

Week 3

Balancing work and home life

Key verses: John 19: 26-27

“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

Introduction

This week we’re looking at balancing our work commitments with our home and family life. For most of us, some form of work is necessary in order to provide for our basic needs. How can this be fulfilling and rewarding rather than merely economic? And how do we ensure work doesn’t take over our lives so that other responsibilities such as the duty to care for our families gets squeezed out? And how do we find time to spend with those important to us or relax so that we don’t burn out or? This session aims to encourage us to think about our work-life balance and consider whether we need to make any changes.

Identifying your purpose

Every organisation has a mission statement. This sets out its purpose. Can we recall the mission statement for Testwood Baptist Church? *‘To reach people for Jesus and help his followers grow to be like him.’* (Can you find it on the website? Where would you find it written inside the building?)

1. What do you think was the mission statement of Jesus? Can you think of some Bible verses that would express the purpose of Jesus’ coming and his work on earth? (*‘For the Son of Man did*

not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ Mark 10:45 see also: John 10:11; John 6:51; John 18:37; John 12:46.

2. What would your mission statement be? What do you think is your purpose? Write a mission statement for yourself. Use these points to help.

- What am I good at?
- What can I do that no-one else can?
- Who are the most important people in my life?
- How all this be used to serve God’s purposes?

3. Why is knowing one’s purpose important? Jesus knew his purpose, and this enabled him to ignore roles or tasks which were outside of that purpose. E.g., a dispute about baptism - John 3:22-26, John 4:1-2. The apostle Paul was equally clear about what his purpose was. (1 Corinthians 1:13-17) This meant he kept focussed on the job God had called him to do.

Delegation

Knowing your purpose helps you to delegate some roles to others. Jesus delegated his mother Mary to John. John was to take on the role of caring for Jesus’ mother. Do we try to fulfil roles that are outside of our purpose? Think about work situations, family life, church etc.

4. What roles could/should you delegate to others?

Knowing when to stop

Read Mark 11:11. Jesus knew when the day was done. Do we know when it's time to call it a day? There's an increasing pressure on people in business to work long hours, well into the evening.

5. What contributes to increasing pressure to work?
(Think about technology, mobile phones, emails, desire for higher salaries, better living standards etc.)

6. What can be the result of working long hours and not getting enough rest?
(Increase in mental health problems, family breakdowns, sickness, loss of relationships.)

7. Rest is important. God set out the pattern for us in Genesis 2:2-3 when he rested on the Sabbath. Do we ensure we take a break on one day a week? What are the benefits of having a day away from work activities?

8. It can be difficult (in some cases, impossible) to refuse to work such long hours. What can we do to help reduce or relieve pressure from work? If you're experiencing work pressure, try to think of ways your stress could be relieved or reduced. Some talking points:

- Taking one day at a time
- Try not to worry about tomorrow
- Trusting God – he knows our needs
- Know when to stop

Know who's important in your life.

Jesus knew that Mary and John were important people in his life. He cared for them, even in the middle of his own pain and suffering. Think about who are the important people in your life. Read Luke 10:38-42. People are more important than tasks. Of course, it's important to prepare meals and do the housework! But this was not the time to be concentrating on those things. Martha had got her priorities wrong. How do we ensure we get our priorities right? Do we make time for the important people in our lives? Or are we so busy with work that our family life gets squeezed? (If you have young children, you'll be surprised at how quickly the time goes before they're leaving home!)

9. How can we ensure we give priority to our family life/relationships? Share ideas that you have found helpful in maintaining family relationships in busy lives.

Some suggestions worth trying:

- Keep a diary of what everyone in the family is doing so you're all aware of each other's lives
- Try to make mealtimes special – turn off the TV and mobiles, talk to one another
- If you have to spend time away from family, use technology to keep in touch
- Book diary dates to spend some family time doing something special – date nights, days out
- Create one time of the day when you can all pray together, even briefly (e.g. mealtime)

Recap by sharing any changes you will consider making to create a better work-life balance. Pray for anyone in your group who is experiencing pressure to work longer or harder.