

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

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The phrase “work/life balance” has always struck me as somewhat strange. Is my work somehow distinct from my life—and not a part of it? I try to think about the role of work as part of a larger “whole-life balance.” I find myself asking: *What does it mean to live a balanced life? How do I integrate my work into my life in a healthy way? What does God intend for the balance of work as part of my life?*

It’s in the life of Jesus that we see a faithful picture of a life lived in balance. He shows us what it means to have meaningful work, to step away from that work when the time is right, and to find our balance in knowing who we are as God’s children.

- **Jesus shows there’s a time to stop working**

Mark 6:30-32: “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

Jesus’ disciples work really hard, ministering to many people, to the point that they end up working right through lunch. Sound familiar? Jesus’ immediate response is to invite them to a quiet place, to rest, and to get away from the hurry of their work. In a time with so much to get done, Jesus’ impulse is to rest.

Some ways I try to practice this (and often fail!):

- My co-workers know that I am unavailable during non-work time. When I’m not working, I’m not working. They know I won’t read an email until the hours I have designated for work. If there is a true emergency, they can call.
- I don’t email on my phone. No notifications, no access, nothing. I will see it when I return to my computer during work hours. (No personal email on phone either.)
- I take at least one day a week as a Sabbath. I don’t work at all on that day.
- I do my best to get outside and to exercise regularly. A regular schedule is helpful.
- I prioritize good sleep.
- I remember that relationships, family, rest, play, worship, and prayer all need to play a role in my daily and weekly rhythms.
- Time spent with God is always a necessity. It is in God’s presence that we ultimately discover our priorities, find balance, and receive truth about who we are.

These are just my own practices. The best for you might look quite different!

- **Jesus shows there’s a time for meaningful work**

Mark 6:33-34: “But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”

This story takes an incredible turn. After calling his disciples to come away and rest with him, Jesus encounters a great need. Out of compassion, Jesus begins teaching--he goes back to work! He knows that

work, rest, play, relationship, and more all need to live in balance.

When I am working, here are some helpful practices I try to use:

- Even at home, I “go to work”—I put on “work clothes” and have a dedicated space where I work. Then when my work time ends, I leave it behind.
 - I set daily to-do lists that are less than I think I can accomplish. With the unexpected interruptions that come most days, a smaller list tends to be what I actually get done.
 - When I finish my work for the day, I thank God for the work I have been able to do and prayerfully set aside the things I have not accomplished.
- **It’s all about knowing who you are.**
How does Jesus know when to work, when to rest, how to live in balance? While there can be any number of practical tools, ultimately it comes down to the reality that we, like Jesus, need to know who we are—that we are God’s beloved daughters and sons. Our work, whatever it be, is not ultimately what defines us. Regardless of how much we do or don’t accomplish, we are loved by God. When we overwork, there is grace-upon-grace. When we don’t finish what we need to, there is grace-upon-grace.

In our work and rest, in our worship and play, in our stress and joy, in our accomplishments and failures, in our life and death—we belong to the Lord. Out of this truth, we can begin to find a life of balance.