

A Christian Approach
to
Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance



A graceful balance between two equal factors?



BALANCE

It's important to maintain a balance between your work life and your family life. There are 24 hours in a day. Why aren't you working 12 hours every day?

Is there no Life at Work?

- Work is as much an integral part of our lives as everything else we do.
- Work belongs to our calling/ministry/mission
 - See last week...
- Our Christian faith underpins *everything* we do: life and work.
- Life is more like a number of activities that compete for our attention

A collection of competing demands



A collection of competing demands

Prayer

Family

Work

Sleep



Which one do I feed next???

Dogbert on Work/Life Balance

WELCOME TO
DOGBERT'S SEMINAR
ON WORK-LIFE
BALANCE.



www.dilbert.com scottadams@aol.com

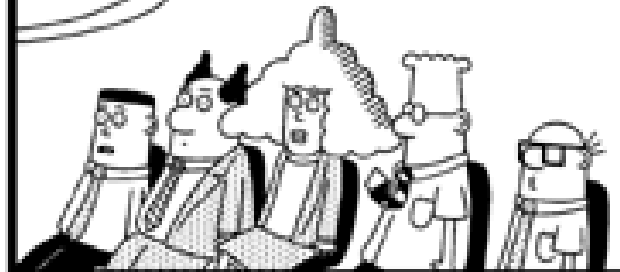
FIRST,
REVIEW
THIS LIST
OF YOUR
PRIORI-
TIES.



FAMILY
JOB
EXERCISE
VACATION
MUST-DOS
MEDICAL
EATING
HYGIENE
SLEEP
ROMANCE
HOLIDAYS

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YOU HAVE TIME
FOR THREE THINGS.
WORK AND HOLIDAYS
ARE TWO. YOU GET
TO PICK THE THIRD.



Poor WLB is not Universal

- Relatively modern phenomenon
- Particularly afflicts certain professions and certain types of corporate workers
- Many workers are spared this and can happily work hard but regular hours
- Seasons in life:
 - Unemployment
 - Sickness
 - Singleness/Family
 - Training
 - Retirement



Why is modern work so hungry?

- Long hours culture
- Irregular hours
- Business travel
- Long commutes
- Blurred boundaries
- Labour market flexibility

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- Long hours culture
- Irregular hours
- Business travel
- Long commutes
- Blurred boundaries
- Labour market flexibility
- The curse of the BlackBerry
 - Give BlackBerry the Raspberry!



Biblical Balance (1)

- We are not made to work constantly

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

(Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

(Ecclesiastes 4:6)

Biblical Balance (2)

- We are made to work hard

Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,
she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.
How long will you lie there, O sluggard?
When will you arise from your sleep?
A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,
and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want like an armed man.

(Proverbs 6:6-11)

If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

(2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

Knowing the Enemy! (1)

Reasons we work too long...

- Long-hours culture (peer pressure)
 - Romans 12:1-2
- Fear
 - Hebrews 13:6; Psalm 27:1
- Crisis
 - Temporary or permanent?
- Sense of responsibility
 - This is usually good!
 - But can be linked to pride – Proverbs 29:23

Knowing the Enemy! (2)

- Desire for personal success
 - Mark 8:34-36
- Financial pressure
 - Matthew 6:31-33
- Greed
 - 1 Timothy 6:9
- Escape from other responsibilities
- Enjoyment!

A Christian Viewpoint

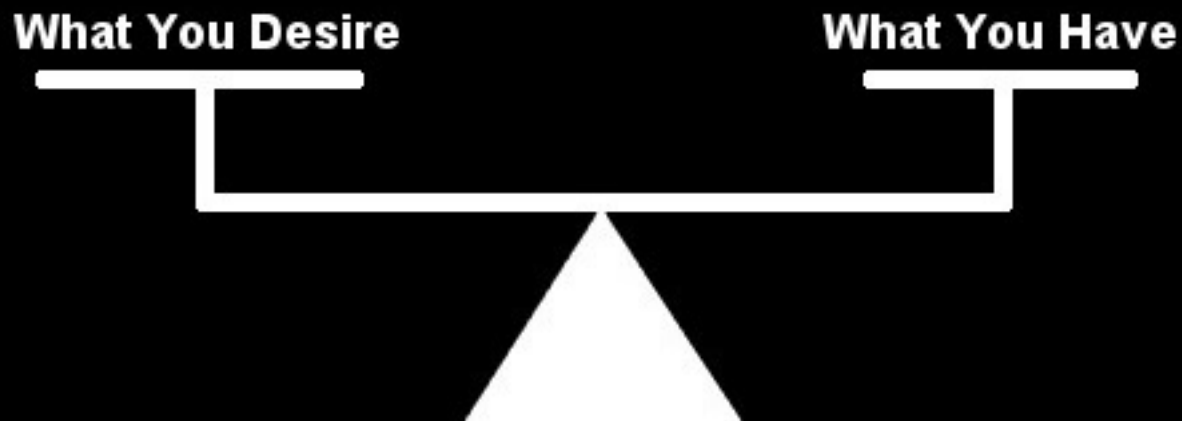
How can we respond in a
distinctively Christian way?

1. Contentment
2. Consecration

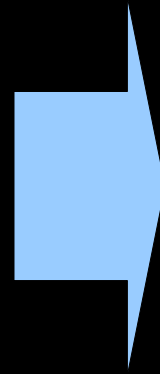


1. Contentment

- The Bible has a lot to say about contentment
- Contentment brings into line what we *desire* and what we *have*
- Contentment is the friend of good work-life balance



Contentment Illustrated



Our work can't deliver contentment

Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

(Ecclesiastes 4:7-8)

All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

(Ecclesiastes 6:7)

Only our relationship with God can truly satisfy

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,
when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

(Psalm 63:5-6)

You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

(Psalm 145:16)

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought
nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.
But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

(1 Timothy 6:6-8)

Contentment and WLB

- Lack of contentment
 - can lead to turning to our work for money, meaning, purpose, identity, significance
 - therefore results in poor work-life balance
 - arises from idolatry
 - shows that we are not truly trusting Jesus
- Contentment is the antidote to
 - pride, fear, greed, anxiety, ungodly ambition, peer pressure and many other enemies of WLB

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28-29)

2. Consecration

- Definition: to set apart as sacred, sanctify, dedicate.
- Our work is part of our worship every bit as much as anything else we do.
- We need to offer/consecrate our work to God
- Diagnostic: do you pray for your work?

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

(Romans 12:1-2)

Consecrating our work as worship

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.

(Proverbs 16:2-3)

Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

(Colossians 3:22-24)

Scenarios

- Continually ask, “How will it glorify God?”
 - Should I stay another hour at the office?
 - Should I pursue a promotion?
 - Should I take a day off?
 - Should I work on Sunday?
 - Should I change jobs?
- How will our thinking differ from our colleagues' thinking?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

Some Personal Observations

Building good habits...

- Daily routine
- Switching off the phone
- Sundays
- Redeeming the commute
- Redeeming travel
- Prayer pointers

A More Radical Move...

- A test of flexible working.
- The Cornhill Training Course
 - Two years part time (2 days per week)
 - To study the Bible and Bible Teaching
- But not an escape from the workplace!



Work-Life *Balance*

- The same principle applies in *all* of life!
- We need to ask the same question of everything we do: “Will it glorify God”
 - Should I move house?
 - Should I marry? Whom should I marry?
 - Should I go to the meeting at church?
 - Should I watch this television programme?
 - Etc., etc., etc.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

(1 Corinthians 10:31)

Responses

- Thoughts, experiences and reflections on work-life balance.
- What are your struggles with WLB?
- What are your strategies?

Summary

- A specifically *Christian* work-life balance is approached through cultivating
 1. Contentment
 - ♦ Bring your desires and circumstances into alignment
 - ♦ Find your identity, security and purpose in God alone
 2. Consecration
 - ♦ The *whole* of your life is to be lived to the glory of God
 - ♦ “You are serving the Lord Christ”