

LESSON 8 Devotional

Ordering Your Priorities

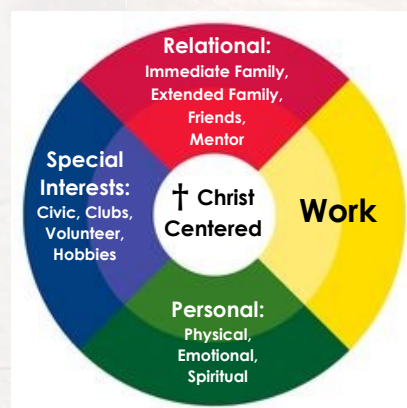
Finding a balance between work and the other aspects of life is an illogical construct from a Biblical perspective. This work-life-balance worldview pits our work against life, yet the Bible teaches us that our work is part of our life, just as our faith is intrinsic to who we are! Unfortunately, our secular culture puts striving for this so-called Work-Life Balance as an optimum goal.

Work-Life Balance also fosters compartmentalization. It presumes that when you leave home and head for the workplace that you have effectively shelved the other aspects of your life—like family, faith, and friends—as you focus solely on your work.

Wouldn't an integrated life be less confusing and more rewarding? What if instead, you viewed your life as an entire pie with the different slices being the different roles you hold, such as follower of Jesus, husband or wife, father or mother, employer, or civic leader.

From a practical standpoint, we understand time conflicts arise in life and choices need to be made. This means that each piece of pie requires a ranking in importance. But at the same time, your faith and values should be fully integrated. That is, your approach to any day should be one complete, one-of-a-kind, pie that reflects God's calling on your life.

Ephesians 5:15-17 says, "So, then, be careful how you live. Do not be unwise but wise, making the best use of your time because the times are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."



All said, your problem is not a time problem, it is a priority problem. The challenge becomes establishing the right priorities. Past research from a Gallup Poll revealed that as much as 39% of business owners work more than 60 hours a week. This level of work can undermine the other priorities owners might have.

In his book, *The Integrated Life*, Ken Eldred tells the story of the launching of his company Inmac. From his past business experience, he knew how all-consuming a new startup could be, so he decided before he began to prayerfully consider his priorities.

He determined that Matthew 6:33, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well,” and 1 Timothy 5:8, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever,” needed to be considered heavily.

Ken determined to live a fully integrated life in which his faith was interwoven into all aspects of his existence. His priority would be God first, family second, and his work third. To Ken it only made sense that his daily schedules should mirror this prioritization.

He decided how many hours were needed to grow in knowledge and intimacy with God and placed this as his number one priority. He then determined how much time was needed to spend with his family each week to adequately nurture and provide for them. Lastly, he looked at what was left for the office, and the result was only 40 hours per week.

Steadfastly holding to his priorities, he lost all interested venture capitalists and had to bootstrap the funds to start the business. Although challenging, Ken held firm to his priorities and proved that you can build a successful firm on 40 hours a week by selling the business when it had reached \$400 million in sales.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Review Matthew 6:33-34 and 1 Timothy 5:8. What is your view on how these passages might relate to your time management?

2. Take a moment to consider your schedule for the last week. What order did you place on God, spouse, family, and work? (The amount of time spent on an activity isn't the full measurement of priorities. Instead, it's about the amount of time needed compared with the amount of time you gave.)

3. If your spouse or children were asked to rank their perception of your priorities, what would they say? Reflect on how their answers make you feel.

GOING DEEPER

Take the time to consider your roles and responsibilities.

- A. For each category, list your primary roles and responsibilities in order of priority, with “1” being your most important priority. (For example, Follower of Jesus, husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, vocation position, board member, committees you serve, church or volunteer activities, etc.)
- B. Estimate how much time is needed next week for you to adequately fulfill each of those roles. (If your calendar usually only includes work activities, consider also blocking time for the other category roles and responsibilities.)
- C. Prayerfully consider how the Lord might want you to modify your list.

Category (examples)	Primary Role/Responsibility	Priority	Time/Week
Faith & Serving <i>(Relationship with Christ, church member, teacher, elder)</i>			
Work <i>(administration, business development, customer relations, employee engagement, board member)</i>			
Relational <i>(spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, friend, mentor)</i>			
Personal <i>(working out, quiet time with the Lord, rest)</i>			
Special Interest <i>(civic, clubs, volunteer, hobby)</i>			