

# “It’s a Balancing Act”

Proverbs 11:1-4



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For my sermon, this morning, I want to begin by getting a “volunteer” from the congregation. Bryce Yancey would be a good choice, don’t you think? Bryce is a regular participant in our youth ministry, sings in the youth choir, attends as a fish, I mean a freshman, at Lubbock High School, and is also a gymnast.

“Bryce, I know gymnastics takes a lot of flexibility and strength, but it also seems to take a lot of balance. Of the different routines you do in gymnastics, which ones require the most balance? Would you show us some balance-intensive moves or positions? How long did it take you to do those things successfully? What was it like while you were learning them? Even now, what happens when you get out of balance? What was the secret to learning it? Thanks, Bryce.”

Proverbs 11:1 reads, **“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.”** The wise writer of Proverbs gives us an important piece of advice in a couple of different ways. The literal understanding of this passage is making sure you are balancing the weights right when people buy grain or other weighted foods. People put things on scales to determine how much something weighed (nothing digital back then). If the balancing weight on the opposite side was not what it said, then someone was likely to get cheated, and often people were. So a sermon on this passage could easily be about honesty. But today, I am thinking about balance in another way. And like Bryce earlier, if this kind of balance is not kept, some could fall or get injured. But there is a real sense in which, if we don’t keep this kind of balance, someone could be cheated – God, our loved ones, or ourselves. And here I speak of the balance in our daily lives. It is among the most challenging parts of living the Christian life.

Dee Riebel, the director of our Pre-School and Kindergarten provided me this picture from Dr. Seuss’ *The Cat in the Hat*, which I shared with the children earlier. I regret that the juggling act of the cat feels all too familiar (GRAPHIC: The cat balancing) as I know it feels for you. There’s almost this euphoria that hits us when we are over-functioning. We begin to think, “I am superdad. I am supermom. I can do it all.” But, as you remember, from the story, doing it all led to a great fall (GRAPHIC: The cat falling). The cat ends up making quite a mess and putting other things and people at risk. As usual, Dr. Seuss was talking to adults and youth more than he was to children. The story was written in 1955. If only he could see us now: with our computers, cell phones PDAs, instant messaging, etc. We have become professional jugglers and multi-taskers. How will we ever rediscover balance? The Bible certainly gives us some clues.

The first is to keep balance we must work from our spiritual center. We sing it so often and we don’t do it. **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else works out better** (A Cotton paraphrase, but a good one).” When we give God his due, everything flows better. When we give God our first love, then all our other love relationships are healthier. When we give God the best of our time in prayer and study, somehow our lives have less wasted time. When we give God our money, the rest of our money goes further. About 40% of the time when my life gets scattered and things are falling down around me and people are getting cheated, it is because I am not operating from my spiritual center.

Second, to keep balance, we have to learn the rhythm of Sabbath. Our self-worship says that each day

must be busier and more productive than the day before. We live in a world that tries to extract that from us on a regular basis. Work-rest. Intensity-relaxation. It's the bio-rhythm of being human. One of the things fitness experts are learning is that interval training (going in short bursts with rest in between) is better for your fitness and burning fat than just doing something for a longer period of time. You were not created to be a lean, mean machine. You were created to be a God-glorifying, loving, growing, fully-alive child of God. Like the grass that goes dormant or the animal that hibernates you have a creation rhythm that requires Sabbath. How long has it been since you took one in which rest, play and worship were the priorities for a 24-hour period? Some of us haven't done it in years. And our self-idolatry will not let us see the price we and others are paying for it. In Genesis, even God takes a Sabbath. What does it say that we don't think we need one? Another 40% of my scatteredness comes from lack of Sabbath.

Third, to keep balance, we need to take the long look. Not seeing the forest for the trees is not just a saying, its part of what gets us so out of balance. The long look sorts out what matters and what doesn't. That really means sorting out what we will say yes to and no to. The Cat in the Hat though he could just keep adding. But the long look chooses relationships over things. The long look chooses that which is lasting over that which will be here today and gone tomorrow. The choice in the garden was really about short-term answers and short-term gratification (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) vs. long-term answers and long-term benefit (the tree of life). The subtle snake invited Adam and Eve to choose the short-term, convincing them that they deserved what the tree of knowledge offered that they were going to miss out if they didn't act right then. They missed out on life's best and so do we. The other 20% of my scatteredness may be from my lack of proper perspective.

So as we come to the Lord's table, how is your spiritual and relational equilibrium? Are you centered in Christ? Are you in Sabbath rhythm? Are you taking the long look?

The bible says that a right balance is a delight to the Lord and not too bad for us either. In fact, when there is balance there is vitality because you know that you and Christ are in sync. There is nothing quite like being in sync with God. There is flow and movement in your life that makes it easier even when things get touch. And there's nothing quite so frustrating as when you're not in sync. When there is balance you are motivated by peace more than by anxiety and fear. Peace is not empty or lifeless. There is energy and freedom in God's peace. The old Psalmist was right. "Be still and know that He is God...and who is not." When there is balance there is meaning and confidence. The little things that so easily derail us are put in their place and we find ourselves doing things that matter forever. I find that none of these is easy to do consistently. It takes persistence and lots of practice. But I know this. The hardest thing about practice is getting started. Holy Communion may be the best place to start. Come to the table.

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