

Lecture 4 - Keeping Balance

Focus Verse:

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Introduction:

Do you ever feel your life is out of control—out of balance? As a child of God, we must take time from our busyness to set our priorities in order. Life is a gift and should be lived well. We all have emergencies where we burn the candle at both ends, but this should not be the norm or soon there will be no candle left to burn. That candle is the spirit within us that inspires us and propels us into forward motion.

Much of life is a question of maintaining balance. Any athletic team knows that they need a balance between offense and defense and between quickness and strength. In our personal finances we work to maintain a balance between income and expenses. In teaching we try to keep the proper balance between content and creativity. Too much emphasis on content and the subject becomes boring, too much emphasis on creativity and you have a lot of fun but communicate little. We all have to find the balance between diet, exercise and rest. Too much to one extreme or the other and we begin to hamper healthy living.

There must also be balance in our Christian life. There must be a balance between knowledge and application. In the book of Colossians we see that the first two chapters deal with right thinking . . .with our knowledge and understanding. The last two chapters deal with application or how we live. The two go together. Paul is urging us to be stable and balanced in our Christianity. In Colossians 3:16,17 Paul gives us four characteristics of a well-rounded or balanced Christian.

1. BIBLE-SATURATED

First, Paul tells us that we are to "Let the Word of Christ, dwell in you richly". Paul encourages these believers to allow the message of the Bible to dominate, saturate and motivate their living. The word *dwell* means "to feel at home." Paul urges us to have such a relationship with God's Word that it feels at home in our life . . . or we feel at home with it.

The Bible should be at the heart of our existence. We draw our direction from it. We should find our comfort and strength in it. Being saturated in the Bible does several things for us: 1) it helps us know the truth. 2) It enables us to recognize error 3) It provides answers to difficult questions.

2. FELLOWSHIP

The second characteristic in this passage is that the well-balanced believer is aware that they need to have fellowship with others. The Bible tells us that we are to "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom". We teach someone when we help them understand something they didn't know before. We have a responsibility to help each other grow in knowledge and understanding. But we must also be willing to "admonish" one another. We must remind each other of the truth that we have forgotten in our living. We are to teach and be taught; admonish and be willing to be admonished.

This is contrary to the ways of the world. We live in a world that urges us to be independent. We are told to "pull our own strings" and warned not to become "dependent" on anyone. As a result of this teaching we

have become isolated from each other. But this is not what God wants for His people. God calls us to be involved with each other.

God has designed the church so that we are INTER-dependent. In fact, he uses the analogy of a human body. He says the Christian community is like a body: the body has different parts and different functions but must work together to be effective. Paul tells us that God has given us various gifts (or skills) that can be used to spread his Word. We must work together!

Are you trying to function as an isolated Christian? Perhaps you feel that you can worship God just as effectively at home as in a church. You may be able to worship well in isolation but you cannot grow! In order to grow you need to "be connected". The Christian life is a matter of giving and receiving. At times we will need others to teach to us . . . other times we will do the teaching.

And so it is in the church. It is not meant to be one-man operation. God has called us to all be involved, to grow in fellowship and love for one another. For some it is helping in areas such as: Sunday School, the Nursery, Children's Church, Kid's Club, Youth Groups. For others it is: Singing in the Choir, working in the kitchen, cleaning the church. Some will work behind the scenes copying, mailing, cleaning repairing. Some will serve by giving financial support, gaining vision for the church, managing the resources of the church. There are hundreds of ways to serve in the church. And when everyone is doing what they can do . . . we become what God wants us to be.

3. SPIRIT OF CELEBRATION

One of the ways we are to teach and admonish one another is through "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs". In other words, we are to be a joyful, singing body. We should be celebrating grace! The right music during a movie or TV show can cause you to smile or cry. A well placed song can drive home a point better than a myriad of words. It only makes sense to say that Christians should be using music to teach, worship and encourage each other. Worship should be a joyful time

The point here is simple: the person who has received God's grace is a person who wants to express their joy. If you have a good voice you should sing well, if you have a fair voice you should sing fair, if you have a croaky voice . . . you should croak out praises to the Lord. The point is not whether or not you are "in tune" it's that we should give expression to the joy that is in our heart.

Make a conscious effort to worship the Lord for the greatness of His grace.

4. GOD HONORING CONSISTENCY

Paul brings his thought to a fitting peak with the final words in this passage: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17) It seems like the perfect conclusion doesn't it? The person who is well-balanced should be revealing Christ consistently.

The world is watching the believer. It is interested to see if we truly believe what we say. How can they tell? They watch our lives. The test of genuine faith is a God-Honoring consistency in our lives. Now, don't get me wrong. A God-honoring consistency is not perfection. That would be an impossible standard to reach in this life. However, even when we make a mistake and fail we should handle those situations in a Christian manner. We should be willing to take responsibility for our actions (no excuses or blaming others) and be willing to make things right with another.

Lecture 4 – Keeping Balance - ABBA YOUSAB THE HERMIT

The saintly father Abba Yousab lived in the wilderness of Sheheet. He was well advanced in age, and his body had become weak from his constant spiritual struggles, devotion and strict ascetism. He prayed unceasingly and kept watch throughout the night. He was a blessed man of patience and tolerance, and humbly clothed himself in a tunic of weaved palm. God provided him with food, and upon the soft clouds Abba Yousab would travel from place to place...He possessed many spiritual virtues. One day he thought curiously to himself, "I wonder if anyone is equal to me in virtues?" and he prayed that the Lord would reveal a sign. Abba Yousab then heard the voice of the Lord's angel saying to him, "He who is the king of Antioch, go to him and see the honour bestowed upon him." Abba Yousab at once rode upon the clouds, and when he had reached the city of Antioch, he walked with his rod until he arrived at the gate of the city. There he saw the king mounted on his horse, and surrounded by all his soldiers and guards. He was received by all the people with great honour and dignity. The king was clothed in the most exquisite gown, and on his head he wore a crown glittering with diamonds and precious gems. Abba Yousab became very confused at this, and as he wondered how he could compare spiritually with such a magnificent king, the king approached him and said, "Abba Yousab, you bring upon yourself many hardships." He then ordered the soldiers to take the saint to his palace and take care of him there until the king returns.

When the king arrived at the palace, he took hold of the saint's hands and lead him into a lavish hall where a banquet had been prepared. The two of them sat beside each other on the table...Later, the king lead the saint to his private quarters, and there Abba Yousab was introduced to the king's wife. The queen who was arrayed in beautiful jewels and fine apparel, welcomed the saintly father with much joy and warmth. Serving the king and queen were maids who were also very beautifully dressed. Having completed their duties, the queen then dismissed them... The king and queen then excused themselves and after a short while returned clothed in animal fur. Abba Yousab marveled at this. They then lead the saint into another room within the palace, and there sitting on the ground, working with his hands was a monk. Immediately the monk came forward to kiss the hermit father, then greeted the king and queen. They then all stood together and prayed the 6th hour prayer, before returning to their craft work. Each one of them worked in silence, then the monk said to the saint, "My saintly father Abba Yousab, it was God's will to reveal to you the life of the king and queen, for it has been a spiritual experience for you."

They then spoke about the many wonders of God, His love and His care. After praying the 9th hour prayer, the servant prepared a small table upon which lay bread and a small portion of food. They ate and gave many thanks to God. The monk then took the saint aside and said, "My dear brother, I hope that you have benefitted from the example of the king and queen, for as you have noticed, their greatness is not in ruling the monarchy, but in spirituality and wisdom. Despite their riches, they live in ascetism and humility. They eat only a little and delight in working with their hands." The king and queen took the saint's blessings before Abba Yousab left, riding upon his cloud back to his cave in El-Eskeet. He glorified God through His chosen people, and lived in joy and continuous prayer and praise until the day he rested in peace. May all glory be to our God forever, amen.