

## Living a Balanced Life

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### INTRODUCTION

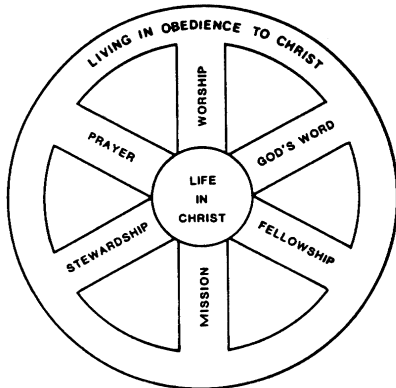
In preparation for this message I put “Balanced Life” in a Google search bar and received more than 77,000,000 hits. I was dumbfounded until I realized that in itself says something about today’s world.

A few years ago when I was working on my degree I was looking for ways to study more efficiently. I came across this gadget called a pen scanner. The idea was that when I found something in the text that I found important I could quickly scan it like a highlighter and then drop it into a file on my computer. Not only would this little gadget be helpful to me in my studies, but it was also very cool. It was very cool until I started to use it.

I remember the first week I had it I got so far behind on my reading assignments that I had to put the scanner down and use a regular highlighter. I told myself that it was just because it was new and that the next week I would get better at using it. Within just a few weeks this cool gadget was relegated to a drawer somewhere where it has been collecting dust for a number of years now.

So much of technology that is available to us today simply become time wasters and distractions that keep us from doing the real work that we need to be doing. They were supposed to make life simpler so that we could spend more time on leisure activities, exercise and just plain relaxation.

Judging from the 77,000,000 hits I found on Google, it seems that many in our society are still struggling, in spite of all our technological advances. When one’s life is out of balance it affects all of their life and causes all kinds of problems.



The same is true of our Christian life. There are a number of components of the Christian life that we need to have in balance. Think of them like a wheel. (explain the diagram)

What would happen to the wheel if you removed one of the legs? Two of them?

What would happen if you removed the hub? The rim?

Shari and I are going to begin a series on discipleship. This series will take us through all the parts of this wheel and by the end you will have the knowledge you need to live a balanced Christian life.

Abraham Lincoln said, “In the end it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.” I think he had it right. When we are out of balance we lose perspective. When one spoke takes priority and is given the majority of our attention we don’t experience the “life” God intended for us.

By way of introduction for this series, today, I want to look at a lesson given by Jesus. Let’s look at Luke 14:25-33. (READ SCRIPTURE)

**BECOMING A DISCIPLE IS NOT SOMETHING WE SHOULD THINK IS EASY.** There are costs associated with it.

**COST #1: LOVING JESUS TAKES PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER RELATIONSHIPS.**

Because of Jesus’ words in other places we know that He doesn’t really mean that we should hate our family members. This would conflict with so much of what is written in the old and new testaments. What Jesus is doing here is using extreme language to get His point across. “If you want to be my disciple, your love for everyone else, must pale in comparison to your love for me.”

Think with me for a moment to your first “love” if you’ve had one yet. I’m very fortunate that my first real love was my wife. I never had to go through the dating game. Yes, I had a couple of girl friends, but they were just childish relationships where manipulation was the norm as opposed to relationship building. However, when I found my first love, nothing else mattered near as much. Other friends took a backseat. My family played second fiddle, so to speak. Everything in life was about Shari first. Looking back were things out of balance? Probably. But that’s they way things work when you are in love and are building a relationship.

With Jesus that’s how things are always to be if you are His disciple. Your other relationships play second fiddle in comparison. It’s going to cost you. Your unsaved family and friends may understand you. You may be ridiculed, teased, shunned and even physically harmed. It’s a cost you have to consider.

**COST #2: YOU’VE GOT TO CARRY YOUR CROSS.**

Carrying the cross was something these followers understood well. Death on a cross was a punishment reserved for dangerous criminals. Carrying their own cross to the place of their death was to force their submission to authority. For each of these followers of Jesus their symbolic cross would be different. This crowd was enthusiastic now. Jesus was popular and liked by the majority. Jesus warns them it won’t always be this way. If they only have a superficial relationship with Him they might not think its worth it when things get tough. He encourages them that their commitment must be on a deeper level.

**THEY NEED TO COUNT THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP.**

My father is first of all a carpenter. Although carpentry now for him is hobby or used to for keeping up his own home, he used to make a living doing it. I remember going to work with him when I was younger. I remember going to the “shop” when I was around 7 or 8 I think. I remember a number of times building cabinets with him. The job I remember doing the most was using the countersink bit before he would screw the pieces of wood together. (explain countersink). I remember the great care my dad would take in making his cabinets. He would say to me, “Anything worth doing is worth doing right.” For my dad, if he decided to take a job he wasn’t going to do it half way. He was going to do it right the first time.

I remember when he was building his first house. I don’t remember the reasons why but I remember that before the house was done he began to regret taking on the project. He learned a lesson, however, and it’s related to what Jesus is talking about here. You’ve got to decide if the end product is worth the effort of getting there. I’ve never asked my dad about this so I don’t know for sure, but I think he decided the finished house wasn’t worth it. To my knowledge he’s only ever built one other house since then and it was my grandparent’s retirement home.

Discipleship involves a lot of effort. You need to count the cost.

**BECOMING A DISCIPLE REQUIRES A WELL THOUGHT OUT DECISION.**

Jesus uses the example of a king who needs to make a decision in regards to a response to an opposing army. Since this king is at a disadvantage he needs to decide whether to attack, run or seek a peaceful resolution. This requires a deliberate decision. If he does nothing surely his own army will be pounced. He must evaluate things like the strength of his army and the strength of the opposition. He must evaluate the terrain to see who has the advantage.

The king has to count the cost, but he does have to make some kind of decision if he is going to save his army the humiliation of defeat.

The only difference from the story of the king that Jesus told and our decision to become a disciple is that by not choosing to be a disciple you automatically are not one. Fence sitters are entitled to the same rewards as those who do not engage in this deepening relationship with Jesus.

**THE FINAL COST: WILLINGNESS TO GIVE UP EVERYTHING.**

Jesus said, “Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” The first part of chapter 14 talks is a story Jesus used to make a point. The story is about a man who is holding a banquet. The invited and distinguished guests who were invited didn’t show up. They weren’t willing to give up their own plans to attend this banquet. The man then told his servant to go out and find anyone who wanted to enjoy the banquet he had prepared.

If we are so preoccupied with our money and our belongings that we miss the call, we also will miss out on the banquet. When he tells us to give up everything, again this is about priority. We have to submit those things to God and make him and our relationship with him priority.

### **CONCLUSION**

The costs are great. There is no doubting that. The good news is that the banquet is greater. The banquet is worth it. Our trouble is that the banquet seems so far out of our reach and we can't decide if the effort is worth it.

Jesus is not going to lighten up on the expectations. The life of a disciple is tough work, but it brings huge rewards as well. It brings us joy and contentment. It gives us power to live and power to be the people God has called us to be. There's no great peace than that offered to us by God.

You'll never know that peace though, until you decide to be a disciple.