

## LIFE MATTERS – What Matters Most – Family Part One

Isaiah 40:12 says the Lord, “*Weighed the mountains on scales and the hills in a balance.*” Have you noticed that there is divine balance in the universe? If God did not balance everything perfectly the whole earth would be dysfunctional. Likewise, our lives should clearly reflect the divine balance that surrounds us.

Yet there is a great lie that many of you may have bought into, and it is this, “*Balance means equalizing the scale of life.*” Seeing balance as allocating the same amount of time and energy to both sides of a scale (to keep them even) may be mathematically correct, yet this becomes mythical when applied to life matters.

Life is not like that – mechanical, static, sterile or clinical! Life is dynamic! Therefore, true “balance” is staying upright on the surfboard of life when the waves are high and the ocean spray is in your face. To be realistic you must adopt the view that life balance is a constantly changing, deeply personal dynamic experience. Therefore, the primary challenge is not balance, but “balancing!” It’s developing the capacity to adequately balance the changing circumstances of life.

Someone once said, “*Balance is beautiful.*” But for decades, *life balance* has been a huge issue in our society. What we say matters most to us, and the way we actually spend our time and money don’t line up. Check it out! Pull out your diary and your bank or credit card statements for the past month and look at where you’ve spent your time and money. Do those spending decisions really reflect the things that matter most to you?

Unfortunately for most people, the answer to that question is “No.” What matters most is not evident in their lifestyle.

The bottom line is this: *Work* matters, *Family* matters, *Time* matters, *Money* matters, *Wisdom* matters, and most important of all, *God* matters. But how can you keep a correct balance between all these things? How can you prioritise the family, your church commitments and also do a great job at work? And how can you prioritise correctly in the midst of everyday challenges; including career pressures, job insecurities, family issues, and mental or financial stress?

The truth is – it is possible! *You can do anything you want, but not everything* – William Ray Rippy. You must learn to do anything you want, without feeling guilty for not doing everything. You have to learn to do *first things first*, and then enjoy doing them. Align your life to what matters most, and not to your circumstances.

What matters most? Family matters! Family is a God idea – the word originated in God. It is rooted in God. God is *the* Father, and the word father expresses the way that God relates to all of us. The Bible reveals this aspect of God’s nature in rich and varied use of family imagery. God isn’t just Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He is “the” Father – *from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named* [Ephesians 3:14, 15]. When a man and a woman come together in marriage God extends to them this ‘name’; a name that in essence belongs to Him – the name of *family*. Parents and children alike live up to the true meaning of this name as they reflect the nature and life of the divine family in their human family. Family *matters* because the word and concept of family was established in God even before time began. However, *family* was always meant to be extended to us.

*Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the white House, but on what happens inside your house.*

Barbara Bush

It's the small and insignificant things that are the *big* things in family relationships. In order to take control of what happens inside your house you must learn to take control of the little things. In other words:

**Stop doings things like: Start doing things like:**

- \* Not really listening
- \* Listening
- \* Interrupting someone
- \* Respecting each when they're talking other's opinion
- \* Being sarcastic or always
- \* Praising others complaining \* Saying thank you
- \* Having to be asked \* Helping out without repeatedly to do things being asked to
- \* Breaking promises
- \* Surprising someone with a gift

This may be simple but it's not simplistic. In relationships, the little things you do show caring and commitment. They say, *"I care more about you than I care about my own habits or convenience."* And, *"These things are important to me because you are important to me."* In reality, it's not so much the little things themselves that matter, but the attitude and character you show in choosing to give priority to those things. And notice, none of these things are really too hard or impossible to do!

Family is priority, but how do you see family? How do you see your own family? How do you see your role as a family member? We will be examining all these issues and finding answers that I believe will help direct you toward better personal relationships. Relationships do matter!

So where does your view of family come from? Does it come from God or is it based on your own growing up experiences? We live in a time when social messages about family are incredibly mixed and confusing. Even the purpose of family itself seems muddled. But the truth is, thousands and thousands of years of civilization affirm that family is the very DNA of society. Confucius said, *"The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home."*

The author of the stirring family saga *Roots* stated, *"It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child, but I tell you it takes strong families to make a true village."* Clearly, strong families nurture a strong society. But what makes a happy, healthy, strong family? Extensive research shows that:

[1] A strong, loving marriage tends to create a strong family.

[2] Families are generally happy and successful to the degree that family members:

- \* Trust each other \* Serve together
- \* Love each other \* Play together
- \* Believe in each other \* Work together
- \* Help each other \* Worship together
- \* Comfort each other \* Pray together

\* Forgive each other \* Celebrate together

Concerning family, the bottom line is this - there is simply no better, stronger, more deeply satisfying, richly rewarding, productive, and effective way of life (and living).

But how do you see your own family? Looking back at the list I have just read, do you only see weakness and faults? Do you find it hard to believe that it can ever become the unit that God wants it to be?

Remember, by nature family life is filled with challenges. Therefore, it's not about attaining perfection but rather about finding better ways of dealing with these challenges. One of the great benefits of family life is the incomparable interdependence and strength of character that comes as a result of working through the challenges together.

There is no such thing as a perfect family. Family is an ever moving, ever evolving institution. Yours may be a growing family; a learning family; a becoming family; or even a pioneering family. But whatever family you are will have impact on future generations. And there is no greater legacy you could pass on than to prepare your children to fulfil their own family roles with excellence and joy.

While it's true that the greatest joy and satisfaction in life come from family, it's also true that this incomparable fulfilment only comes when we fully give ourselves to God and to the family also – then work for it and sacrifice for it. And the best place to start is to have a vision for your family. By creating and maintaining a clear vision of the kind of family you want, you will be able to work through all of life's challenges. Not on your own – but together!

One way to capture and retain this vision is by incorporating it as part of a personal mission statement. Here is a simple but beautifully effective mission statement:

#### OUR FAMILY MISSION

To love each other...

To help each other...

To believe in each other...

To wisely use our time, talents and resources to bless others...

To pray together...

To worship together...

Forever.