

**Living a
Balanced and
Effective
Christian Life**

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Please bear with me while I try to make a point:

In the eyes of most others, I do not have an exciting life. It doesn't have the carnival atmosphere that some people seem to need. But, at the age of 87, it is satisfying and rewarding to me. Let's look at the heart of a typical day: I...

- **work** at my computer. After some time, I take a break and sit or lie down somewhere away from the office. This causes me to
- **worship** because God draws near. Worship leads me to
- **pray** because His presence makes me feel my need of help for myself and for others who have the same needs. This makes me
- **meditate** on the goodness of God because that same presence draws little gems of thought out of my inner being. I then arise refreshed and ready to return to the computer.

This pattern may be repeated several times during the day. Now what if I had not taken a break because I was too busy "doing God's work"? Then I would not have indulged in worship, which is a necessary part of every believer's life. Neither would I have prayed to God nor meditated (thought on His goodness and excellence). Meditation is a necessary part of Christian living. It leads to communion with Him in which He illuminates areas of His Word and will and ways of doing that we cannot obtain in any other way.

The believer's life has to be one of balance, otherwise he will be less effective in any area of his life. It's like a plane with two jet engines. If one jet stalls out, the plane will go around and around in circles. Its forward motion has been stopped. Similarly, if we aren't operating on all four of our "jets" -- **work, worship, prayer, meditation** -- our progress in this Holy Way will be seriously hindered.

So let's avail ourselves of all the means of grace God gives us. Neglecting any one of them will make us substantially less effective in the work of God. If we know these things, we are held accountable by God if we do not do accordingly.

“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” (Luke 12.47)

Doing What We Can

I like the idea of being just another Joe Schmuck, trying my best to please my Maker. I am not anyone's leader, not their pastor, not their mentor. I am just a lowly inch worm, inching my way to greatness in Christ. I make no pretensions to greatness among men. That would be ludicrous when I am appalled by the many defects in me that make any pretensions along that line an absurdity. Those who are closer to me – including my wife, that charming other half of this Joe Schmuck – know that I am not some sort of superman bent on making everyone else into a clone of himself. What would God do with a crazy gaggle of egomaniacal Joe Schmucks frantically running around in circles? What glory would there be to His name?

We are all riddled with faults. That is why we are just inchin' along, one wriggle at a time. It may be slow, but it is progress. We are slow creatures in whom God has seen (what only He could see) a potential for greatness in Christ. But, hold it a second, before you assume that halo you conjured up at the mention of our potential greatness. Sure, there was a greatness that would have been ours by virtue of being, in Adam, the literal sons of God, but it was bent all out of shape in Eden. All God really sees in us at this time is His *memory* of an innate goodness that would have led on to greatness. We have nothing other than the gracious memory of God who sees in us what is not literally there. Chalk that up to grace, pure and simple.

So here we are, a motley group of good-for-nothings who don't know enough to latch on tight to God until He blesses us with the true blessings from on high. The true blessings, of course, are the invaluable promised spiritual blessings. It is good to have “things,” but things don't follow you into the afterlife. Things don't wash away sins; they don't comfort a broken heart. Things don't do any of the “things” that really count. We have to get it into our thick skulls that God wants us – *the entirety of each of us* – and in return He will freely give us all of Himself.

That's why I am hanging around in this life so long: I am charged with reminding you, as well as my own bumbling self, there is more to life than material substance, which will effectively die with our passing. I firmly intend to keep that charge. I will pester you and goad myself until we – you and I – give our all to Christ.

Life Is a Balancing Act

The believer in Christ lives with his head in the clouds while his feet are still on earth. It is a necessary situation; in fact it is a difficult one that nevertheless we can deal with in a positive way. The difficulty comes when the believer forgets one of two facts, either that he is still a part of this world or that his head is necessarily in the clouds. Having his head in the clouds means that he is a citizen of the Kingdom of God. We all know what having his feet on earth means. It indicates he has to live in this world. Forgive me a little levity here: We believers are “mugwumps.” A mugwump is a bird that sits on a fence with its mug on one side and its wump on the other. We are indeed mugwumps. (When you have ceased your uproarious laughter, I will continue.)

No one can successfully try to live an entirely spiritual life. You can see why this is impossible when you remember that our bodies are flesh and blood and need attention in order to keep them (our own selves) alive and functioning. The preresurrection Jesus was a good example of a successful balancing act. There was never a man more conscious of His spiritual side than Jesus, yet He fed the body, rested it when He was tired, traveled from one city to another by the very human expedient of walking. He could have willed Himself to be in any place He chose at any time, just as He could have called for legions of angels to rescue Him from His ordeal in Gethsemane and on Calvary – but He did neither. He was fully human as well as fully divine and He accepted the limitations of His humanness as we all have to do. When we refuse to accept our human limits, we get into a confused state of mind and are left with an ineffective ministry.

We need a combination of pragmatism and spirituality. A pragmatist sees things the way they actually are. He refuses to see them the way he wants to see them as that would be mere wishful thinking. At first this would seem to clash with faith, which belongs to our spiritual side. Faith without practicality (pragmatism) sees things the way we

want to see them. But there is no clash if faith acknowledges the way things are and then declares, by faith, the way things are going to be, that is, as God wills for them to be. Any other so-called faith is merely wishful thinking, and God does not operate in the sphere of wishful thinking.

Wishful thinking refuses to see the actual situation. It says, through lips trembling with fear, “There is no danger, there is no danger...” God cannot accept that. Why would He rescue you if there is no situation from which to be delivered? What glory would accrue to God? When there is a real danger to the child of God, God takes particular delight in snatching him out of the danger. Read your Bible; it is full of perilous situations from which God delivered the person of faith.

But, as always, we have to come back to reality, and the reality is that we live in a sin-cursed life and God will not always deliver us. No biblical hero ever lived a life devoid of evil situations and distress of some sort. These are part and parcel of life in this world. It has never been God’s intention that we should go skipping through this mortal existence without some pain, some opposition. As I have so often said, there are various reasons for the things we suffer. Without boring you with repeating the reasons, I will mention only one of them, the need for purging us and making us what God wants us to be.

What will we do, then – shall we be overbalanced one way or the other? Shall we opt to live a life devoted only to the pleasures of this world or shall we pretend we are not in this world and attempt to live solely in the heavenly realms? Wisdom dictates that we do neither of these. Wisdom tells us to give what attention we should to the things of this life while we are walking close by the side of Jesus. Wisdom decrees that we should set our affections on things of heaven and not on the pleasures of this life. This does not mean we have to forego all worldly pleasures, but where and when they hurt our spiritual side, the pleasures of this world will have to be denied.

It is not a light task to successfully balance the world on one side and the life of the spirit on the other, but it can be done. We only have to remember where our priorities lie, which is “What does Christ want me to do?” Our priorities should never be the things of this world.

