



Balancing Life's Challenges Bible study

Opening: Sing "Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me" (verses 1-3) LSB 722, LW 512

Prayer: Lord, we come before You with humble hearts, and we ask that Your Presence be here with us. You are our life source, and You promise that Your Word will do what You send it to do. Work in us now as we contemplate life's balancing act, the necessity of balancing time spent with You with the demands of life here on this earth. We ask that You work in us a cheerful heart to serve others that they may see You in all that we do. In our Savior Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Balancing Acts Of Two Women

Jane is in her mid-fifties and has been the main caretaker for her mom for 23 years. Her mom now requires more care, and her dad needs help to remember to take his medications and to take care of their finances. They reside on a farm and raise beef cattle. Jane also works in town three and a half days a week in a work environment that can be volatile. She has sacrificed many of her own needs to care for her parents. She lives exhausted most of the time, but her love for her parents and for her Lord spurs her on each day.

What does this woman have to balance in her life?

Jane is caring for her parents along with needs of running the farm and her own job. Jane also needs to care for herself and get adequate rest.

Like Jane, Brenda is also a caretaker for her mom who has dealt for decades with difficulties resulting from a severe stroke. Two of her adult children face challenging marriages and the third is angry with her because she did not join her at an important doctor's appointment for her daughter. In addition, her house needs to be cleaned, the laundry basket is overflowing, the garden needs to be weeded, and produce must be canned. Her children and grandchildren have school activities that she wants to attend, and she wants to make time to teach them God's Word. Brenda's husband is a pastor who has led five funerals in the past three weeks and he definitely needs her support and encouragement as he cares for grieving family members. She also serves the Lord in many ways in her congregation, including making compassionate care visits to families. The families she visits are dealing with a variety of losses. What does this woman have to balance in her life?

Brenda is a major part of her children's and now grandchildren's care. She supports her husband in his ministry as well as the members of their congregation. Again, Brenda needs to take time to care for herself.

Each of these women face different challenges. What about you? Jot down some challenges and situations which you are currently trying to balance in your life. If you feel comfortable, share these with your group.

Answers will obviously vary, you may want to take note of these to use as prayer requests at the end of your study.

How does balancing these challenges make you feel physically and emotionally?

Be aware of women who may feel helpless. You may encourage them to talk to your pastor or a counselor. God has put people in vocations to help us work through our challenges. It is good to utilize their abilities and knowledge.

How have these challenges affected your walk with God?

Be ready for women to share stories of being closer to the Lord and others who may have felt a distance from Him.

We Live Lives Of Busyness

We live crazy, busy lives filled with others' needs and desires, our own needs and preferences, church and community needs and opportunities, ministry choices and challenges, political turmoil, and the list goes on. When the busyness gets out of hand, we feel frazzled, trapped, fatigued, and even ineffective. We may lose sight and control of what we believe should be priorities in our lives. Our mental, spiritual and physical health may even decline and suffer. How in control of your schedule are you?

Answers will vary.

At this time, are you able to balance your priorities? Why or why not?

Allow for sharing, but also keep conversations positive so that your group is building each other up in faith.

Voluntary Commitments

Some "demands" of life are voluntary. We choose to serve in areas we enjoy, with the gifts God has lavished upon us. What opportunities are you involved in by choice? List them and share with your group. If service in these areas is fulfilling for you, tell your group why.

Answers will vary

Uninvited Invasions

At other times, life's challenges invade our lives uninvited. Death, an incurable disease, health issues, a financial crisis, a divorce, strained relationships, a geographical move, and other life changes force us to serve in new and demanding ways. Which involuntary realities/demands in life are affecting you negatively, and why?

Answers will vary.

It's not easy to balance the challenges in our lives so that we can keep our most important priorities front and center. All of us have our own ideas and goals with regards to how we want to live and serve. All of us are also faced with the unexpected. Our life in service to others in God's kingdom is just as valid and necessary as our spending time in God's Word and in prayer. Many other facets of our lives including taking care of our families and homes and working at jobs outside the home are also a part of Christian living. Instead of a matter of what ought to be done, the issue becomes, what is possible? What are our prime responsibilities and what are our limitations?

God Helps Us Keep Our Balance

In His Word, God offers us cautions and directions so that we can balance life's challenges in ways that glorify Him.

Read **Matthew 13:15a** and **Galatians 5:16–21**. What can happen to us when balancing life's challenges disconnects us from our life source, Jesus?

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed,

Galatians 5:16-21 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It is easy to become bleary eyed in a world with so many distractions. Our eyes lose focus on our Lord, our ears can't hear what is truly important, and our hearts are disconnected from what truly matters when we desire worldly items and put our Lord second.

Read **Exodus 20:1-8**. How do God's first three commandments guide us as we balance life's challenges?

Exodus 20:1-8

1 And God spoke all these words, saying, **2** "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **3** "You shall have no other gods before me. **4** "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **5** You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. **7** "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. **8** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

In each of the first three commandments we are told to put God first in our lives. Not only as our only God, but also as we speak, act, and set aside time to learn from Him and be in His Word.

According to the Scripture references below, what promises does God give us to encourage and help us in our daily balancing acts?

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

God will not only be with us always, but also give us strength. He strengthens and upholds us in His hand as we live our lives as His children.

Isaiah 43:1–3a

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. **3** For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

We are called and redeemed by the Holy One of Israel. He has called us by name; that means He knows each and every one of us. He will be with us in all things. Remember that our temporal problems are in God's hand and our eternal life is God's plan.

Philippians 4:6–7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

God will give us peace in all things so that we need not be anxious. He guards us; body and soul and gives peace that is more than what anyone or anything else can give.

Which of these promises encourage you and give you hope? Why?

Answers will vary. Perhaps encourage women to write out a verse on an index card to keep handy in the coming weeks.

Relief, Rescue, And Redemption

We need not be knocked off balance by life's challenges, invasions and busyness. God gives us His Word as well as His means of grace (Holy Baptism, Holy Communion) to keep our focus on Him. As you seek to balance the challenges in your life, how can each of these truths from God's Word keep your focus on God and on His gracious will and work for you despite your missteps?

Psalms 37:3–8:

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. **4** Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. **5** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. **6** He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. **7** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! **8** Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

When we seek to do God's will and serve Him and His people, His will is evident to us. We can be patient as we watch for God to be glorified as we work according to His direction; refraining from anger, worry, and wrath.

Matthew 28:20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus is with us always, until we meet Him face to face in Heaven. Don't forget that we are God's baptized children. While we are to teach, we also have been taught of the love of Christ.

John 6:53-58

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will

live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

Through Holy Communion our sins are forgiven and we abide with Christ. By His forgiveness we are His. In the Lord’s Supper we are also reminded of the unity we have with our fellow believers in Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Even the small things we do each day can be done to glorify our Lord.

Titus 3:5–7

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

While we know that God prepares work for us to do, (**Ephesians 2:10**), we also know that we are saved by grace, not by our works. We are heirs of eternal life with Christ.

Read Romans 8:31–32, 35–38.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

Whatever challenges may come your way, on what can you be certain when you trust in Jesus as your risen Lord and Savior? There will be tribulation and troubles, but none can get in the way of Christ loving us. Nothing will stop Christ from making us His.

Look back at the challenges you listed at the beginning of this study. What truths from the Bible, that you’ve explored today, could you remember and share with women to help them balance the challenges they face?

Remind women that nowhere in the Bible does God say our lives will be easy when we trust in Him. In fact, Scripture does tell us that there will be trials and troubles. What Scripture does tell us over and over is that He will always be with us and that no matter what troubles come our way, God will keep us in His hand.

God, in His grace for us in Christ Jesus, enables and empowers us to learn, practice, and change. This does not depend upon our resolve. Instead, it is sealed in the redemptive work of Jesus. What a wondrous gift He gives us! May the Holy Spirit continue to work in you to do God’s will.

Closing Prayer: Merciful God, Help us to make You our priority, even in the midst of life’s busyness. Help us daily to set aside time to read Your Scriptures and to pour out our hearts to

You in prayer. Empower us, by Your Holy Spirit, to believe Your promises and to carry out Your commands. Work in us a willingness to share Jesus with our family, our neighbors, our community, and our world. We pray all this in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen

Sing: “Fight the Good Fight,” (verses 1-4) LSB 664, TLH 447, LW 299

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