

Week 1 Balanced Life

Social

Last week we talked about a life balance, some of you may remember the see saw and the wobble wheel. Finding a balance is one thing, recognising that each of us have different balance points because of the way God has made us is another thing.

Each of us are gifted differently, each of us have different personality types, we have different levels of intellect and different interests. All of these things mean that we need to find our balance individually. There is probably no generic balance point.

Having said that, we are all different social creatures. And today we will look at finding a social balance. Finding a social balance has the potential to positively effect out whole of life balance points.

We are social beings. It is part of our balance and our sociality needs to be balanced.

Let me be blunt about this up front. How we balance our social life has a lot to do with our effectiveness in ministry, mission and witness.

Our perspective as Christians changes how we live our life because of our requirement to be obedient to Christ's calling of sharing the message of Jesus with people.

1. Your witness

Listen to this verse.

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

How do we keep a balance on our social lives when we are called to tell people about Jesus or defend our faith as this verse says? The danger is becoming bible bashers and alienating anyone in listening range.

Yep, so thus we need to be balanced.

Notice in the verse it says " anyone who asks"

It doesn't say hound people, tell them how to live, criticise their life style choices. It says:

"Make a defense to anyone who asks."

The essence of the verse is you say your bit because someone asks yep but also notice

to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you

In other words it is what they see in you that creates the desire to ask the question what is different in you.

What is different in us socially – we have a sociality within us between God and us.

1 John 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

It is this relationship that makes us socially different.

2. Your activities

How we do things is perceived by others. That means it affects the social structure between us. How we live is a reflection of our relationship to Jesus. And as we have said, that at some stage needs to be explained to people but how does that out play in real life? How do we live differently?

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

³² Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,

³³ just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

Here is a template for life and social interaction.

Notice.

a. Do all for God's glory. V31

b. Give no offense and notice it is to Jews and Gentiles – that means everyone. V32

c. Imitate Paul tries to please everyone in what he does. V33

d. Not for my good but theirs. V33

Do we really get this? Reality is even in the church we want what we want. IN many ways churches are so big on grace that they forget the social graces. So big on the expectation that we will be forgiven that we forget to do right by our fellow church attenders.

Where does this leave us? Sometimes our social expressions in church are so far removed from the reality of the world that we are viewed as if we are on another planet.

Barna Research Group suggest that "Church has its own language, its own music, its own social expressions to a point where Church goes no longer can identify with normal social settings and it has become impossible for non church people to integrate with a church outside of a miracle from God."

That is a huge statement. And it is in conclusion to years or research into church and church health in USA, Britain, Canada and Australia.

Barna is saying we have become our own little world and our social expectations have changed to a point that we are irrelevant. In another part of the research he says that we have even become irrelevant to ourselves. That takes some more unpacking and is for another day.

Listen to what Paul says.

Romans 14:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

If you cause someone else grief – its no longer love. If what you do causes someone else grief – you demonstrate that you don't care for them. Tough words.

3. Your abilities

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;

⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Notice:

"Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God expects his light to shine socially!!!!

Also notice it aint gonna be easy!

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;

⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

God uses our abilities and our interests as social launches.

Eg Cars, racing, this week. Matt is up on the mountain working. He can talk to all the guys in the pits and garages why? His ability to fix cars, and his interest in motor racing. His light shines in the darkness this weekend.

4. Your actions

In some ways this concept pulls things together from the rest.

1 Samuel 2:3 (ESV)

³ Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

People socially look at what you do to make their value judgement on whether your expressed Christianity is valid.

What that means is:

If you live for Christ it will come out in the way you live your life.

5. Your associations.

Now in finishing up I want to just add one more practical thing.

All of us have people we don't get on with. That's ok. Sometimes we have what I call "Irregular People." People we have a personality clash with. While this verse is specifically about staying away from people who do wrong, I think we need to be realistic and if we don't get on. Don't join that bible study together, don't be involved in that committee together, don't hang together too much.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

¹⁴ If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

¹⁵ Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

It's ok sometimes to realise we have different personalities. (EG Myers Briggs and Bel Air Baptist Leadership)

Also we can treat everyone equal – it's not possible. Jesus didn't so why do we think we can?

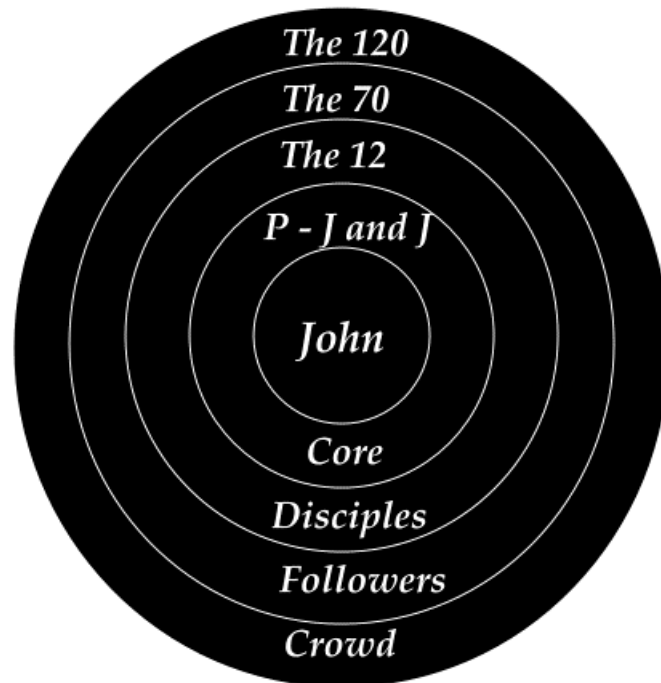
Jesus worked with crowds huge crowds, The bible says at times he 120 or 70 followers,

BUT

He picked 12

And realistically was closer to 3. (Peter, James and John)

AND probably very close to 1 (John)



Ok here is a diagram that explains that. Some of you may disagree, but it also may give you and understanding of my thought processes and how I understand the church sociality.

Is there at template for our social understanding here? Yep I think so. I think it releases us to focus on who we can. Some of us are good at crowds others good at one on one. That's ok.

Anyway, enough for today.