

Title: Is There Balance In Your Life?

Author: Allen Dvorak

File Name: balance.txt

Helping young people learn to fish is fun. Watching them catch fish is even more fun. It is difficult, however, sometimes to give clear instructions to the novice fisherman. *"Reel in your line pretty fast, but not too quickly. If you feel a bite, don't pull on the line immediately or you will pull the hook right out of his mouth, unless, of course, it's a 'bait stealer.'* Don't wait too long to jerk the line or else the fish will swallow the hook. When you are reeling in the fish, don't put too much tension on the line or it might break, but keep the line pretty taut or else the fish will throw the hook. When you take the hook out of the fish's mouth, hold the fish firmly to avoid getting 'finned,' but don't squeeze the fish too much or you may hurt him."

After getting such "precise" instructions, some folks might be tempted to say, "Leave me alone and let me make a mess of it by myself." Actually, it's not the fault of the one giving instructions. Fishing is often knowing just how much pressure to use, how much time to wait, etc. Like fishing, so much of life involves observing a balance between two extremes--not too hard, not too soft, not too fast, not too slow, etc. And it's frequently "not too easy" to describe the precise balance which should be maintained!

Take, for instance, the matter of parenting. Parents are instructed to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4b). Children must be taught to respect the authority of their parents, but parents have to decide how to exercise their authority. Parents can be dictatorial and overly rigid in their relationship with their children or they can be too permissive with their children. Being unreasonable with children will result in either rebellion or a broken spirit, but permissiveness produces children who lack self-discipline, i.e., disrespectful, spoiled brats used to having their own way about everything. Somewhere between these two extremes is the best course.

A balanced attitude toward material things can be hard to find and maintain. Some folks worry about material things; others fail to pay enough attention to providing for themselves. One extreme leads to covetousness (Luke 12:13-15) or faithless anxiety (Matthew 6:24-34). The other extreme amounts to irresponsibility and, in some cases, laziness (1 Thessalonians 4:10a-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12). The "workaholic" has no sense of balance, but then neither does the sluggard! We must strike a balance between work and leisure.

The experienced fisherman knows when the bait is being retrieved too fast or too slow. He knows how long to wait before setting the hook when he feels a bite and how "hard" to fight the fish when reeling it toward the boat. He knows just how firmly to hold that fish to get the hook out and yet not kill the fish. He knows all these things because he has fished for a long time. Chances are good that he lost quite a few fish as he learned the proper balance in his efforts. Experience is a good teacher, but a hard one for she gives the test first and the lesson afterward. We are fortunate because we don't have to depend on experience in every matter. The Word of God helps us to strike the proper balance in life by setting forth principles and instructions which enable us to avoid costly extremes. Of course, we might not apply these principles perfectly, but to the extent that we use them in our lives we will avoid much of the suffering caused by a lack of balance in life.