

14. Work-Family Balance



As this Fathering in 15TM lesson explains, as fathers we are frequently told that a good Dad works hard to provide for the financial needs his family, and we are also told that we need to be involved with our family and that takes a lot of time. There is nothing wrong with either of these goals – our wives and our children need both of them from us. On the surface these goals seem to be working against each other, so we have to find some sort of “balance” between them. We should ask if God’s Word, the Bible, can help us work this out. How does God see all of this? Are there godly principles that we can apply as we try to work through this “conflict”? There are. Let’s look at some of these principles.

First, we must remember and believe that God is in complete control of not just the entire universe, but also the smallest of details of our individual lives. Along with that he has an infinite love for each of us. In combination those two facts tells us that we do not have to be anxious about anything, but sometimes that is hard to remember! In a passage in the Bible that many people refer to as the “Sermon on the Mount”, Jesus himself said the following:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
Matthew 6:25-26

There’s a second principle we can learn from this passage. Notice that God promises to supply all of our needs, he doesn’t promise to supply all of our wants. As a human father you know that some of the things your child wants are not what they need, and may not even be what is best for them. Just as they should find comfort in knowing that you as their earthly father will do what is best for them, we can find comfort in knowing that God is doing what is best for us. God may be asking us to give up some of our wants because he knows we need to redirect some of our time and energy to our family. Notice that Jesus refers to God as our “heavenly Father”. He looks after you and your family as a loving father, just as you look after your family!

Third, we must remember that one of the main ways that God wants to meet our needs is through our work, and that he wants us to do our work in a responsible way. In the third chapter of the book of Colossians in the Bible it says:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

We tend to think of our jobs simply as a way to earn money to buy the things we need to live, but this principle teaches us that our primary motivation for doing our jobs well should be because that is what God wants us to do. We tend to think that we are working for ourselves and our families, but instead our attitude should be that we are responding to the God who loves us so very much! We’ll be looking at this more closely in the next lesson on Managing Money.

Finally, when we realize that God will meet our needs then we will be more willing and able to focus on the other needs of our family; that is, being a father that is actively involved with his wife and family. We need to realize that our wives and our children need us, even more than they need our money. And when we give of ourselves to our family we will be able to lean on God’s promise from Psalm 128, which is:

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord.
Psalm 128:3-4

Questions for thought and discussion:

- a. Take a moment to think about the difference between needs and wants. What are some examples in your own life of things that you really want but, if you are honest, you can live without?
- b. Think again about some of ways you answered the previous question. What might be some benefits of doing without those things? For instance, would you save money or time that is better spent in other ways, or on the needs of your family?
- c. What is your attitude toward your work? Do you think of it as God's way of providing for the needs of you and your family? Do you see that doing your work in a responsible way is a way of thanking Him for all that He has given you?
- d. Do you realize that what your wife/partner and children need most from you is you? Are there adjustments you can make in your work responsibilities to make more time for your family?