

Balancing Work and Home Life

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Introduction

I was born and raised just a few miles away in La Porte. My family has many connections with Valparaiso University.

Grandma Burger	B.A. in Music Education	ca. 1933
Uncle Donald Schaal	B.S. in Business Administration	ca. 1947
Uncle Chuck Burger	B.S. in Business Administration	1962
Dad	B.S. in Business Administration	1967
Mom	B.A. in Elementary Education	1967
Aunt Betty Schaeffer	B.A. in Elementary Education	1969

I earned my bachelor's degree in 1991 at Rose-Hulman with Professor Tougaw and studied Computer Science and Mathematics. After I graduated, I got married and worked for a year as a systems programmer at Bristol-Myers Squibb while my wife finished her degree in nursing at the University of Evansville. From there I went to Indiana University and earned a PhD in Computer Science $4\frac{1}{2}$ years and 2 daughters later. Since then we have lived in Indianapolis and have expanded to four daughters. The girls are hoping that the baby due March 22 is another sister, but we don't know yet.

For almost 7 years I've worked for SAGIAN, the platform development center of Beckman Coulter. We develop innovative robotic systems to automate certain activities of pharmaceutical laboratories. I write software that schedules and manages the interactions among the various machines. The management is outstanding and understands balance quite well.

Q: How many of you are seniors? juniors? sophomores? freshmen?

Q: What do you want to do when you graduate?

Q: How many of you are married now or would like to get married some day?

Thank you for coming today. Your interest in non-technical issues demonstrates you already understand there's much more to life than work.

“Valparaiso University, a private institution of higher learning distinguished by its Lutheran heritage of scholarship, freedom, and faith, provides strong programs of liberal and professional studies well grounded in the arts and sciences by a faculty dedicated to challenging teaching and care for the individual in a residential setting where its students can develop as whole persons, motivated and prepared to serve both church and society.”

What is Balance?

balance to bring into harmony or proportion, to bring to a state or position of equipoise (a state of equilibrium).

equilibrium 1. a state of adjustment between opposing forces or divergent influences or elements. 2. a state of balance between opposing forces or actions that is either static (as in a body acted on by forces whose resultant is zero) or dynamic (as in a reversible chemical reaction when the velocities in both directions are equal).

Balance is always measured with respect to something. For static equilibrium, balance is measured with respect to the net force.

Q: We must balance work & home life with respect to something. What is it? Or how can we measure how balanced our life is?

A: Balance depends on what's important in life. What's your purpose?

Purpose in Life

Q: What does our culture say is important in life?

A: Narcissism or egoism, love of self

A: Health, exercise, love of body

A: Being the master of your own destiny

Q: What is one of the 3 or 4 things that matter most to you in life?

A: Loving my wife as myself, loving & raising my children to love God & others, working with integrity to help others

College is an excellent time to think about the big questions that are often crowded out by the busyness of everyday life.

Who am I? Why am I here? Who has the right to tell me how to live my life? What legacy do I want to leave? What would I want my tombstone to say?

In engineering and science, you study the immutable physical laws of the universe God created. God also created the immutable spiritual laws of the universe, and you can study them in His Word, the Bible. Consequently, there is great harmony between science and the Bible.

Around 935 BC, wise King Solomon of Israel set out to find the meaning of life and recorded his findings for us in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Q: Have any of you have read Ecclesiastes?

Q: What are some things he tried?

A: wisdom & knowledge

Eccl. 1:18: "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."

The more we learn, the more we see the fallenness of our world because of sin, and that brings grief.

A: pleasure, laughter, wine

A: building houses, amassing wealth

Eccl. 2:10f: “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”

Eccl. 2:24-26: “A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”

We cannot find the purpose in life within ourselves, despite what our culture would have us believe. We must find our purpose outside of ourselves, in our Creator.

Jesus says in Matthew 10:39: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Because He is the Son of God, Jesus had the right to be served. But instead of being selfish, He demonstrated perfect selflessness. In Matt. 20:26b-28 He says: “[W]hoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is “What is the chief end of man?”

Answer: “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

Matt. 22:36-39: “‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Micah 6:8: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Work Life: Vocation

Q: What are some reasons we work?

A: To help others, to provide for our family, to enjoy solving problems

Dangers: (1) to think work is a necessary evil, and (2) to think work is the only important thing in life.

Vocation comes from Latin *vocare* (to call). Work is good and is a calling from God.

Even before sin entered into the world, God called man to work.

Gen 2:15: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

“The mission of the College of Engineering is to educate qualified and motivated individuals in a strong undergraduate environment who, upon graduation, are prepared for lifelong learning and the pursuit of professional excellence by ethically and creatively applying scientific knowledge to benefit society.”

Work is satisfying because I love to work on tough technical challenges whose solution will help others.

SAGIAN sells automated systems to pharmaceutical companies. The first step in developing a new drug is called drug discovery. Drug discovery labs screen new drug candidates against 100,000+ compounds. This is mind-numbing work for humans but no problem for robots. Scientists use software I write to explain the assay or experiment they want to run on each compound. Software schedules the same experiment on all compounds and interleaves the operations for efficiency.

We also make robotic pipettors that move liquid from one well or test tube to another. Various tests and experiments can be automated. The results of these tests are used to develop better drugs & treatments that help people.

Although work is good, work is not the only important thing in life.

Sabbath principle

We are not designed to work all the time. Rest is important, so important, in fact, that God included it in the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:8-11: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Rest is also important for machines. At Beckman Coulter we build machines that run experiments all night long. The mean time between failures for these systems is in the hundreds of hours. Therefore giving these machines rest for regular maintenance is essential for reliable, efficient operation.

Stephen Covey gives the example of a man who hurried to cut down a tree. After a while, his saw blade became quite dull. Rather than taking the time to sharpen it, he presses on. Had he taken time to sharpen it, he would have finished faster.

Taking regular time away from work actually helps us work better.

Q: What is one thing you do to sharpen your saw?

A: Reading a good book, playing with the children, visiting a museum, singing in choir

My experience has proven this principle time after time. I work on a problem all day but can't figure it out. At 5:00pm I leave for home. Many times I'll have the answer during my 5-minute drive. Other times the answer comes in the shower or while I'm sleeping. Unfortunately I still haven't learned that sometimes the best way to solve a problem at work is to step away from it for a while.

What's great is that my management understands the importance of rest and encourages us not to work overtime, knowing that we do our best work when we have regular time away. On the other hand they expect us to work diligently when we're there and not squander the time gossiping or surfing the web or thinking about other things.

Another application of the Sabbath principle is ongoing education, which the College of Engineering's mission statement called "lifelong learning." I spend a considerable amount of time reading about what others are doing in my field and exploring new technologies and algorithms. Sometimes there is a clear application to the projects at work; sometimes there isn't. Regardless, the process helps the company, and management encourages this type of ongoing education and research.

When you are interviewing for a job, ask questions about the number of hours worked, how much time they spend learning new things, and how management looks at these issues. The answers you hear may surprise you.

In 1996 I interviewed at a company in Indianapolis with a good reputation in the software field. After asking questions about working hours and expectations, I learned that the employees there didn't like the long hours and poor management.

Expectations are very important. Professor Andy Mech at Rose-Hulman warned me not to turn on my afterburners when I started work at Bristol-Myers Squibb. He warned that if I worked long hours, the company would come to expect that I do the same all the time.

At Bristol-Myers Squibb in Evansville, I shared an office with a man who fell prey to both dangers about work. He spent long hours at the office, working evenings and weekends at the expense of time with his wife and young children. At the same time he longed to be free from the tyranny of work. After a couple years, he struck it rich in the stock market and quit his job. Was he happy & satisfied? No. His adultery against his wife led to divorce and great heart break, and he lived in great misery.

Company Man

This article was written by Gary Thomas and appeared in the August 27, 1994, issue of World magazine.

"It was like he never existed."

I looked at Ernie as he spoke these words and saw the gentle grace of a life well lived. He had worked hard to support his family, and now in retirement he was putting his energies into building up the men's ministry of his church.

One of the reasons Ernie chose early retirement occurred just a few years before he left. He worked for one of the most stable and famous companies in the United States. Until just a few years ago, if you were able to land a job with this company, you pretty much figured you had a job for life. They paid well, but demanded a lot out of their workers in return.

"We gave our lives to the company," Ernie said. "They took care of us, but they expected us to organize our lives around our work. If we ever said, 'No,' even once, we'd be taken off the track of promotion and kept in a vocational eddy for the rest of our careers. So we got to work early and stayed late."

One of Ernie's coworkers was a younger man in his late 40s. He had worked side by side with Ernie for years. One morning he was late for work. Ernie assumed he was sick until a call came in from his wife at 8:30.

The coworker was dead. His heart has stopped while he was eating breakfast.

"His replacement was chosen that afternoon," Ernie said, "and was on the job early the next morning—less than 24 hours after the man he replaced was dead. We spent about 15 minutes giving him a quick orientation, but he was familiar with what we were doing so it didn't take much."

Ernie paused, gazing out the windshield before he went on. "None of the other coworkers went to the guy's funeral. They knew the guy but didn't know his family, so they figured it

didn't matter much. After he was buried, it was like he never existed. He gave his entire life to the company, but the company didn't miss a step once he died."

Ernie's words remained with me.

The next day I walked in my front door, heard the familiar cry, "Papa!" and soon felt three little pairs of arms around my legs and waist. We went for a walk and Graham, my four-year-old son, held my wife's hand and mine at the same time, proudly proclaiming, "Now the whole family's together!" He kissed my wife's hand and then kissed mine.

As I watched my two-year-old daughter look back and point at me and say, "Papa's home!" Ernie's words, "It's like he never existed," hovered over me. I thought of my friend who had recently been laid off.

"My first thoughts were, they can't do this to me," he had told me. "I had given so much to them. I had worked long hours, traveled a lot, and frequently came home too tired to play with my kids or talk with my wife, and now they send me off with two month's pay and a pat on the back."

That night I was staring at a piece of paper. It was a notice of the "Tour of the World Figure Skating Champions." It had been a busy week and I needed extra time over the weekend to prepare for a Sunday School class and work on a book—not to mention catch up on my desk at work after having been away traveling.

But I kept looking at the notice. My oldest daughter loved figure skating. She had watched Nancy Kerrigan on television, and when she heard Nancy was coming to town, her whole face lit up. The work I had scheduled to do tomorrow would be swallowed up in time. A year from now, it would be like that day never existed.

I called the number. They had exactly two seats left. I thought of Allison's surprise and I pictured her delight as the two of us watched the skaters fill the rink. I could imagine her a year from now, saying, "Papa, remember that time you took me to see the skaters?"

I could still feel the three-foot-high hugs that had been planted around my waist earlier that day, and I thought of what really mattered. The last thing I ever wanted my kids to say was, "It was like he never existed."

I got off the phone and headed upstairs to give my daughter the good news. As I ascended the steps, I realized it would take more than 24 hours for me to be replaced at work, but after a few months, what would be left of my efforts? A few training manuals, some audio-cassettes, and that would be it. They'd find a replacement who might very well do the job so well that my passing could be seen, in retrospect, as a net gain.

I passed my son's room and saw the light in his eyes when he caught sight of me. I looked over my youngest daughter's crib and watched her suck her thumb and curl her hair with her finger. I then knelt down in front of Allison's bed and made an investment that will be with me for eternity.

Home Life

We are called to serve others at home, at church, and in our community as well as at work. This university's mission statement ends with "... motivated and prepared to serve both church and society."

Q: How many of you men are fathers now or would like to become fathers some day?

Q: How many of you women are mothers now or would like to become mothers some day?

Training the next generation is a very important and noble calling, especially for mothers. Listen to a portion of "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" by William Ross Wallace (1819-1881):

Woman, how divine your mission
Here upon our natal sod!
Keep, oh, keep the young heart open
Always to the breath of God!
All true trophies of the ages
Are from mother-love impearled;
For the hand that rocks the cradle
Is the hand that rules the world.

Rebecca Merrill writes in *First Things First*:

I'm often troubled by the stigma attached to women who choose to focus their time and effort primarily on motherhood. It is as if society somehow deems it less valuable to raise competent children than to raise the profit on a company's product line.

A woman who chooses to focus on motherhood, and does so out of a clear sense of her own personal vision, becomes truly energized in her role. She recognizes the value of her efforts in shaping the characters of future leaders in society. And in the process, she develops competence and character to fulfill other roles. Perhaps a second career or another degree are in the plans, but that doesn't distract from the task at hand. It's not a matter of capacity, but of chosen contribution.

There are women who choose motherhood for a season who don't earn the character and competence because they aren't deeply connected to a vision of the role and don't fully apply their creative energy to it. But those who do are empowered to fulfill other roles with excellence.

In *The Thing* (1930), G. K. Chesterton wrote about social reformers who were trying to eliminate the parental function:

But this, like many notions of solid scientific persons, is a wild illusion of the nature of mere moonshine. It is based on that strange new superstition, the idea of infinite resources of organization. It is as if officials grew like grass or bred like rabbits. There is supposed to be an endless supply of salaried persons, and of salaries for them; and they are to undertake all that human beings naturally do for themselves; including the care of children. But men cannot live by taking in each other's baby-linen. They cannot provide a tutor for each citizen; who is to tutor the tutors? Men cannot be educated by machinery; and though there might be a Robot bricklayer or scavenger, there will never be a Robot schoolmaster or governess. The actual effect of this theory is that one harassed person has to look after a hundred children, instead of one normal person looking after a normal number of them. Normally that normal person is urged by a natural force, which costs nothing and does not require a salary; the force of natural affection for his young, which exists even among the animals. If you cut off that natural force, and substitute a paid bureaucracy, you are like a fool who should pay men to turn the wheel of his mill, because he refused to use wind or water which he could get for nothing. You are like a lunatic who should carefully water his garden with a watering-can, while holding up an umbrella to keep off the rain.

When my wife finished her nursing degree, she wanted to use it before having children. She worked for two years in critical care. When God blessed us with children, she felt called to stay home and teach them. She also homeschools the ones who are old enough. She finds the challenge of civilizing and teaching them at home challenging and exciting. She applies her nursing skills and gets to learn many other things along with the children. She may work as a nurse outside the home again once the children are grown, but she is very satisfied and fulfilled right now at home.

Practical Ideas for Balancing

First Things First shows a graph with urgency on the X axis and importance on the Y axis.

Quadrant I Urgent & Important

- Crises
- Pressing problems
- Deadline-driven projects, meetings, preparations

Quadrant II Not Urgent & Important (Quadrant of Quality)

- Preparation
- Prevention
- Planning
- Relationship building
- True re-creation

Quadrant III Urgent & Unimportant (Quadrant of Deception)

- Interruptions, some phone calls
- Some mail, some reports
- Some meetings
- Many proximate, pressing matters
- Many popular activities

Quadrant IV Not Urgent & Unimportant (Quadrant of Waste)

- Trivia, busywork
- Junk mail
- Some phone calls
- Time wasters
- “Escape” activities

The Urgency Addiction

When I ask people, “How are you doing?”, I often hear: “I’m keeping busy.”

From *First Things First*:

Some of us get so used to the adrenaline rush of handling crises that we become dependent on it for a sense of excitement and energy. How does urgency feel? Stressful? Pressured? Tense? Exhausting? Sure. But let’s be honest. It’s also sometimes exhilarating. We feel useful. We feel successful. We feel validated. And we get good at it....

We get a temporary high from solving urgent and important crises. Then when the importance isn’t there, the urgency fix is so powerful we are drawn to do anything urgent, just to stay in

motion. People expect us to be busy, overworked. It's become a status symbol in our society – if we're busy, we're important; if we're not busy, we're almost embarrassed to admit it. Busyness is where we get our security. It's validating, popular, and pleasing. It's also a good excuse for not dealing with the first things in our lives.

The important things change across the different seasons of life. Before we had children, we spent a lot of time serving at church (Sunday School, nursery, choir) and volunteering in the community (4-H, Crisis Pregnancy Center). With small children, we spend a lot of time with them and much less time outside the home. As they become old enough to help, we will train them to serve along with us.

Eccl. 3:1-8: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace."

Example of fitting logs into the bucket.

Schedule the important things first.

Track where your times goes each week. This can be quite humbling.

Conclusion

Balance in life is measured relative to your purpose in life.

Your purpose is life cannot be found in yourself, but in your Creator, to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

Work (vocation) is good, a calling from God to serve others.

Sabbath principle or sharpening the saw: rest is good and essential.

We are also called to serve our families, churches, and communities.

Raising children is a high and noble calling, extremely important for the future of society.

Be careful to do the important things, even though they're not always urgent. Don't do unimportant things that aren't urgent.

Living life with balance based on this noble purpose will leave a great legacy for generations to come.