

A Balanced Life – Introduction
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season. Perhaps you have read this scripture and wondered about its meaning. In each day that we are given, any of these that are mentioned in this scripture may occur. During a 24 hour time period, we may encounter much. Maybe too much sleep, maybe too much work, maybe too much play. For those who have been working with Faith in Action this weekend, you have seen all these things and a lot has happened in a short time period. How do we know how much is too much of one or the other? For the Sundays in August, we are looking at how we can live a balanced life. For the next 3 Sundays, Wesley will share with you more information on each of the 3 areas of a balanced life: next Sunday is Work, then Rest, (I look forward to Wesley preaching on sleep), then Recreation.

Living a balanced life (or unbalanced life) directly affects our attitude. We can be too tired to think, too relaxed to work, or too sleepy to rest. But when we have the right amount of each of these areas, we have the optimal conditions for healthy living. Let's look at simple definitions of these three:

Work is an activity in which one exerts strength or faculties to do or perform something. **a:** sustained physical or mental effort to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result **b:** the labor, task, or duty that is often one's accustomed means of livelihood.

Rest is the ceasing of our labors, and sleep to restore us. It is rest from our usual kinds of intellectual labors. It is setting aside our problems.

Recreation is an activity that is enjoyable, and not undertaken for the purpose of accomplishment. Ceasing to worry. Refreshment of one's mind or body after work through activity that amuses or stimulates; play. Peace and quiet – the absence of hassle and conflict.

Think about what you were taught as a child about eating a balanced meal. You remember you were taught to eat your vegetables, and your protein, make sure you have your dairy each day, and of course a desert would be nice. Living a balanced life is like having a balanced meal, making sure we receive the correct amount of each.

You may remember a time in which you ate too much of one or the other, and it made you sick. Having too much work, or even too much sleep, or even too much play time, can make you sick.

And of course we have differences in how we were raised. Maybe you were taught to eat all on your plate. Do you remember long hours sitting at the table, hoping the food would disappear so you could go and play? Or maybe you were told to just eat as much as you could, and try 3 bites of anything you weren't sure of. When we think about how we learned how much we should eat, we can think about how we learned how much to work and how much to play.

When I was growing up, we were taught that we had to get our work done first. After school, and a snack, we did our homework, and then we could go out to play, which is where we did almost all of our playing-outside.

Last week, I took Tatjana and Manuel to Boliviari Peninsula to see the place where our families beachhouses stood before the devastation of Hurricane Ike. As I stood on the beach, I remembered our many, many camping trips our family took when I was growing up. We would go seining and camp out on the beach, before my parents bought the beach house. We had a pop-up camper and when we arrived, my 2 brothers and sister, and I would each go to the corner of the camper to begin setting it up. We knew that before we could go and play we had to get our work done. In both of these situations, I learned that I had to get my work done before the

recreation could begin. To this day, I live with that work ethic, but as I've gotten older, I realize there is a danger. When we were kids, we had several tasks that were our work. There was an end in sight. Now, what I have discovered, is there is always something else to do. So, I have to give myself permission to stop work, and relax. I can not live with the ideal of "get all your work done and then play," because I would never get to relax. We have to find balance in our life.

Of course the real question is why? Why can't I just hang out all day long and do nothing. Why do I have to work? Or why can't I just work till I fall down? Or why can't I sleep 10-12 hours a day? The most important reason to have a balanced life, is to give God the glory.

God is God, and we are God's servants. And when we live our lives in such a way that is optimal, we say to God, you are in control, and I want to do all that I can in my work, rest, and recreation to be the best that I can be. My responsibility in living a life with God is to be as faithful as I can. Our scripture tells us that there is a season for everything. How do we reflect God's love in our work, in our rest, and in our play? In Faith in Action, this weekend, the youth reflected God's love in the work that was shared at the client's home. And God's love was reflected in the worship, and games that were played when you returned to the church. And you even reflected God's love in your sleep, even though I think you will be trying to find the balance of sleep later today. This week, be aware of how God's love is lived through your life. Are you balanced? Read Ecclesiastes 3:9-15.