

# Questions and Answers



*How do I achieve balance in my life given all the demands on my time?*

When I was serving as the Relief Society president in my singles ward, I felt overwhelmed with all of my responsibilities. I went to a leadership training meeting, admittedly with the wrong attitude. I anticipated being told that there was something more I needed to do. I wasn't sure I could listen to that message because I honestly didn't feel that I could do any more.

The message of the visiting authority that day was very different from what I had expected. He said he wasn't there to tell us one more thing that we needed to do; he was there to tell us to find one *less* thing to do. He encouraged us to look at where we were spending our time and decide which activities were not beneficial. He

told us to cut these things out of our lives and free ourselves up for more meaningful and important things.

A weight was instantly lifted from my shoulders. I felt the Lord was watching over me with His love and knew my thoughts and feelings. I realized that He was aware of the pressures I was under, and to Him, my doing my best was enough.

Alicia Doure, Utah, USA

**Y**ears ago, I heard this quote from President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994): “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.”<sup>1</sup>

I decided to put it to the test. I started to get up before our children to spend time in the scriptures and in prayer. I noticed that I was able to accomplish more during the day. I had more patience and was more able to keep calm. It was also easier for me to recognize the promptings of the Spirit.

My husband and I felt that it was important for our children to be at home in the evenings and that they didn’t need to be running from one activity to another. We told each of them they could be involved in one sport or music activity per year, and they could pick which one. This helped us keep some balance in our family life and spend time at home together.

Carrie Norman, Utah, USA

**W**e face a lot of demands on our time. It is essential that we constantly evaluate how we are using our time. We want to be sure that the activities we choose will help us be obedient to Heavenly Father’s counsel so we can reach our greatest potential and ultimately inherit eternal life.



At times it may be necessary to say no to some obligations. We are counseled not to “run faster than [we have] strength” (Mosiah 4:27). We may want simultaneously to have immaculate homes, hold a position in the school’s parent-teacher organization, spend hours working on our family history, and train for triathlons. However, “to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). It is important that we have the courage to forgo commitments that do not make us better.

As difficult as it can be to say no, we can say yes to a lot of worthwhile things. As we do so, our Heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus Christ will be pleased that we are choosing to use our gift of time wisely.

Chandice A. Richards, Ohio, USA

**I** am a doctoral student and a research assistant in graduate school. I am also a second counselor in a bishopric, a home teacher, and most important, a husband and father. I have learned one key principle in managing my schedule: to have faith in God so He can help me be able to do everything He has asked. It is

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a simple solution, but it requires constant faith.

Sometimes we may be tempted to give up Church callings or personal spiritual development so we can dedicate all of our time to secular work. When I was a teenager, I made a promise to Heavenly Father that I would dedicate my time and talents to build up His kingdom. I have learned that accepting a calling doesn't mean just accepting the title. It also means accepting the responsibilities.

As I keep my commitments to my Heavenly Father, I see blessings in my work and study. Most of the graduate students I know need to dedicate all of their time to their research to attain success. I have found that even though I am not able to give that kind of time because of my other responsibilities, when I put the Lord first, He blesses me to be able to perform well anyway. I am certain that without His help, I would never be able to do what I need to do.

I know that when I seek first the kingdom of God (see 3 Nephi 13:33), He grants me sufficient strength to take care of everything else. Gary Wong, Hong Kong

**I** have come to realize that our lives aren't ever perfectly balanced. There will always

be times when one thing is more important than another. Now that I understand this, I no longer feel burdened by not getting everything done. The following strategies help keep me from feeling overwhelmed:

- I write down the things I need to do. The list often is shorter on paper than it feels swimming around in my mind.
- I don't try to get everything done in a single day. I commit myself to only one major project a day. If it's laundry day, that's the project. If I feel I have enough time and energy to get other things done, I do them, but I don't worry if they need to be put off to another day.
- My husband and I work from a job chart. Our children are too young to be included on the chart at this point, but my husband and I use the chart to track daily and weekly household chores. I like this because it helps me realize the things I regularly do. I also appreciate getting help from my husband on jobs that I often don't have time to complete.
- Finally, I have a night for me. On Tuesday nights, my husband enjoys time with our children while I focus on tasks I wouldn't be able to otherwise. I have used that

time to work on homework for a course I'm taking, to write Christmas letters, or to catch up on journal writing. (We also make sure that my husband gets time for his personal projects, too.)

With these strategies and my change of perspective, I have reduced my stress level. I believe that "doing our best" is really feeling our best about what we do.

Rebecca Shaw, Connecticut, USA

**I**nspired leaders of the Church counsel us to set our priorities based on eternal perspectives.

Elder O. Leslie Stone of the Seventy (1903–86) taught: "Time is one of our most valuable possessions. Use it wisely. Remind yourselves often that things that matter most should not be left to the mercy of things that matter the least."<sup>2</sup>

Some things I try to do regularly include feasting upon the word of God and offering meaningful prayers, as well as getting appropriate exercise, adequate sleep, and proper nutrition. These things take some time, but they develop a physical and spiritual fitness that allow me to accomplish more with the rest of my day than I can without them.

Kenneth Hurst, Alabama, USA

**B**alance has been an important focus for me from the time I was a teenager. During my youthful years of competitive wrestling, I quickly learned that five pounds out of balance could lead to surrendered points.

Since then, I've learned that balance includes health (physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional), service (to God, family, and others), and work. The further I go in life, the more I realize I can do nothing in a balanced way unless I follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. I find I receive clearer directions from the Holy Ghost through regular prayer, meditation, scripture study, listening to the prophets, and attending Church meetings. I have also found that the Holy Ghost eventually leads me to the temple, where I am taught and empowered by truth.

Imbalance in a wrestler is always exposed by greater opposition; if a wrestler can adapt, he can overcome that opposition. As we face opposition in life, we can choose to overcome or succumb.

Jesus Christ overcame the world (see John 16:33). Our victories are limited, but His grace is sufficient for us if we "humble [ourselves] before [Him] . . . and have faith in [Him]" (Ether 12:27). Through faith, repentance, and obedience to Him, we can overcome all opposition. Our feeble and incomplete attempts at balance can be made whole and complete through Him.

Richard Gieseke, Texas, USA

*Editors' note: For more on how students are balancing their time, visit [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org).*

#### NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.
2. O. Leslie Stone, "Making Your Marriage Successful," *Ensign*, May 1978, 57.

## SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions & Answers feature will focus on the following question:

*When people ask me, "Are you a Mormon?" or "Are you a Latter-day Saint?" I'm happy to respond that I am. I'm just not sure what to say next to engage people in a conversation about the gospel. What are some ways I might respond so that I can positively represent the Church?*

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "Are you a Latter-day Saint?" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" on the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by January 20, 2012.



### FINDING PURPOSE AND MEANING

"Not long ago, one of my children said, 'Dad, sometimes I wonder if I will ever make it.' The answer I gave to her is the same as I would give to you if you have had similar feelings. Just do the very best you can each day. Do the basic things and, before you realize it, your life will be full of spiritual understanding that will confirm to you that your Heavenly Father loves you. When a person knows this, then life will be full of purpose and meaning, making balance easier to maintain."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Keeping Life's Demands in Balance," *Ensign*, May 1987, 16.