

# OUT OF BALANCE FAMILIES

By Mike Sciarra

I recently read a series of short articles in USA Today on the Ten Hardest Things to Do in Sports. Things like riding the Tour de France, driving a race car at 200 mph, and hitting a long straight tee shot in golf and hitting a 95-mph fastball. All ten things have one thing in common: They require a degree of balance to accomplish.

How many of us live balanced lives? Most of us are over-stretched, over-committed, over-worked, over-stressed and over-come with all of life's worries and cares and to-do lists. While it is true that we are going overboard in the out-of-balance arena, it is also true that we are less ministry-oriented, less giving, less in the Bible and prayer, less patient, less godly, less inclined towards spiritual growth individually much less with our family members. What is the matter with us? Why can't we just come to Jesus, trust the Weaver of our lives, grow deeper, be balanced and all that jazz? Maybe it's because we keep slipping into the spot reserved only for Jesus. If you are anything like me, the following common issues and corresponding encouragement may be of help.

**ISSUE #1:** We live too-busy lives that lead to bondage, have-tos, obligation and the like, rather than a life of freedom in Christ. We adopt a Pharaoh-driven type of life of making more bricks with less materials. It's an endless circle of frustration. We live frenzied lives that lead to burnout while we could be resting in the work of God.

**THE ENCOURAGEMENT:** We don't have to do what everybody thinks we should do! That doesn't mean we can disengage from involvement and commitment to the body of Christ, but we should want what God wants more than what we or others want. We must please God rather than men. We don't have to be involved in everything! Don't do nothing though. Choose a few good things. Choose your boundaries but also don't worship them. If we are not balanced in this we'll have to deal with the consequences and fallout relationally, physically and spiritually. Rest in the knowledge that God is in control and He knows best. Trust Him to do the work that only He can do. Remember, It is God who is at work in you to will and do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

**ISSUE #2:** Sometimes we live complacent lives that lead to laziness versus one characterized by obedience.

**THE ENCOURAGEMENT:** We don't need to create easier or more comfortable lives to please God. But looking at most of our lives, that's exactly what we are aiming for. We are preoccupied with ourselves. We need to remember that the best is sometimes the most difficult thing for us to do and choose. Easiest isn't always best. The path of least resistance is a snare for many followers of Jesus. What important things in life are easy? It is not easy to engage your family

members in the things of God that lead to spiritual growth. When we are exhausted, its hard to have a family Bible study and prayer time. But living a Deuteronomy 6 kind of life (talking, walking, living, breathing God's presence and goodness with your family) is beneficial. Remember too that none of us are indispensable. God wants to use us, but we are not the only option. God has many tools in His toolbox. He wants us to be faithful and available and obedient. Obey Him and watch what He does!

ISSUE #3: We live performance-oriented lives that lead to unrealistic doing versus the authenticity of realistic being.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT: You don't have to look like the perfect 'Christian' or the perfect Christian family! Be honest with who you are and where you are in your journey of faith and practice. Be the right person, in the right place for the right reasons. Check your motives. Why do you do what you do? Is putting on a show really that necessary? Does it help or hinder your growth in Christ? Families that are honest are in a position to change and grow. As followers of Jesus Christ, we should do anything to please the One we follow. If we want only His pleasure and to perform (in a good sense) for Him, we will be Christian families in process of becoming more like Christ. Who we are will overshadow what we do.

ISSUE #4: We try to find our significance in shallow things versus the peace and joy found in Jesus.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT: There is more to life than what we often experience! We live below God's best. God's best is waiting. It is not for us to manufacture or dictate but to discover. Jesus came to give us abundant life and we chase butterflies, those things that can never truly meet our needs. We find momentary pleasure in the sorriest things that can never really satisfy our needy souls. All the while God waits for us to recognize His hand in our lives. See who you are in Christ! Taste and see that the Lord is good! Jesus is effective! Be a revolutionary that exalts and celebrates the One True God in every sphere of life: in the home, church, community and the world. When we do that, overriding peace and joy will flow abundantly. Our best thought truly will be of Jesus Christ and His presence.

The hardest things to do in the Christian life and in the realm of family discipleship are to simply trust and obey God. We need to allow Him to do what He wants in and through us. Want to live a balanced life? Of course you do. So do I. Lets get off the over-stretched, over-committed, over-worked, over-stressed and over-come train and hop on board with Jesus. As we rest in Him and trust Him with the results, He will make us more ministry-oriented, more giving; more in the Bible and prayer, more patient, more godly, more inclined towards spiritual growth. All in balance. More like Him.