

EDITORIAL

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Guest Editor

Balance

How many times have you been told to “get a balance”? Balance is a word that is used so often in so many circumstances and yet we limit it to a few meanings. Recently, with work changes and church commitments my husband has reminded me to make sure I have a balance and that I don’t get “stressed out”. As a result I decided to investigate balance and how it impacts my life, or better yet, how little I manage to use it in my life. We are instructed to find balance in so many areas of our lives—your work, your life commitments, your eating, your time, your social networking, your exercise—the list is endless!

What is balance exactly? How do you find it? How do you maintain it? These are the questions that I seem to constantly ask myself. In order to get direction on the definition of balance I went to the Oxford dictionary and found the following:

counteracting weight or force, even distribution of weight or amount; stability of body or mind, offset or compare (one thing with or against another); counteract, equal or neutralise weight or importance of; bring into or keep in equilibrium.

I was not surprised to find the definition beginning with weight distribution and the mention of stability; however, I had not linked the meaning of balance to offsetting something or in neutralising the importance of something. To further understand these meanings I went from the dictionary definition to my trusty Collins Thesaurus to find out other words associated with balance:

stabilise, level, steady, offset, match, square, make up for, compensate for, counteract, neutralise, counterbalance, even up, equalise, counterpoise, weigh, parity, fairness, impartiality, remainder, rest, difference, surplus, residue, composure, restraint, self-control, poise, coolness, calmness, strength of mind or will.

This little exercise of stopping my daily rush and actually reading through the definitions and alternative words for balance has made me pursue a deeper and more meaningful understanding of this word. Often we limit our understanding by choosing to only define a word with one meaning. I have had the image of a scale where the weight is distributed evenly to balance the scale and seen this as trying to even out

my work and family life; however, time is never evenly distributed and one or the other “misses” out. This has caused me concern and I have often battled over this issue; however, the alternate words for balance from the thesaurus have settled some things for me.

I can offset things in my life to stabilise what is happening so that I can feel happier. I can develop a fairness of understanding of how and why my time is distributed between my work and family. Balance does not always mean an even distribution, it can also mean the remainder or what is left over. Thinking about this has made me wonder about “the rest”. After the toil of every day, what is left? This residue or surplus is the balance in my life. What am I doing with it and how do I handle it?

Each person has a different time allocation for the things they prioritise. My list of things to balance is different from yours. Also my understanding on the way that I balance these and feel satisfied will be different from your understanding. I was interested to note that other words associated with balance included: composure, restraint, self-control and poise. These are characteristics we try to practise and embed in our children and yet, we often forget that they form part of balance. I must admit that I had never considered coolness, calmness and strength of mind or will as part of the balance needed in my work, exercise, eating, life commitments, time, social networking, etc. But now that I have made these connections these words make perfect sense in understanding the reference to maintaining a balance. I am not sure that I will ever reach the ideal for balance in my life, but being aware, having a better understanding of what is meant by having a balance and making the effort to exercise balance in my life will hopefully make all the difference.

This edition of the journal has a range of articles from various disciplines and hopefully you experience a “balance” in topics. **TEACH**

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[Photography: Stephanie Hattingh]