



THE BALANCED LIFE

Adrenaline & Stress: How long will you last?

God intended a balanced life, but so few of us give it more than a mental acknowledgement. There are profound biochemical and physical impacts on the human body when we just keep pushing. God frees us to live a very different lifestyle.

Matthew 8:23-27 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A gale arose on the lake, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid, you of little faith?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'

For Personal Study

Two runners push ahead in the race, both have trained well and have challenged themselves to their best. One has an advantage. This person understands the importance of building recovery time into their training. Their body attains high output without the damage done by continuous stress. They will be able to sustain their peak performance for the long haul.

God designed us to live in balance physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. During **The Balanced Life** series, we will explore how to intentionally build balance into life and live the life God intends for us. Are you going full tilt all the time? Then you are the runner without the advantage. How do you build in the recovery strategies that ultimately bring your best to your one and only life?

Take a look at your body's natural cycle of stress management:

1. **Alarm:** *Stress triggers an indication of overload, such as a headache. If we reduce the stress, the alarm recedes.*
2. **Activation:** *When we do not reduce the stress the body triggers the "fight or flight" emergency response, including adrenaline. We experience a sense of motivation, speed, energy,*

clarity, strength. God designed this as a short term solution to pressing demands.

3. **Recovery:** *Following an emergency or activation response, our energy is slightly depressed. The body needs additional rest after such activation, rest from the original stress and rest from the activation process. All too often we tune out the need for recovery and try to sustain activation. This is where the damage begins.*

What do you do when stress piles on — Keep pressing through? Late nights at the office? Cancelled vacation days? Scrap those plans with friends to get projects done? You are drowning in adrenaline. You may even be addicted to it. That's the way of our culture summed up in one seductive word: **busy**.

In Archibald Hart's book Adrenaline & Stress, he says "We don't cooperate very well with recovery because we have been taught to feel guilty whenever we indulge it. Also, the lowering of adrenaline during recovery is invariably accompanied by a feeling of depression. And we just don't like feeling depressed — even when it is a natural part of a healthy stress response. The drop in your adrenaline signals a mild depression that aids in disengaging you and forcing you to rest. It is really your friend!"

One of the most fundamental recovery strategies is sleep. How many hours did you sleep last night? What is your typical sleep pattern? Read Matthew 8:23-27. What was Jesus doing while the disciples on the boat stressed out over the storm? He was sleeping! Why wasn't Jesus worrying?

For that matter Jesus had only three short years to carry out his primary mission on earth — the salvation of all people. Why wasn't he working all-nighters?

You may say "well, Jesus is God and he knew what would happen." Yes, and so he has given us faith to apply in this life so that we look beyond the nagging stresses of this world. What needs to change in your perspective so that you would be willing to make decisions to live by God's design? In what ways is God encouraging you to build recovery into your life?

Resources:

The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress, Dr. Archibald Hart, © 1995.

A Passionate Life, Mike Breen & Walt Kallestad, © 2005.

Stress & Your Child, Dr. Archibald Hart, © 2005

Readings & Questions

Monday, Sept. 25th

1 Corinthians 9:24

Ecclesiastes 2:21-23

What rewards do you see in the world that put life out of balance with God's design? What greater rewards (God's perspective) do they interfere with? With what competing rewards do you contend?

Tuesday, Sept. 26th

Gen 2:1-3

Psalm 3:5

In what ways do people avoid "recovery?" How do you build or fail to build recovery into your own life?

Wednesday, Sept. 27th

Psalm 127:1-2

How do you see adrenaline misused in today's society? Do you or a loved one have a problem with habitually pushing past the limits of healthy balance? Why would that be "in vain" from God's perspective?

Thursday, Sept. 28th

1 Peter 5:7

Ephesians 3:16-17

How do worry, anxiety, stress, & fear affect your sleep? What does it mean to not be afraid in the presence of Jesus? Select a verse or a phase to remember as you go to sleep.

Friday, Sept. 29th

Psalm 4:8

Philippians 4:5-7

What needs to change in your perspective so that you would be willing to make decisions to live by God's design? In what ways is God encouraging you to build recovery into your life?

The Balanced Life ...for Families

Discussion Starters

- Opener: How did everyone sleep last night?
- How much sleep do we each need? How much are we getting?
- If someone needs more sleep, how can we help him or her get it?
- Why do you think God made us to need sleep?
- Read Psalm 4:8. How does that make you feel? Try saying it before you sleep.
- What would make bedtime easier?

4-9 year-olds need 10-12 hrs. of sleep

Adults need 8-9 hrs. of sleep

More for Young Kids

- What do you like about going to bed and sleeping? What don't you like?
- What do you like to dream about?
- Who watches over us when we sleep?
- What should be (or is) our bedtime routine? Let's draw the different steps.

1-3 year-olds need 10-13 hrs. of sleep

TEENS...

Do you daydream about sleep but hate going to bed? Many experts say that a teen's internal clock is shifted later than younger kids or even adults. But while going to bed later may feel natural, that doesn't make school start any later. While 9¼ hours of sleep would be ideal for you, many teens barely get 7½ on school nights. The dangers of sleep deprivation include lower test and IQ scores. It can also make it harder to make good decisions, remember things, and deal with others. Athletics can also suffer. So what to do? One St. John teen says she breaks the day in 3 parts: 8 hours each for school, play, and sleep. Sometimes school needs more, so "playtime" gets less. But she always, always tries to protect her 8 hours of sleep. Otherwise, she says she's like a zombie!

Another thing to try is to keep lights low in the evening. It sounds weird, but your teen body will keep you awake later if your room is well lit. Also try setting

a regular time for bed even on week-ends. Adjust your bedtime by 15 minutes each night until you reach your goal. Then try it out for a week and see how you feel.

Teens need 8-9.5 hrs. of sleep

Bedtime Ideas:

- Do quiet activities with dim lights before bed
- Set a regular bedtime and develop a routine
- Remind 30, 15, and 5 minutes before routine starts
- Read Bible stories and pray together just before sleep

10-12 year-olds need 9+ hrs. sleep

Resources on Sleep for Kids

The Happiest Baby on the Block, Harvey Carp

The No-Cry Sleep Solution, Elizabeth Pantley

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, Mark Weissbluth

6-12 mo.-olds need 14 hrs. of sleep