

In Wisdom and Order

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We Should Do All Things in Wisdom and Order

Elder M. Russell Ballard said: "Coping with the complex and diverse challenges of everyday life, which is not an easy task, can upset the balance and harmony we seek. Many good people who care a great deal are trying very hard to maintain balance, but they sometimes feel overwhelmed and defeated. . . . Many people have heavy demands upon them stemming from parental, family, employment, church, and civic responsibilities. Keeping everything in balance can be a real problem" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 15; or *Ensign*, May 1987, pp. 13–14).

At a time in Joseph Smith's life when he was still young and just recovering from a major disappointment, the Lord gave him some loving advice. This advice can be applied to all of us who have felt frustrated over our apparent inability to manage our lives successfully. The Lord said, "Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided; . . . but be diligent unto the end" (D&C 10:4).

It is comforting to realize that the Lord knows we all have limits. We cannot always do everything we would like to or think we should.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin addressed this same theme when he spoke to the Nephites (see Mosiah 4). He admonished them to live the gospel fully, to work out their salvation, to care for the poor, to feed the hungry, and to minister to those in need. But then he cautioned, "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

We Can Learn to Use Our Time and Resources Wisely

We can learn to make wise choices about the use of our time and resources. It is important that we have realistic expectations and that we set proper priorities.

Have Realistic Expectations

General Relief Society President Elaine Jack explained that many of us make “unrealistic comparisons” of ourselves to others. “Because I know many of you, I know of your goodness and your individual gifts from the Lord. I can see that these comparisons may keep you from achieving your potential and basking in associations that will enrich your lives and the lives of others. . . .

“The prophet Jacob said things as they ‘really are’ and ‘really will be’ are ‘manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls.’ (Jacob 4:13.)

“Sisters, how are these things manifest unto us? Plainly, through the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through the example of our Savior’s life. Only by living His gospel can we find what is real. We can never accurately take the measure of our lives based on social, economic, ethnic, age, marital, or physical conditions. Ask yourself, are the comparisons you may make of yourself and others based on the model of the Savior’s life, or do they come from trying to fit your life into the pattern of others’ lives? . . .

“Some of you may say, ‘I’m just average. There’s nothing special about me or my life.’ And yet what is manifested plainly to me is that you are extraordinary, you whose average day is lived in accordance with our Heavenly Father’s laws.

“No greater heroine lives in today’s world than the woman who is quietly doing her part. Generally unsung, you live everywhere—you live in Nebraska or Puerto Rico or Ghana or Canada or Czechoslovakia. You show your love for the Lord daily as you support husbands, nurture children, care for parents, benefit neighbors, serve in your schools, sit on community councils, and do much of the work of this world in and out of the home. No one is more impressive than you.”

Sister Jack reviewed the lives of several sisters throughout the world who are serving others. Then she asked: “Isn’t the point of these . . . examples that each of these sisters serves as she is able, according to the needs around her? Isn’t that the point of your life? . . . We want you to live lives of spiritual maturity and fulfillment, free of unrealistic comparisons” (“These Things Are Manifested unto Us Plainly,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, pp. 89–90).

Set Proper Priorities

An important factor in deciding what we can and cannot do is setting proper priorities. We have many demands on our time and resources. Sometimes deciding where we will spend our energies can be difficult.

Elder M. Russell Ballard said: "Think about your life and set your priorities. Find some quiet time regularly to think deeply about where you are going and what you will need to do to get there. Jesus, our exemplar, often 'withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed' (Luke 5:16). We need to do the same thing occasionally to rejuvenate ourselves spiritually as the Savior did. Write down the tasks you would like to accomplish each day. Keep foremost in mind the sacred covenants you have made with the Lord as you write down your daily schedules" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 15; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 14).

We are here on earth for some very important reasons. We are to work out our own salvation, learn to love and care for each other, and participate in the building of the kingdom of God on the earth. With these goals to inspire us, we can set our priorities and organize our lives.

"Each day brings its own requirements. At one time we may have heavy Church responsibilities, and other facets of our lives, even our families, may temporarily take supportive roles until pressure eases. At other times, family responsibilities may require all our attention, to the exclusion of everything else. Those who must provide financial support for themselves and their families necessarily find that Church work and time for one's self fall behind pressing needs at home. At still other times our 'self' must come first as we refill our own spiritual and emotional reserves. We certainly cannot fill someone else's cup if our own is empty. We may envision our daily tasks as a kind of seesaw, where one day something is 'up' in importance and another day it is 'down.'

"... When deciding which aspect should receive emphasis at certain seasons of life, sisters would do well to seek the Spirit as a guide" (Evelyn T. Marshall, "Mary and Martha: Faithful Sisters, Devoted Disciples," *Ensign*, Jan. 1987, p. 31).

Ecclesiastes gives us an important truth to remember: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The proportion of time we spend in various activities differs significantly depending on our season or phase of life. One sister may be able to devote all her time and resources to the Lord by serving a full-time mission. A mother with growing children will find her time largely taken up with

child-rearing, and other activities will have to be given less time. Another sister will need to decide how to divide her time between employment demands, maintaining her home, and giving service to others.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell counseled: "Striking the proper balance is one of the keenest tests of our agency. Therefore, we need to ask regularly for inspiration in the use of our time and in the making of our daily decisions. So often our hardest choices are between competing and desirable alternatives (each with righteous consequences), when there is *not* time to do both at once. Indeed, it is at the mortal intersections—where time and talent and opportunities meet—that priorities, like traffic lights, are sorely needed. Quiet, sustained goodness is the order of heaven, not conspicuous but episodic busyness" (*Notwithstanding My Weakness* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 5).

The Lord does not require that we run faster nor labor more than we are able. But he does expect us to be diligent and use wisdom and good judgment so that we can accomplish those things he knows we can do.

Suggestions for Teachers

1. Review the circumstances that led to the Lord's counsel to Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 10:4. This information can be found in the headings to sections 3 and 10 and in verses 1–3 of section 10. Also review King Benjamin's counsel found in Mosiah 4:27. Ask: In what circumstances do we sometimes try to run faster than we have strength and means? Why are we also given the counsel to be diligent unto the end? How can we know whether we are being diligent without running faster than we have strength?
2. Review Sister Jack's statements. Ask: What are some of the ways in which we compare ourselves to others? Why are these comparisons usually not helpful? How can we learn what the Lord feels are the most important things for us to accomplish in our lives? How can someone who feels that her life is not of value learn to see her role more clearly?
3. Review Ecclesiastes 3:1 and the statements of Elder Ballard, Sister Marshall, and Elder Maxwell. Ask: What are the most important priorities in our lives? How can we determine which of these priorities requires our attention each day?