

Finding Balance

Dr Lois Dodds (Part 1 of 3)



Hello! How's your balance today? Are you feeling dizzy or are you delighted to face the day? Life can feel like a teeter-totter can't it? It does for me sometimes, or even like a merry-go-round: the house, the children, your marriage, your work or a ministry that is never done. How can you keep it all in balance? Even in our own culture this is hard; in another country or culture it is really hard. But there is a way to sort it out.

You can reduce your struggle and your stress, but how? You might start by sitting down with your spouse. Do you have a notepad handy? You could jot down things you are responsible for, then put these things in order of priority, and reflect on them. Does your time use match your priorities? Ask God to help you see your life through his eyes. You might not believe it but the most important factor in your family, in your ministry, is your marriage. Your family is actually the foundation of your ministry.

My husband Larry and I learned this to our surprise when we lived in another country. He was a busy young doctor, flying all over the jungle to care for his patients. He loved it: the thrill of saving lives, promoting health and changing communities. I was a mum: 3 children, the house, people at the door, teaching, having perpetual guests - life was challenging and busy. The wonderful thing that we discovered through our many guests was that our family life and our home had more impact on them than our jobs. Even our books and the dog were part of that. Our real ministry, it seemed, was being in a loving family with cheerful children. Our relationships as husband and wife modelled things that amazed our guests. Larry treated me as an equal, he valued my opinion, he didn't have a mistress on the side. Our kids loved to be with us, their friends filled our house. Think about your children: what do they experience? What do people see? They are growing up in a different culture but you, mum and dad, make them feel secure. You give them a sense of roots when your relationship is loving and strong. They're your partners in your life-calling when you include them. I'll give you an example that I remember.

We had the Attorney General and his wife in that country come to our house for dinner. They came from the city to the jungle. We included our children at the table, and our guests were surprised because they didn't usually do that. They commented on the fact that we had such a nice table and our children got to learn good manners. After dessert our son Michael said, 'Mum could I go over to my friend's house for a while?' and Larry and I said, 'Sure Michael, come home at 9:30 please.' I'll never forget the astonishment on our guests' faces when Michael roared up at 9:29 on his little motor cycle. He came in the door cheerful and happy and greeted us all. Our friends said, 'That never happens at our house.'

What are you modelling through your life as a family? Is it consistent or showing people the love that motivates you to help other people? Is your real life what people long for? If so, your purpose in calling will flourish. You may be the doctor, the teacher, the pilot, the printer.

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People test the reality and truth of what you teach by what you live. So how can you enrich this connection between who you are and what you do? Again you could take your paper, jot down 3 things that you do, or can do more of, that make your family reflect God's love. Then jot down 3 things that are ways your family enhances the ministry that you do.