

“Tipping the Scale: Finding Balance between Ministry, Work, and Family”



“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is His delight.”

Proverbs 11:1

Confucius stated, *“Choose a job that you love and you will never have to work a day in your life!”* This was such a profound statement. I wonder if Confucius had a schedule like that of someone working in Deaf ministry.

As a worker in Deaf ministry, my schedule can become quite hectic. I’m committed to the ministry which means I have dedicated time to interpret worship services, attend Bible study, teach an ASL class, attend choir rehearsals, and reserve time for studying the Word of God. All of these activities take place within a week’s time. These activities don’t include the long hours of work at my place of employment or time with my family and loved ones. When all three are factored in, there doesn’t seem to be enough hours in a day or days in a week to be effective in all areas.

Time diary researchers have found it convenient to distinguish four types of time: (1) Paid Work (contracted time), (2) Household or Family time, (3) Personal time, and (4) Free time. Because working in Deaf ministry requires professional services, I will classify it in group one. Household or family time is the *quality* time we spend with our families. When I’m home and working on the computer or internet, it is not considered quality time but work.

The time I spend worshipping at church, (not interpreting) is considered Family time. Those times when I go out to eat with friends or the times I go to the football games are classified as Personal time. My Free time, which is few and far between is used watching my favorite TV programs, writing, or listening to music.

As an interpreter, I have met so many who have become overwhelmed and as a result, experience ministry burnout due to lack of balance. Interpreters must realize that life's activities must be divided into four categories:

- Urgent and Important
- Important, but not Urgent
- Urgent, but not Important
- Neither Urgent or Important

My advice to those I meet is always the same, "Strive to live a Value-Centered live. Living a value-centered life is a 4-step process. Step One requires creating a personal mission statement. Step Two requires that you define the actions you can take and what actions you will avoid to live out those values. Step Three requires that you schedule an appointment with your priorities. The final step, Step Four demands that you forgive yourself if you fall back into old life patterns/habits.

In Step One, the mission statements details how you will act on what you believe, how your life will reflect your values, and what you will do to fulfill your mission. In Step Two, one must recognize that core values translate into "Daily Doings" known as habits. In Step Three, it's important for individuals to set a date to perform the actions they say are important to them. Step Four is very important. Often, when we fail to meet a projected goal, we tend to beat ourselves up instead of getting up, dusting our feet, and moving forward. We must realize that it's okay to fall short. We must not allow falling short to become a habit or lifestyle. If at first we don't succeed, we must try again.

Another reason we tend to get hung up on Step Four is because often, we set unrealistic expectations or unattainable goals for ourselves. I believe interpreters should really put their time where their heart is. Interpreters should ask themselves, "What am I really living for?"

A suggestion to balancing your time and setting realistic goals would be to make a list of the current priorities in your life. On that list, one should write the amount of time they spend on each priority. Once the list is completed, they should pick the top three. If the person isn't spending a large chunk of time on the three elements they have selected, there are a few explanations:

- Important things don't require a lot of time
- You are mistaken about your priorities
- You are not putting your time where your priorities are

If you're involved in Deaf ministry, you should know and understand the VISION of the pastor or leader of your church or ministry. It's important that you follow that vision and not create a separate vision.

And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Mark 3:25

It's important to network with other members within the ministry and those outside of the ministry. In doing so, you establish support systems. Get phone numbers of those you network with. They can serve as prayer partners, sounding boards, or just friends.

Interpreters should have a realistic expectation of themselves. No one can do it all. If you work, have a family and are involved in ministry, you may not be able to complete specific assignments. Use judgment and discretion before accepting those responsibilities. If your priorities indicate ministry is important, you should also be willing to sacrifice.

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Luke 12:48

Interpreters should ensure they keep their stress level under control. To do this, they should find time for fun and fellowship. They should also seek to include their families in their activities. Interpreters can seek family members to assist in balancing ministry, work, family and personal time.

“If I have walked with falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit -let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless –if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.”

Job 31:5-8

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“A 21st Century Deaf Ministry -From a Biblical Perspective-” is available in in paper back and electronic copies. The workbook supporting the text is only available in paperback. To order your copy, please click on the following link:

Paperback: <http://www.iids-inc.org/htmls/products.htm#NewBook>

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