



"We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our 'to do' list."

Michelle Obama

"Life is a balance between what we can control and what we cannot. I am learning to live between effort and surrender."

Danielle Orner

Many of us have childhood memories of an afternoon at the circus. We remember excitedly watching the high-flying trapeze artists who kept us on the edge of our seats as they flew through the air, or the courage of the lion tamer placing his head inside a lion's mouth, and who can forget a dozen clowns stepping out of a miniature clown car!

Possibly, you've experienced a little-known circus act called the plate spinner. One by one, the plate spinner placed a china plate at the top of a dowel rod and began to spin it. The plate was spun with such precision that it would then balance on its own at the top of the rod. What added to the excitement was that the performer went down a line of standing rods spinning plates on them, until there were at least a half dozen or more spinning and balancing all at once. The challenge for the performer was to watch what plates were beginning to slow down and masterfully move his hand across the edge to keep them in motion and balance.

Let's face it, we are plate spinners. Our days can be so chaotic that we feel like our life is a circus! We've got an assignment due at work/school (*spin plate*), the family gathering to attend (*spin plate*), your child's parent/teacher conference (*spin plate*), the meal to get on the table (*spin plate*). When was the last time you exercised (*spin plate*)? Wait... don't forget that assignment that's due (*go back to that first plate and get it spinning faster*). You get the idea.

Search for "Chinese Plate Spinners" on YouTube. I'm not sure I have the same look of calm and elegance as I try to manage all of the "plates" I am spinning!

Our world is not the same as our foremothers who were keenly aware of the well-defined expectation of nurturing family and home... period. Mother Teresa so aptly said, "What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family." No truer words have ever been spoken, but we live in a multi-faceted world today, and family and home are just two of a myriad of important "plates" that most women are called to spin.

When surrounded by spinning plates, it helps to take a good, hard look at what fills our time and attention, and calls for so much of our energy. Where do we begin? What can be pared down, eliminated, or passed onto someone else, and what is ours to own?

The Apostle Paul may have been the greatest "plate spinner" of the New Testament. Not only did he travel the known world (*keep in mind his transportation was usually the two feet God gave him*) proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and establishing churches throughout his travels, but he was also misunderstood, harassed, beaten, and imprisoned as he lived out the life to which God had called him. You would think his obedience and passion for living out God's call would make his life smooth sailing (*ever felt that way?*).

The following scripture is advice to Paul's fellow "plate spinners". What can you glean from his words of wisdom that will help you find better balance in your life?

"Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

"So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return."

Philippians 1:3-10 NLT

Making it Personal

Life is a journey with changing seasons and shifting demands. You have a deep desire to live your life for Christ while navigating the maze of responsibilities in your life.

"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

Philippians 1:6 NLT

Write briefly of a moment when you felt the hand of God guiding a decision you needed to make. What was the outcome? How do you feel as you remember this incident?

Reminiscing about God's loving guidance is reassuring as you seek His face for balance in the many demands on your life today. Let these words wash over you:

"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return."

Philippians 1:9-10 NLT

Every life has a measure of stress. Good stress is that bit of tension that reminds us what needs to be emphasized for we don't lose our way in the maze of life's demands and find it hard to sift through to find priorities. So let's focus:

Right now, what is important, what is the priority of your life?

Now that you have been reminded of God's guidance in the past and are able to put some of the top responsibilities (*spinning plates*) in some kind of order...what about everything else that calls for your time and attention? Remember Paul's words:

"... for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now... You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News."

Philippians 1:5,7 NLT