

Family and Friends: Leading an Integrated Life



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Family and Friends: Leading an Integrated Life - 1

Fresh  Start

Talking Points

The Bible is full of stories of friendship: David and Jonathan; Ruth and Naomi. Paul frequently mentions friends in his letters to the burgeoning Christian communities. Jesus had friends in whose homes he sought respite from the demands of his ministry – think of the trio in Bethany: Mary, Martha and Lazarus. And even Jesus needed to take time for rest and prayer – and encouraged his disciples to do the same. “The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.” (Mark 6:30-32, New Revised Standard Version)

Balance vs. Integration



“The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has enough time.”

Rabindranath Tagore

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Talking Points

People talk about the need for balance in one’s life, but balancing various priorities requires trade-offs, giving up something on the one hand to balance what is on the other side of the scale. Some work/life specialists are beginning to talk about the need for people to lead **integrated** lives – acknowledging that vocation is only one of many priorities, and looking for ways to redesign how work gets done and things get scheduled so that time for vocation, rest and recreation, spiritual life, and family and friends are seen as part of a whole, with each segment in one’s life reinforcing the others. Rather than a balancing scale, life is more like a mobile – all the parts contribute to the whole. If any one is “off balance” the beauty of the mobile is destroyed. This approach to an integrated life is, in effect, a return to a natural order of living that used to be governed by the seasons and the normal cycle of day and night – an order that has been overturned by technology. The problem of too long hours and overwork is particularly virulent in American culture, and economists such as Juliet Shor are beginning to talk about the price that is being paid by the “overworked American.”

In their ordination vows, clergy promise to “pattern (their) lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that (they) may be a wholesome example to (their) people.” (Book of Common Prayer, page 532). What better place to start than to look at how our lives are lived and scheduled and how well we maintain our relationships with family and friends?



Talking Points

Distribute Handout 1

Think about the many roles you play in your life – and the people whose lives demand your attention. On this piece of paper draw a circle with you in the middle. Draw a line radiating from the circle for each role that you play, then answer the questions that follow.

In small groups or pairs, have people share their drawings. How alike/dissimilar are they? How many roles are asked of you? What role gets “short shrift” in your life? Lead a brief discussion with the whole group about any “ahas” they might have had. Or facilitate a large group discussion, filling in all the roles on a copy of this graphic on a flip chart.

How Do You Spend Your Time?

- Work
- Daily tasks (e.g., doing the dishes)
- Relationships
- Self-care (e.g., sleeping, exercising)
- Spiritual life
- Other (describe)



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Talking Points

Distribute Handout 2

Using the data you collected over the past two weeks, enter each activity under the appropriate heading and add up the amount of time given to that activity over the two-week period. Where is your time spent? What is given short shrift?

Lake Wobegon Example



*A pastor, a wife and
grace from an
unexpected quarter*

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Talking Points

Setting boundaries so that we have time for relationships, rest and recreation, continuing education, and spiritual formation can be a challenge. And we all need friends who will point out to us when we've failed at boundary setting, as well as people who will love us unconditionally in spite of what we do. Listen to this Garrison Keillor story of "Pastor Ingvist's Trip to Orlando," paying particular attention to what Pastor Ingvist does to get himself into this situation and where he finds support and help.

Play the story from "Gospel Birds" (see bibliography for how to order). After it has finished, ask for general reactions/observations – steer the conversation toward boundary setting and the role of family and friends.

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” - Annie Dillard



Relaxation



Learning



Spiritual
Formation



Vacation

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Talking Points

Look at the chart you did of how you spent your time over the past two weeks. Did you have time for continuing education? For spiritual formation? For rest? Pastor Ingvist – at least in the story we just heard – gave up his time away which was for both rest and professional development. How well do you do at finding this kind of time? Take a few minutes to answer the questions on this handout and then we will discuss.

Distribute the Alban Institute questionnaire, “How Well Do You Keep Sabbath Time?” (Handout 3) or the Headington Institute questionnaire (download from web site – see bibliography for details) and give participants a few minutes to complete it, then hold a general discussion on what they discovered about themselves.

Leading an Integrated Life

- What energizes you in your vocation?
- What else energizes you?
- When has your life felt integrated?
- What ideas do you have to recapture that feeling?

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Talking Points

There have been times in all our lives when we felt more “balanced,” and perhaps led a truly integrated life where we felt a wholeness of purpose and a meshing of multiple priorities. Let’s take a few minutes to explore what energizes us today and how we might recapture that sense of wholeness.

Distribute Handout 4

Pair up with another participant and interview each other using the questions on the handout. You will each have 10 minutes to interview the other. When you are the interviewer, listen carefully for the themes around what is energizing and what makes meeting multiple priorities possible. At the end of the interview time, join with another pair, share your themes with each other, and come up with a single combined list of what is energizing and the wishes you have for your lives.

At the end of the time, ask each foursome to report out and facilitate a general discussion about the ideas (wishes) people had for recapturing that sense of wholeness and ability to meet multiple priorities.

A Basque Proverb



“Unless you feed the shepherd . . .

the shepherd will eat the sheep.”



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Talking Points

After all, as this Basque proverb states – unless you find time for your family and friends, rest and relaxation, spiritual and physical renewal, you will be unable to do what needs to be done. Having a good support system is one way to help you lead an “integrated life”. So let’s take a look at where you get the support you need.

Support Network

Unexpected Grace

Fr. Emile's kind of caring does not always happen. How can we help "make it happen?"

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Returning to Garrison Keillor's story. Fr. Emile's support was certainly unexpected – a real inbreaking of grace. Pastor Ingvist may not even had known that Fr. Emile was part of his support system, but there he was.

When we move to a new community we often leave our support network behind, but there are other reasons why one's support network might change. Someone in that network might move away or have a change in his/her life that disrupts your relationship. So it is always good to periodically assess your network. Who is in your support system right now?

Looking at Your Support Network



Comforter



Clarifier



Confronter

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Talking Points

Distribute Handout 5

Support networks should consist of three kinds of people:

Comforters: people who are always there for you, to whom you can confide anything; who would be empathetic and sympathetic regardless of what life throws at you.

Clarifiers: those who can help you articulate your beliefs, feelings and thoughts; who engage you in friendly debates that help you get clear.

Confronters: those who will call you up short when you go astray; who will share the uncomfortable truth with you and offer constructive feedback.

The people who fulfill these roles in your professional life may or may not be the same ones who do so in your personal life. Take a few minutes to write down the names of all the people who fulfill these roles in your professional and personal lives.

When people have completed the matrix, go on to the questions that follow.

Looking at Your Support Network

- Put a box around the name of family members
- Draw a line under those who live more than an hour away
- If you a clergy – circle the names of parishioners or others from your denomination
- Who's left?
- Do you have more than one name per box?
- Where do you need to develop more support?

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Put a box around the names of members of your immediate and extended family. Put a line under any who live more than an hour from your home. If you are a clergyperson, circle all the names on your chart who are members of your congregation or of another congregation within your denomination. Who is left? Do some people fill more than one role? If so, you risk burning them out. Are there others who can fill that role for you? Who? Do you have more than one person in each of the boxes? If not, what will you do if that person is unavailable? How many do not have a circle or box around his/her name or a line underneath? If none, where do you get an outside perspective? How many of your support network members live close by? If you rely on primarily on those who are more than an hour away, where do you get face-to-face support? How do you find time to get together with these distant friends? In what area of your life might you need to find additional support? Where might that support come from?

Give participants several minutes to respond to the questions, then engage in a discussion about some concrete steps people could take to increase their support network. The point is not to give up any of those who are supporters now but to deepen and broaden the pool of those people can count on in each area.

Staying in Touch



“Still – in a way – nobody sees a flower – it is so small – we haven’t time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.”

Georgia O’Keeffe

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Talking Points

Keeping a support network – maintaining friendships and family relations – takes time. Looking at the list of people you just named, when did you last see them? How often do you stay in touch? What commitments can you make today to strengthen those relationships? What would it take?

Give people a few minutes to reflect and to jot down their commitments.

Saying Thank You!



Remember those in your support network –

- Draw a picture of your prayer for each or
- Write a prayer for each
- Write a prayer for yourself

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Now take a minute to think about the individuals in your support network. Then take a piece of paper and the colored markers and pencils I've left on the table and draw a prayer, incorporating each person's name. As you write and embellish the name, concentrate on that individual -- giving thanks for his/her friendship and support and asking God for whatever the person needs right now. As you complete one person's prayer, move to another on your list until your page is filled with prayer. Or, if you prefer, write a brief prayer for each person – again concentrating on that individual until the prayer is finished, then moving to the next person on your list. At the end compose a prayer for yourself, dedicating yourself to find the time to be with these people in the near future.

When people have finished, ask them to take their prayers with them as a reminder of their support network and their vow to keep in touch with them. Close with a prayer or a reading from Scripture.