

This devotional was given during Women's Awareness Week 2007 at the General Conference Morning Worship in Silver Spring, MD. The devotional may have some portions specific to the writer. If you use the material, please edit to be sure it is understood that these are the writer's personal experiences.

What God Expects from Me

By Iris Kitching

Years ago when my children were young they had the habit of asking for a million things all at the same time. "Can I have milk. Where is my cereal? I need a spoon. I want the blue bowl. You didn't give me a napkin?" And of course they wanted me to do a million things instantly. I had to remind them constantly that I was ONE person. Well, that didn't mean anything for a 5 and 6 year old. So I started saying "How many hands do I have? How many feet do I have? Well, mommy can only do one or two things at a time." I kind of thought they got it... until they started being funny and responding that I had 5 hands and 7 feet.

Now I have 3 little granddaughters, who will be 4, 5 and 6 years old in the next 3 months. And it has started again...."Grandma can I have noodles? Where's my hot chocolate? I want marshmallows. You didn't give me a cookie. I need a napkin." And on, and on, and on. Three of them talking all at the same time! It's exhausting. Frustrating even. And, I find myself saying (again)... How many hands do I have? How many feet? I am sure that soon they, too, will be giving me 5 hands and 7 feet, maybe even more.

But in this day and age, that is almost what we need to accomplish everything we have on our plates! We are overworked, over-scheduled, stressed out, tired, and frustrated. Frenetic schedules; ambitious goals; obsessive desires to achieve or to produce more and more; the aim to be the best. We're caught up in today's **gotta do, gotta see, gotta get, gotta be world!**

Today's Black Woman Radio Show, guest D. Gorham, says: "Most of us live our lives in a constant state of "fast forward".... running here, rushing there, zooming and zipping through life at break-neck speeds. Yet ... how many of us can honestly see **the meaning** in all this bustling?

What value can be derived from our hectic lifestyles?

In the United States:

- We're putting in longer hours on our jobs **now than we did in '50s.**
- We're working more than medieval peasants did, **and more than citizens of any other industrial country.**
- We work (on average) nearly nine full weeks (350 hours) LONGER each year than our peers in Western Europe do.
- Working Americans average a little over two weeks of vacation per year, while Europeans average five to six weeks. **37% of women earning less than \$40,000 per year) get NO paid vacation at all.**
- **Mandatory overtime** is at near record levels despite recession.

Life is out of balance for most of us. Each day you probably wonder "Who am I, and

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT FROM ME? --- our topic for today. We know that as Christians God wants us to use our gifts, our talents in His Service. But what we don't know, or don't acknowledge, is that *HE SHOULD BE THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES before we use our gifts and talents. And IF HE'S NOT, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS. Where did we go wrong?*

*Mind Character and Personality, Vol. 1, p 359, tells us that “**In the beginning** God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and **all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man.**”*

So, here we are today, with ridiculous or excessive levels of busyness. Information overload (e-mails, text messages, and junk mail); couples with no time together, families who rarely eat at the same time; people who don't nurture themselves, or their souls. No quiet moments when we don't have to commit to anything. You know, there is an expression: **If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got!**

MULTI-TASKING. Women (and men) in committee meetings with non-committee mail to read or documents to read or edit;, even with laptops to work on non-committee work. Productivity? Hardly! Imagine how much work would get done more efficiently if everyone gave their full, undivided attention to the committee work.

Did you know WE (women that is) are getting and dying from heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, suffering from depression, mental breakdowns, developing chronic problems, and more health problems that previously only men got?

Ellen White, in April 1904 said “*I hear of workers whose health is breaking down under the strain of the burdens they are bearing. This ought not to be. God desires us to remember that we are mortal. We are not to embrace too much in our work. We are not to keep ourselves under such a strain that our physical and mental powers shall be exhausted.*” And in *That I May Know Him*, p. 86, “*It is easy to lose health, but it is difficult to regain it.....We can ill afford to dwarf or cripple a single function of mind or body by overwork or by abuse of any part of the living machinery.... **The influence of a well-balanced, well-ordered life is of inestimable value.***”

So - What does God expect of you and me?

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind, and with ALL thy strength: this is the first commandment." Mark 12:30.

God desires that we love him first. That we put Him first in our lives. That we make HIM the **Center of Our Joy**. Some may falsely believe that that they have already done this. But, think again. ...And if God isn't first, it's not too late to make him first. Then, **HE** will provide the roadmap we each need for our ministries and for our work to be a blessing to others. Think for a moment. What are you most passionate about. Is it Jesus?

In the book, *The Zacchaeus Effect* by Emil Dean Peeler, page 61, it says “*If all of our activity is not rooted in a **passionate desire to know Jesus or an outgrowth of a heart overflowing with love for Him, we'll soon burn out, give up, or eventually stop running!***”

Jesus. When we give Him ALL of ourselves and trust Him to direct our paths...He will be our strength when the trials come. He will be our comfort when we are troubled. He will provide the answers when we are perplexed. He will give us peace in challenging situations. He will give us the right words to say when we need to pull back. Because as we know Him, truly KNOW Him and TRUST Him, we will learn to balance things. We will learn to be temperate.

You know, we often attribute temperance only to smoking and drinking, and maybe to food. To BAD habits. But temperance encompasses how we deal with the GOOD areas as well - careers,

community involvement , family commitments, church work, our aspirations, -- and it is the stepping stone to being healthy, whole, balanced Christians. We need to balance our 'YES' and 'NOs' so we don't jeopardize our health, our sanity, or our commitment to God! To help you get started, please see the handout "20 Ways to Say No."

In 2 Peter we read about the fruits of the spirit. We all could use those fruits, but I'd like to pay particular attention to 2 Peter 1:6, "And to knowledge **temperance**; and to temperance **patience**; and to patience **godliness**. Is Jesus at the center of your life? This weekend, spend time contemplating how you can be more temperate and more balanced in the important areas – like your relationship with God, growing spiritually, your family, relaxing? Where are you out of balance? *You don't need 5 hands or 7 feet to keep you going.* Keep in mind 1 Corinthians 9:25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

Make JESUS the center of your life! Get acquainted with Jesus, Love Jesus first, last, and best; then... Work for Jesus. This, I believe, is what God expects of you and me as we seek to live godly lives! Then we will have power to be more balanced as we strive to walk on the right road—one that leads to a crown of life and eternity.

Let us pray: Lord, we need your guiding hand to help us stop thinking we can do it all... and without YOU. Help us to desire to KNOW – to make YOU the center of our joy, so we will bring honor and glory to you – in my prayer in Jesus name. Amen.