

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 1
Healthy Lifestyles
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Mark 6:30-46
Subject: How Jesus responded to the intense demands that both He and His disciples experienced
Complement: He took time out and encouraged His disciples to do the same.
Exegetical idea: Jesus responded to the intense demands that both he and His disciples experienced by taking time out and encouraging His disciples to do the same.
Homiletical idea: **Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to review their current lifestyle and allow God to guide them towards a healthy, balanced life.

Introduction

Last weekend was an amazing time of ministry. At our 7:45 AM prayer service, we prayed that God would call people by name and that He would bless everyone who stepped onto the campus that day! And God honored that prayer. We experienced showers of blessing! Three communion services. Three baptisms. A baby dedication. Twelve people added to the church as new members. Five prayer quilts given out. Six powerful testimonies. It was an amazing morning!

I stayed to pray with people after 3rd service. And we continued to sense the showers of blessing. When I looked at my watch, it was 1:30 PM. I had a lunch appointment scheduled with a family, but I realized that I wasn't going to make it. If I left immediately, and drove to their house, I would have to turn around and leave as soon as I got there in order to get back in time for a memorial service scheduled for 2:30PM. So I had to call on my cell phone, apologize and tell my gracious hosts that I would have to take a rain check. So many showers of blessing, there wasn't even time to eat.

Have you ever had a day like that? So busy, there's not even time to eat? Or if you do get your hands on some fast food, there's no time to chew?! It's not easy to maintain a healthy, balanced life, is it? The disciples of Jesus could relate to the challenge I was facing. They also had days when they were so busy they didn't even have time to eat.

Perhaps you remember the story, recorded by the gospel writer Mark. I want us to study that story today, because we see a familiar problem, and an added complication, but we can also find in this story the solution to our problem...how to maintain a healthy, balanced life.

Open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, and we will begin to read from verse 30. "....." Jesus had just sent the Twelve out on their first missionary assignment. We read in Mark 6:7, "....." And Mark 6:12-13 tells us, "....."

What an amazing time of ministry! Showers of blessing! And more showers of blessing. But there was a problem. And Jesus noticed the problem immediately. Let's continue the story in Mark 6:31, "....."

Does that sound familiar? "There were many coming and going and they didn't even have time to eat." The verb that Mark uses here, translated "they didn't have time" is in the imperfect tense. That means that this was an ongoing problem. The disciples were so busy, they were continually challenged to find time to eat.

Does that sound like your schedule? Busy, 24/7. Tough to find balance. And you're not doing bad things. They're all good. But there is so much to do. Too much to do.

The other day, one of our church family was having a chat with his 8 year old son, who is currently in 3rd grade. Dad was hoping that they could have a father and son bike ride the next

day. When he asked his son about the bike ride, he was expecting a quick response: “Great daddy, I can’t wait!” Here the response that he heard from his 3rd grade son: “Daddy, I am completely booked for the week. I have school, then school homework, then reading, then piano practice, Karate class on Monday, basketball practice on Tuesday and Wednesday and Tennis classes on Thursday and Friday. Maybe Sunday afternoon we could make some time for the ride!”

And that young man is only 8. I don’t have to convince you today that we have a problem. Not just a few of us. But many of us, trying to maintain a healthy, balanced life. And when we try to take time out, when we try to “come apart and rest awhile” we face an added complication.

And that added complication isn’t new to us. It’s found in the story that we are studying today in Mark chapter 6. Let’s look again at Mark 6, beginning with verse 30. (30-33)
“.....” Do you see the added complication? When we try to find time out from our hectic schedule, our work follows us! The disciples could probably see the huge crowd running around the shoreline of the lake. And the mass of moving needy humanity grew by the minute! So that by the time they got to their deserted place, there was more work waiting for them. Can you relate? When you try to find time out from your hectic schedule, your work follows you.

We not only have the problem of trying to maintain a healthy, balanced life. We have the added complication of our work following us. Our society has developed what seems like a thousand ways for our work to follow us, hasn’t it?

(CELL PHONE RINGS) Oh, excuse me. “Hello. No this isn’t a good time right now. I’m preaching a sermon!....I’m sure that it’s very important....You said that the last time you

called and you kept me on the phone for 30 minutes. So what's so important that you need to call me during the sermon? Your toe hurts? No, I don't know the name of a good podiatrist. No, I don't have problems with my toes hurting. Listen, can I call you back later. I'm preaching a sermon right now. Thanks. Good bye!" (Close cell phone)

That happens all the time.....when we're sitting down for a quiet meal together as a family, when we're walking and praying. Before long, they are going to develop waterproof cell phones that you can take with you into the shower. Work follows you wherever you go!

What's that buzzing? My heart is fibrillating from all of the stress of my unbalanced, unhealthy lifestyle. Oh no, it's just my BlackBerry! Excuse me. I need to check my e-mail. Three messages! Oh, that's just my hourly stock quotes! And there's a great business opportunity in Nigeria, but I have to respond within the next 7 minutes! And there's a message from the same fellow who just called me on the phone. It's marked urgent. He wants me to know that he just found the name of a good podiatrist to look at his hurting toe! No peace!

OK, so where was I in the sermon? Oh, yes. The added complication. You're already struggling with an overloaded schedule. You're trying to find time out so that you can find some balance. And what happens? Just like this story in Mark 6, your work follows you.

Now, Mark 6:34 is a beautiful verse. "....." That's a beautiful picture of our compassionate Savior. But I've heard this verse misused. I've heard this verse used to argue in favor of an unhealthy, unbalanced life, and we justify our intemperance by saying that we're working ourselves to death because we love people! That's a terrible abuse of this text.

There's no where in this story that Jesus tells his disciples that they have to stay with him

the whole day while He is teaching the crowd. He does ask for their assistance later in the day when they come complaining that it's time to send the people home. But nowhere does Jesus expect more of the disciples than is reasonable and balanced and healthy. Listen to this quotation from my favorite book on the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter Come Rest Awhile. Though Jesus could work miracles, and had empowered His disciples to work miracles, He directed His worn servants to go apart into the country and rest...He did not urge upon His disciples the necessity of ceaseless toil..." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 361

Perhaps Jesus was hoping that His disciples would take some retreat time while He taught. They had been teaching and healing for many days on their missionary journey. They needed some time out. Unfortunately, they didn't seem to take that time. And that's the reason why they had such a bad attitude later in the day!

We could spend a whole sermon on what happened next. The feeding of the 5000 was one of the most remarkable miracles that Jesus performed. But today, I want us to learn from this story how to have a healthy, balanced lifestyle. We've seen the problem...so much to do that there isn't even time to eat. That's an ongoing problem. We've seen the added complication...when you try to take time out, your work follows you. So where's the solution?

The solution is found right here in this same passage of Scripture. Mark 6:45-46. "....." The solution to our problem, the way to find a healthy, balanced life is to go to the mountain, to take time out alone with God. I know that sounds very simplistic. But stay with me. Let me say again, the way to find a healthy balanced life is to go to the mountain, to

take time out alone with God.

But here is the important question. What do we do when we go to the mountain? What do we do during our time out alone with God? Well, what did Jesus do during that prayer time, that communion time with His Father?

Let me suggest at least three components to that mountain retreat time. First, I'm sure that Jesus was strengthened just by being in the presence of His Father. Now I realized that God's presence is always with us. Isn't that right? But sometimes we can be so inundated with the demands of those around us, we don't have time or energy to notice God's presence. Am I speaking the truth this morning? So when you go to the mountain, turn off your cell phone, leave your BlackBerry in another room. Take time just to be in God's presence. Jesus may have prayed praise to God, He may have sung Scripture songs, He may have repeated the words of God given through the prophets. He experienced what the Psalmist wrote about 1000 years earlier when David said, "In Your presence is fulness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

Part of that mountain retreat involved sweet communion with His Father. Another component of that mountain retreat may have been rest, rest in His Father's presence. There are times when we need to simply rest in God's presence. Do you remember when Elijah was exhausted from all of his amazing ministry experiences? In fact, Elijah was so physically and mentally depleted, he was suicidal. And what did the Lord say to Elijah in their communion time together? The Lord sent an angel with this message, "Arise and eat. We'll talk later!" That's a paraphrase, but you get the idea. "Eat and rest some more. We'll talk later!"

Some folks think it's evil to take a nap in God's presence, especially on Sabbath! I don't

think it's evil at all. I think it's a great idea. Now if you're so exhausted that you can't even get up to come to church, if you're so exhausted that you can't stay awake during the church service....now is a good time to nudge the person next to you who's taking a nap!.....if you're that exhausted, you're probably suffering from sleep deprivation. You need to make sure that you're getting adequate rest on a regular basis.

But there's nothing wrong with a nap...after church. And we can take a rest in God's presence. Not falling asleep to resist God. But resting in His presence! Perhaps that was another component of Jesus' mountain retreat time. Sweet communion. Rest. But I believe that there was a third component to that mountain retreat time. There's something else very important that happened on the mountain. Jesus was not only strengthened by sweet communion with His Father, He not only rested, but He also received instruction regarding what God was asking Him to do and what God was not asking Him to do.

In other words, Jesus received wisdom to know when to engage and when to disengage. And that's so important. If you are going to maintain a healthy balanced life, you need to learn when to engage and when to disengage. You need to learn when to say "Yes" and when to say "No."

Look at another occasion when Jesus took time out with His Father. Mark 1:35-37.
"....." I imagine Simon Peter waiting anxiously for Jesus to end His special communion time with His Father. Perhaps Simon Peter cleared his throat, or shuffled his feet. After all, so many people were waiting. And how does Jesus respond? Mark 1:38
"....."

And between that secluded place and the next town, Jesus and his disciples could find

several hours, perhaps even several days of solitude. What was the message that Jesus gave to His disciples following that retreat time with His Father? Time to disengage. Jesus learned when to engage and when to disengage. And if we don't learn that lesson, and where better to learn it than in the presence of our loving Heavenly Father...if we don't learn that lesson, we will burn out and die young.

Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life. We live in a world where our schedules are constantly hitting overload, 24/7/365. And we have the added complication of our work following us wherever we go. The solution is found in by going to the mountain, our time out in communion with God. There we are strengthened, we are energized in sweet communion with our Heavenly Father, there we can rest in perfect peace, and there we can receive wisdom to know when to engage and when to disengage.

There's much more that we will discuss together in this new series on Healthy Christians...healthy finances, healthy relationships, healthy bodies. I hope that you will join us for the whole series. But remember this today: Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life.

I invite you, after your power nap this afternoon, to read again from Mark 6:30-46 and to meditate upon God's Word to you. And if you have a copy of my favorite book on the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*...read the chapter entitled "Come rest awhile." I have a few copies up here if you would like a complimentary copy. It's chapter 38, Come Rest Awhile.

Is there anyone here today, or listening on the radio or on our website, and you sense the great need for God to help you to find a healthy balance in your life? I want to invite you to raise your hand right where you are...if you sense a need for God to help you to find a healthy balance in your life? Notice, I'm raising my hand too. I want to pray a special blessing for you today.

(CELL PHONE RINGS AGAIN) I'm going to ignore the cell phone. We have something more important to do right now. **(TURN OFF CELL PHONE)**

Let us pray.

Quotes:

“Daddy, I am completely booked for the week. I have school, then school homework, then reading, then piano practice, Karate class on Monday, basketball practice on Tuesday and Wednesday and Tennis classes on Thursday and Friday. Maybe Sunday afternoon we could make some time for the ride!”

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