



Are You Doing
Too Much?



3 COVER SUBJECT ARE YOU DOING TOO MUCH?

Today, many people are extremely busy, to the point that sometimes relationships are strained and families suffer.

How can we be balanced in our use of time?

A wise man once wrote: “Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind.”—Ecclesiastes 4:6.

This issue of “Awake!” provides practical suggestions on making wise use of our time, which includes setting practical priorities.

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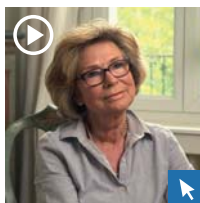
FAMILY

Can the Bible Help Me to Have a Happy Family?

Wise advice from the Bible has already helped millions of men and women to have happiness at home.

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

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Monica Richardson: A Physician Explains Her Faith

What she learned about the miracle of childbirth changed her view on the origin of life.

(Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS, in the category “Interviews and Experiences”)



COVER SUBJECT

Are You Doing Too Much?

Do you feel you are too busy? If so, you are by no means alone. “Everybody, everywhere seems to be busy,” reports the magazine *The Economist*.

IN A 2015 survey of full-time workers in eight countries, many respondents said that they find it hard to meet the demands of both their work and their homelife. Causes included increased responsibilities at work or at home, rising expenses, and longer working hours. In the United States, for example, full-time employees report working an average of 47 hours a week. Nearly 1 in 5 claimed to work 60 hours or more!

In another survey, this one involving 36 countries, over one quarter of the re-

spondents said that they often felt rushed *even in their leisure time!* Children too can be affected if overloaded with tightly scheduled activities.

When we constantly try to do more than time may allow, we can become stressed—victims of what has been termed “time pressure.” But is it possible to live a more balanced life? What role do our beliefs, choices, and goals play? First, consider four reasons why some try to do too much.

1 THE DESIRE TO PROVIDE WELL FOR ONE'S FAMILY

"I was involved in my work seven days a week," says a father named Gary. "I did it because there was always something better that I wanted to give my kids. I wanted them to have the things I never had." Despite their good motives, parents need to examine their priorities. Some studies suggest that both adults and children who attach a lot of importance to money and material possessions tend to be less happy, less satisfied with life, and less healthy physically than those who are not materialistic.

In an effort to position their children for future success, some parents overschedule both their children and themselves with various activities. Such well-meaning parents, says the book *Putting Family First*, "are acting like recreation directors on a turbo-charged family cruise ship."

2 THE BELIEF THAT 'MORE IS BETTER'

Advertisers try to convince us that we are depriving ourselves if we don't buy their latest products. Says *The Economist*: "The explosion of available goods has only made time feel more crunched," as consumers "struggle to choose what to buy or watch or eat" in the limited time they have available.

In the year 1930, a leading economist predicted that technological advancements would give workers more leisure time. How wrong he was! "Instead of quitting [work] early," observed Eliza-



beth Kolbert, staff writer for the *New Yorker* magazine, people "find new things to need"—and these things cost money and time.

3 TRYING TO SATISFY THE EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS

Some employees work grueling hours to avoid displeasing their employer. Coworkers can also exert pressure by making others feel guilty if they do not stay late. And then there is economic uncertainty, which can make people more willing to work longer hours or to be constantly on call.

Similarly, parents can feel pressured to conform to the hectic pace of other fami-



Children who are raised with an emphasis on material things are actually less happy

lies. If they do not conform, they may feel guilty about “depriving” their children.

4 THE PURSUIT OF STATUS AND SELF-FULFILLMENT

Tim, who lives in the United States, says: “I loved my work, and I worked at full throttle all the time. I felt that I had to prove myself.”

Like Tim, many feel a strong connection between their self-image and their pace of life. The result? “Busyness has acquired social status,” says Elizabeth Kolbert, quoted earlier. She adds: “The busier you are the more important you seem.”

LEARN TO BE BALANCED

Diligence and hard work are encouraged in the Bible. (Proverbs 13:4) But so is balance. “Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind,” says Ecclesiastes 4:6.

Leading a balanced life is good for our mental and physical health. Is it really possible, though, to cut back or slow down? Yes. Consider four suggestions:



Technology and Time Pressure

Do smartphones and tablets increase time pressure or relieve it? The answer depends on how these tools are used.

At work: Mobile devices can give workers more flexibility in choosing when and where to work. But they can also make work more stressful by creating the expectation that workers will be available at almost any hour of the day or night.

At home: Cell phones may reduce time pressure by making it easier for families to coordinate their activities. However, these devices can also intrude on family time. Studies indicate that children who have to compete with devices for a parent's attention may become frustrated and prone to behavioral problems.

1 CLARIFY YOUR VALUES AND GOALS

It is normal to want a measure of financial security. But how much money is enough? What constitutes success? Is it measured merely by income or material assets? Conversely, having too much rest or recreation can also increase time pressure.

Tim, quoted earlier, says: "My wife and I took a hard look at our life and decided to simplify it. We made a chart that showed our current situation and our new goals. We discussed the effects of past decisions and what we would need to do to reach our goals."

2 REDUCE THE INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER CULTURE

The Bible advises us to control "the desire of the eyes." (1 John 2:15-17) Advertising can fuel such desires, pushing a person to work long hours or to indulge in excessive or costly recreation. True, you may not be able to avoid all ads. But you can limit your exposure to them. You can also carefully consider what you actually need.

Keep in mind, too, the power that your associates can have on you. If they avidly pursue material things or if they measure success in material terms, you may be wise to seek out friends who have better priorities. "The one walking with the wise will become wise," the Bible says.—Proverbs 13:20.

3 SET LIMITS ON WORK

Speak to your employer about your work and your priorities. And do not feel guilty about having a life away from your job. The book *Work to Live* says: "Those who put



Use mealtimes to talk as a family

up boundaries between the job and home or take vacations find one consistent revelation: There is no apocalypse while you're gone."

Gary, quoted earlier, was financially comfortable, so he decided to reduce his working hours. "I talked with my family and suggested that we simplify our lifestyle," he said. "Then we gradually took steps to do so. I also approached my employer with a proposal to work fewer days each week, and he agreed."

4 MAKE FAMILY TIME A HIGH PRIORITY

Husbands and wives need to spend time together, and children need time with their

parents. So avoid trying to match the pace of other families who are constantly on the go. "Declare some downtime," Gary suggests, "and drop things that have a lower priority."

When your family is together, do not let television, cell phones, or other devices isolate you from one another. Share at least one meal together each day, and use mealtimes to talk as a family. When parents heed that simple advice, their children enjoy greater well-being and do better at school.

In conclusion, ask yourself: 'What do I want out of life? What do I want for my family?' If you desire a happier and more meaningful life, set priorities that reflect the proven wisdom found in the Bible. ■



Tern migration follows an indirect path, as shown in the illustration

The Amazing Arctic Tern

IT WAS long believed that arctic terns flew about 22,000 miles (35,200 km) on their journey from the Arctic region to Antarctica and back. Recent studies, however, revealed that the birds actually fly much farther.

Tiny instruments called geolocators were attached to a number of birds. About the weight of a paper clip, these amazing devices revealed that some terns flew an average of 56,000 miles (90,000 km) on the round-trip—the longest animal migration known. One bird flew nearly 60,000 miles (96,000 km)! Why the revised estimates?

No matter where they began their migration, the arctic terns flew an indirect route.

As shown in the illustration, a common Atlantic Ocean route took an S shape. The reason? The birds simply take advantage of prevailing wind systems.

During their lifetime of about 30 years, terns may travel well over 1.5 million miles (2.4 million km). That is equal to three or four round-trips to the moon! “This is a mind-boggling achievement for a bird of just over 100 grams [3.5 ounces],” said a researcher. What is more, because arctic terns experience the summers at both poles, they see “more daylight each year than any other creature,” states the book *Life on Earth: A Natural History*. ■



‘A Good Name Is Better Than Great Wealth’

A GOOD name, or reputation, is so valuable that in some lands it is legally protected. That may include protection against libel (a published or broadcast defamatory statement) and slander (an oral defamatory statement). This calls to mind the ancient saying: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great wealth; to be respected is better than silver and gold.” (Proverbs 22:1) How can we earn both a good name and the respect of others? Excellent suggestions can be found in the Bible.

For example, consider what the Bible says in Psalm 15. In answer to the question, “Who may be a guest in [God’s] tent?” the psalmist wrote: “The one who is . . . practicing what is right and speaking the truth in his heart. He does not slander . . . , he does nothing bad to his neighbor, and he does not defame his friends. He rejects anyone who is contemptible . . . He does not go back on his promise, even when it is bad for him. . . . And he does not accept a bribe.” (Psalm 15:1-5) Would you

not respect someone who lived by those beautiful principles?

Another quality that contributes to gaining respect is humility. “Before glory there is humility,” says Proverbs 15:33. Consider: The humble see where they can make improvement and work hard to do so. Also, they are willing to apologize if they have offended someone. (James 3:2) The proud are not like that but instead are quick to take offense. “Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling,” says Proverbs 16:18.

What, though, if someone smears your good name? Should you react hastily, perhaps in the heat of anger? Ask yourself, ‘If I try to defend my name, will I actually be giving wider exposure to the lie?’ While legal action may be appropriate at times, the Bible gives this wise advice: “Do not rush into a legal dispute.” Rather, “plead your case with your neighbor.” (Proverbs 25:8, 9)* This more measured approach can also spare you costly legal expenses.

The Bible is far more than a book about religion. It is a trustworthy guidebook for life. All who apply its wisdom cultivate qualities that merit deep respect and contribute to a good name. ■

* Additional Bible principles on conflict resolution are found at Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17.



When the Children Are Gone



THE CHALLENGE

Couples often face their greatest challenges after their children have grown up and left home. The empty nest can leave them feeling like virtual strangers. “I counsel many people who don’t know how to reconnect to their spouses,” writes family expert M. Gary Neuman. “Now that the children are gone, [the parents] have very little to talk about or to share.”*

Does that to some degree describe your marriage? If so, you *can* get back on track. First, though, consider some factors that might be to blame for the distance that has developed between you and your spouse.

* From the book *Emotional Infidelity*.

WHY IT HAPPENS

For years, the children came first. With good intentions, many parents put their children’s needs above the needs of their marriage. As a result, they become so accustomed to the roles of dad and mom that they lose their connection as husband and wife—a fact that becomes readily apparent once the children are gone. “When the kids were there, at least we did things together,” says a 59-year-old wife. But after the children left home, she admits, “we were on separate tracks.” At one point she even said to her husband, “We are in each other’s way.”

Some couples are unprepared to adapt to this new phase of life. “For many couples, it is almost as though they are in a new marriage,” says the book *Empty Nesting*. Feeling that they have little in common, many husbands and wives retreat into their own separate pursuits, becoming more like roommates than marriage mates.

The good news is, you *can* avoid the pitfalls—and even enjoy the benefits—of this new chapter in your life. The Bible can help in that effort. Let us see how.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Resolve to accept the change. Concerning grown children, the Bible says: “A man will leave his father and his mother.” (Genesis 2:24) As parents, your goal was to train your children for that moment, to help them develop the skills they would need to function as adults. Viewed in that light, your children’s leaving home is something of which you can rightly be proud.—*Bible principle: Mark 10:7.*

Of course, you will always be a parent to your children. Now, however, you are more of a consultant than a supervisor. This new relationship allows you to maintain a close bond with your children while giving *primary* attention to your spouse.*—*Bible principle: Matthew 19:6.*

Share your concerns. Talk to your mate about how this life transition affects you, and be ready to listen to your spouse’s feelings as well. Be patient and understanding. It may take time to strengthen your connection as husband and wife, but doing so is worth the effort.—*Bible principle: 1 Corinthians 13:4.*

Find new things to do together. Talk about goals you would like to pursue together or interests you would like to explore as a couple. Having raised children, you have gained much practical wisdom. Why not use that to help others?—*Bible principle: Job 12:12.*

Reaffirm your commitment. Think about the qualities that attracted you to each other. As a couple, think back on the history you have shared and the storms you have weathered. In the end, this new chapter in your life can be a good one. In fact, with cooperative effort you now have the opportunity to *improve* the quality of your marriage and rekindle the love that brought you together in the first place. ■

* If you are still raising children, remember that you are “one flesh” with your spouse. (Mark 10:8) Children feel especially secure when they see that their parents’ relationship is a solid one.

KEY SCRIPTURES

“A man will leave his father and his mother.”—Mark 10:7.

“What God has yoked together, let no man put apart.”
—Matthew 19:6.

“Love is patient and kind.”
—1 Corinthians 13:4.

“Is not wisdom found among the aged?”—Job 12:12.



SALVATORE AND AURORA

“We came to realize that we now had more time and that we needed to take full advantage of it. So we decided to reach out to more people—families with children as well as young couples. We love helping others and sharing our experience with them.”



CARLO AND CATERINA

“It took time to accept the idea that our life had changed. For years we talked mainly about the children. Now, when doing things together, we have gradually become accustomed to talking about ourselves and our interests.”



A Brain Pathologist Explains His Faith

PROFESSOR Rajesh Kalaria, of Newcastle University, England, has studied the human brain for more than 40 years. He used to believe in evolution. But later, he changed his views. *Awake!* asked him about his work and faith.

Please tell us about your religious background.

My father was born in India, and my mother, although of Indian origin, was born in Uganda. Their lives were largely governed by Hindu customs. I am the second of three children. We lived in Nairobi, Kenya. Many other Hindu people lived nearby.

What stimulated your interest in science?

I was always interested in animals, and I often went hik-

ing and camping with my friends to see the spectacular wildlife. My initial goal was to be a veterinary surgeon. But after graduating from a technical college in Nairobi, I went to England to study pathology at the University of London. Later, I specialized in research into the human brain.

Did your studies affect your religious beliefs?

Yes. The more I studied science, the harder I found it to believe in Hindu mythology

and traditions, such as the worship of animals and images.

Why did you accept the teaching of evolution?

In my younger years, many people around me held the view that human evolution began in Africa, and we often discussed this idea at school. Also, the teachers and university professors gave us students the impression that all respected scientists believe in evolution.

In time you reconsidered the question of the origin of life. Why?

I had been studying biology and anatomy for some years when a fellow student told me what he was learning about the Bible from Jehovah's Witnesses. I became curious. So when the Witnesses held an assembly at our college hall in Nairobi, I attended. Later, two Witness missionaries explained some Bible teachings to me. Their belief in a Grand Designer who has the answers to life's big questions did not sound like mythology. It appealed to me as being reasonable.

Did your medical knowledge hinder your belief in creation?

On the contrary! As I studied anatomy, I saw how well-designed and complex living things are. To attribute such a high level of sophistication to an unguided process no longer made sense to me.

Can you give us an example?

I have studied the human brain since the early 1970's, and this remarkable organ never ceases to amaze me. It is the seat of thought and memory and the control center for many bodily functions. The brain is also the hub of our many senses, interpreting information that comes

from both inside and outside the body.

Our brain functions the way it does largely because of its complex chemistry and intricate networks of neurons, the primary brain cells. The human brain has many billions of neurons, which communicate with one another through long fibers called axons. From these, a single neuron may make many thousands of connections with other neurons by way of branching fibers called dendrites. As a result, the total number of connections in the brain is astronomical! What is more, this dense forest of neurons and dendrites is, not chaotic, but precise. It is an amazing feat of "wiring."

Please explain.

The wiring progresses in a most orderly way during a baby's development in the womb as well as postnatally. Neurons send out fibers to target neurons that may be a few centimeters away—a vast distance on the cellular level. The target of a fiber, by the way, may be not just a specific cell but a specific part of that cell.

As a new fiber branches out from a neuron, it is guided by chemical signposts that say such things as "stop," "go," or "turn" until the fiber reaches its target. Without clear

instructions, growing fibers would soon get lost. The whole process is brilliantly orchestrated, starting with the instructions written in our DNA.

That said, we are far from understanding fully how the brain develops and functions, including how it forms memories, emotions, and thoughts. For me, just the fact that the brain *works*—not to mention how well it works and how beautifully it develops—points to a mind *far* superior to our own.

Why did you become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

The Witnesses showed me evidence that the Bible is God's Word. For example, the Bible is not a science book, but when it touches on scientific matters, it is consistently correct. It also contains accurate prophecies. And it improves the lives of those who apply its teachings. My own life is evidence of that. Since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1973, the Bible has been my guidebook. As a result, my life has become truly satisfying and purposeful. ■



TEMPTATION

Broken marriages, ill health, pangs of conscience—these are just some of the consequences of giving in to temptation. How can we avoid this snare?

What is temptation?

You are tempted when you are attracted to something—especially something wrong. To illustrate, while shopping you see a desirable item. The thought flashes into your mind that you could easily steal the item and not get caught. However, your conscience says no! So you dismiss the thought and move on. At that point, the temptation is over, and you are the victor.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Being tempted does not make you a bad person. The Bible acknowledges that we all experience temptation. (1 Corinthians 10:13) What really matters is how we act when tempted. Some dwell on the improper desire and sooner or later give in to it. Others promptly dismiss it as wrong.

*“Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire.”
—James 1:14.*

Why is it wise to act quickly when tempted?

The Bible reveals the steps that lead to wrongdoing. James 1:15 says: “The [improper] desire, when it has become fertile [literally, “has conceived,” footnote], gives birth to sin.” Put simply, when we dwell on a wrong desire, we reach a point where our acting on it becomes as inevitable as a pregnant woman’s giving birth. Yet, we can avoid being slaves to improper desires. We can gain the mastery over them.

HOW THE BIBLE CAN HELP Just as our mind can feed improper desires, it can also snuff them out. How? By our focusing on something else—an activity, a conver-

sation with a friend, or a wholesome thought. (Philippians 4:8) It is also helpful to reflect on the consequences of giving in to a temptation, which may include emotional, physical, or spiritual harm. (Deuteronomy 32:29) Prayer too can be a big help. Jesus Christ said: “Pray continually, so that you may not enter into temptation.”—Matthew 26:41.

“Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap.”—Galatians 6:7.



How can you fortify yourself against temptation?

THE REALITY See temptation for what it really is—a lure, or bait, that can lead a foolish, naive, or unwary person into danger. (James 1:14, footnote) That is especially true of temptations involving sexual immorality, which can have disastrous consequences.—Proverbs 7:22, 23.

HOW THE BIBLE CAN HELP “If, now, your right eye is making you stumble,” said Jesus Christ, “tear it out and throw it away from you.” (Matthew 5:29) Of course, Jesus was not speaking literally! Rather, he meant that if we want to please God and gain everlasting life, we must deaden our body members, as it were, in regard to wrongdoing. (Colossians 3:5) That may mean resolutely turning our back on a tempta-

tion. “Turn my eyes away from looking at what is worthless,” prayed a faithful man of God.—Psalm 119:37.

Of course, exercising self-control can be difficult. After all, “the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41) So we will make mistakes. However, when we are truly sorry and try hard not to make a habit of doing wrong, our Creator, Jehovah God, “is merciful and compassionate” toward us. (Psalm 103:8) How reassuring that is! ■

*“If errors were what you watch, O Jah,
then who, O Jehovah, could stand?”
—Psalm 130:3.*





WAS IT DESIGNED?

The Brilliant Blue of the *Pollia* Berry



© National Geographic Creative/Alamy Stock Photo

THE small berry of the *Pollia condensata* plant, found across Africa, exhibits the most intense blue color ever seen in a plant. Yet it has no blue pigment. What is the secret behind its striking color?

Consider: The cell walls in the skin of the berry contain tiny threads arranged like rows of matches. These threads form layers, each layer set off at a slight angle to the layer below, so that the rising layers form a helical, or spiral, pattern. The threads themselves are not colored blue. The color comes from the way the threads are stacked. Thus, structure, not pigment, is the key to the berry's intense metallic hue and iridescence. Most cells appear blue. But from different angles, some emit a green, pink, or yellow hue because of subtle changes in the layers. Moreover,

when examined closely, the colors are not smooth and even but appear pixelated, like the colors on a computer screen.

Since *Pollia* berries have no pigment, they keep their color even after they drop from the plant. In fact, some berries collected over a century ago look as brilliant as fresh ones! Even though the berry has no edible pulp, just seeds, it sends an irresistible signal to nearby birds, according to researchers.

Scientists believe that the *Pollia* berry's pigment-free color could inspire products ranging from fade-resistant dyes to counterfeit-resistant paper.

What do you think? Did the brilliant blue of the *Pollia* berry come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

