

Where Do You Focus Your Attention?

We have a 3-year old granddaughter who enjoys watching the kid's TV show Paw Patrol. Her eyes are glued to the screen as she gives it her total attention, oblivious to anything else around her. Do you have times when you are so focused on a task and oblivious to the world around you?

This weekend concludes on Labor Day. Labor Day is recognized the first Monday of September each year. It acknowledges the labor movement and is “dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.” Going back in history the labor movement has helped workers maintain some normalcy in their lives in and outside the workplace. We need that.



For most of us Labor Day is a day off from work and provides an extended weekend for time with our families. Our highways are filled with families headed to the beach or mountains to spend time together. In our everyday lives time with our families is precious and often in short supply. The fast-paced American culture encourages many of us to seek achievement at work often at the expense of family life at home. We sometimes sacrifice our family in order to advance our career. Yet, the Bible gives us a different direction. If we are married, God's instruction is to love our spouse sacrificially (read Ephesians 5:25 below). In effect, it tells us to place love ahead of the paycheck. As children come into the family His guidance is to bring them up in the “training and instruction of the Lord” (read Ephesians 6:4). Family relationships take time and commitment.

Many of us struggle with this. Some of us turn our passion at work into an obsession. Often we realize it is happening, but still are fanatical with achievement at work. A recent study revealed that 81% of American workers were unhappy with their work/life balance and 88% had a hard time juggling work and life. We stay at work late. Approximately 40% of American workers frequently work overtime. We do what we think we have to at work while the family sometimes gets short-changed.

In the struggle to be productive in the workplace the term we often think about is “balance.” The Bible takes a different approach. It talks about “redeeming the time,” referring to how we prioritize the family and share the good and gracious things of the Lord with our families. It isn't referring to “quality time,” when people exchange a focus at work for a temporary focus on the family. That is rarely an even exchange. Redeeming the time makes God the key component of all we do – at work, at home and in the community. It recognizes the challenges of being Christ-centered in a fallen world. Ephesians 5:16 tells us: *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil*. If God is an integral part of every aspect of your life you will revere the importance of God's gift of marriage, family, health and all that you have. Your work will be a testimony to your faith but it will be put in proper perspective with your other roles in life. You won't shun the family for love of money or power in the workplace.

On Labor Day we can appreciate our nation's historic efforts to provide a work environment that makes provision for the well-being of employees and their families. It is, however, up to us to utilize the opportunity to make family life a priority and life outside the workplace enriching. John 10:10 reminds us (see below) that Jesus came so that we may experience the fullness and abundance of life. The fullness of life is not just a healthy paycheck but a healthy, well-rounded life. Enjoy this Labor Day with your family, and make family a key priority in your life year-round. After all, you are an important part of the Family of God.

Question: Can you consistently make the choice for your family to be a priority in your life?

The Bible Says:

- *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25).*
- *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).*
- *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10).*