

It's all about balance!

One of the things that we commit to as members of CA&H is to keep our lives in a rhythm. Rhythm and balance are very closely linked, as there cannot be a good rhythm if things are out of balance. At Spring Harvest this year we were asked to give an interview on living by a way of life in one of the seminars that Russ Rook was leading. Penny Warren braved the first session, and I the second. The last thing that Russ asked me was that if there was one thing that I would say was the key to living a way of life what would it be? Through an explanation I gave the answer that I believe balance to be the answer, to have things in balance was key to living a way of life.

Recently I had a question for God, something which I was struggling with. My usual way to deal with this is to go and spend time with God out in creation, dwell in his presence for a while and allow his voice to soak into my heart. So this was exactly what I did.

The question I had was this: *Why is it that I can have such inner peace within me one moment and be attuned to God's voice, but then another, not?*

This was bothering me, so I wandered for a while in creation near where I live, along the banks of a river among the trees, watching the birds and fish along the way.

As I walked I came across a tree which had a branch that drooped down and then up again in a curve a bit like a hammock, just low enough in its droop for me to sit on the branch. As I sat on the branch with my feet on the floor and closed my eyes to spend some time in contemplative meditation I felt the need to sit crossed legged as I did this. I looked at the ground to see where I might be able to sit, when I felt in my heart God say "Stay on the branch." Crossed legged? I thought, I looked at the branch, it was not very wide, but I thought I would give it a go, so I hoisted myself up onto the branch.

It took some time, a few attempts and quite some effort, and a lot of help from the walking staff I always take with me, but I managed to get myself onto the branch crossed legged. For some time I continued to use the staff resting on the floor to balance me, but then felt I should remove the staff from the floor and place it across my lap, as I usually do when in this position. This too took a few attempts, and a few more times of ending up on the floor again, but I managed to do it. So there I was, sitting crossed legged on the branch with no support, only my balance to keep me there. I was feeling quite pleased with myself.

However, a quiet and gentle gust of wind (sent deliberately from God I am sure) made the branch bounce and sway a little, and I lost my balance again. Quickly moving the staff from its place and pushing it against the floor, I regained my balance without falling from the branch. I placed the staff back across my lap and continued to sit cross legged on the branch, doing well with my balance (continuing to be quite impressed with myself). Then I decided to continue in my contemplative meditation whilst on the branch, and so closed my eyes to listen to the outer and inner sounds.

This proved to be a mistake.

With my eyes open I could balance (pretty well), but as soon as I closed my eyes I seemed to lose all ability to balance at all! Numerous times the staff was swung from its place to the floor, and once or twice I ended up on the floor again myself.

Then God spoke (after laughing to himself whilst watching me I should imagine). He taught me that there is a difference between *obtaining* balance and *maintaining* balance. That I was quite good at *obtaining* balance, quietness and inner stillness in life, but to *maintain* this balance throughout the whole of life, every day, with all that I would have to deal with, was a whole other thing altogether, and though I have learned and am well practiced at how to *obtain* balance and inner stillness, it is how to *maintain* this balance that I must learn, and which he has continued to teach me in the days which have followed.

May we all, in our walk with him, *obtain* balance, but may we more *maintain* it within our everyday.

David Cole