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Right now being a student is my occupation, and being in school provides many opportunities for life to get out of balance. Classes, homework, and activities all compete for students' time. But in the midst of these pressures, students can maintain a balanced life by putting God first in all we do.

A truly balanced life involves putting God at the top of the to-do list. He gets first place in our priorities. So how can students keep God first? We can plan time to read God's Word and pray, fellowship with like-minded believers, and give of our increase and our time. When we plan time for God, we are putting first things first.

Proverbs 21:5:

The thoughts [plans] of the diligent tend only to plenteousness....

I often find myself under pressure, thinking that there might not be enough time to accomplish everything I have to do. Planning helps me think through my day and identify particularly pressing assignments, allowing me to take care of specific problems before they lead to stress. By planning my time wisely, I can also make sure to set aside time with God. Without sticking to a plan, it can be easy to let an entire day slide by without taking quiet time to read the Word and pray.

I have been tempted to look at a busy day and think that I can't find time for God. But when I make time to put Him first, He faithfully rewards me. On one particularly busy day, a friend texted me because she had just been reading I Samuel 17 and thought that I would enjoy reading it too. I told her that between my packed schedule and list of assignments, I didn't have enough time, but I would try to read it the next day. She replied, "Read it today! Trust me, it'll be worth it." So I opened my Bible to the chapter she mentioned—the record of David and Goliath. My friend was right: my time reading about a young believer doing what seemed impossible made me feel refreshed and ready to take on my day. After that, I was able to accomplish way more than I had ever expected. Putting God at the top of my to-do list prospered the rest of my plans.

Planning time to pray is another important part of putting God first.

Philippians 4:6,7:

Be careful [Be anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Prayer allows us to share every concern with God, and it also brings peace to our hearts. Having a prayer partner can help us pray consistently. And it's fun to share challenges and victories with another believer who can help us pray for specifics in our lives and keep us on track with our own believing. If prayer with believing can cast a mountain into the sea (Matthew 21:21,22), then it can definitely help students through any homework assignment! Prayer is an especially great way to keep God first because we can do it anywhere and at any time.

We can also put God first by fellowshiping with like-minded believers.

Acts 2:42:

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

I attend the local home fellowship as often as possible and aim to fellowship with another believer at least once a day. For me, that may mean texting a Bible verse to a friend or talking to a believer on the phone. Even if it's only something small, fellowshiping with like-minded believers helps us stay on God's Word and keep Him first.

Tithing and abundant sharing is another way to keep God first.

Luke 6:38:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over....

Before I left for college, I asked a friend who was a college graduate if she had any tips for me. What she told me was one of the most helpful pieces of advice I received. She told me to give of my increase, even if my increase was only a little, because God would bless me in return.

Malachi 3:10:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

If God will bless us this much when we tithe, imagine how much He will do when we give even more! Students may not always have a financial increase, but when we do, giving the portion due to God keeps Him first.

We can also give of our time and talents—perhaps by volunteering to teach at fellowship occasionally. And even if time is sparse, remember that simply praying is giving time for the things of God. We give of what we have, and no matter how much or how little it is, God will bless us when we give with thanksgiving and believing.

Students, as we keep God first, we can make it through any challenge in life. We can keep God first by planning time to read the Word and pray, by fellowshiping with other believers, and by giving of our increase and our time. As we endeavor to keep God first, we will be able to maintain a truly balanced life.

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