

# Keeping the Balance

by George Verwer

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*We must strive for balance between grace and discipline in all areas of life, while also taking responsibility for our actions and behavior.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:11, Matthew 18:15, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 3:23, Hebrews 12:11, 1 Peter 5:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discipline", "Godly Balance"

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## Description

George Verwer addresses the struggle between grace and discipline in life, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance. He highlights the necessity of following basic rules and laws, even in the midst of grace and forgiveness. Verwer stresses the need for personal responsibility, discipline, and organization in all aspects of life, including spiritual growth and ministry. He challenges listeners to respond to sin and failure with grace and love, while also understanding the consequences of breaking rules. Verwer encourages a realistic approach to life, acknowledging its harshness and complexities, especially in Christian ministry.

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## Transcript

We have tried to emphasize balance, but in many areas of life, we have not found it easy. One of my own greatest struggles is between grace and discipline.

For any of you who think this is not a problem, I would say you probably have not looked at the issues and realities. What has happened in the White House over the past year is just one of many of examples.

We need to have certain basic laws and rules just to function. Non-Christians know this and are creating more rules and laws by the day. Near to where I live, you can be fined £50 if your dog fouls the sidewalk. When I walk my daughter's dog I carry a little plastic bag; am I a legalist?

The truth is, that no matter how 'grace awakened' and 'big-hearted' we are, we still must learn to keep the basic rules of the game.

In the area of basic morality, we must make every effort in God's power to 'keep the rules'. We all know people who were killed due to, in some cases, one quick simple act of indiscipline. Many car accidents take place because for a moment the driver let his eyes or mind wander from the road. I remember as a little boy my dad telling my mom that he just had such an accident. I really believe we need a 'wake-up

call' in this area before, humanly speaking, it is too late.

The fact is that no one can function, Christian or non-Christian, without basic rules and law-keeping discipline. We must work and think hard: we must organize our time and work. We must know the basic laws and rules of our country, city, job and keep them. When we sin or fail, we can be forgiven, especially by God and often (not always) by people.

It's hard for me to admit, but sometimes we are reading too many books, especially of a certain kind, and we need to lay them aside for a while and come down to earth. In some cases, this is harder for the 'spiritually-minded Christian' than for some non-Christians.

We must take full responsibility for our life and behaviour. We must stop blaming God, our friends, the system or demons and spiritually-speaking, 'bite the bullet' of ordering and disciplining our lives.

All sports people (read Heb. 12) who are any good have disciplined their bodies and aimed and worked for excellency. All of us in God's marathon must do the same; no more excuses!

The balance is kept especially in how we respond when other people sin, fail and really blow it, maybe even causing great harm. As God's people, we must respond in grace and love. We must try to find a grace-awakened solution and keep a godly attitude in the midst of the problem or crisis. The person, or persons, may need to be disciplined.

In God's work we must have basic rules, and we must be mature enough to face the consequences when we break them. One of the confusing, hurtful statements that some people make is, 'It's easier to get forgiveness than permission.' To do something wrong to start with, wow, the devil has had a field day with that one! Remember, in certain secular situation you will simply be fired.

We have learned some lessons on our ships over the past 30 years. Partly because they knew we would forgive, people have walked down the gangway into serious sin. By the way, in one sense, all sin is serious. I just had a letter from a person who did just that some years ago and said that his life has been a total chaotic mess ever since.

The truth is that life in itself can be very harsh and very hard. The sooner we learn that and stop making excuses, the better. In volunteer Christian ministry certain kinds of unreality are especially very prevalent. We seem to more easily blame the agency, team or the leader. Their sins and shortcomings are a factor that makes it hard to know how to react. In some situations there is no easy answer and seemingly win-win situation. Sometimes, it's only 'damage control'.

In our work, when we finally ask someone to leave, we often find great problems as the person being disciplined calls 'foul' or even starts a gossip campaign against the leader or even the organization as a whole. Yes, welcome to God's work, planet earth.

We must continue to emphasize grace and show people in every way that God loves them even when they sin or fail. Even if the person commits a crime, yes, even murder, they can be forgiven by God - but to get forgiveness from the legal system, judge or jury is going to be different. As we bring justice and judgement into the picture, the battle for balance becomes even more complex.

In our emphasis on love and forgiveness and in all our care and counselling about grace, love and acceptance, we must try to also keep the big picture. Some Christians with their inexpensive advice can

often make the whole event more complicated. We have found that it is one thing to preach about God using the weak, needy, fallen ragamuffin, sometimes eccentric people (there are books about them), but quite something else to live with one on your team or have one as your leader. Are we dealing with contradiction or paradox?

Yes, this is a huge challenge and we will never all agree on the many aspects of it, but my prayer after you read this is for greater balance, reality and consistency on every level. Forgive me if I aim too high.

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