



Leaders

BOOK SUMMARIES

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Your Life in Rhythm

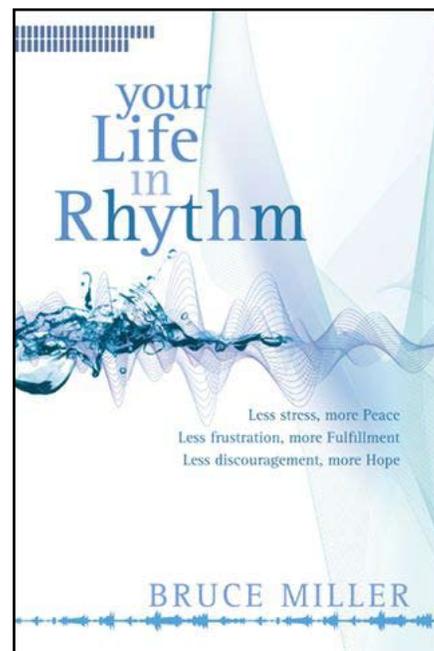
THE SUMMARY

Chapter 1: How I Got Rhythm

As an approach to life, “balance” never made sense to me. Intuitively I knew something was wrong with it but could never figure out what it was. My friends said I was just too driven and didn’t appreciate the importance of balance, but I was never sure exactly what that even meant. No one could ever give me a good definition of balanced life; it was just assumed to be obvious. To me it just sounded like being average.

Every time I heard about living a balanced life, I thought—*“There has to be a better way to live. Isn’t there another model?”* I couldn’t find anything clear in the Scriptures to help, and there always seemed to be something missing from all the time-management tools I looked at.

Then, several years ago while speaking at a conference in New Zealand, I had a eureka moment. I had a sudden flash: *Rhythm. Rhythm is a better model than balance.*



About the Author

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I'm not sure where it came from, but as I shared it I received a tremendously positive response. Clearly I had struck a chord. Since then my understanding has grown.

Balance is a stagnant concept—it assumes things stay the same. Rhythm is different—it *moves*. It's active, like our lives are—always moving and changing. And as I explored the concept, I realized that all of life operates in rhythm. Nature operates on daily rhythms, lunar rhythms, seasonal and annual rhythms, etc. Gail Sheehy in her books *Passages* and *New Passages* outlines how there is a rhythm to our lives and how we go through stages as we go through life. Elite athletes understand rhythm. They have figured out the power of interval training, which mixes times of rest and exercise in regular intervals.

Rhythm gives us a whole different paradigm to approach life with. I encourage you to stop asking "Is my life in balance?" and start asking "Am I in a good rhythm?"

Chapter 2: Our Busy Lives and the Burden of Balance

The central myth of the modern workplace is that with a few compromises you can have it all. But that's wrong, and it's making us crazy. The quest for balance between work and life, as we've come to think of it, is a hurtful and destructive idea.

Most of us struggle with busyness, competing priorities, and stress. As success-driven people, we keep looking for the next system to help reach the next rung on the ladder of keeping it all

together. But we often struggle deeply. I've asked thousands of people if their life is balanced, and so far no one has ever said, "Yes, my life is balanced." It's not a helpful concept.

We all want to live a full life, make a meaningful contribution, and enjoy ourselves along the way. But the stress of life often drives us to anxiety and depression. Life in the developed world is unhealthy.

Balance happens when two weights on the scales are equal. The idea of balance is flawed when applied to life because it assumes our lives can find that kind of equilibrium. Unfortunately, life never pauses for us to find balance. And it doesn't work—we wouldn't want to give equal time to work, marriage, sleep, meals, friendships, etc. Even if it is just about having "proper proportions" of time for each area of life, it doesn't work because life is constantly changing.

Balance conveys average, and yet, in life we strive for excellence. And wildly successful people are usually not balanced. To be outstanding in anything requires commitment and sacrifice. Great success requires great sacrifice, and sacrifice is not balanced. Yet it is the very element necessary for greatness. Balance doesn't beget greatness, yet we all want to be great.

Chapter 3: Why Rhythm Offers a Better Life

A well-lived life will find ways to harmonize with created rhythms. The reason we are often stressed out, anxious, and guilt-

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ridden is because we are out of step. Our lives don't feel right because we aren't living in sync with our natural rhythms and our surroundings.

Rhythm is an intuitive concept that isn't hard to understand. There are two main types of rhythm: *seasonal flows* and *regular cycles*. Flows are chronological; they have a beginning and end. Cycles are repeated sequences that recur regularly. Sports are a great example; there is a preseason, a regular season, play-offs, and a break. Each has a different focus and emphasis.

Birthdays, graduations, births, and marriage proposals are times of celebration that carry special rhythms. Layoffs, divorce, illness and death are times of grief that have their own flow and rhythm. We need to grieve well and celebrate well. Grief and celebration are not something to be held in balance; instead, they are to be experienced in natural rhythms.

Beyond that, each human season (singleness, marriage, parenting) entails a unique way to live during that time. If a woman tries to live the same way during pregnancy as she did before she was pregnant, she will get frustrated. New parents often comment on how they didn't know what they used to do with all their time before the children came. What might appear balanced in one stage doesn't even make sense in another.

A rhythm approach is more practical than balance because it takes into account our current seasons and life stages. A person in the middle of career building has a different life rhythm from a retiree or a student. That may seem obvious, but actually taking your life stage into account

is crucial to forming a pattern for living well.

When we strive to live a balanced life without taking into account our seasons, we take on burdens that we weren't meant to bear. We end up with false expectations that add stress to our lives. A mother of a newborn cannot expect to have the same level of outside involvement she had as a single person; expecting to will only produce guilt and frustration.

The answer is living intentionally according to the rhythm of the season we are in. Note: this book assumes you have a life mission that guides you. A life mission provides the boundaries within which your life's rhythms can flow. There are six rhythm strategies that give you a way to live a better life, and two kinds of rhythm that undergird them. We'll look at them now.

Chapter 4: Kairos and Chronos Rhythms

There are two Greek words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos*, where we get the word *chronology*, relates to clock and calendar time—measured, predictable, and regularly reoccurring. *Kairos* is different—it is experienced time, or quality time. It often relates to a critical time, as when we talk about "seizing the moment."

I am using the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos* time to label the two basic kinds of rhythm: cycles and seasons. *Chronos* cycles describe the natural flow of life on planet earth, while *kairos* seasons describe patterns in the flow of our human lives. *Kairos* seasons are not tied to clock time;

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they are flows rather than cycles, and that is what we are talking about when we describe specific periods in our own lives.

Paying attention to kairos seasons can add tremendous value to our lives. Even more importantly than chronos cycles, recognizing and seizing those moments (or seasons) can make all the difference in life quality.

Chapter 5: Your Life Seasons and Life Stages

Several years ago I had the opportunity to watch a surfing competition. Surfers have to learn how to read the waves and take advantage of the natural swells and breaks as they learn how to ride the waves. Understanding kairos rhythms will help us learn to ride the waves as well.

The easiest way to understand kairos rhythms is in relation to personal seasons and life stages. We move through them rather than repeat them. Some seasons we may experience more than once, but never in the same way. Personal seasons typically last from a month to five years. Life stages are longer periods, like adolescence, midlife, and retirement, which usually last from 4-25 years. Sometimes seasons and stages overlap, like when we go to college in late adolescence. It isn't as important to categorize the season or stage as much as it is to understand what time it is in our lives—and then live in sync with the rhythm of that time.

Seasons are normally identified by significant experiences rather than a chronological age. When a personal season begins, we need to recognize it for

what it is and then make the necessary adjustments in our lives—release wrong expectations, seize opportunities, and anticipate what's next.

Many seasons are characterized by a beginning or an ending. Conception begins the season of pregnancy, and the moment of birth both ends that season and begins a new season of parenthood. Recovery, as from an illness or injury, is a class of season, as is a time of crisis. That doesn't mean seasons are always connected to something bad; a harvest season is connected to reaping the rewards of our efforts. These can be times of great intensity; when the crop is ready to be reaped, it's time to work from morning to night. Harvest seasons are intense times of busy, hard work—and they should be.

Seasons can be connected to times of celebrations, like graduations, anniversaries, and retirements. The workplace has its own rhythms. Learning to make the most of your kairos rhythms begins with identifying your personal seasons.

Life stages are a different kind of rhythm. Most people aren't fully aware of their stage of life. This often results in activities and bearing responsibilities that aren't appropriate for that stage. Applying the kairos rhythm strategies to your life stage can powerfully reduce your busyness and stress. Doing so guards you from taking on expectations for an age or stage other than the one in which you are living. It's sad when children are forced to assume adult responsibilities before they are ready. At any stage of life, when we take on expectations from a previous or future stage, we increase our stress, busyness, and distraction beyond what's natural.

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Our life stages are often defined largely by our family relationships. We begin as children living with our parents; when we become adults we relate to our parents differently. Then the time comes when we begin to take care of our parents. The same cycle then replays with our own children, and their rhythms actually create ours. (Infants bring us a season of no sleep; school age launches us into homework, sports, and school activities, etc.) Let's not try to live as if we had an empty nest until the kids are gone, and once they are, let's not try to parent them in the same way.

Consider the stages of your life and what different responsibilities and opportunities each future stage may call for. Until you've been through a few transitions, it's easy to assume that every stage will be like the one you are in now. But those who have passed through a few often look back and realize how unique the stages were and how quickly they pass.

In order to "ride the wave" you need to first identify what life stage you are in. Look first at your physical age and then at your relational status. Then identify if you are in a new, multi-year phase, like moving to a new location or starting a new job. Then ask: What expectations can you release? What opportunities can you seize? And what's next—what can you look forward to? Once you can identify the waves, you can discover how to ride them.

Chapter 6: Kairos Strategy #1—Release Expectations

Everyone has experienced guilt. Some

of it is deserved, but other times it is self-imposed and unnecessary. We feel guilty because of expectations we have about what we ought to be doing or not doing during a particular season of our lives. Peace comes from living fully in each season, without getting sidetracked by resentment for the season we are in or regret for a season gone by or fear of a season yet to come. Young people wish they were older, and older people wish they were younger. Both are trying to live in a different season than the one they're in.

Releasing expectations and embracing rhythm means we accept the limitations placed on us by certain seasons. For example, when we are in a season of grief, it's not the time to start a large project. While on vacation, don't plan to work. When it's crunch time at work, don't expect to have significant family time. By releasing expectations that don't fit your current rhythms, you will reduce guilt. And by trusting that God has you in this season and stage, you'll have more peace.

Note: If you are in a close relationship, it's vital to appreciate not only your own personal seasons but also the seasons your loved one is experiencing. Whether your wife is pregnant or has cancer, that season is going to affect you, and you need to adjust your expectations accordingly.

This same strategy of releasing expectations applies even more powerfully to the longer life stages. This is the place with the greatest opportunity for getting rid of false guilt. Be at peace with the stage God has you in right now. Stop envying others who are older or younger. When we have little, we wish for more, we want to be wealthy. After we get more, we resent all the hassles and anxiety that go

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with having more. We wish for a simpler life. Instead, we should adapt to the rhythm of the season we're in and make the most of it.

A great question to ask is: "What can I do only in this stage?" In my late thirties I realized I had a limited number of years left to raise my kids. That made me seriously re-evaluate my commitments and expectations. I stepped off the board of an organization because I recognized I had many years to be a board member but only a limited amount of time to raise my kids. And I didn't feel guilty about it.

As time goes on, seasons change. When my daughter went to college, we both needed to release the expectation she would be at home the way she was while growing up. If we don't release the expectations of the previous stage, we inhibit our ability to receive the blessings in the new stage that is beginning. The same happens for older people, who often struggle with losing the strength of youth. Some try excessively to regain their vigor, going way beyond normal, healthy exercise. After that comes an even harder battle—accepting the gradual loss of independence. In order to embrace the opportunities of either stage, unrealistic expectations need to be released.

Chapter 7: Kairos Strategy #2—Seize Opportunities

You can live full-out without burning out. One of the keys to finding fulfillment is to seize unique opportunities with your current kairos rhythms. When it's playoff time, go full-out to win. When it's off-season, rest and rebuild your capacity.

When you are young and have more energy, use it. When you're old and have more wisdom, use that. To carry out your life's mission, seize the opportunities that are in your current life stage and season.

Burnout comes from trying to seize opportunities that don't fit the current season of your life. It's created by trying to meet unreleased false expectations. When we release false expectations, we create space to be able to seize opportunities that we couldn't anticipate but are unique to the season.

Look for the blessings available in each season. We increase our stress when we don't count our blessings. We breed unhappiness and discontent when we live with regret and resentment for what we don't have (or wish we didn't have). Each season carries with it distinct benefits and challenges. We waste our lives when we focus on the difficulties and neglect to seize the opportunities and enjoy the blessings.

Every business has its seasons when extra time and energy are required to make the most of the opportunity. For example, Christmas is harvest time in retail sales. Focusing our efforts during these peak times will often pay off with maximized results—results we would never achieve if we miss the strategic kairos moments. Just as there is an opportune time for releasing expectations, there is an opportune time for seizing opportunities. But if we are pursuing "balance" we may miss out on those opportunities.

Rather than resenting intense seasons, enjoy the feeling of accomplishment, of pushing yourself to the limit, whether it's cleaning the house, making the big sale,

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or finishing a major project. Seize the opportunity to accomplish something. In a rhythmic approach to life, there are times to work like a madman and times to rest deeply. In 1995 we started a church in McKinney, Texas. In the first couple years, I worked like crazy—often 70-80 hours per week. That’s what it took to launch the church, and I was glad to do it. But after we got established, I kept going at that pace, until some friends confronted me. That’s how I realized there are seasons for intense activity and others for rest.

Too often, when we are starting a company, building a church, or raising kids, we are in such a rush that we don’t take time to enjoy the blessings and opportunities. We get consumed with the work and miss the joy that could be ours if we slowed down and embraced the season. Parents of little kids can embrace those bedtimes where a multitude of hugs and kisses seem required. Relishing university life rather than just trying to get done as soon as possible, enjoying the empty nest, and the freedom that comes with retirement are all examples of embracing the season. Exchange burnout for fulfillment by releasing false expectations and seizing unique opportunities in this season and stage of life. You’ll find a better life.

Chapter 8: Kairos Strategy #3—Anticipate What’s Next

Anticipation breeds hope. When you feel stuck in your current stage, you can take hope in the fact that it won’t last forever; nothing does. The next stage is on the horizon. All of our stages are relatively brief in light of the whole scope of our lives. Despair comes from feeling stuck and

having no way out. We can’t always see the light at the end of the tunnel, but it’s there.

Our English word *hope* isn’t as strong as the biblical concept of hope, which describes a sure confidence that something is going to happen. The kairos rhythm strategy is based more on the biblical idea than the typical English usage. When you anticipate what’s coming, that expectation fuels the hope that gives you a better life.

Of course, our hopes don’t always come to pass. Sometimes the wedding is called off or the soldier doesn’t make it home. In times of crisis, the same strategies still apply. After taking time to grieve well, look for expectations to release, as hard as that might be. Release the expectation that you’ll get back together or that he’s coming home. Identify and take hold of the unique opportunities in this challenging season. Find new hope in anticipating what’s next, because this wave, as overwhelming as it may seem, will not last forever. It *will* pass, and a new day *will* come.

What’s about to end in your life? What is about to begin? Winter comes every year, but a new job doesn’t. But some seasons can and should be planned. After an intense season, you need time to recover so you can move into the next busy season. Sometimes you can see a high-stress time coming and plan for it.

One key habit to develop is to plan for rest. When I know an intense or busy time is coming, I schedule a time of rest to follow. We’ve had times when my family knew I was going to be super-busy, but they could look forward to the vacation that would follow. The power of expectation gives the endurance it takes to keep working

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hard. When you know that a break is coming you can go full-out on the task at hand. Schools have learned this; after final exams there is a break before the next term starts.

After a long stretch of high stress, you need a long break. About four years after we started the church, I was deeply tired, and the elders gave me a 6-week sabbatical. I needed it. The tiredness itself wasn't bad; it's healthy to work hard, so hard that you are exhausted. What's foolish is to never stop and renew your energy. A rhythmic approach to life encourages seasons of high intensity that require personal sacrifice, but these times should be followed by a season of rest and renewal. Note: You can increase your anticipation by planning the downtime while working. Figuring out where you'll go and what you'll do puts your mind in that place, and helps you keep pressing on in the meantime.

While not all kairos rhythms can be predicted (who knows when a crisis might hit?), life stages can be anticipated. We know we will age and experience predictable changes, as will children. We know what's coming: the terrible twos, noisy nines, preteen issues, puberty, etc. Each child is different, but the stages are predictable. If you don't like the one you are in right now, use the power of anticipation to give yourself hope. Your current stage won't last forever...there is another one coming.

Chapter 9: The Five Chronos Cycles

Over the past 20+ years, many authors have written on effective time management

with increasing sophistication. But can you move beyond time management? I think you can, by shifting your mental model from "management" to "flow." You can't manage time—it happens, and is the same for everyone. By growing in your understanding of how time flows, you can flow *with* it more harmoniously and effectively. Shift the focus from *time* to *yourself*.

Let's shift from kairos time to chronos time. Chronos time is measured time; clocks and calendars keep track of chronos time. Chronos time flows in cycles; these cycles are the way life happens on earth for all organisms, including humans. There are five basic chronos cycles, all rooted in creation. These cycles reflect how God made the world we live in. Living in harmony with them is one of the keys to peace. Busyness is exacerbated when we attempt to live in the same way, day after day and year after year, without paying attention to the cycles that structure our existence. They are:

- Orbital (annual): based on the earth orbiting the sun.
- Seasonal (quarterly): based on the tilt of the earth.
- Lunar (monthly): based on the cycle of the moon.
- Sabbath (weekly): based on the creation pattern of seven days.
- Rotational (daily): based on the rotation of the earth.

There is a rhythm we can develop that is in harmony with each of these cycles. Though we understand the concept of a year, few of us plan annually. And yet every year brings the same cycle. Knowing that allows us to plan for it.

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Each year contains four seasons. Most of us overestimate what we can do in a day or a week, but underestimate what we can accomplish in a season. Many of us can stay focused for a week, but tend to lose focus over three months. Developing a seasonal pace can help us live more healthy and productive lives. By envisioning what we want to accomplish over a quarter, we can take some large steps toward carrying out our life's mission.

Likewise, monthly and weekly rhythms are rooted in creation, and we are finding that our human biological rhythms align with them as well. From menstrual cycles to the Sabbath, life on earth is rooted in these rhythms. It is therefore worth figuring out how to align our own lives with these rhythms. The rhythm of a day is the one we are most familiar with, but without the other rhythms as context, we misuse most of our days. In the context of the longer rhythms, we can relax about what we are not doing on any given day. If we try to be totally balanced on any particular day, we will add unnecessary stress to our lives. Part of the reason for our high stress levels is that we ignore the basic cycles of our planet. Fighting those rhythms creates frustration because they don't change; we just burn out. And we feel guilty because we cannot overcome natural cycles by sleeping less or maintaining a consistent lifestyle.

Chapter 10: Chronos Strategy **#1—Pace Yourself**

You don't have to be a runner to know that you don't run a marathon at the same speed you run the 100-yard dash. Each race requires its own pace. But in our day-

to-day lives, most of us are trying to run every race at the same pace. Then we feel guilty and stressed when we can't do it. Each of the chronos cycles has its own pace. Matching that pace is the key to learning how to flow with it well.

We will find more peaceful and fulfilled lives if we can identify appropriate frequencies for our regular activities. When we try to balance all our obligations every week, we lose the benefit of the longer rhythms. When we take those obligations into account, we can relax about the "imbalance" of any particular week because we know that we have a healthy pace over the course of a year. We need to find the best frequency, or pace, for each activity we are involved in.

We experience a lot of confusion and stress when we try to fit things that are best suited for a longer rhythm into shorter cycles, like living daily with guilt because we haven't called a parent, when that is a weekly task, or feeling bad because we haven't cleaned the garage, which is a seasonal task we could plan to do in two months (and not think about it until then).

To live in harmony with each rhythm, we should ask, "What's the best frequency for activity or responsibility in my life?" Is this something to do daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, or annually? Most people over-focus on the day and the week to the neglect of the longer rhythms (which makes sense, given that most time management systems focus on daily and weekly rhythms).

Holidays, taxes, and anniversaries (of all events, not just weddings) are annual events. Financial reports and grades are quarterly ones. When you are thinking

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about the month, focus on the weekends—how will you invest those? Every activity in your life has some kind of natural pace—find it. By pacing yourself with the way life works, you can reduce burnout, stress, and the guilt of false expectations that you need to carry all of life’s responsibilities every day. Find the best frequency for the activities in your life, relax, and let each cycle have its natural flow in your life.

Chapter 11: Chronos Strategy #2—Build Rituals

Burnout doesn’t result from hard work. When we are achieving what is important to us, we are fulfilled. Merely slowing down won’t give you a better life; it may just give you a boring one. If you are feeling burned out or unfulfilled, there are other factors at work. Building life-enhancing rituals is a powerful strategy for improving your life in harmony with life’s rhythms.

What is a ritual? Sociologists define it as a repeated activity that creates meaning in a culture. It could really be any healthy routine, and it could be communal, involving a team or family, and it can be personal. Some people might call it a tradition; others define it as simply a routine, repeated action—a habit, or in a spiritual context, a discipline. Whatever you want to call them, they are important, and they are powerful.

Rituals are critically important for the health and well-being of families, especially in today’s busy, stress-filled world. They provide stability in times of stress and transition; they are connected to marital satisfaction, adolescents sense of personal identity, children’s health, academic

achievement, and stronger family relationships. Family rituals usually have three key elements:

- Special meaning or significance—those involved consider it special.
- Repetition—it isn’t a one-time event; it’s done again and again.
- Coordination—it’s done intentionally, and someone makes sure it happens.

We can build three types of family rituals: holidays and rites of passage, traditions that symbolize a family value, and routines that reflect unique interactions. Birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays are annual rituals. (Note: rituals can change over time, for example, as children grow older). A family can have rituals around food (daily, like meal time, or annually, like turkey at Thanksgiving), vacations, etc.

Individuals can benefit from building rituals, or routines, as well. They actually ensure that we use as little conscious energy as possible, leaving us free to focus our energy where most needed. I take a 3-day personal retreat each year to focus on my spiritual growth. You can build daily, weekly, and monthly rituals as well. The challenge here is to not try to pack everything into your daily rituals and neglect the medium- and longer-term rhythms.

Building rituals is a key strategy for living better. Across longer cycles they become traditions; across shorter cycles they become habits. Together they will give you a more fulfilling life with less burnout and more achievement.

Chapter 12: Chronos Strategy #3—Oscillate Work and Rest

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Life is not a marathon, but a series of sprints and rests. If we try to keep a constant pace, we build up higher and higher levels of stress. Humans aren't made to do that. We need regular rest, renewal, and restoration. The Bible calls us to both sacrifice and Sabbath. We are to set aside time to rest, and we are to take risks for God. There aren't any biblical characters I know of who led "balanced" lives. Jesus oscillated between times of intensity and times of renewal.

The principle of oscillation is fairly well known at this point. Anyone who wants to build muscle knows you first stress it, expending beyond-normal energy, and then you rest—and that is when the muscle rebuilds even stronger. To grow, we must experience stress. We must push past our normal limits in order to expand our capacity. And then we need rest time to recover. The point is that we need *both* rest *and* work, intensity *and* renewal. Most of us are under-stressed physically and spiritually (not enough stress) and over-stressed mentally and emotionally (not enough recovery). You need to develop a rhythm that includes both.

As you think about oscillation in the various chronos cycles, here are some questions to consider:

What are the ebbs and flows of your work? What times are more and less intense? What is the best time of the year for you to start a large new initiative? In the church world, things slowdown in mid-summer, so that is when I take a longer rest. (And during a vacation, you need to rest, not rest plus something else! Studies show regular vacations improve health.)

When you look at a month, consider your weekends. Which of them are for work, and which are for renewal? You need both. When you look at a week, are you taking a Sabbath? Many people can testify that taking a Sabbath actually helped them be more productive the other six days of the week.

There are rhythms within individual days as well. To oscillate daily, look at where your discretionary time is, and when you have the most energy. Look at your sleep as well. Most of us get too little, but studies show that lack of sleep slows reaction time, decreases concentration, degrades memory, and causes a decline in logical thinking. We heal and grow during sleep, which is one of our most important times of recovery. Getting good sleep makes us better athletes, helps us deal with stress, improves our memory, and keeps us from being crabby.

Following the three rhythm strategies in the chronos cycles—pace yourself, build life-enhancing rituals, and oscillate between work and rest—will give you a better life. You will decrease guilt, burnout, and stress, while increasing peace, fulfillment, and hope. Adding to these the kairos rhythm strategies—release expectations, seize opportunities, and anticipate what's next—will even further enhance your life.

Conclusion: Living in Rhythm

When I had my "eureka moment" in New Zealand, I had no idea how rich the concept of rhythm would prove to be, nor how helpful. Living rhythmically has

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enabled me to get free from busyness and guilt, and accomplish more of what matters most with less stress and frustration.

I haven't mastered it yet, but I've learned to change the question. I no longer ask "Is my life balanced?" Instead I ask, "Am I living in a good rhythm?" I encourage you to make the same change. I think you'll quickly find the same benefits.

The Pastor's Perspective

I read a lot of time management books, and many of the principles are the same. Many of the things Miller talks about in this book can be found in other books that focus on time or energy management (there's nothing new under the sun).

Having said that, there are a couple things I gleaned from *Your Life in Rhythm* that were really helpful. The first was just the idea that there are rhythms and that we need to live where we are. It is so easy to lay things on ourselves that we shouldn't carry—that aren't realistic for the season we are in. Grabbing hold of the idea of letting go of unrealistic expectations was helpful—that there are some desires or goals I have that are just not realistic for the season I am in.

I remember a conversation I had with a church member several years ago. She was a young mother with three kids—aged 1, 2, and 3, and she was feeling guilty about not being more involved at church. I laughed and told her that her goal was survival, not service. I was talking about the season of life she was in, although I didn't use that language.

As I was reading, part of me said, "This is obvious," probably because it is—but it has also very quickly begun to shape how I think about my time. I think that's because he's onto something.

I also really agree with his dislike of the idea of pursuing a balanced life. That idea—that a balanced life isn't the goal—is showing up in more and more of the literature I'm seeing. The current emphasis, which I applaud, is on living intentionally and fully, and pursuing a satisfying, fulfilling life—which isn't always balanced, at least on the calendar. In real life, it means you are giving appropriate attention and energy to the areas of life that need it.

Finally, I appreciated his recognition that it is good to work hard, and that there are times when we have to almost go crazy. That's how life really is. It's also true that we can't live that way 24/7, and the idea of living in rhythm gives a good framework for how to balance (oops! Wrong word!) that out. So...is your life in rhythm?