

## In pursuit of work life balance ...

The choice of a career in industry, rather than academics which was the option, appeared to be a relatively easy one in the late seventies. I had hedged my position by asking for a deferment of post-graduate school admission to prestige colleges but gave it up after a taste of the first two years in industry. It seemed what I always wanted to do, and the challenges came pretty early, with irregular hours of work and what I later came to understand was a quick succession into higher responsibilities. Twenty-five years on, the stretch on our family had grown rapidly. Bola had yielded her career in lecturing after 15 years for a full time career in home building. Not an easy decision then, but one that has been fulfilling. The needs of our four children (two boys and two girls), now aged between 24 and 17 seemed to grow in nature and complexity by the second and we had, in obedience, come to accept our ministry was a comprehensive one. The challenge was to bring Godlikeness to the market place while raising a Godly family foundation, serving the Church, keeping in step with the demands of leadership in the business community and the numerous constituencies we have been privileged to serve, mentoring younger people and studying. We had understood that there was to be no distinction between our “secular” work and other “ministry” responsibilities. The model was to “increase in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (*Luke 2:52*), or put differently, an apostle in the market place like Dr Luke. Looking back, the hand of God in planning our family and in charting the path day after day is unmistakable.

Our experience in the 25<sup>1/2</sup> years can perhaps be captured in four headings

- a) **Growing stronger together.** Sharing our passion, purpose and accountability, learning to communicate (this is still work in progress!!), complementing each other especially as responsibilities grew and avoiding the default tendency to “grow apart” in the middle years by seeking to increase joint activity.
- b) **Raising a Godly heritage.** Laying a common foundation but being sensitive to the evolving needs of each child, accepting their individuality, and avoiding a stereotyping from one to another. Bola took on an increasing role as the “ever present help”. Even when she went out to work, she saw them off to school and was home to receive them, and shared the leadership of the family alter especially when the daily routine of building a career seemed to take a toll. We learnt some key lessons that seem to characterize each developmental phase of their growth:
  1. “Parenting is not for cowards” and “Dare to discipline”
  2. A habit of memory verses does help implant the Word in young minds, as does active involvement in Church activities for youths
  3. Teenage years need constant guidance and involvement. Critical choices are being made in these years, and demands quality time
  4. Mentoring and teaching is crucial for young adults
- c) **Alignment on what is important.** We needed to align our understanding on what is important in achieving our purpose and ministry, and focus on first things first, without being clinical about it. We learned with the children that “you do not need to tell me what is important to you, I only observe what you spend time on”.

- d) **Family demands don't reduce, they only change in nature.** It is true that the needs of boys gradually become differentiated from those of girls from teenage years.

The learning continues as we wonder what the next phase brings .....

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