

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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## Doing a Little More for Jesus

David J. Mulder

*Dordt College*, [david.mulder@dordt.edu](mailto:david.mulder@dordt.edu)

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## Doing a Little More for Jesus

### Abstract

"Work is an essential, integral part of my life! It isn't separate from the rest of my life any more than being a husband or father is separate from the rest of my life."

Posting about a healthy work-life balance from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/doing-a-little-more-for-jesus/>

### Keywords

In All Things, work, life, busyness, idolatry

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# Doing a little more for Jesus

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 [all in allthings.org/doing-a-little-more-for-jesus/](http://allthings.org/doing-a-little-more-for-jesus/)

Dave Mulder

It's perhaps a little ironic that I was asked to write this essay because I am probably the poster child for living a life "out of balance." Writing this piece is perhaps *one more thing* on my list of things-to-do.

And it's a long list. I am working on wrapping up my own graduate work for this semester, and at the same time I am trying to dig my way out from a pile of marking that I've been putting off. I have committee work to attend to and have been leading worship a couple times a month at church. My kids have homework and after-school activities and appointments, and I want to be an involved husband and father (though some days, supper and family devotions together at the table might be about all the time they get from me). I have students requesting reference letters and recommendations. Exams just a week or so away, which will bring more marking. One more paper to write this semester for grad school. And I have to practice some guitar parts for leading worship next Sunday.

I'm not in a panic... yet... but I am a little stressed out.

Some people would say I need to think more about "work-life balance." I think I understand where they are coming from: a generous admonition that "you should avoid becoming consumed with your working life, and make sure that there is space for other good things in your life as well." But setting this up as a "balance" makes me think it's about putting "work" on one side of the teeter-totter, "life" on the other side, and trying to make them level out. This just doesn't ring true for me. The problem? Work is an essential, integral part of my life! It isn't separate from the rest of my life any more than being a husband or father is separate from the rest of my life. My work life is *part* of my life, and an enjoyable, valuable, meaningful part at that!

Perhaps "rhythm" is a better word than "balance." I'm a musician, so this analogy makes sense to me: how do I ensure that my work life is in tempo with the other important parts of my life and not getting off the beat, taking solo stage, or dominating the rest of the band?

Right now, the struggle for me is finding the right rhythm between my work life, my ongoing doctoral studies, home and family life, and church commitments, while still carving out a little time for myself. I love all of these parts of my life, and I don't want to lose the beat with any of them. But that's a real challenge! There are only so many hours in a day, and sometimes, something has to give.

But it's hard to know what. I think of myself as a team player, someone others can rely on to pitch in and help out when possible. But honestly, this can become a snare for me sometimes. I know that I tend to be a people-pleaser, and I have a hard time saying "no" to things. My challenge is this: if I have the gifts/talents/strengths to help someone who is in need of that set of gifts/talents/strengths, it feels *wrong* for me not to help them. I feel like I'm failing them and like I'm failing God somehow, too. I believe He is the one who has given me these gifts, after all. And I believe He has called me to [use them for the good of the body](#) — to help and support others.

[Mutemath](#) is one of my favorite bands. Their song "[Blood Pressure](#)" captures this tension I feel pretty accurately. (Actually, this could be the people-pleasers' theme song.) The line in the song, "Why can't you do a little more for Jesus?" sums up a lot of my experience in terms of expectations and obligations:

“Can you do a little more for Jesus? You have the gifts and talents and we really need someone to help out here.” You want me to coach the 7th grade girls’ basketball team too? You want me to serve on the Professional Development committee? You want me to serve on the church education committee? You want me to lead singing in chapel one Wednesday a month? Yes. Yes. Sure. I can do that. I can help out. I have the gifts and talents and strengths... and it almost feels *sinful* for me to not do my part.

I think Christian teachers (and I suspect this is not just true of teachers) often take on a lot of extra stuff because it’s expected that they will. Somehow, it’s almost a badge of honor to brag about how busy we are in Kingdom work. And so, I have always been quick to volunteer for (too many) great Kingdom tasks. I am proud to be busy in the Kingdom!

However, when I think about this busyness and reflect on whether my life is getting out of rhythm, I really start to wonder if this is perhaps harmful. “Doing a little more for Jesus” might mean neglecting other important people in our lives. “Doing a little more for Jesus” might mean our rhythm is off.

Please hear me right: I think it’s important that we use our gifts and talents in many venues, both in our vocations and our avocations. But it can be dangerous and unhealthy when Christians fall into the trap of expectations and obligations. If we feel obligated to serve on one more committee, if we think that we ought to take on planning that event because everyone is expecting us to, if we are neglecting our own needs or those of our family because of what we “should” be doing, we are missing the boat. I’m speaking here from painful first-hand experience. It is so hard for me to say “no” to things, because there’s some part of me that thinks that if I have the gifts and talents to do something, I *should* do them. If I’m not, I’m somehow not doing enough for Jesus.

Because I’m doing it for... *Jesus*.

Right?

Except that, when I really reflect on my heart-condition, I realize that I may actually be doing it for... *me*. I want to look good. I want people to notice all the great stuff I’m doing and praise me for it. Maybe I even think I might be able to make God love me more somehow, because I am doing such good stuff in the Kingdom.

Here is the sad reality: this is idolatry. In his excellent book [Counterfeit Gods](#), Pastor Timothy Keller explores idols that we might not even see as idols. Keller defines an idol as “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give” (p. xvii). Reflecting on this definition, I recognize the hard truth that sometimes, I’m making “doing good stuff” or “being busy in the Kingdom” into an idol that I worship. I want people to think highly of me. I want people to value me for the things I do. I want people to think that I am pretty great, and that I’m really doing great things in the Kingdom. I might even think that somehow I can win God’s favor by working hard enough at it and doing enough good things — the things I “should” be doing.

And that is when I start to lose the beat, when I start to get out of rhythm. When I elevate my Kingdom service to idol status, it is no longer “service” at all.

I fear that I am putting my desire to be seen “busy in the Kingdom” — and being praised for it — ahead of actual service in the Kingdom. Am I really doing a little more for *Jesus* at all? Or am I doing a little more for *me*? I am not proud of the honest answer to this question.

How do I move past this? If my (idolatrous) tendency is to always say “yes” to things, perhaps the antidote to this idolatry is to learn to search my own heart for my motives, and to learn to say “no” to things — even *good* things, even *Kingdom service* — to better reflect my honest love of Jesus. Maybe “doing a little more

for Jesus” might actually mean, “doing a little less for me.”

I believe that God is in fact almighty and omnipotent. How audacious for me to imagine that if I don't do something, it won't get done? The truth of the matter is that God's will is going to be done. If I am acting in accordance with His sovereign will, what a blessing that He invites me to share in His work!

Maybe what I need is to trust that God's will is going to be done, whether I do it or not. And in this, perhaps I can actually find the rhythm of my life: I am continually learning to bend my will to Christ. If I am serious that he is *Lord* of my life, instead of trying to get Him to follow my rhythm, I will find myself falling into step with *His* beat.