

LIVING A BALANCED LIFE

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Introduction

The following pages will help us to think and discuss about the personality, the calling, and the daily life of the artist, whether musician, dancer, writer, film maker, painter... The items can be used as study group materials, or for private studies. An asterisk (*) indicates that you can stop and discuss a question for 5-10 minutes with others. A double asterisk (**) suggests that a discussion break of 10-15 minutes would be helpful.

Some remarks about the contents:

Our lives are often out of balance. We all know times of extreme stress when we don't see any chance to relax, or we feel under emotional pressure in our family or at the work place and there is no chance to talk to a friend. At another time we might be finally successful, but not really prepared for this totally new experience.

Life is marked by changes just as a clock's pendulum is always swinging. Neither does the clock of our life remain in one spot, which is a blessing! Otherwise it would be very boring. Yet the modern pace of life, even for the artist, is sometimes so hectic, the pendulum is swinging so quickly that we feel out of control. This can produce unhappiness, frustration, bitterness, anger and sometimes even depression or health problems. For an artist it can result in a period of unfruitfulness.

There is a chance to deal with the challenges of life. The guiding word of the following studies is "balance". This balance is sought through: inner times of reflection, taking time to share with others, doing things "the other way around" and, (as Christians we believe), through reading God's word, and talking with him in prayer.

Maybe some of the following ideas will seem in your eyes new or even strange, but that is part of the concept. Don't we occasionally need new voices and unusual thoughts --- in order to move towards greater balance?

Contents:

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2. Ups and Downs in Life
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7. Enemies – Friends

1. Loneliness - Fellowship

“Welcome!” Spoken at the entrance of a house or inn, as the host stands in a wide open door with arms open to give us a big hug - these words fill each heart with warmth. Doesn't each one of us long for fellowship and community?

There is another desire, very well known especially by artists- the desire to be separated or even isolated from others – in order to practice a music piece, to write a poem or to paint a picture. This is also very important and necessary.

Yet, far away from Middle Age art ateliers, modern artists tend to be “geniuses,” living and working in “splendid isolation” (This corresponds with the concept of “autonomous art”). The writer Samuel Beckett for example decided to spend the last years of his life in total isolation, avoiding any fellowship with friends, for the “sake” of his art.

To choose an isolated life is nowadays not too difficult. It fits into the mainstream of modern life style; more and more people are living on their own in a single household, driving a mini car, and dancing at night in a disco by themselves. Even the history of dance demonstrates the shift in society from a strong community (baroque dance) to the intimacy of private life (pas de deux) to the single life style (modern disco).

- **Do you know times of being alone? How do you experience them? ***

We all need times of fellowship. We are not created to be alone! Complete isolation is not at all “splendid”, but can be cruel and destructive.

In the Bible – in the context of God's creation - we read the following verses:

Genesis 2:18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 1:26 (27)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them."

- **What insights do we gain through these words? Please, read carefully word by word. ****

- **What does fellowship mean for your daily life? Do you have good friends with whom you can share important things? What makes it easy or difficult to have such friends? ****

- **What about Samuel Beckett's concept of isolation? How does it affect the art? What about autonomous art? And what about your concept of art? ***

For a more introverted person it might be difficult to interact with a group of people. He or she feels easily lost and overlooked. For another it is no problem to attend a conference with 10'000 people; even there he feels loved and at home.

- **How do you feel in a group? What are your fears and expectations in a group? ***

Welcome again to each one! We hope you feel really at home in this institute and in this group. We want you to enjoy the times of fellowship – but also to have fruitful times of being alone with your instrument, with your pencil or with your thoughts.

The growth which takes place during these times will bear welcome fruit in the whole community.

2. Ups and Downs in Life

What is happiness? Being always on the “top” and “high”?

Philosophers discussed happiness. One of them said, “Happiness doesn’t consist only of the absence of problems. Imagine someone lying in a deep sleep – under the influence of a drug which induces only happy feelings. Would this be real happiness? No!”

A happy life consists of a lot of experiences and challenges, where our efforts are needed and also where troubles and problems may occur.

In the book of Ecclesiastes 3:4ff, we read:

*There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;*

The question is: How do we deal with changing situations in our life? Life might get totally out of balance. But how do we react?

- **How do you deal with ups and downs? Please, tell the others in your group about at least one of your experiences and how you dealt with it. ****

Our individual reaction depends on our personality:

- **A more reason oriented person** is able to see things in a relative perspective. Success is relative and also a defeat is not a big catastrophe. Through his intellect he stands somehow beyond the ups and downs. This person may hide his emotions but one has to wonder if he allows enough space for them!
- **A more emotion-driven person** is described by Wolfgang Goethe as “himmelhoch jauchzend – zu Tode betrübt”, which means: “now shouting with joy to the heaven – then being depressed to death”. This person can easily lose the ground under his feet.
- **An anxious person** is a little bit like the tomfool who wept at happy events and laughed at sad events. Asked why, he answered, “Because I know that a happy event will turn tomorrow into a sad thing and a sad event will be followed by a happy thing.” This person is in a way realistic, but it’s hard for him to live in the present.
- **A more optimistic person** sees good in all circumstances, but there is a danger that he doesn’t really face the problems and that he is always looking for the sunny side of life.

- **A more pessimistic person** tends to find problems everywhere. He is often able to solve them, but it's hard for him to enjoy life and to make life enjoyable for others.

- **Are there other kinds of personalities which come into your mind?***
- **Which kind of personality are you? ****
- **Where would you need to be more balanced – maybe by having good friends who have other personalities or by learning other patterns of reacting? ****

Let's reflect on two verses in the Bible:

Romans 12:12:

The Apostle Paul writes: "Be joyful in hope; patient in tribulation; faithful in prayer..."

Matthew 11:28:

Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest..."

- **What could these verses mean to you? ***
- **Are there things you could – or we could - pray for? ***

3. Strong –Weak

An often asked question in an interview with an artist or a famous person is, “What is the source of your energy?” The answers are interesting, “I receive energy from my family,” “...from my fitness and sport activities”, “...from my success” etc.

- **How would you answer this question? Mention three sources of energy in your life.***

It is important that we have such sources. And it is important, that we have strength and energy, and of course, health (By the way, in most interviews people answer the question “what is your greatest wish for your personal future?” with, “that I might be healthy!”).

Yet, there are periods in our life when we feel weak or when we are even sick. Nothing seems to help and give us energy in order to be “balanced”.
What then?

We could compare changing periods of our life with the seasons.

- **Please, answer very spontaneously without reading the text below: What do you think the seasons of one’s life are, and what characterizes each one? ***

- **Spring:** We are full of energy, full of plans and visions, full of energy to work. As artists we have big, exciting projects. We feel inspired!
- **Summer:** We are working hard and putting our visions into reality. The performing artist is studying and practising a lot; the composer or the writer is working hard to put his plans into reality (it is more the time of “transpiration” than of an “inspiration”...). With the words of today’s psychology: There is a “flow” of life and work.
- **Autumn:** We are reaping the fruits of our work. We are finishing our studies or enjoying another success. We have maybe also more relaxing times – for example with our friends. Sometimes we are longing for the “freshness” and visions of the spring, but we are at the same time happy that we have accomplished something.
- **Winter:** We are experiencing cool times with cold winds. The development of our artistic gifts and our work doesn’t go forward as they once did. We might feel weak or sick or have problems in our relationships. Maybe we don’t feel very comfortable “outside”, in the public. We rather prefer the cosy atmosphere within our own four walls. This means we don’t have much energy to be extroverted, but we are more introverted and need good friends around us.

It might happen that the seasons differ in various areas of our life. Maybe there is “summer” in our work, but “winter” in our relationship to the family. Yet, the season of the most important areas of our life do often affect the other areas.

Now we want to focus on the winter time. What is the crucial problem and the main question? Maybe we ask: “How can we avoid the winter?”

- **Would this be the right question? Why? Or why not? ****

This could be the wrong question. It is obvious that the nature needs the winter period: The sap of the trees and plants are going back into the roots. The plants need to concentrate their energy, to dig the roots even deeper and to gain new strength inside.

- **What does this mean for our life? ****

The winter periods help us

- to dig our roots deeper
- to gain new strength from a new source
- to reflect about our priorities
- to...

Let’s think about some quotes:

- In the Chinese the word of crisis and chance are written in the same way.

2 Cor. 12:9 But he (Jesus) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Cor. 12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **How can such verses be understood? It seems that Paul has found a very deep and powerful source of life.**
- **What could this mean for us? (Read also the following verses from Ephesians). ****

Eph. 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father,...

Eph. 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Eph. 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love...

Eph. 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you maybe filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

4. Living as an Artist – The Art of Living

What is the difference between a worker who merely puts in time and an artist? One difference is that a true artist is for 24 hours and for 365 days a year an artist. He doesn't just go to his work place in order to do a job. If playing in an orchestra or being a dance teacher becomes just a job for him, he will lose his passion and no longer be motivated to develop his talent. A "real" artist is creative, of course. This means that he invests his whole personality and innermost being in order to interpret a piece of music or to write a poem.

This way of life as an artist is a privilege of modern times. Living as an artist in our modern times has some essential advantages and some dangers.

- **What in your eyes are the advantages and the dangers of being an artist? Maybe share a personal experience. ****

Some characteristics of the modern "art world":

SOME POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN ART LIFE	DANGERS
A modern artist (at least in a democratic country) is no longer the servant of a prince, a king, or a political system, but is free to express his art and opinions.	Art can over-emphasize independence and become rebellious against all conventions. Common rules and values could lose importance for the artist's life.
Modern art is "autonomous". This aesthetic concept means that there is a realm beyond common life, rules, and even values.	Some artists assume that art is above all ethical values. There is often an ignorance and lack of reflection about ethics in the arts.
Modern art, music or theatre life is perceived as a separate world, a "subsystem" in our society. Going into a cinema, a theatre or a museum, you feel that you are leaving the "world" and entering another realm.	Because the arts are perceived as a "subsystem," the artist becomes alienated from reality.
Modern artists are somehow allowed or almost expected to have a non-bourgeois life style. Why? Because a "genius" is not	An artist comes to the conclusion that being "abnormal" could even be good for his art.

"normal".	
The world of the arts is a world of strong competition – almost like in the sports. An artist can become very successful and even world famous.	Many artists are living for the arts and the success. For them there is no life beyond or outside of the arts. Yet, the success oriented world of the arts, of music, theatre, etc. can cause a lot of stress in an artist's life. Because many artists are sensitive, the constant struggle and competition atmosphere can hurt them deeply.

- **Please, reflect on these points and tell again of your own experiences. ****

How could an artist learn the “art of living” beyond living only for the arts? There are some tips:

1. Gain a realistic view of “success”

In one of his books the former chief technician of Steinway & Sons, Franz Mohr, tells of sitting with Wanda Horowitz-Toscanini backstage - after a wonderful concert of her husband. The audience was totally excited and kept asking for more encores. Yet Wanda turned to Franz and said: “If this is all that life has to offer – I don’t want to have it!” What does this story teach us? Even the biggest success in the arts doesn’t make life happy!

Imagine that you are on the Olympus of your art- would you really be happier? Success is not bad – and often very useful, but success cannot be the ultimate dream nor the fulfilment of our lives.

2. Learn being modest

Franz Mohr was a good friend of the pianist Rudolf Serkin, an extremely modest man. He often played in the White House – and Franz Mohr had to tune the piano. At a party there he turned to Franz and said: “I would rather be now in my house in the mountains of Vermont. This is not my world.” Being modest helps one to become a good artist – and to be happy at the *same* time!

3. Have clear life priorities– also beyond the arts

- **Please, make a list of the highest priorities in your life. (You might share it with others or keep it for yourself.) ****

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

4. Have clear values

- **Do you follow in your life a code of values? Which one? ****

- **Which parts of the Ten Commandments and the double commandment of Jesus are important for you and could be guidelines for your life as an artist? ****

Deut. 5:7ff.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything...You shall not bow down to them or worship them...
3. You shall not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain...
4. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God...
5. Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord you God as commanded you...
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Matthew 22:35-39

One of them, expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

5. Failure – New trial

A realistic view of life leads to the insight that we are not perfect at all, but that we make daily mistakes and failures. There is a word from Jesus-- “Then you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32) - which could be important here.

- **Why could this word be important in regard to our mistakes and failures? ***

There is a story which illustrates that being honest is a first step to freedom: The King Friedrich the Great from Preussen visited a prison one day. He went from cell to cell, talking to the prisoners. He asked each one of them: “Why are you here?” And all told their stories which ended with the sentence: “You see, I am not guilty. It is a big injustice that I am here!” Then Friedrich came to the last cell. The man there also told his story, but he ended with the confession: “I have made a big mistake! I am guilty!” – Friedrich was astonished and he started to shout: “You are such a bad man! What do you have common with all these righteous people here? Get out of here!!!”

To make mistakes is part of our life. How can we find a balance? By trying to make amends? Yes, but the first step is always to admit that we are not perfect.

If we are too proud or too anxious to be honest – what are the consequences? We mislead ourselves. We live in a lie. In theatre pieces by Ibsen and Strindberg many persons are living in a “Lebenslüge”, a lie of life. The drama shows how this lie crashes down – and with this lie the individuals and their whole world.

- **What could be a “life lie” – or just a typical lie of an artist? ***

What helps us to be honest?

1. To see that lies don't help

In German there is a proverb: “Lies have short legs”. When we are lying, others will discover (and maybe tell us) the truth. In an artist's life this could be very embarrassing, when others have to tell us the truth we don't want to see.

2. To trust in the fact, that we are precious and loved even when we fail

As artists we have to ask: Are we free to fail? Can we fail because we know: We are not precious and loved because of our success! There might even be big mistakes we made in our lives...

The Biblical parable of the prodigal son is a wonderful story which tells about a big mistake and its consequences.

- **What does this parable in Luke 15 tell us about the son and the father? ***

3. To realize that there is grace

We need forgiveness and grace! These terms are very important in Christian faith. Why? God is gracious and he loves to forgive.

As human beings we are separated from God and not at all perfect, but sinful. To deny this doesn't help, as an important passage from the first letter of John explains:

1John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But:

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

But:

1John 2:1 My little children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence-- Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

1John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

According to the Bible the deepest reason for Christ's coming is to forgive us our sins and to open for us the way back into the "house of the Father."

- **Please, discuss the passages of the Bible above and below.**
- **What is "sin" (singular) or "sins" (plural)? ****

John 3:16-17. For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but to save the world through him.

Luke 23:39-43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

- **What would be the most appropriate reaction to God's forgiveness? ***

Franz Mohr tells again about Wanda Horowitz...

"In the fall of 1995 I sent a letter to Wanda, basically saying that Elisabeth and I would like to know how she is doing; also that we were praying for her and would be glad to hear from her. Shortly after that we received a phone call from Wanda. She said that our letter had made her very happy and invited me to come for a visit. I prayed a lot about this visit. When I arrived, she didn't appear for a while; she had been in bed. Giuliana was still with her, and she helped Wanda get up. The first thing Wanda said when we greeted each other was, „Franz, I have completely lost interest in music. I don't listen to anything anymore." I thought it would be like that. Ever since Vladimir Horowitz's death, no one had heard much from Wanda. The only things that remained from her husband were memories of all the splendid times and the plaster cast of his hands that stood on the piano. It seemed like all the life had disappeared from the house, even their old friends stayed away. The first thing she said to me when I sat down at her was, "Franz, I am being punished and only punishment is waiting for me." I said, "No, Wanda, we deal with that right now." So I opened the Bible that I had brought with me; I remembered our quiet conversation in front of Horowitz's coffin and how I had talked to her about God's forgiveness. After all, God willingly forgives us when we come to Him with our sins! - I hadn't had a chance to talk to her about my faith since that conversation. I had tuned her piano, but had not been able to bring up my beliefs. Now the time had come; she remembered our previous conversation as well. I showed her the Bible verses that tell how Jesus died for our sins because of His love for us. I explained that He wants to give us eternal life, which begins now as a new life with God. Those that believe in Jesus know that when they die and close their eyes, in that same instant their eyes open in God's world and they are home with a father who will not judge them. Wanda asked me, „But Franz, what do I have to do in order to make that happen?" I said, "I'll gladly help you." And so I offered to pray with her. I prayed slowly and suggested she repeat what I was saying. That is usually easier for people who have never prayed before and are unsure of what to do. She repeated my words with a loud, strong voice, saying, „**Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I regret the sins that I have committed. Jesus, I accept you as my Lord and savior. You died for my sins, please come into my life and cleanse me of all guilt by your precious blood. I thank you.**" In repeating this prayer word for word, I want to express that I wish that more people would place their sins before God, repent, and accept forgiveness as radically and courageously as Wanda Horowitz did. When we were finished praying I asked her, „Do you believe with your heart what we prayed?" Wanda said that she did. I gave her a beautiful Bible with a red leather cover and large print. I encouraged her to read it daily, beginning with the Gospel of John, and underline God's promises for our life. Just as we need food every day to nourish our bodies, God's word is like a meal that nourishes our soul. That is what I explained to her. Juliana had witnessed our conversation and also seemed moved; she promised to read the Bible aloud for Wanda if reading became too difficult for her. A week later I visited Wanda for the second time, and we discussed questions that had arisen as she read. Shortly afterward she called me again and joyfully thanked me, saying, „Franz, I am so thankful for everything that you've done for me. You have to know that I am doing what you said, I read the Bible, remember God's promises and thank him for them."

"Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I regret the sins that I have committed. Jesus, I accept you as my Lord and Savior. You died for my sins, please come into my life and cleanse me of all guilt by your precious blood. I thank you."

This prayer is a good answer to God's grace. It can be the turning point of one's life! We invite you to reflect about it and pray it – alone or together with others. God will listen and respond to you!

We are human beings and we continue to make mistakes. And we even commit sins again and again. Yet, we have the chance to leave them behind us again - or better, to leave them in God's hands.

Then we are free to begin anew and to do it better next time.

The truth is that we are forgiven, and that makes us free.

6. Horizontal – Vertical

“Art has the task of making the invisible visible”, wrote the painter Paul Klee.

There is almost no artist who would deny that there is a reality beyond our visible reality and that art is the enemy of sheer materialism. Therefore it is important that we don't only think and live in a “horizontal” dimension, but also in the “vertical” dimension.”

Let us think about a parable of Jesus:

Luke 12:16-21. He told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

- **What could this parable mean for us personally as well as for our society?***

The question: For what do we “collect” our riches can be translated as following: For what do we use our talents? For what are we creative? For what do we live? The answer cannot be given with a purely “horizontal” argument. There are other life questions which lead us to more “vertical” thinking.

Which questions lead us to more vertical thinking? *

There should be a balance between “horizontal” and “vertical” in our lives, between “immanence and transcendence”, between “human and God”.

The next question is: Which is the most helpful approach to “vertical” thinking and living?

Each one has to find the solution by himself. Each one has to come to his own conviction and decision. It is important to invest time in this.

Let's talk about Christianity: The Biblical answer to this question (“which vertical dimension could balance out my horizontal life” ?) is very remarkable and unique! The Bible tells of God, who comes from heaven to earth in order to encounter us and to help us. There are religions which don't have any “link” between our daily and earthly life. This might even be dangerous. The Biblical testimony speaks of another God:

Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What does it mean to live in a vertical dimension as a Christian – practically?

1. Having faith in a God who helps

The Hungarian opera singer Gyöngy Lukàks says in an interview (Crescendo magazine No 45): “I want to tell about a wonderful demonstration of God’s help and provision. I was auditioning at Covent Garden. When I arrived, I was told that my audition was postponed, and that there would be no chance to catch my airplane to Hungary. I had just caught a cold and felt terribly homesick. I started to pray. I went to a walk through London, and eventually stepped into a McDonald’s, ate something, and wept a little bit. Everything was so strange to me, because I did not speak English. While I sat at the table, I again heard God’s voice, this time saying: “I am with you”. I felt the assurance of God’s presence, and knew that everything would be all right. Back at the opera house, it turned out that I was the first to sing, and the audition took only ten minutes. In spite of my cold, I received an invitation to both London and San Francisco! Then, when I took the underground to the airport, usually a 90 minutes trip, the tube went directly, without a stop, to the airport. The ride lasted only 30 minutes. I arrived one full hour before take off! This was a real miracle for me. The experience reminded me that often our problems seem to be so big, but when we lay them in the Lord’s hands, we see that they are really quite small.”

2. Daily Prayer

The viola player of the Emerson string quartet, Larry Dutton, said in an interview: “I would say the main factor keeping the Emerson Quartet together for such a long period is prayer. I am praying for our quartet, of course.”

3. Regular reflecting about the Biblical message

4. Attending church services / having fellowship with other Christians...

Have you had any experiences with some of these points mentioned? **

The “horizontal” dimension is often very strong in our daily life. We almost forget that there is a “vertical” dimension. Yet in our time society is discovering again the value of faith in God. There is even research about the practical benefit of faith, such as good health. It is worthwhile to live in a vertical dimension, too, and to live with a God who loves us and who cares for us!

7. Enemies – Friends

Life is full of struggles – also for an artist. Some artists do their work in an atmosphere of strong competition. If he is successful others are jealous. If he is mediocre others despise him. The word “enemy” might be strong, but its reality, that not all around him are good friends!

How do you experience the atmosphere around you? Friendly? Hostile? And how do you react? **

The question is not how to escape such a world but how to survive in it and even, how to create a better atmosphere as part of a balanced life.

There was an orchestra musician, Karl, sitting at the same stand with a man who didn't like him at all. He constantly showed him this. Then, the moment came when in a concert this stand neighbour developed a problem. He didn't know where he was in the music and what he should play! Karl thought: This is my chance! I won't help him at all, but rejoice about his failure. Yet, at the same moment he remembered the word: “Love your enemies!” and in the following second he gently showed him what he had to play. Afterwards the relationship between them became much better.

What does this word mean for you: “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27). In another text Jesus says: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you!” (Matthew 5:44) **

There are also enemies (dark invisible forces) which we cannot influence by love. But we can pray against them. The opera singer Gyöngyj Lukàks tells about an experience in a hotel room where she felt attacks from dark spirits. She started to pray in Jesus' name and felt a sudden release.

It is easier to deal with our enemies: to love the human enemies and to fight against the spiritual ones, when we have good friends.

The question is: Who are your friends who can help you to live a “balanced life”? Where is a fellowship of artists (or other people) which could provide you an “oasis” in midst of your life?

There is a chance to be part of the larger artist's fellowship of "Crescendo" in your region. Or if there is no "Crescendo" group, we would try to provide for you other contacts. Would you be interested in such a fellowship? Which would be most helpful in such a fellowship? **

Evaluation sheet:

What was helpful in these studies "Living a balanced life"?

Which topics were for you the most interesting ones?

Which topics did you miss?

What could we do better next time?

Would you be interested in regular meetings in your region?

in an artist's sharing group

in an artist's prayer group

weekly

monthly

Would you be motivated in starting such a group, linked with "Crescendo"?

Your name and address:

Please, copy this sheet and mail it to: info@crescendo.org

