

# Balance Work and Family

By Mike Yorkey and Greg Johnson

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/parenting-roles/the-involved-father/balance-work-and-family>

Don't expect corporate America to recognize how much fathers are needed at home. The employee's family life isn't a part of the annual report, nor can it be measured on the bottom line.

If you're chalking up a lot of overtime, then here are ways you can jog loose a few more hours at home:

**Work smarter.** What's your body clock? Are you a morning person? Or do you do your best work at night? If you get more done in the morning, perhaps you should begin working earlier in the day (if your company has flex time). That way you can get off earlier and beat the traffic home, thus saving you even more time.

I do most of my creative work — writing and editing — in the morning because that's when I feel most productive. When the post-lunch doldrums arrive, I turn my attention to less-taxing tasks, such as answering my e-mail and returning phone calls.

**Skip going out to lunch.** Yes, it's nice to be served a prepared meal, but by the time you're seated, given a menu, order an entree, wait for the food to arrive, eat, ask for the check, make the payment — well, say *sayonara* to a huge chunk of time. And that doesn't include the minutes lost driving or walking to the restaurant.

If you're working past 6 or 7 p.m. because you lingered over lunch, that's not good stewardship of your time. Bringing your own lunch is cheaper, faster and healthier. If you need a change of scenery during the noon hour, take your lunch to a nearby park or company picnic area.

You also should consider taking a 30-minute lunch. My father, who worked in the construction trade, always had a half hour for lunch. That meant his workday ended at 4:30, which gave him time to coach my Little League team.

**Think through any promotion.** Does it mean more hours? Will it lead to more travel? Is the money worth it? What would you do if your boss offered you a raise — albeit modest — but said you might have to put in eight hours of overtime? Would you take it? Perhaps the promotion means 10 days of out-of-town travel each month. What would you say?

**Live closer to work, or consider relocating to a smaller city.** That suggestion is easier said than done, isn't it? For openers, it may be hard to sell a house, and some of us don't want to live in neighborhoods close to work. Or we like where we live: The kids are established in school, and we're active members of a local church.

But living closer to work can be a huge benefit. By cutting your drive time to a manageable 10 to 15 minutes, you might gain another hour or two a day. That's often enough time to see your daughter's soccer game or coach your son's baseball team. You can retrieve up to 10 hours a week. Think about how many family activities you can do with that extra day!

**Reserve the weekends for the family.** If you let work — the Monday-through-Friday variety — encroach on your weekends, you're headed for misery. Christopher, a salesman for a marketing firm, still puts in 50- and 60-hour weeks, but he's stopped working on weekends. "Saturday and Sunday are for the kids," says Christopher. "They should know that from Friday night to Sunday is family, and that we're going to do something together, whether it's playing baseball, going to Sea World or whatever."

**Plan your week.** From the beginning of their marriage, Don and his wife, Rhonda, have gone out for a piece of pie and a cup of coffee every Sunday night. Shortly after the waitress clears the plates from the table, Don and Rhonda reach for their personal calendars. For the next hour, they go over their schedules — work, church activities and kids' programs — for the coming week.

**Believe God's promises.** Gregory used to work 11 and 12 hours a day, but after five years of burning the candle at both ends, his marriage fell apart. When he became a Christian awhile later, Gregory remarried. Inside, he felt different about his reasons for working so much.

"I first read God's promises, then I really started to believe them," he said. "Especially the one where it says that God will provide for all your needs. I thought, *OK, Lord, I'll slow down and trust You to bring in enough work so the business can survive.* These days, I won't work more than 10 hours a day. I'm not always able to get what I want, but we always have what we need."