

Welcome to the Pope home. The day we took the photo for the magazine cover I was sick: not swine-flu sick, but like I had been run-over-by-a-truck sick. If you had come by our home prior to taking this photo, you would have found me in bed, not having bathed for days, wearing nose uglies, with a house that would make the folks from the show "Clean Sweep" blush. Fast-forward two weeks.

As I write this article I am healthy. However, the tops of my washer and dryer are piled high with clothes that need to be washed, have been washed or just need a place to stay. A sticky unknown substance covers my kitchen counters and tinker toys litter the playroom floor. And the planting bed in the front yard is missing shrubbery because our 9-month-old puppy destroyed them. This is normal in the Pope home.

Yet, even in this chaos, there is peace and balance. I don't achieve that balance by keeping a well-manicured yard or a house free of cobwebs and dust bunnies. Rather, I achieve balance by setting priorities and keeping them. It is a state of mind that stays with me in the midst of a messy house and poorly-groomed lawn.

How did I come to this place? How am I able to sit in the middle of a mess and have peace? Jesus. Jesus is how. For over a decade, I have started each day the same way: in prayer and reading God's Word. Spending this time every morning gives me power and strength to face whatever the day brings.

My morning date with Jesus has helped me set priorities for my life. Those priorities are God first, family second, followed by ministry and then friends. God has taught me one simple rule that when followed, keeps my life balanced: Say "yes" to God, "no" to self, and "maybe" to others.

Believe it or not, saying "yes" to God is the easiest part of this rule. His plans for me are good. He offers me a hopeful future. Having this knowledge brings peace in itself. I don't have to worry, only rest in His leadership.

The second and third portions of my "life rule" are more difficult. Not because the Lord is demanding, but because I am selfish by nature and the little girl in me at times still cries, "What about me?"

Being in a two-parent working family, with two kids, and a puppy, there is not much time for "What about me?" This is where trusting in the Lord's provision and care for me must be strong. It's imperative to trust that He sees all I do and will provide what I need when I need it.

Saying "maybe" to others is one of the toughest challenges for me. Most women like to be useful. God made us with the desire to serve, love and care for others. We are gifted at multi-tasking, therefore believe it is possible to be PTA president, leader of the Cherub Choir at church, head of the local chapter of Meals on Wheels, and serve on the Community Beautification team. Learning to say "maybe" and then asking for God's permission and blessing has brought me great freedom. There is peace knowing I don't have to do it all.

Rules get broken, even simple ones. At times my priorities get "off-balance" a bit. For instance, when Karate demo team practice lasts two hours instead of one, and my daughter gets to her friend's house late. When this happens, I go with the flow of life, ask for God's help, and get through the "off-balance" situations one day at a time. ☺

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One Simple Rule

Every woman longs for fulfillment in the areas that matter to her most. But how do we balance our commitments, dreams and callings? Perhaps balance can be accomplished through the management of these three simple words: Yes, No and Maybe.

by Wendy Pope

