

“How to Avoid Burnout”

Serving in our ministries while experiencing some fatigue or a certain level of burnout is a big part of the nature of serving. However, how do we know when our fatigue has turned into burnout? Here are some common signs when we are experiencing burnout in ministry:

SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT:

- Vulnerable to temptations
- Mild depression
- Difficulty making decisions
- A judgmental or critical attitude
- Feeling guilty for no obvious reason
- Constant heaviness
- Loss of intimacy with close ones

How to Avoid Burnout:

1. Spend most of your time within your giftedness.

We are most vulnerable to burnout when we are serving outside of our initial passions, dreams and gifts on a regular basis. This necessitates a clear definition of what God has called you to and how he has gifted you.

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

The rule of thumb is that 80% of our time should be spent in our primary area of passion or giftedness, and 20% in the areas that just simply need to be done. Finding a focus in ministry not only frees you up to excel in areas you were made to excel in, but it also limits you from doing things outside of those areas. You must master the art of saying “no” graciously to very good and important opportunities that just don’t fall within your calling. Every time we say yes to something that isn’t lined up with our dream, we will get burnt out.

Write down your gift, post it in your office, do what you can to make sure you are not spending most of your time outside of your giftedness.

2. Repent from any ongoing sin patterns.

Sometimes burnout has nothing to do with over-extending ourselves but hanging onto something that is taking energy from us. The bible indicates that when King David failed to repent from his sin with Bathsheba, he felt his strength wane:

Psalm 32:3-4 (NIV)

³ *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*

⁴ *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah*

Guilt has that affect on us. We shrink back from people, our spouse and the Lord when we know we've been holding on to something. However, the good news of the Gospel is that when we finally confess and repent, the Lord is faithful:

Psalm 51:8-10 (NIV)

⁸ *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.* ⁹ *Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.* ¹⁰ *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

The "steadfast spirit" is just what we need to feel confident, joyful and energized once again to continue the work of the Lord!

3. Serve God first, then the church.

Serving the church is not the same as serving God.

2 Corinthians 8:5 (NIV)

⁵ *And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*

The difference is in our motivation. Why are you doing what you are doing? Is it because you don't want to let someone down? Are you afraid of what they will think if you said "No"? When you are serving God, you feel His pleasure and find your motivation from the peace you get knowing you are performing for Him and no one else.

Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ *...for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

4. Increase your quiet time spent with the Lord.

Just as an athlete has to increase his protein intake to match his increased activity, we must also increase our "spiritual protein" when our service or responsibilities have increased. Jesus often spent the night or awoke early in the morning to pray just before he performed intense ministry. He knew what was required of him and made sure he was filled and focused for the task at hand.

Mark 6:31-32 (NIV)

³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

Experiment with various forms of devotions, such as walking while you pray, journaling, fasting or an in-depth bible study. Find those moments with the Lord on a regular basis so that your strength and joy can be made full!

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.