

BURNOUT

- I. Burnout is the exhaustion of physical or emotional strength brought on by continued stress; it is a loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective, and purpose.
- A. Scripture calls it despair which is the loss of hope. **1SAM 27:1.**
1. Without hope we are lost. **ROM 8:24.**
 2. Without hope we are adrift without an anchor. **HEB 6:18-20.**
 3. Without hope we are defenseless, without a helmet. **1TH 5:8.**
 4. Without hope we are insecure. **JOB 11:18-19.**
 5. Without anticipation we have nothing to live for.
 6. The arrow with no target falls to the ground.
- B. **GAL 6:9** is a telling commentary on burnout.
1. A person starts out doing well.
 2. As well doing escalates, he becomes weary.
 3. He loses sight of the prospect of reaping in due season.
 4. He faints, that is, he gives up.
- II. The following are characteristics of burnout:
- A. Acute emotional pain. **PSA 6:3; PSA 55:4a.**
- B. Fearfulness, a continual sense of dread. **PSA 55:4b-5a.**
- C. Trembling. **PSA 55:5a.**
- D. A sense of being overwhelmed. **PSA 55:5b; 143:4.**
- E. Loss of energy. **PSA 88:4.**
- F. A disgust with life and work. **ECC 2:15-23.**
- G. Just putting in your time on the job and going through the motions. **JOB 7:2-3.**
- H. Confusion, no sense of direction. **JOB 10:15; LAM 3:6, 9-11.**
- I. Fretting. **PSA 37:1.**
1. Fret: "To gnaw. To chafe, irritate. Chiefly with regard to the mind: To annoy, distress, vex, worry. To distress oneself with constant thoughts of regret or discontent."
 2. This fretting can lead to anger and sin. **PSA 37:8.**
 3. Fretting can be against the Lord. **PRO 19:3.**
- J. Bitterness. **JOB 7:11; 10:1.**
- K. Excessive cynicism towards others. **PSA 116:11.**
- L. Rejection of comfort. **PSA 77:2; GEN 37:35; EXO 6:9.**
- M. Detachment, a desire to escape and be left alone. **JOB 7:16; 10:20; PSA 55:6-8.**
- N. Loss of sleep. **PSA 77:4; JOB 7:3-4, 13-15.**
- O. Loss of appetite. **PSA 102:4.**
- P. Difficulty in concentrating. **PSA 88:15.**
- Q. Reduced accomplishment. **JOB 7:3.**
- R. Physical problems. **JOB 30:27; PSA 102:3; PRO 18:14.**
- S. Loss of fellowship with God. **PSA 77:7-9; JOB 10:16-20; 30:20-22.**
- III. The state of burnout is dangerous.
- A. In such a state a person may give up on serving God and others.
- B. It can lead to serious moral downfall. **JER 18:12.**
- C. The burnout victim can be suicidal.
- IV. A continual barrage of problems is definitely a factor in burnout, but some people have had this and

have not burned out.

- A. Consider the plight of David as expressed in **PSA 3**.
 - 1. He could sleep in the face of increasing trouble.
 - 2. He would not be afraid of ten thousands of enemies.
- B. Consider David's plight in **1SAM 30:1-6**; yet he encouraged himself in the LORD his God.
- C. Or consider Paul who, though troubled on every side, was not in despair.
2CO 4:8-9; 11:23-33.
- D. Therefore, we must look deeper to find the cause of burnout.

V. Following are some of the causes of burnout.

- A. Over-commitment, trying to do too much, is a major cause of burnout. **EXO 18:13-18.**
 - 1. This is the person who thinks he must be perpetually available for everyone and everything. He cannot say "no."
 - 2. It is the person who thinks he must do everything himself and, therefore, never delegates responsibility to others.
 - 3. This is the person who thinks of himself indispensable.
 - 4. It is the person who must know everything about and control all people and situations around him.
 - 5. It is one who assumes responsibility for everybody's problems.
 - 6. This is the person who finds his sense of worth in an endless round of "productive" activity.
 - 7. It is one who feels guilty if he relaxes and does nothing.
 - 8. This is the person who will not even stop if he is sick.
 - 9. It is Martha cumbered about with much serving, careful and troubled about many things.
LUK 10:38-42.
 - a. Note that such persons neglect spending time at Jesus' feet hearing His word which is that one thing "needful."
 - b. Such persons also resent those who are not doing what they are doing.
 - 10. It is the husband and father of several children who owns a home and two cars, works sixty hours a week at a job that is thirty minutes away, attends functions at his children's school, goes to school to improve himself professionally, faithfully serves his church, plays racquetball to keep in shape, tries to maintain a social life, and dies of a massive cardiac arrest at age forty-two.
- B. Unfulfilled expectations or deferred hope are another major source of burnout.
LUK 24:17-24; PRO 13:12; PSA 13:1-2; JER 15:16-18.
 - 1. One can become SO absorbed with an unfulfilled expectation that it is all he thinks about.
 - a. This continuous thinking is exhausting and frightening.
 - b. In such an exhausted state even small problems and decisions become major hurdles.
 - c. In such a state a person begins to fear he is going mad.
 - 2. This is the person who expected appreciation for a job well done and did not get it.
 - 3. This is the man who poured himself into a business enterprise which promised great profit only to lose everything.
 - 4. It is the woman who has longed and longed for a baby and yet never conceives.
 - 5. This is the parent who poured himself into his child only to have that child turn out to be a fool. **PRO 17:21, 25.**
 - 6. It is the parent who keeps hoping that a wayward child will get his act together.

7. This is the person who thought he was married for life only to have his spouse abandon him.
 8. This is the abandoned lover who hopes that his beloved will return to him and yet waits and waits for that time.
 9. It is the person who has been betrayed by a friend he thought he could trust.
PSA 41:9; 55:12-14.
 10. This is the person who hopes for a job change or a move that sometimes seems close but never arrives.
 11. It is the one who expects someone to change yet that person stays the same.
 12. It is the sick person who keeps thinking he will get better but does not.
 13. This is the person who thought he could please everybody and discovers that he cannot.
 14. It is the person who thought he joined a perfect church only to find that it is made up of sinners.
 15. This is the minister who labors to produce more mature church members and yet sees little or no progress in some.
- C. Envy will lead to burnout. **JOB 5:2; PRO 14:30.**
1. The envious can never accept the superiority of others over themselves.
 2. He who envies is seeking vain glory. **GAL 5:26.**
 3. The person who aspires to be what he cannot be is seeking a vain thing that can only lead to endless frustration.
 4. Madison Avenue advertising feeds envy in that it subtly implies that we are not all that we can be or should be.
 5. Envy is bitter and breeds confusion and every evil work. **JAM 3:14-16.**
 6. Envy will lead one to either emulate the man who is superior or destroy the man who is superior. **PRO 3:31; MAR 15:10.**
- D. Covetousness is another source of burnout. **1TI 6:5-10.**
1. The lust for riches is a relentless taskmaster that will never let its victim be content with what he has. **ECC 5:10.**
 2. Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. **LUK 12:15.**
 3. The covetous will be drowned in destruction and pierced THROUGH with MANY sorrows.
 4. This is the person who trusts in riches and is filled with anxiety concerning them.
1TI 6:17; PRO 23:5; MAT 6:31-32.
 5. It is one who thinks he would be happy if only he had more.
- E. Pride and self-righteousness will cause burnout. **PRO 16:18.**
1. This is the person who works for praise of men. **MAT 23:5.**
 - a. Such a person may be compensating for feelings of inferiority.
 - b. Such a person can be burned out by criticism.
 2. This is the person who derives his sense of worth from doing more than others and thus cannot bear to be outdone by others.
 3. It is the person who cannot share praise and wants credit for everything.
 4. This is the person who cannot accept that he makes mistakes and fails.
 - a. Such a person may wear himself out by being overcautious to avoid making mistakes.
 - b. Such a person relishes his perfect performance rather than God's mercy.
 5. It is the person who cannot endure the humbling experience of tribulation because he thinks he is too good for it.
 - a. This was Job's problem. **JOB 27:5-6; 32:1-2.**

- b. Job wanted to argue with God. **JOB 23:3-4; 40:8.**
- F. Guilt is a fertile source for burnout.
 - 1. The symptoms of burnout arise from the burden of guilt. **PSA 38:1-11.**
 - 2. Guilt can arise from actual sin or from imagined sin as in the case of thinking that we must be perpetually available.
 - 3. This is the one who engages in endless “good” or “productive” work to prove to himself and others that he is not that bad.
- G. Fear will lead to burnout.
 - 1. Fear is an effect of guilt. **GEN 3:10.**
 - 2. Fear debilitates a person in that it causes faintness and cowardice. **DEU 20:3, 8; JOS 2:9-11.**
 - 3. The spirit of fear generates bondage. **ROM 8:15; HEB 2:15; PRO 29:25.**
 - 4. Fear has torment. **1JO 4:18.**
 - 5. Nervous illness is the expression of sustained fear.
 - a. Fear is said to cause the release of adrenalin which stimulates bodily organs to produce sensations like rapid heartbeat.
 - b. Fear of these sensations will result in the production of more adrenalin which will in turn stimulate the bodily organs to increased sensation which leads to more fear.
 - c. Fear of the effects of fear will intensify those effects.
 - 6. This is the person who fears what people will think of him.
 - 7. It is the agoraphobe who fears to venture from home.
 - 8. This is the person who cannot accept death.
 - 9. It is one who assumes that because things were bad in the past, they will be in the future. He thus dreads the future.
 - 10. It is the person who does not utilize the opportunities he has because he fears he will make a mistake. **MAT 25:25.**

VI. Consider some Scriptural examples of burnout.

- A. Moses was a prime candidate for burnout. **NUM 11:10-15.**
 - 1. He complained of the crushing burden of his responsibilities.
 - 2. He lost a sense of God’s favor toward him.
 - 3. He lost sight of God’s ability to provide and saw everything as his responsibility.
 - 4. Under these circumstances he wanted to die.
 - 5. Under similar circumstances Moses disobeyed God and incurred judgment upon himself. **NUM 20:1-12.**
 - a. Moses saw the fetching of water as his responsibility rather than God’s.
 - b. In this frame of mind he was a prime target to be provoked by the people. **PSA 106:32-33.**
 - c. Burnout victims reveal an increasing sense of dependence upon self-effort rather than upon the Lord which makes them prey to anger and provocation.
- B. Elijah experienced burnout after his peak encounter with the prophets of Baal. **1KI 18-19.**
 - 1. Consider the series of events leading up to Elijah’s burnout.
 - a. Elijah won a tense contest with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel.
 - b. He then slew the prophets at the brook Kishon.
 - c. Following this contest, he earnestly prayed for rain.
 - d. When it rained, Elijah ran from Mount Carmel to Jezreel.
 - e. He then received word from Jezebel that she would see to it that he would be dead

- by the next day.
 - f. High peaks are often connected to deep valleys.
 - g. After this much intense experience, anyone would be a prime subject for a let-down. **JAM 5:17.**
2. Mark the symptoms of burnout in Elijah.
- a. He experienced detachment in that he isolated himself from his servant and went into the wilderness alone.
 - b. He lost interest in life and wanted to die.
 - c. He felt disappointment in that he was no better than his fathers.
 - d. His efforts had not resulted in a nationwide reformation. All that he had done and risked seemed to be for nought.
 - e. He errantly thought he was the only one who was faithful to God. One of the great causes of emotional stress and personal grief are false perceptions of one's uniqueness in a crowd of "losers."
 - f. He placed great emphasis upon himself and what he had done. He wallowed in self-pity.
 - g. He thought everybody was out to get him, a sure way of darkly coloring your perception of everyone's words and conduct and a sure way of coloring their opinion about your stability.
3. Note the steps that the Lord took in recovering Elijah.
- a. Elijah was allowed rest and nourishment.
 - (1) God knows we have need of bodily rest and encourages us to take it. **PSA 127:2; MAR 6:31.**
 - (2) The scytheman who takes a break to sharpen his scythe is not a slacker. He is rather thus better enabled for work. **ECC 10:10.**
 - (3) Spiritual, sensible people know that great tasks require adequate nourishment. God concurs and provides. **1SAM 14:24-30; ACT 27:33-34 c/w EPH 5:29.**
 - b. God engaged in dialogue with Elijah during which Elijah vented his feelings.
 - (1) Do you sometimes because of weariness from well-doing (**GAL 6:9**) need to tell someone about it? Tell God. **HEB 4:16.**
 - (2) Marvel here at the goodness and tenderness of God towards dust. **PSA 103:13-14.**
 - c. He experienced God's presence in a still small voice.
 - (1) Elijah found recovery in quietness.
 - (2) God's presence is not always to be found in the sensational and spectacular.
 - d. He was given a fresh challenge to anoint two kings and a prophet. Rest fits us for future work.
 - e. Elijah's faulty perception was corrected in that he learned there were seven thousand more faithful souls.
 - f. He was given a close companion in Elisha. c/w **2CO 7:6.**
- C. Under the stress of seeing his nation destroyed, Jeremiah experienced burnout as expressed in **LAM 3:1-32.**
1. Observe the symptoms of burnout as listed by Jeremiah.
- a. Jeremiah emphasized himself and his problems.
 - b. He believed that God was against him; he lost the sense of God's favor. **vs. 1, 3, 5, 12-13.**
 - c. He was in darkness. **vs. 2, 6.**

- d. He felt old and broken. **v. 4.**
- e. He felt trapped, imprisoned. **v. 7.**
- f. His desperate prayer was unheard. **v. 8.**
- g. He had no clear direction. **v. 9, 11a.**
- h. He thought God was just waiting for an opportunity to pounce upon him. **v. 10.**
- i. He was in pieces; he did not have it together. **v. 11.**
- j. He was estranged from his people. **v. 14.**
- k. He was full of bitterness. **v. 15.**
- l. He knew what it was like to eat dirt. **v. 16.**
- m. Peace was far off and prosperity was forgotten. **v. 17.**
- n. His strength and hope were perished: he was burned out. **v. 18!**
- 2. The burnout experience is humbling. **v. 20.**
- 3. Recovery came when Jeremiah's attention was directed away from his symptoms to certain facts about God. **v. 21.**
 - a. He realized that God's mercies save us rather than our own effort. **v. 22a.**
 - b. He focused on God's unfailing, ever fresh compassions. **vs. 22b-23a.**
 - c. He acknowledged that God's faithfulness is great. He now had something VERY dependable. **v. 23b.**
 - d. He found fulfillment in the LORD as his portion. **v. 24a.**
 - e. With these realizations hope was restored. **v. 24b.**
 - f. He now had a sense of God's goodness toward him. **v. 25.**
 - g. Recovery was in QUIET waiting for the Lord. **vs. 25-26.**
 - h. Being humbled by his afflictions and waiting for the Lord's salvation, he found hope. **v. 29; ROM 5:3-5.**
 - (1) The process of waiting sifts out our delusions.
 - (2) It causes us to realize Who is really in control.
 - (3) Waiting teaches us where to place our hope.
 - i. He now saw his present affliction as temporary. He saw the light at the end of the tunnel (and it wasn't an oncoming train). **vs. 31-32.**

VII. Consider Scriptural preventatives against burnout.

- A. Implementing these steps can prevent burnout and also help the burnout victim to recover.
- B. Faith in Jesus Christ is a great antidote to burnout. **JOH 14:1-3.**
 - 1. To relieve him of the burden of guilt, the believer is assured of justification.
 - a. There is mercy to cover the inevitable imperfections of our performance. **1JO 2:1-2; HEB 8:12.**
 - b. To avoid burnout, this mercy must be the ground of our hope. **PSA 130.**
 - 2. Countering the fear of death is the assurance that the believer has eternal life and a place in the Father's house. **JOH 11:25-26.**
 - 3. Through believing we are filled with joy and peace and abound in hope. **ROM 15:13.**
 - 4. The believer has abundant assurance that God has his best interest at heart. **ROM 8:31-39.**
 - 5. The believer is assured that God has a good purpose in allowing problems in his life. **1PE 1:6-8; ROM 5:3-5.**
 - 6. The believer can commit himself to the Lord's keeping since he is assured of good in the outcome. **1PE 1:6-8; ROM 5:3-5.**
- C. Intake of the Scriptures is a vital preventative against burnout.
 - 1. Through the Scriptures we have hope without which we burn out.

ROM 15:4; PSA 119:81, 114.

2. Great peace comes through the Scriptures. And there is no peace without them.
PSA 119:165; PRO 3:1-2; 2CH 15:3-5.
3. In learning of Jesus we find rest to our souls. **MAT 11:28-29.**
4. In order to profit by the word we must meditate therein rather than merely hear it or read it. **PSA 1:1-4.**
 - a. Meditate: “To muse over or reflect upon; to consider, study, ponder.”
 - b. Lack of meditation is owing to a lack of love for the law, not a lack of time.
PSA 119:97.
 - c. Meditation requires quiet time. **JOB 37:14; PSA 4:4; 46:10 c/w DEU 4:39.**
 - (1) This means that we must work resources of quiet time into our lives.
 - (2) Quietness: “The condition of being quiet or undisturbed; absence of noise, motion, or excitement; calmness, tranquility.”
 - (3) Quiet: “Free from disturbance, molestation, or annoyance; not interfered or meddled with; left in peace. Characterized by the absence of all strife, bustle, stir, or commotion; also, free from noise or uproar, silent, still.”
 - (4) Family, work and telecommunications may have to be ignored during this time.
 - (5) Quietness is to be preferred above abundance of things if in having that abundance our life is full of travail and vexation of spirit. **ECC 4:6.**
5. The difference between reading and studying the word is like the difference between an acquaintance and a close friend.
6. **PRO 7:1-4** shows us how intimate we should be with the Scriptures.
 - a. We should keep them like the apple of our eye.
 - b. We should bind them to us.
 - c. They should be written in our heart.
 - d. They should be as close as a sister.
 - e. They should be part of our family.
7. Too many cares will choke the word (**LUK 8:14**). Therefore we should strive towards a condition of being without carefulness. **1CO 7:32.**
 - a. Carefulness: “The quality of state of being careful. Solicitude, anxiety, concern. Heedfulness, vigilance, attentiveness, exactness, caution.”
 - b. Too much carefulness creates too much hustle and bustle which interferes with needed quietness.
 - c. In the context of Paul’s admonition, *carefulness* refers to having things to care for.
 - (1) *To care for* – to take thought for, provide for, look after, take care of.
 - (2) Therefore, to be without carefulness is to have fewer things to look after.
 - (3) Without qualification, being *without* carefulness would in context include not having wife or family (which things God approves of).
 - (4) A measured, sensible approach to being without carefulness is in order lest one conclude that the only truly spiritual believer is a single, penniless, jobless, naked wanderer and meditator.
 - (5) Each must work out his own salvation. **PHIL 2:12.**
8. If you just don't seem to have the time to meditate in God's word, perhaps it is because you need to redeem that valuable commodity. **EPH 5:15-16.**
 - a. Redeem: “To buy back (a thing formerly possessed); to make payment for (a thing held or claimed by another). To regain, recover (an immaterial thing).”
 - b. We should spend other things to secure time.