

BURNOUT: PREVENTION AND CURE

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Before we look to a cure for the Christian chiropractor, we must first look at the cause of the burnout from the Christian viewpoint. Dr. Clyde M. Narramore says, "If you are suffering from burnout, you need to understand the causes for it. Unless you do, you will probably never make much progress toward a happy, meaningful life." So let's look at some of these causes that are relevant to a Christian and his profession.

Dr. Sumner H. Garte, in his article, "The Cost of Caring," states that one of the most vulnerable individuals is the dedicated and committed individual, often willing to spend great amounts of energy and time in service to other people. The Burnout victim also seems to have a high need for approval and some have a "Messiah Complex," Over commitment and chronic stress due to malpractice concerns, paperwork, put-down by the M.D. and a wrong interpretation of experiences, all can lead to burnout. Dr. Ronald W. Wiebe, a licensed clinical social worker and family counselor and executive director of Medical Resources Institute in San Jose, California lists demanding perfection of oneself, inadequate peer support (need support-not rivalry), and confusing work roles as causes of burnout.

Perhaps you can already relate to some of these factors in your own life, but let's look a little more deeply into its spiritual implications. Why do we allow ourselves to be over committed and over concerned about our problems in practice? In his book "Too busy Not to Pray", Bill Hybels states: "Prayerless people cut themselves off from God's prevailing power, and the frequent result is the familiar feeling of being overwhelmed, overrun, beaten down, pushed around, defeated. Doesn't this sound a little bit like burnout?"

This then brings us to one factor in both preventing and curing burnout. Don't ever think you are too busy to pray. Remember, God is willing. God is able. If He can create planets and raise the dead, He is able to handle me and my practice. He has power over nature, power over circumstances, power over lives and He will have His way in my life. I must pray secretly, sincerely (not repeating religious phrases) and specifically. This then leads us to the achievement addiction referred to earlier in this series of articles. Prayer will help us to seek God's will for what we need. Maybe we don't need a bigger practice. Maybe He wants us to slow down a bit so we can spend more time with other things such as with our families. Time to make sure my goals are God's goals.

It is possible we may burnout when we are really trying to please God through our own good works. We seem to feel that God will only be pleased with us if our performance is up to par, like if our practice is as successful as others in town. Let's remember that we did not have our sins forgiven because of our good works; neither do we keep in God's good favor by our works. Trying to please God by our own efforts only leaves us exhausted and burned out.

Malcolm Smith, in his book "Spiritual Burnout" states "Spiritual burnout can only come when there is either a fundamental misunderstanding of the heart of the gospel, or a failure to apply it to our lives and ministry." Those are pretty tough words: but before we rise up in indignation, let's think about its implications. Further on in the book, he mentions that thousands of believers are burning out daily because they are expecting things from God that the gospel does not promise.

For example, does the Bible promise happiness all the time? Of course not; happiness is not really the peaceful quality that we think (Prov. 14:13). If our peace depends on people acting the way we want them to act or our practices growing as we want them to grow, we will spend most of our lives without peace, and will end up with burnout. As Christians, we don't have to be slave to happenings or to happiness; because people and the events of life are not always going to fit into our plans.

Christians in the past and in Biblical times certainly did not live in the midst of happiness all the time; but they rejoiced in spite of the adverse conditions and uncooperative people. After all, these things belong to time; we are centering our lives on everlasting things, (Romans 14:17) When demonic forces throw themselves against us, when people are fighting against us, and everything seems to be going wrong, through faith we can look at the enemy and say "God is here and all His promises are true. Everything is under His control. He knows all about my situation, He is good and He loves me What more can I want? (Habakkuk 3: 17, 18)

According to II Cor. 4:7, our human weakness is necessary so that we may constantly be showing forth the power of Christ in our lives. However, when we are pressured, unless we are aware of the danger, it is easy to lose sight of the grace of God. We can become disoriented and fall into the trap of drawing on our strength which is already operating in the red. This is what Elijah did in I Kings 19:10.