

Global Connections
Member Care Conference: Growing People
High Leigh Centre February 18-2-2002

AVOIDING BURNOUT
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Burnout is not the same as **Stress**:-

- **Burnout** is an exhaustion state due to too much adrenaline being poured into the body for too long. Usually due to voluntary overload and type of personality structure.
- **Stress** is a reaction to events, either common or unusual, that are perceived as being threatening to us.

Can Christians burnout?

Term comes from rocket technology and indicates death. All that is left after boosting a rocket burns out as useless bits of rubbish. This is not compatible with the Christian faith for we can never become useless bits of rubbish to God.

It would be better to use the term “**brownout**”. This indicates operating on reduced voltage.

However, as burnout is common speech I will use it in this paper, but you know what I mean!

What does burnout feel like?

“Trying to work through a blanket of cotton-wool”.

“Everything feels dead”.

“I have no interest in things and work is just an effort”.

Some common causes of burnout

1. **Normal wear and tear**, eg Elijah. We therefore need to remember that burnout usually indicates we have expended a lot of energy, perhaps unwisely, but we have often done a good job for God. “I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing” is the principle of 2 Samuel 24: 24.

I am NOT saying that it is only if we burnout that we have offered God enough, but if we do happen to burnout that may help us through.

2. **Physical illness** Hyper-conscientiousness leads us:-

- **Not** to go to the doctor when we should because we do not have time.
- **Not** to convalesce properly after illness, but to return to work too soon.
- **Not** to take care of our bodies as the temples of God’s Holy Spirit.

3. **Work-related problems**

- a. **Overwork** There are three major causes:-

- **Reality** Christians are willing workers due to their faith, and if the personality structure is conscientious and a bit obsessive can easily take on too much. We must learn how to say “no” by combining the refusal with a positive suggestion.
- **Hyper conscientiousness** usually include a strong sense of personal responsibility, so we fear to delegate. Remember wise Jethro and exhausted Moses. “What you are doing is not good, you will surely wear yourselves out, both you and these people with you. The task is too heavy for you, you cannot do it alone” (Ex. 18:17). Our problem is that church members will not always volunteer for tasks we could delegate to them, and we should discuss how to get round this problem.
- **Workaholism** Not the same as hyper-conscientiousness, often due to psychological causes, and can also be cultural. Sufferers find satisfaction in work alone, and especially it’s success. Failure may lead to anger and depression.

Practical suggestions

- **Look at the reality of the load**, discuss how you can reduce it.
 - Say “**no**” to extra work (excluding pastoral emergencies) plus a **positive suggestion**.
 - **Handle workaholism seriously** in yourself and others.
- b. **Job frustration** The job of being a pastor, or anything else for God, is often not what we expected and we feel frustrated.
- **Never despise the day of small things.** Zech. 4: 10. Take the job from God and make the best of it for a time.
 - **Keep praying** for clarification and to know when it is time to move on.
 - **Find one area of special interest** and use that as a study challenge so that you grow mentally.
 - **Take good care of your health** in every aspect
 - **Never resent where you are located.** Discuss it with those to whom you are responsible, and if you still cannot change then take it from God, not man.
 - Remember that **God will keep your unused gifts in cold storage**, they will not be lost.
4. **Excess emotional baggage.** This puts an added load on us. For example:
- Inferiority**
- It may be a **reality**. Failure to accept this leads to jealousy. It is often based on childhood troubles, but by accepting it God then exercises more power on our behalf.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)

- **It is not the same as humility** Inferiority is destructive, humility is constructive. Treat it by honouring other people’s reality gifts and accomplishments rather than by trying to pull them down. “Do nothing from selfish ambition and conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3)

The Difference between Inferiority and Humility

Humility	Inferiority
A new creation within us. The Greeks had problems with this due to their training in self-assertion.	A life-long problem, often with some old psychological roots.
Increases understanding of God’s loving grace and power in our lives.	Results in voluntary humility, an effort to appear humble, which blocks the expression of God’s grace.
Reality based. We recognise our gifts and weaknesses. Our gifts, or lack of them, are accepted as coming from God. Results in increased understanding of the Church as the total body of Christ.	Unrealistic. Often leads to a denial of any worthwhile gifts, or a brash over-confidence that usually ends in disaster. There is often little personal experience of the reality of being new creations in Christ.
Constructive	Destructive

The dangers of inferiority are obvious

- True humility is blocked
- Life is unhappy, since inferiority can invade every aspect of life
- Interpersonal relationships are often poor due to swings between inferiority and the wrong kind of domination and superiority

Some common causes of inferiority

Childhood causes

- Unresolved sibling rivalry, accompanied by jealousy
- Excessive adverse comments
- Personal handicaps
- Poor parental relationship affecting the child

Adult causes

- **Social problems** an important one, including unemployment, marriage failure, job status, poor stability, poverty and other things

Handling inferiority

- **Never live in the “if-onlys”.** God has no favourites.
- **Deal with reality-based inferiorities**

- Acknowledge **unpleasant things** about ourselves, then we can more easily deal with them.
- Remind yourself of **important Scriptures** indicating how important we are to God:-
 1. You are the Temple of God's Holy Spirit (1 Cor: 6 : 19,20)
 2. You are bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor 6: 20: 1 Peter 1: 18,19)
 3. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God (1 John 3:1)
- **Handle negative emotions such as constant resentment and bitterness.**
 1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the occasions on which you have been hurt.
 2. Ask the Lord to show you why people hurt you (Eph 4: 31-32). This enables us to combine the hurt with compassion, the first sign of the oil of God coming into our hearts.
 3. Write down in detail who you have to forgive and why
 4. Remember that what we are thinking of is the debt they owe us.
 5. Make a detailed act of forgiveness at a certain place and time. Wait for healing to occur. Memories never go, but the painful emotion does.