

HOW CAN I OVERCOME BURNOUT AND FATIGUE

Text: John 8:12-58; Luke 9:37-43; Matthew 9:27-38

One woman tells of a Sunday worship service, in which the congregation was singing the chorus, "I exalt thee, oh Lord ..." As I sang, she said, she glanced down at her 5-year-old daughter standing beside her. Her little arms were up in the air and she was singing, "I'm exhausted, oh Lord ..."

-- Sandy Anthony, Canton, OH. Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

Burnout is a form of depression but is a very specific form that is connected to one's ideals and efforts. People who are burnt out often place blame on themselves in highly stressful situations rather than seeing their feeling as a response to the stress-provoking situation. People burn out on church as well as other areas in their lives often feeling taken for granted and overextended in their service to the church.

Burn out reveals it's self in many ways.

It shows up in physical exhaustion—low energy, chronic fatigue, weakness, and weariness, accident-proneness, increased susceptibility to illness, headaches, nausea, muscle tension, and more.

Burnout also shows up in emotional exhaustion—feelings of depression, helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment. If you feel you are going nowhere in life and that your resources are drained, if even your best friends irritate you and you feel you do not have the emotional energy to be a friend, if you find it hard to be polite and tolerant of others, and if you often find yourself in self-pity with your main goal as wanting to be left alone, you could be emotionally exhausted.

Burn out shows up in mental exhaustion—which involves negative attitudes toward oneself, work, and life leading a person to feel inadequate, inferior, and incompetent.

Burn out shows up in spiritual exhaustion—joy is gone, one's faith feels powerless, worship and prayer feels like an obligation. This is the attitude of a spiritually burned out person.

The fact is that many Americans today feel that even churches are asking for more time and energy than they can give which has led some to

become more detached from the church. Some futurists predict that in less than 10 years, instead of turning to a local church, 10 to 20% of the population will rely exclusively on the internet for their religious and spiritual needs.

This has been a quick thumbnail sketch of what burnout and fatigue is all about. The question is did you recognize yourself in anything I've told you so far? If so, we are ready to hear some questions from Jesus.

What do the questions Jesus asked have to say to those who may be exhausted or burned out? He starts with relatively mild questions—the first of which is:

I. “Why do you not understand what I say?” (John 8:43).

The NIV records Jesus words this way, “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.”

A. Jesus came as the light of the world and everything He did was met with unbelief, resistance, and criticism.

B. This is just one example of the frustration and disappointment Jesus experienced.

C. Jesus’ questions reveal the humanness of His experience on earth.

Jesus become more intense...

II. “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you?” Luke 9:41

One translation renders this verse this way, "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?"

A. Jesus and His disciples had just returned from the glorious “Mount of Transfiguration” experience.

- They saw the appearance of Jesus’ face change,

- His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.
- Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor,
- They saw the glory of God
- A cloud appeared and enveloped them,
- A voice came from the cloud...it was glorious!

B. On the way down Jesus encounters a distraught father with a suffering child, whom His disciples were unable to help. But the crowd encountered a Savior on the verge of burnout.

Luke 9:37-41 “The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

C. This passage shows us that Jesus knows us and understands the experiences of frustration and burnout more than we might think.

III. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” (Matthew 9:27-28).

Jesus had just raised the ruler’s daughter from the dead when He encounters two blind men. We pick up in Matthew 9:27 “As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

A. The question Jesus asked struck at the heart of their *desire for help*. “Do you believe I can do this?”

B. The question is also are we willing to accept His help

CONCLUSION

I am told that in stormy weather it is not unusual for small birds to be blown out of sight of land on to the sea. They are often seen by voyagers out of their reckoning and far from the coast, hovering over the masts on weary wings as if they wanted to light and rest themselves, but fearing to do so.

A traveler tells us that on one occasion, a little bird, which followed the ship for a considerable distance, was at last compelled through sheer weariness to alight. He was so worn out as to be easily caught. The warmth of the hand was so agreeable to him that he sat down on it, burying his little cold feet in his feathers and looking about with his bright eye not in the least afraid, and as if feeling assured that he had been cast among good kind people whom he could trust.

It makes a touching picture of the soul who is aroused by the Spirit of God and blown out of its own reckoning by the winds of conviction, and the warm reception of the weary little bird received at the hands of the passengers conveys but a faint idea of that welcome which will greet the worn-out, sin-sick souls who will commit themselves into the hands of the only Savior.

-- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*, (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990)