

10 PRACTICAL KEYS TO PREVENT BURNOUT

1. Depend on God. It sounds obvious, but too many of us take the burdens upon ourselves. Remember, your life and your ministry are not yours, but God's. He has called you, and He accomplishes His work in you (Phil. 1:6). Stop trying to control things you can't control and manage what you can't manage. Cast every care on Him (1 Peter 5:7).

2. Get real. Don't try to meet everyone's expectations (including your own). Learn to say no and to delegate. Let others use their gifts.

3. Cultivate peer relationships. Too many of us feel isolated and lonely. We need intimate fellowship with friends who endure similar struggles. It takes effort to cultivate these friendships, so start making time for it. Seek to go beneath the surface with them. Rather than striving to "keep up appearances," be ready to honestly share your challenges and failures, as well as your successes.

4. Stay connected. In First Timothy 4:16 Paul tells Timothy, "Take heed to yourself" (NKJV). He realized that Timothy was a person first and a pastor second. Pay careful attention to your own life and spiritual well-being. Daily remember your salvation and your calling, and honestly assess your strengths and weaknesses. Take time to care for yourself and your family.

5. Pace yourself. Life is a marathon, not a sprint, and the victory goes to those who pace themselves. Slowing down often makes you more effective. Create margins of time so that you are not always rushed. Take frequent breaks. Give yourself permission to rest and refresh (Matt. 11:28 AMPC).

6. Get a life. Develop interests outside of your job or calling. Find activities that offer healthy distractions from your everyday life where you are not the one in charge. These will help you to relax, remind you of how most people live, and give you material you can use to help others.

7. Play every day. Blend solitude, recreation, and refreshment into your daily working hours.

You can't stay in good spiritual condition by always being on the go. Jesus often "withdrew to a quiet place" and said no to ministry (Luke 5:16). Schedule regular times of refreshment on your calendar and treat them as "real" appointments. Protecting these appointments is not being selfish. It is exercising good stewardship. It will increase your effectiveness and protect you from burnout.

8. Take a chill pill. Don't take everything so seriously! Learn to laugh at yourself and at difficult situations. Develop a sense of humor. Laughter is an antidote to cynicism and sarcasm (Prov. 17:22).

9. Do what we all know we should do. Exercise! Eat right! Get enough sleep! It takes effort but pays rich dividends. Until you get these right, you'll be tired, stressed, out of shape, and less productive. So do whatever it takes. You can't underestimate the importance of physical health when it comes to being effective and preventing burnout.

10. Reach out. Those of us in the "helping" profession are most at risk of burnout. Too many of us feel as if we have to keep everyone and everything together. If you're feeling overwhelmed, one of the best things you can do for your ministry, yourself, and your family may be to visit with a trusted counselor. He or she can provide insight and feedback and can help you along the way.