

BE ON FIRE FOR GOD WITHOUT BURNING OUT



Instances of people feeling depressed or overwhelmed, experiencing anxiety or heart palpitations, are on the rise among the general population worldwide. It is often difficult to distinguish between depression and what is called 'burnout'. Is there a difference? Although some aspects between the two may overlap, they are different. Burnout can usually be addressed by beginning to reduce time spent on activities that cause you stress. Depression, however, is defined in medicine as a mental health condition that needs special attention.

Usually, one does not end up burnt out due to hard work alone. Burnout is also accompanied by emotional and spiritual fatigue, leaving a person so tired that they struggle to regain equilibrium. True burnout is a complex physical and spiritual condition. Following are some thoughts to help you spot warning signs and help you prevent this from happening to you.

Watch out for these warning signs

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the motives behind some of the things you do that leave you tired and drained, by prayerfully considering these:

Motivation. Wrong motives, like trying to prove ourselves over and over again after having experienced humiliation, rejection or several failures, can end in burnout.

Guilt feelings. Perhaps we are feeling guilty or afraid about something and try to make up for it by working harder or trying harder, e.g. being a new mom or starting a new job. This can tire us out completely, even though it's done in all sincerity!

Expectations. We can mistakenly think that the harder we work, the more God will love us. We end up never feeling we have done enough, and always subconsciously thinking that God is not pleased with either our work or ourselves.

Drivenness. When there is a parent, teacher, or perhaps a spouse with a dominant personality present, we may feel compelled to do what is asked of us just to keep the peace. As a result, everything we do becomes fear-driven. This can be a church leader who fears failure or criticism. In the end the problem is not the hard work, but the spiritual and emotional pressures that accompany it.

Needs. Do you find yourself boots-and-all in the middle of crisis situations, helping everyone? When we are not following the direction of the Holy Spirit in helping others, 'guilt for doing nothing' will leave us depleted over time.

Deception. The devil often succeeds in getting us to believe that we have to work harder, in order to be accepted by others.

Recovery tips

God is enough. One of the biggest problems for people with burnout is that they feel they are indispensable. They believe (consciously or unconsciously) that everything will collapse if they are not there to intervene. *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas in your life where this is the case. Pray for wisdom on how to address such situations, e.g. training others to start helping.*

Stop. You have to bring all activities to a halt. Adjusting your programme, working smarter, or building in time-saving mechanisms is a temporary help, but no solution at all. The moment you have 'extra time' you will fill it with something else. *Ask the Holy Spirit what is the void you are trying to fill by constant 'busyness'. Bring your emotional need and spiritual void before Him in all honesty.*

Exercise. Eating healthy and exercising will alleviate emotional stress almost immediately. It will also reduce the medical bills over time as you regain your health.

Stressors. There are some things that may cause us unnecessary stress, burnout and eventual depression: lust (wanting something we don't have), gluttony (over-eating), greed (wanting more than we already have), laziness (omitting what needs to be done), anger and pride. *Prayerfully consider each one, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any expectations or emotions you are subconsciously hiding from yourself.*

Pray with someone. Perhaps you have not yet openly shared what you experience with a prayer friend. Having someone who prays with and for you is priceless.

Meditate on Scripture. Taking time daily to meditate on Scripture makes a huge difference. We often quickly read a chapter, and then close the Bible until tomorrow. One way of effectively facing emotional issues like trust, faith and love, is to pause at one verse that stands out to you. Read it a few times. Write it down. Pray it. Think upon the meaning thereof. And then take a next verse. Spending time in the Word like this, soothes those emotions and brings them in line with God's character of love, care and protection. Start by looking up the following Scriptures in different translations and languages to learn more of the depth of each. Then pray through each one.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty [whose power no foe can withstand]. (Psalm 91:1, AMPC)

Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you; He will never allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved (made to slip, fall, or fail). (Psalm 55:22, AMPC)

Commit your way to the Lord [roll and repose each care of your load on Him]; trust (lean on, rely on, and be confident) also in Him and He will bring it to pass. (Psalm 37:5, AMPC)

But those who wait for the Lord [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount up to the sun]; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired. (Isaiah 40:31, AMPC)

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. 30 For My yoke is wholesome (useful, good--not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne. (Matthew 11:28-30, AMPC)