

Prevent Burnout

Your guide to thriving and staying energized.



2 INTRODUCTION **New Light**

Tired of changing bulbs all the time?
Tap into a new source of Light.
by Janine Petry

4 THE HEART OF THE ISSUE **A Cool Look at Burning Out**

It's not stress, but rather distress
that leads to burn out.
by Paul A. Qualben

12 GETTING DEEPER **Preventing Burnout**

Try these three biblical models for
effective, lasting ministry.
by Robert Morgan

17 PRACTICALLY SPEAKING **Lessons in Burnout Prevention**

Here's how to keep your "unsung
heroes" enthusiastically active.
by Virginia Vagt

26 MAKE IT REAL **Positively Stressed**

Stress can either serve as our
enemy or our ally.
by Holly G. Miller

32 HOW TO **Get Up & GO!**

Start your day right with these
energizing tips.
by Deborah R. Simons

37 LEADERSHIP TOOLS **6 Ways to Bust a Rut!**

TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN readers
share how they mix things up.

39 **Additional Resources**

More places for more information.





New Light

Tired of changing bulbs all the time?
Tap into a new source of Light.

by Janine Petry

I have an uncanny knack for shorting out light bulbs. I used to think it was just good timing—that I just happened to be the person to flip the switch at the same time the bulb was ready to burn out. But it's happened too many times for that to be true. It just seems that every time I turn on a light switch, it blows. So maybe it's my electric personality, or perhaps I shuffle my feet too much. Either way, changing light bulbs is getting tiring.

Strangely enough, there's another thing I've got an uncanny knack for burning out: *me*. I used to think my personal struggles with burnout were coincidences as well. Sure I had a busy life, but how did I reach this state of complete mental fatigue? What does not exercising have to do with how I feel? And where's the abundant, full life Christ has for me? After years of repeating the same draining patterns, changing the light bulb gets tiring.

Thankfully, God has much more for us than just living from burn out to burn out. John 1:4 says this about our Savior: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." In Christ,

Introduction





Prevent Burnout

New Light

3

there's so much more for us than succumbing to the pattern of this world—running on empty, burning out, and searching for a new source of energy. With Christ in us, there is enough Light and Life to last a lifetime—and far beyond.

As leaders, it's important that we follow Christ's directions when it comes to staying energized so that we can be effective in accomplishing his purposes. As you seek to experience the abundant life that Christ has for you—and lead others to do the same—this resource will guide you. In it, you'll learn the truth about burnout, and how to protect against it. You'll also find the practical tips and advice you need to stay strong throughout your day. To help you go even farther in understanding and experience an abundant, burn-out free life, you'll find plenty of other resources packed inside. Shine on!

Blessings,

Janine Petry

*Contributing Editor, Gifted For Leadership
Christianity Today International*

Introduction





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

4



THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

A Cool Look at Burning Out

It's not stress, but rather distress that leads to burn out.

by Paul A. Qualben

A little over a decade ago, Herbert Freudenberger coined the term “burnout” to describe a condition that occurs in members of the helping professions, including the church leaders. In simplest terms, burnout was thought to occur when a professional works too hard for too long in a pressured environment. The burnout victim is drained on all levels—physical, emotional, attitudinal, and spiritual. The condition knows no age limits. It can strike a struggling young intern as easily as the veteran pastor.

Cary Cherniss in his book, *Staff Burnout*, describes three stages in the burnout process:

1. The honeymoon stage, in which enthusiasm, commitment, and job satisfaction eventually give way; energy reserves begin to drain off.

Features





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

5

2. The “fuel shortage” stage, characterized by exhaustion, detachment, physical illness, anger, sleep disturbances, depression, possible escapist drinking or irresponsible behavior.
3. Then crisis-pessimism, self-doubt, apathy, obsession with one’s own problems, disillusionment with one’s career.

Job stress, however, does not invariably lead to burnout. Working in a slaughterhouse removing hair and fat from hog carcasses is as physically draining and mentally numbing a job as one can find, as I personally can attest. Yet one worker I knew took pride and pleasure in his ability to clean a hog carcass in forty-five seconds.

Burnout as a concept has its limitations. It is like a declaration of bankruptcy-necessary at times, but not always responsible. It may be, as Freudenberger suggests, “a demon born of the society and times we live in,” but it may also be a sign we are trying harder, though not always successfully, to meet the needs of the people to whom we minister.

But why do some pastors and lay professional leaders seem to thrive in stressful situations, find satisfaction in their work, and weather the ups and downs of personal and professional life with equanimity, while ones in the next parish burn out? There must be other factors-within each individual-that account for the difference. These factors include the attitudes, wisdom, and faith the individual uses to handle the stresses in his or her ministry.

Three Candidates for Burnout

Burnout candidates are often, but not always, Type A personalities: hard workers who set high goals for themselves but suffer from “hurry disease.” A Type A person, for example, honks the horn when the car ahead doesn’t move when the light turns green, interrupts the speech of others or finishes sentences others have started, makes a fetish of being on time, has the sermon for the next Sunday done on the preceding Monday, places great emphasis on making the budget and increasing the membership, plays nearly every game to win, some times even when playing with children.





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

6

Let me give an example. A fine pastor who had been in a New York parish for fourteen years came to the office with a number of physical complaints: shortness of breath, panic reactions, feelings of faintness, diarrhea. A physician he consulted could find nothing wrong. The family doctor thought his problems might stem from some emotional base.

When we first talked together, there seemed nothing to support the doctor's hypothesis. The pastor got along well with his wife, had lovely children, and served a congregation that was going well. He was conscientious, capable, and concerned. When we began to review his daily activities, however, he listed a schedule a yard long: an active parish, Rotary, several synodical committees, part-time VA chaplaincy, community preservation committee, many outside speaking engagements, plus an active counseling program.

As he finished listing these, he put his hand to his forehead and complained of a headache and not feeling well.

I asked, "Do you think there may be a relationship between what you've just been describing and the headaches?" He hadn't really thought of it.

"Do you think you might be overloading yourself?" Not really, there was so much that needed to be done, and this was his calling.

I commented that he seemed very busy looking after the needs of others, but who took care of him? His wife, for the most part, but then she had a fulltime job looking after the kids, running the house, and being involved herself in the parish and community. Did he have a hard time saying no? That he admitted.

I am happy to report it didn't take too long for him to see the tail was wagging the dog, that his life had gotten out of control. He didn't have enough sense to cut back, so his body had cried out in protest and forced him to slow down. I am not suggesting that hard work hurts a pastor or anyone else. What causes problems is allowing work to become a compulsion.

Features





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

7

A second type of burnout-prone person is the one who bases personal worth on the results obtained in ministry. She plays the numbers game and is exhilarated by the throngs on Easter and depressed by the drop-off on Low Sunday. He feels good about himself if the budget is raised and bad if the goals are not met. Now it's normal to feel good if things go well and disappointed if hard times fall on the parish, but it is extremely risky to feel good about yourself if the numbers are up and bad about yourself if the numbers go down. We need to remember that God has not called pastors to be promoters; he has called them to be witnesses. The increase is God's responsibility.

A pastor in the office not long ago told me he was feeling miserable about himself. "How come?" He felt the sermon the Sunday before had bombed. "What happened?" The time he had set aside for preparation had been usurped by a crisis—a member's husband had committed suicide, requiring the pastor to spend the day with her and the children. He knew this was the right thing to do, but felt torn. I reminded him that any professional had to set priorities, and the needs of the traumatized family were of top order even if the sermon suffered. His error was in feeling guilty and letting the lukewarm response to the sermon affect his self-esteem.

Alvin Rogness points out that faith allows us freedom from the judgments of others. We are judged by God in Jesus Christ and found righteous. Such faith is a powerful antidote to burnout. A third candidate for burnout is the twenty-four-hour-a-day pastor. This personality can be found in every profession.

In the doctors' dining room at the hospital there are usually two clusters of physicians. On one side of the room are the full-time diagnosticians. Even during lunch hour, they discuss the morning's surgery or the probable significance of the laboratory findings for the baffling medical problem on their floor. They talk with intensity, their brows furrowed, often leaving food on their plates. They seldom have dessert.

On the opposite side of the room, their colleagues are discussing the New York Knickerbockers or telling about a play or movie they have seen. They laugh a lot, scrape their plates clean, and are more prone to indulge in goodies. I prefer to eat lunch with them. Their medical

Features





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

8

skills are every bit as good as those of the first group, but they have learned the art of compartmentalizing. They are not physicians twenty-four hours a day. They don't wear their stethoscopes in bed. Their lives are in balance.

Some ministers over-identify with their profession. A number of years ago, a pastor's wife said she admired her husband's dedication but protested the endless amount of time he spent in parish duties. She felt neglected; they seldom went out, and she was being left to rear the children virtually alone. I don't know what happened to this couple, but I suspect that unless the husband got his life in balance, his round-the-clock involvement in his parish eventually led to fuel exhaustion and put his engine and marriage in real trouble.

Stress or *Distress*?

I have described these cases of burnout in some detail for a reason: If we have a problem, we need to know it; if we are doing things correctly, it is good to know that, too. Many authorities claim stress is the reason for burnout. I do not believe that. Most work—in the church and elsewhere—is done by people under stress. Stress is not the issue. The problem is rather distress. Distress is the product of frustration and repeated disappointment. We must address the conditions that produce distress in the ministry.

Distress can result from a wrong chemistry between pastor and congregation. There are many examples of fine congregations and fine pastors who just don't work well together. If this is the cause of the distress, then the solution may be another call for the pastor.

Sometimes the source of distress may be bad internal chemistry: unrealistic expectations, poor stewardship of one's resources, relating one's worth to results in the congregation, and the like. If we can identify the correct causes of distress, the first step in preventing or correcting burnout has been taken.

To avoid the distress that leads to burnout, maintain control over your life and work. Determining your agenda are both your assets (and limitations) and the needs of your congregation. If the congregation unilaterally determines your activities, burnout is the





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

9

likely consequence. There is no way you can do everything that needs to be done in your parish. Only you can determine the order of priorities.

Professional church leaders should strive to keep their lives in balance. Get away from parish responsibilities at regular intervals. Become good at something else—it doesn't matter what—music, butterfly catching, automotive repair, carpentry, golf, you name it.

If you can't get away from the parish physically, you can always do so in your imagination. Many times during the week, I travel mentally to our little place in the country where I fish, or build stone walls, or finish the inside of the cabin.

A voluntary change of activity is as good as, or even better than, rest when completing a particular task becomes impossible. For example, if the ideas for Sunday's sermon won't gel because of fatigue or enforced interruptions, it is better to go for a walk or sweep the basement than to sit around stewing. Hans Selye says, "Stress on one system helps to relax another."

Learn how to regress. Countless phenomena run in cycles, such as the recurring needs for food, water, and sleep. There is no way we can function at peak efficiency all the time. Damage is done if the cycles are not allowed to run their course.

One way to handle the emotional cycles is to regress, to stop acting your age temporarily, to let your hair down. You married folk, court your spouse the way you did when you were first going together. It will do wonders for your psyche and your marriage. A seventy-five-year-old priest I know plays basketball a couple afternoons a week with grade-school children. He is one of the youngest seventy-five-year-olds I know. Dipping in and out of the regressed state from time to time is a good antidote for burnout.

Develop a support system. Roy Oswald, in an article distributed by the Alban Institute of Washington, D.C., notes that pastors engaged in difficult work over a long period of time need a small group of people telling them they are on the right track and are loved and cared for. Oswald feels fellow clergy are potentially an excellent





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

10

source of support, but his experience is that peer groups of clergy usually don't work too well. He favors a group composed of individuals within and without the congregation.

Finally, I refer to the missionary candidates mentioned at the beginning of this article. One of the things we try to evaluate, although it is sometimes difficult to do so, is commitment to Christian service. Missionaries, like most pastors, experience periods of discouragement. They wonder what they are doing overseas. During these difficult periods they often find themselves sustained by their faith and gain strength to go on.

In Acts 1:8, Christ promised the apostles power from the Spirit as they became his witnesses. The Greek word for power is *dunamis*, from which we derive our words dynamite and dynamo. Kehl observes that the former goes off with a big explosion and then is all burned out, but the dynamo continues to produce day in and day out. For the pastor, as for every Christian, the daily walk in faith is made possible by Word and sacrament; through them we receive spiritual renewal. If, by his grace, we learn to look on ourselves as God's instruments, a lot of the distress that brings burnout will be avoided.

Paul A. Qualben is director of psychiatry at Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York. This article first appeared in the Summer 1996 issue of LEADERSHIP.





Prevent Burnout

A Cool Look at Burning Out

11

Thought Provokers

- *Are you a candidate for burnout? What makes you prone to this—an overly driven personality, a results-driven sense of self-worth, the 24-hour-a-day leader mentality?*
- *The author writes: “Many authorities claim stress is the reason for burnout. I do not believe that. Most work—in the church and elsewhere—is done by people under stress. Stress is not the issue. The problem is rather distress. Distress is the product of frustration and repeated disappointment.” In your own words, what is the difference between stress and distress?*
- *What conditions produce stress for you? What conditions lead to distress? How are you addressing the situations that lead to distress?*

Features





GETTING DEEPER

Preventing Burnout

Try these three biblical models for effective, lasting ministry.

by Robert Morgan

Josh was one of the most zealous workers we'd seen at church, but I realized he was three steps beyond "weary in well doing" when I read his letter: "My walk with the Lord is nonexistent. I've allowed the pressure of church work to crowd out time with God. Now it seems impossible to get back in touch with him. We've also gotten seriously into debt, and I've been trying to do 'ministry' while working five part-time jobs. I'm short with my wife and kids, and we're having problems. I'd like to talk to you."

To keep those you lead from stagnation, frustration, and burnout, try these models I've learned from several examples in Scripture.

Ezekiel: Think Empathetically

A friend dropped out of ministry leadership for a while, taking a "normal" job. He later told me, "I have new respect for those who serve. I can't possibly do everything I once asked of my workers."





Prevent Burnout

Preventing Burnout

13

I've thought a lot about his words. He was learning, like Ezekiel, to sit where they sat (Ezekiel 3:15). When we do, we gain respect for people's schedules, and we guard workers against over-involvement.

Last night, I grew wary while chatting with a new member, a hard-driving sales executive thrilled with his new Christian life and eager to be involved.

"I've signed up for drama ministry," he told me. "We practice on Wednesdays. I have Bible study on Thursday nights and church softball on Fridays. We're going to a Sunday school function on Saturday."

"I don't expect you to be here every night of the week," I said.

As far as I'm concerned, the unwritten motto of lay ministry should be: One Person, One Ministry. That may be unrealistic, but it gives us a goal and keeps us sensitive to demands on our workers.

Nehemiah: Create Systems

Jim, who was in charge of our buildings and grounds, once planned a church workday. Several dozen people sacrificed extra sleep for thankless toil. But I was disappointed to find that Jim hadn't organized the activities. A hallway needed painting; there were no paint cans, brushes, or drop cloths. Floors needed mopping; one old mop and pail occupied the janitor's closet. Most of us stood around trying to look busy, thoroughly frustrated. And only two people showed up for the next workday—so I was told.

Nehemiah went about it differently. He created systems. The projected wall was divided into manageable sections with clearly defined tasks. Some were stationed as watchmen, others as soldiers. Others provided food. Workers hauled off debris as it accumulated. Everyone understood his or her part, and the wall went up.

Local churches are difficult places to create efficient systems, for they are volunteer organizations made up of people with varying levels of ability, maturity, and dedication. Several things have helped us create or maintain systems.





Prevent Burnout

Preventing Burnout

14

Periodic retreats with staff or lay leaders are worth every penny. We get away to the mountains semiannually to look at our church ministries. We ask, “What systems must be in place, working effectively, to accomplish together what God wants us to do?” We develop organizational charts (a simpler task than it sounds, thanks to computer software).

Our staff met in Cincinnati once to take in a Reds’ game and to isolate ourselves for two days of evaluation and planning. While away, we learned that the wife of our oldest member had fallen ill. By long distance, we referred the need to the man’s Sunday school class with its teacher, lay pastor, and tight circle of friendships. I was upset to learn later that no one called, visited, prepared food, or prayed with the family.

We treated it as a systems failure. We met with class leaders to find out where the caring process broke down. We were careful not to be critical, just concerned. Everyone now understands the processes better, and I don’t expect a recurring problem.

It takes longer to solve problems on a systems level. It’s demanding to both minister and administer. But somewhere near or at the top of a productive, motivated organization is a Nehemiah.

Syzygus: Reduce Friction

During an intense capital stewardship campaign, two of our workers argued over decorations for the celebration supper. Claude had acquired three hundred pine seedlings, thinking they could be potted in cups and placed at each dinner setting. “People can plant their pines as symbols of our growth,” he said. “They’ll always be reminded, seeing their trees, of this period in our church’s life.”

It was a good idea, but it didn’t suit the decorations planned by Anne, who visualized fine china and tasteful elegance—not pine trees and potting soil. They had a terrible row, and I hurried over to Claude’s house, where his wife met me at the car, wringing her hands. “Have you come to help us with our problem?” she asked. I nodded grimly and went inside. When Claude told me his side of the story, I sensed he’d lost his temper and spoken harshly to Anne. “Claude,” I said, “you’ve got to visit her and apologize.”





Prevent Burnout

Preventing Burnout

15

“I did!” he said. “I did apologize. It didn’t do any good.”

“What did you say?” I asked.

“I told her I was sorry.”

“You did?”

“Yes,” he said, voice rising. “I told her I was sorry she was acting so immaturely.”

It took all my powers of diplomacy to patch things up (we finally stuck the trees in elegant little flowerpots and handed them out as people left the ballroom), but both families eventually left the church.

Interpersonal conflict is a primary cause of burnout, so we take on the role of the loyal yokefellow in Philippians 4: “I urge Euodia and Syntyche to iron out their differences and make up. Syzygus, since you’re right there to help them work things out, do your best with them” (The Message).

So we strive to mediate or prevent conflict. We’re arranging lunch with a member of our missions team who has been unusually silent during the last few meetings-or absent altogether. I think she’s upset, and I’d like to talk with her. Syzygus would have.

Paul: Give Recognition

Ever heard of Urbanus, Apelles, Tryphena and Tryphosa? They weren’t the most famous New Testament servants, but they must have beamed when the apostle Paul mentioned their hard work in Romans 16. Paul’s example prompted us to create opportunities like these:

- Showing slides during the prelude or offertory on selected Sundays, highlighting workers in various areas of church life.
- An annual Lay Ministry Sunday with videos, testimonies, sermons, and sometimes a staff-hosted dinner for recognizing faithful workers.





Prevent Burnout

Preventing Burnout

16

- Videos of special events. Following our annual Kids' Jamboree, for example, we show two videos on successive Sundays—one featuring the kids, the other highlighting our workers.
- Profiles in our church newsletter.
- Notes, calls, words of love, and lots of hugs from staff and members.
- An annual Lay Minister of the Year. One year's recipient was director of our teen choir. When Missy came forward to receive her plaque, teens from all over the audience rose spontaneously, joined her, and sang their theme to her, "Heaven Is Counting on You."

We can't do that every week, but we monitor and nurture morale all the time. That means becoming like Nehemiah, Syzygus and Paul. And that means work. But nothing works without it.

Robert J. Morgan is pastor of Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee. This article first appeared in the September 2004 issue of LEADERSHIP JOURNAL.

Thought Provokers

- *How has burnout affected you or someone you know? What effect can burnout have on a leader's areas of influence?*
- *How can "systems" help prevent burnout? Which systems can you put in place in order to help protect you or your areas of service?*
- *How can "reducing friction" in interpersonal relationships help prevent burnout? What affect is friction in relationships having on you right now, and how can this friction be reduced?*

Features





PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

Here's how to keep your “unsung heroes” enthusiastically active.

by Virginia Vagt

Faithful lay workers—the unsung heroes of every church, the people whose active participation makes ministry possible. We motivate them to reach out, to meet the needs of others, but sometimes these stalwarts run the risk of burnout. Our most reliable workers could be the next people out the back door if we neglect a few basic rules of lay ministry.

From her own volunteer experiences both good and bad, Virginia Vagt, a homemaker and active lay worker, describes the kind of ministry that led her to burnout and leaving one church, and the different kind of ministry in another church that proved fruitful and enjoyable and kept her excited over the long haul. The principles she learned from these vastly different experiences show how we can keep our unsung heroes enthusiastically active in the work of the local church.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

18

I don't want to go to church tomorrow, I remember moaning to myself Saturday after Saturday during my final months at Resurrection Church. It wasn't the pastor, his sermons, or a lack of warmth in the congregation that caused me to dread driving up the church's gravel driveway every Sunday.

Being 26 years old and trying to find my place in church life, my problem was that I was in over my head in a program called Women's Outreach. The founder of this program, Margaret Schiller, did lay mission work in Honduras every summer with her dentist husband. Her lifelong commitment to outreach was exciting. When she asked me to be one of her workers, to make weekly visits to a poverty-stricken young widow, I eagerly said yes. The extrovert in me and my need to find a meaningful ministry seemed to have found a good match.

Margaret put me in touch with Lisa, who lived with her 2-year-old son in a nearby low-income apartment building. What exactly was I supposed to do in my visits with Lisa? Other than "befriend her," I didn't know, but I felt reassured; Margaret told me the Lord would lead me.

At first, the dreary apartment building with its dark halls didn't deter me. Lisa would open the thin, scuffed door each Saturday and offer me her warm smile. For several weeks we just sat and talked the way new friends do. Lisa seemed grateful to see me, and I felt I was doing God's work.

As I drove back and forth, however, I questioned myself: *What is my purpose? Is Lisa's life supposed to turn around and improve because I visit her? Is Lisa supposed to become a Christian through my friendship? Should I convince her to come to church?* With no answers, I just waited to see what would happen.

As the weeks went by, Lisa came up with all sorts of things she wanted me to do. One was baby-sitting for Danny, her son, while she and her cousin went off for an hour — or most of the day! It was unsettling not knowing how long I'd be alone with Danny in that apartment. On other occasions, Lisa asked me to drive her places so she could shop and visit. I never knew how long we'd be gone or where exactly we'd be going.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

19

On some Saturdays, five or six of Lisa's friends and cousins would come over. Men would sit together on the plastic-upholstered couch while the women talked and laughed and looked at me as I played with Danny. On those days I felt conspicuous, outnumbered, and filled with self-doubt.

In frustration I wanted to say, "I didn't come here to baby-sit for you, drive you places, or be a specimen for your friends to look at." Before the words could come out, however, I answered them myself: *Then why did you come here?* Since I didn't know, how was Lisa supposed to know?

On Sundays, in the church basement next to the coffee pot and Styrofoam cups, Margaret would ask me how my visits with Lisa were going. I wanted to have a good report, to be able to say I was being helpful to Lisa or "We're making progress."

I felt too guilty to say to Margaret, "I don't know what I'm doing. I'm afraid of being in Lisa's apartment building. And I wish I never had to go back." Instead I said, "Well, I don't really know what to say or do specifically, and I feel a little lost."

Margaret responded with suggestions. One was for me to teach Lisa how to shop for values and not waste money on junk food. Theoretically, that was a good suggestion. Lisa did need to learn things like that. But I never felt comfortable suggesting to Lisa that I knew how to shop and she didn't.

Margaret also suggested that I do a Bible study with Lisa. A Bible study sounded good; that was the kind of thing I had imagined we'd do together. And yet, which one? How would I start? If I found a good one, would Lisa think I was turning the tables on her, setting my own agenda? The Bible study never happened.

At the two-month point, I felt panicky about visiting Lisa. Without any goals or guidelines, the program was always in her hands. I felt caught between the possibility of Lisa's rejecting me and Margaret's feeling I was "not a good Christian." I was also unhappy that my Saturdays were being eaten up by a rocky friendship in which I had no real sense that the Lord was leading me.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

20

Looking back on it, there are many things I should have done differently. But it was early in my adulthood and early in my experience in church work. Back then, I thought that if someone was in need, God wanted me to “give till it hurt.” While I still believe there’s some truth to that, my problem wasn’t giving too much or too little but not knowing what I was doing and not having any hope that the situation would improve.

So, one Saturday, after sixteen weeks of visits, I said good-bye to Lisa, and powered by the twin engines of guilt and fear, I never went back to Resurrection Church — and never said good-bye to Margaret, the pastor, or anyone else in the congregation. My guilt came from feeling I had failed.

The fear was that Margaret would talk me into giving it another try. The one thing I knew was that I wasn’t going to visit Lisa anymore.

Immature of me? Yes. Cowardly? Yes. And I doubt the pastor at Resurrection Church ever knew or even guessed why I left.

Learning How to Do Church Work

After my flight from Resurrection and several years of church hopping, my new husband, Peter, and I landed at a little stone church called St. Mark’s. We attended for ten straight weeks and received a warm pastoral visit followed by a phone call. Would we like to team teach the high school Sunday school class?

Peter was a high school teacher, so that was a good fit, but I had never taught any kind of class. In spite of my lack of experience, however, panic didn’t set in. Teaching together sounded like a good idea.

The “good idea” stretched into a four-year success experience. In addition to teaching, we took the kids on retreats and spent time with them after church. Peter and I grew spiritually. By having to prepare material for them, we learned more Bible ourselves than we ever would have on our own. The high school kids even christened us “the sunshine family.” It felt good to get that kind of affirmation from kids. We kept asking ourselves, “Why is this week-after-week, time-consuming commitment working so well?”





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

21

As I look back, these are some of the factors that made our teaching at St. Mark's work well, and that by their absence had made my involvement in Women's Outreach a failure.

Someone to learn from. At St. Mark's, I wasn't thrown into cold water without a life preserver. Peter already knew how to teach. He knew what he was doing and was there to help me week after week. I could *observe* him in action before I had to do the same thing myself.

Going slowly. That first Sunday morning when large and small teenagers began to walk into our classroom, I felt scared. But in those early days, Peter let me solo for just five minutes at a time. As the weeks went by, I took ten-minute segments, then fifteen, and so on until I was able to take half the class time.

Regular debriefing. Each week we'd go home and talk over how our teaching went. Skits didn't work, but drawing posters on the spot to generate discussion did. With our weekly postmortems, failures became something to learn from and laugh about together. Successes made us glow.

The buddy system. For Peter, an experienced teacher, working with a novice had additional rewards. He wasn't just given another group of kids to teach. Instead, he also gained the satisfaction of sharing what he knew about teaching. He saw someone else—me—start to succeed as a teacher as a result of his modeling.

A supervisor to help. When we both ran into problems, the Sunday school superintendent was available for consultation. Teaching Christian sexual ethics to teenagers on Sunday morning, for example, wasn't something we felt confident about. Our superintendent spent several evenings on the phone helping us plan our approach. She kept in touch when she knew we were struggling or trying something different.

Avoiding a rut and passing the baton. Forgive the mixed metaphor, but after four years, it seemed time for a break. We could tell we had lost our freshness with high schoolers. Both of us were being asked to take on other church responsibilities, too. So we asked if we could train other adults to take our place.

Features





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

22

The idea was accepted. Before packing up our magic markers and discussion-starter games, we met with other adults who wanted to begin working with high schoolers. At the close of our teaching years, we both had the satisfaction of training others the way Peter had trained me.

A Lesson in Burnout Prevention

Eight years after leaving Women's Outreach, I began ministry visits to another woman. But this time, our visits worked. As with the above Sunday school teaching, the secret was in training and ongoing support. Without that, I might have thrown up my hands with Sarah, a tired 82-year-old caught in the crucible of old age.

The primary source of help to me in this instance was our local senior citizen center's "friendly visitor" program. The program gave me guidelines and people to call when I wasn't sure what to do, such as how to be helpful to Sarah during the week she moved from her duplex to a nursing home.

As a result of monthly volunteer meetings and the program guidelines, I've been able to maintain my commitment, listen and smile to a lonely person, and be a fresh face in the world of the elderly. This time, we do talk about God and Christ, and we pray for each other's needs. It just took time.

Perhaps there would be less burnout if more churches could adopt some of the training and support techniques that volunteer organizations often use and that Peter and I unconsciously discovered at St. Mark's. Here are some of the important principles I saw in action at the friendly visitor program:

Screening. Before becoming a friendly visitor, I was interviewed. The director wanted to know *why* I wanted to minister in this way. Apparently most volunteers do want to help people, but they also need to feel the work is satisfying to them. If they don't, they'll quit.

My motives were wanting to improve my listening and empathic skills. Also, being without extended family in this state, I wanted a relationship with an older person. I saw it, too, as part of my Christian responsibility to visit those in need. The director thought my reasons were a good match to the purpose of the program, and I was accepted.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

23

After that interview, I thought, *No one at church has ever asked me why I want to teach or be on the Stewardship Commission.* Perhaps if screening questions were asked at church, more people would end up in the right jobs and would last longer in those positions. At the very least, it would help clarify what we want and what we'll need to do the task.

Purpose. It sounds so simple, but how often in church do we nail down our purpose? The friendly visitor director told us our purpose was not to do grocery shopping or to clean the kitchen for our seniors. Our purpose, rather, was to listen and be a bright spot in their week. There were other community services such as Meals on Wheels and Dial-a-Ride to provide daily necessities. If we spent our time cleaning kitchens, how could we be good listeners and empathizers?

In the high school ministry at church, we realized our purpose was not to become “overgrown high schoolers” ourselves, but to be adult role models for them, to help guide them in their spiritual and social growth.

Signing on the dotted line. All friendly visitors have to sign an ethical statement and promise to meet their commitment by not being a no-show and by arriving on time for their visits. Putting it on paper and signing your name brings home the importance of what may seem like a little volunteer job. It also forces those coordinating a program to distill the purpose and requirements into a paragraph.

Since then, I've discovered that many churches also ask ushers, Sunday school teachers, and coffee hour coordinators to sign an agreement to serve, usually for one-year renewable terms. It helps solidify the commitment.

Training. For six weeks, the senior center provided new volunteers with role-playing exercises, question-and-answer sessions, and insights into the typical problems of the elderly. It felt great to be prepared.

Again, many churches utilize the same approach. In training sessions, Sunday school teachers role-play how to handle the disruptive child. Ushers discuss how to handle late arrivers. Committee chairs role-play how to deal with the committee member who won't stop talking.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

24

Follow-up. It helps to discuss the challenges and questions that come up as we minister to others. Quarterly follow-up meetings came in handy, like the time I told the group about my difficulties with leaving Sarah.

Just when it was time to say good-bye to Sarah each week, she would suddenly open up and talk about her problems, often with tears in her eyes. But until then, she would be very difficult to talk to. So, not wanting to leave during a meaningful moment, I'd end up feeling manipulated into staying longer than we had arranged.

In the follow-up sessions, the other volunteers told me I was being manipulated. From then on, when Sarah opened up as I was preparing to leave, I felt comfortable saying, "Sarah, I'd like to stay and talk, but I have to leave for another appointment." And I left. After that, Sarah opened up before the end of my visit.

Laity burnout is a serious problem for the church in this age of superbusy people; witness my hasty, unannounced departure from Resurrection Church. But by implementing some of the principles I learned the hard way, we can do much to avoid it.

Virginia Vagt is a freelance writer and homemaker. This article first appeared in Growing Your Church through Evangelism and Outreach, a LeadershipBooks, 1995.





Prevent Burnout

Lessons in Burnout Prevention

25

Thought Provokers

- *Read Galatians 6:9. What does this teach us about the need to protect ourselves and others against burnout?*
- *Compare and contrast two of your own experiences: what things do you do that energize you and keep you from feeling burned out? What experiences cause you to feel tired, or like you want to run away? What are the primary differences? How can you use this information in your areas of leadership?*
- *How can being confident and clear about your purpose help prevent burnout? In what areas are you lacking a clear purpose? Take time to clarify your purposes in those areas.*

Features





MAKE IT REAL

Positively Stressed

Stress can either serve as our enemy or our ally.

by Holly G. Miller

For years we've heard about the dangers of stress. The warning goes something like this: Allow tension to sneak into your life and don't be surprised when indigestion turns into ulcers, fatigue results in burnout, and innocent nail-biting leads to serious binge-eating. But wait a minute. Some experts now are claiming that stress has another side. They say that when carefully harnessed, it can serve as a positive—not negative—force in your life. It can boost your productivity, keep you interested in what you do, and make you more interesting to the people around you.

"Stress can create an adrenalin charge," says Charlotte Sutton, an associate professor of management at Auburn University who frequently teaches stress management seminars. "We move faster, are more effective, and have more energy. A lot of people tell me that without stress, they don't get very much done."





Prevent Burnout

Positively Stressed

27

Here are some tips on how to tap into the upside of stress in *your* life.

Hire a Stress Manager

“Being overwhelmed wasn’t an option,” recalls Julie-Allyson Ieron about her reaction to the news that a publisher wanted her to develop a book titled *Names of Women of the Bible*. The problem was that Julie had a full-time job, and all writing assignments had to be tackled on weekends and holidays. Added to this pressure was a tight deadline—five months to finish the book. The opportunity had the potential of panicking this first-time author, so instead, “I broke down the project into manageable bites,” says Julie. “I decided to write about fifty-two women, which required fifty-two outlines that would result in fifty-two chapters. I looked at the calendar and figured out how many chapters I needed to research, outline, and write each weekend to complete the job on time.”

Then she “hired” a stress manager to keep her on schedule—someone who was strong enough to hold her accountable to her goals. “I called in my mom and showed her my writing schedule,” she says. “I gave her permission to keep tabs on me. Most weekends, that meant she would drop in two or three times as I was working. If she saw that I was puttering around, she would gently nudge me back to my writing.”

They agreed on two conditions: First, Julie wouldn’t complain when her mother reminded her of her work quota; second, her mother would be gentle and loving in any admonition she delivered. “She helped me stay on task and get the allotted work done each day—no more and no less,” says Julie. “When I reached my weekly goal we would go out to dinner, watch TV, or find some other way to kick back. Once or twice I tried to push myself past my limit and found I sacrificed effectiveness. I knew that would serve no purpose other than to burn me out before the project was done. My mother helped me pace myself.”

Adjust Your Attitude

The Bible teaches us to “be strong and courageous; do not be terrified; do not be discouraged” (Joshua 1:9). Often the way we size up a demanding situation determines whether the stress we

Features





Prevent Burnout

Positively Stressed

28

experience serves as our ally or acts as our enemy. If we think we're unworthy to meet a challenge, that feeling of unworthiness will produce negative stress. If we remember we are God's creation, we'll welcome the opportunity to use our God-given talents. Our enthusiasm will produce positive stress that will push us to perform at our peak.

"Assume a positive viewpoint," suggests Dennis E. Hensley, author of *Positive Workaholism* and an associate professor at Taylor University. "Rather than saying 'No one will hire me for this job because I'm too old,' a senior applicant can adjust her attitude and say, 'I have more experience than anyone else interviewing for this job!' Rather than saying, 'No one takes me seriously because I'm so young,' a newcomer to the job market can say, 'I'm fresh out of school with state-of-the-art skills, and I have youth and energy on my side!' Phrase everything in positive terms and stress becomes an asset, not a liability."

Ignite the Spark

We may never qualify for the Olympics, but we can all learn a lesson from world-class athletes who clamp headsets over their ears as they wait their turn to compete. Whether they're listening to a favorite motivational speaker or inspirational music isn't important. What matters is that they've identified their personal strategy for pumping themselves up and getting their butterflies to fly in formation. These instant pick-me-up techniques blot out distractions, help them focus, and infuse them with a spurt of positive energy.

What works for you? Some people carry a favorite Scripture verse or a few lines of poetry to review immediately before plunging into a stressful situation. Others rely on a funny cartoon that causes them to laugh, and the laughter releases an adrenalin rush that carries them through an ordeal. Each of us needs to determine our individual way of igniting the spark that fires our positive emotions.

Give Yourself Time

"I can't remember a time when I didn't carry some kind of planner with me," says Julie Ieron. "I trust my planner to carry the details, and this frees my mind to concentrate on the important things in





Prevent Burnout

Positively Stressed

29

life.” It also reduces negative tension caused by arriving late, forgetting appointments, losing phone numbers, and scheduling obligations on top of each other.

One key to harnessing positive stress is having time to prepare for demanding situations and time to rejuvenate between them. More than 40 percent of adults who participated in a recent survey admitted they felt they were on a treadmill and couldn’t get off; almost double that number said they would like more time to “stop and smell the roses.” A carefully designed calendar that shows a month-at-a-glance can ensure adequate smell-the-roses time. It also indicates days that contain too much or too little stress.

“Choose a planner you can customize,” advises Julie. “It shouldn’t be too complex or time-consuming to maintain, and it shouldn’t make you feel guilty. Instead, it should free you to do the things God created you to accomplish. Make sure it helps you unify your spiritual, church, home, and family lives rather than merely keep track of professional obligations.”

As you study the month ahead, try to gauge the stress level of each day and each week. Equalize your obligations so that too much stress doesn’t leave you drained on Monday and too little stress doesn’t cause you to feel stagnant by Wednesday. Just for fun, create your version of a perfect day. What activities does it contain? Try to include as many of these activities as possible in your schedule.

Exercise, Exercise, Exercise

“If you get into a negative stressful situation, sometimes you have to stop, step back, and start again,” says Dr. Ken Cooper, who touched off the fitness boom in 1968 with his book, *Aerobics*, and whose latest book is *Can Stress Heal?* “I use stress to make me productive, but when I’ve reached a point where I can’t be creative anymore, I take a walk or work out in the gym. Then I come back and am productive again.”

For Cooper, now sixty-seven, a typical workout includes ten minutes of stretching, a two-mile run, a seven-minute walk, and a series of strength exercises. It’s fortunate for us that what he does is

Features





Prevent Burnout

Positively Stressed

30

less important than why he does it. Exercise breaks the routine, grabs our attention, rids us of tension, and refreshes us as we mobilize our positive stress for the next challenge. What kind of exercise is best? The country's leading fitness activity is also its simplest: walking.

Choose Your Rewards

In her stress management seminars, Charlotte Sutton asks participants to jot down their activities of the past three days and organize them according to priority. Each activity is assigned a label: critical, important, and unimportant. Too often the activities that students categorize as “unimportant” are those that serve as rewards for a day well spent or a job well done. These “unimportant” activities reduce negative stress and replenish positive energy.

“We all need down time,” says Charlotte. “Whether it’s music, a warm bath, an hour of television, or a movie with a friend, we need diversions from whatever is stressful in our life.” But we should choose our rewards carefully because like stress, they come in two varieties—positive and negative. Rewarding ourselves with an outfit that we can’t afford or a dessert that we don’t need may provide a positive lift that dissipates into negative stress when the bills come in or the pounds go on.

“Often just getting a job done and off your ‘to-do list’ is a major reward,” says Charlotte. If a genuine reward is in order, she suggests using the occasion to make a new friend. “Invite someone to share the relief and pleasure you feel at having completed a job. Go up to the person and say, ‘I’ve just finished an important project. Will you go out and celebrate with me?’”

It is possible to make stress your ally, not your enemy. So take advantage of that adrenaline rush and be positively stressed—for a change!

Holly G. Miller is a TODAY’S CHRISTIAN WOMAN contributing editor, adjunct professor of communication at Anderson (Indiana) University, and author of several books. This article first appeared in the July/August 1998 issue of TODAY’S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.





Thought Provokers

- *Are you letting the stress in your life serve as an “enemy” or an “ally”? How, and in what areas?*
- *Which of the author’s suggestions is most meaningful to you? Which tip could you begin implementing right away to help let your stress drive you positively?*
- *What do Psalm 139:16 and Philippians 4:13 teach you about stress and God’s role in your life?*





Prevent Burnout

Get Up & GO!

32



How To

Get Up & GO!

Start your day right with these energizing tips.

by Deborah R. Simons

The kitchen looked like a war zone. It was 10 A.M., and last night's dirty dishes were still piled on the counter. I was in my bathrobe, my son was in his pajamas, and I didn't have one speck of energy or motivation to handle the five thousand things demanding my attention. As I shuffled along, picking up dishes, I moaned softly to myself, *Why am I so tired?*

Thankfully, we don't have to drag ourselves through life constantly running on empty. In fact, the Bible actually promises us "abundant" life. John 10:10 says, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (NASB).

Obviously, prolonged, extreme tiredness may be a symptom of a larger problem such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or depression. In those instances, you should seek medical help. But what about the otherwise healthy body that daily desires an afternoon nap or a fresh burst of energy (that's not caffeine-

Features





Prevent Burnout

Get Up & GO!

33

induced)? I've discovered a few tips that have increased my energy. If you've been dragging lately, they may energize you too.

Get to Bed, Sleepyhead

Sleep is essential for rebuilding your body—so stop feeling guilty about insisting on having enough of it! But how much sleep do you *really* need? Experts say it depends on the person. Ideally, you should be able to wake up without an alarm clock. If you're constantly jerked out of a deep sleep by the alarm or if you usually feel drowsy during the day, you need more sleep. In order to get it, try these sleep-friendly habits.

Establish a firm bedtime. This practice helps overcome what my husband calls “bedtime inertia”: that feeling of being glued to the couch and too tired to get ready for bed. Since our alarm goes off at 5:45 A.M., my husband and I try to start our bedtime preparations at 9:30 P.M. and settle into bed by 10 P.M. A set bedtime also makes it easier to turn off the TV, another prime sleep-snatcher.

Allow yourself to wind down. When I go at it hard all evening, then flop into bed, it's difficult for me to fall asleep, even though I'm exhausted. My mother used to talk about being “too tired to sleep.” Now I know what she meant! I've learned I need some time to unwind before I hit the sheets. Sipping a cup of herbal tea or warm milk can soothe frazzled nerves or an over-wired body. Others find a warm soak in the tub for ten or fifteen minutes an hour before bedtime works wonders, too. I've been doing the soaking routine for some time now and definitely feel more rested in the morning. Try recording your evening activities for a week—chances are, you'll find things you can eliminate so you can add some needed wind-down time.

You Are What You Eat

What we eat—our diet—plays a part in our ability to sleep. Even our best efforts to catch some zzzs can be for naught if we eat or drink the wrong thing too close to bedtime. For example, coffee is a known sleep-killer, but what about hot chocolate? Or regular tea? I tend to think of a nice cup of tea with warm milk and honey as soothing, not stimulating. Consequently I've made the mistake of

Features





Prevent Burnout

Get Up & GO!

34

drinking it late in the evening. But as I stare into the darkness hour after hour, the effect of tea's caffeine becomes quite evident!

Other simple diet tips help ward off tiredness. Loading ourselves up on chips, sweets, and other non-nutritive foods will do nothing for our energy (not to mention our waistlines!). And we should get plenty of something that costs nothing and has no calories: plain old water. Mild dehydration can cause fatigue. I notice a real difference in the way I feel depending on whether or not I'm getting somewhere close to the recommended six to eight glasses (that's eight-ounce glasses—roughly a half gallon).

Thankfully, it isn't necessary to make extreme changes in our diet in order to reap a harvest of heightened energy.

Work in a Workout

Unfortunately, most of us think of exercise as something we do to thin down those thighs. "No time for that!" we say. "We'll just wear baggy jeans." But once we realize exercise is essential for *health*, with improved looks a side benefit, it's easier to get motivated.

Covert Bailey, who's written extensively about exercise, puts it very simply: "Exercise is good medicine." Exercise gives you more strength and stamina, helps you sleep better, and gives you more energy.

It sounds odd, but it's true: You have to spend energy to get energy. Think of it this way. A marathon runner doesn't prepare for his twenty-six-mile run by resting up. He trains. Your life is a marathon, too (don't we all know it!), and your own exercise program is the training you need to run the race successfully.

Many extremely busy women fit in exercise because they realize its benefits pay them back many times over. My friend Cecilia carries the numerous responsibilities of being a pastor's wife, mom of three, and part-time employee. Yet she's the most energetic woman I know. She carves time out of her busy schedule every day for a brisk half-hour walk. When Cecilia started her walking program she only did it three days a week, but soon made it a daily practice. "On the days I walked, I felt so marvelous that I decided to do it every day," she





Prevent Burnout

Get Up & GO!

35

says. Cecilia braves even the worst weather, often praying while she walks and sometimes convincing her husband or daughter to join her. “If I didn’t walk, I’d lie down on the couch and rest when I come home from work. Why not use the time building up energy?” Why not, indeed?

For those of you who, like me, don’t like walking in blizzards, or who find it impossible to get outside and exercise, some type of machine is helpful (and excuse-destroying). I use a cross-country ski machine, bought used, which gives both an upper- and lower-body workout. As a result of using it, these days I have more strength for hefting the dishes—and my fast-growing son, Gideon.

The recommended minimum for exercise is three times a week, thirty minutes per workout. You can exercise any time of day except after a heavy meal (it interferes with digestion) or within an hour or so of bedtime (it interferes with sleep).

It’s a struggle to make exercise a regular part of your schedule, and you’ll probably have a few aches and pains at first. But it’s well worth it. Start out with only ten minutes, then work up. Many beginning exercisers start out by doing too much and give up in despair. It’s taken me awhile to get into the exercise habit, but I now regularly stride away on the ski machine and have reaped great benefits. I sleep better at night, feel better during the day, and have lost a few pounds, too. And, I get more done because of the time I spend on that machine.

So there you have them—some tried and true ways to increase your energy. While I’m still not Superwoman, my energy level is much higher than it used to be. I’ve started participating in the crazy games my husband and son play in the evenings instead of collapsing on the couch after dinner. And I’m able to get through Sunday afternoon without taking a nap—a real accomplishment for me. So give these ideas a try. They may be the energy boost you need.

Deborah R. Simons is a housewife and freelance writer living in Virginia. This article first appeared in the November/December 1998 issue of TODAY’S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Features





Prevent Burnout

Get Up & GO!

36

Thought Provokers

- *Reread John 10:10. In what ways are you experiencing this “life” that Jesus spoke of? If you’re not experiencing abundant life, what’s holding you back?*
- *What effect is your physical life—bedtime, eating, and workout habits—having on other aspects of your life—spiritual, emotional, mental, social? How does your physical care contribute to feeling energized or burned out?*

Features





LEADERSHIP TOOLS

6 Ways to Bust a Rut!

Today's Christian Woman readers share how they mix things up.

Sometimes life can feel dreary and monotonous. To turn the tide and start a new day rut-free, check out these great ideas for shaking things up from TCW readers.

In with the New

Several years ago I resolved to do one new thing each week. It could be as small as trying a new coffee drink at Starbucks or as big as visiting a new museum. A couple times I pulled out a map, picked a nearby town, and drove there just to see something new. Some weeks I tried a new dish at a restaurant. This goal made me branch out in ways I wouldn't have otherwise!

—Kristen Staggers, Maryland

Sing While You Suds

There's just no way to avoid those three dirty words: laundry, garbage, and dishes. But there is a way to get your mind out of neutral and focused on God while you're doing these daily duties. Place a portable stereo and Christian CDs wherever you find yourself doing chores and sing praises to God while you work! Not only will the work become light, but you'll fill your mind with godly thoughts instead of nagging ones such as, *Doesn't anyone care about this house besides me?*

—Hailey Kerzich, via e-mail





Prevent Burnout

6 Ways to Bust a Rut!

38

Fish for Some Freshness

Whenever I'm stuck in a rut, I go fishing. Watching early morning fog lift as the sun quietly rises over the horizon makes for a perfect day. There, it's easier to obey Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." The quiet gives me time to think about different interests I can pursue. Afterward, I return home at peace with my life.

—Carolyn Tomlin, Tennessee

Gotta Serve Somebody

When life gets monotonous, I redirect my energy to serving others. I call up a friend and just listen as she discusses her current joys and struggles. I share needed resources with others. I send articles of interest and encouragement to friends. Keep a list of your favorite ways to serve others. The next time you feel yourself slipping into a rut, pull out your list and start to serve. This is our highest calling!

—Pansy Crumpler, North Carolina

Work In a Workout

Working out over my lunch hour is the best way for me to get out of a rut. I try to do a different class or workout every day—spinning, cardio kickboxing, or using the treadmill, elliptical trainer, or stairmaster. Not only do I come back to work more energized, but it breaks up my day and makes me feel strong and refreshed.

—Doris Casiano, New York

Right Your Perspective

For me, monotony sets in when I've taken my eyes off Jesus. If I stop and reflect on all he's given me and how much he loves me, a heart of thankfulness swells in my chest and joy begins to overflow. Satan will use monotony to squash our joy. Filling our mind and heart with the truth about Jesus and who we are in him gives new purpose to otherwise mundane tasks.

—Cindy Aquilino, Ohio

This article first appeared in the January/February 2006 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.





Additional Resources

More places for more information.



Are You Working Too Much? A downloadable resource from the TodaysChristianWomanStore.com. Work is a part of daily life, but how much is too much? Download this guide from **Today's Christian Woman** for helpful tips that will keep you from becoming overworked. This guide will show you how to embrace rest, while creating healthy boundaries at work and home. Begin to view work as a gift and not as an idol.

Making Stress Work for You A downloadable resource from the **Ministry Burnout**, by John A. Sanford (Westminster John Knox, 1992). This book deals concretely with the circumstances that give rise to spiritual exhaustion and identifies its underlying dynamics. John Sanford studies each problem in detail, provides approaches and practical suggestions for dealing with it, and reviews the psychology of the ministering person to show how an individual can mitigate such problems by being more realistic with himself or herself.

Soul Care for Women Leaders A downloadable resource from **GiftedforLeadership.com**. As a leader, you probably already realize the importance of time spent listening to God and in his Word. Gifted for Leadership introduces a new discipleship tool with this collection of six Bible studies, each of which includes practical and challenging insights, Bible verses, and application questions. Use these Bible studies to focus on biblical characters and spiritual disciplines that will restore your weary soul. This download will help you learn to embrace the dark nights of the soul, and the clarity and closeness they can bring.





Prevent Burnout

Resources

40

Spiritual Refreshment A downloadable resource from **GiftedforLeadership.com**. Where do you go to refill? If you're dry, here's how to rest and refresh your soul. This downloadable packet from Gifted for Leadership helps you understand God's plan for rejuvenation in your life.

Support Your Staff Here's how to provide the support they need. This downloadable packet from **Gifted for Leadership** provides godly wisdom and fresh insights to help you gain a better understanding of how to best give and receive encouragement from those around you.

The Power of Retreat Even when it seems impossible, getting away can be the best thing. In this download from **Gifted for Leadership**, you'll find insight and encouragement to take the time you need—and to get the most out of it! How getting away and stepping back can lead to growth and make things happen.

The Truth About Burnout, by Michael Leiter and Christina Maslach (John Wiley & Sons). This original and important book debunks the common myth that when workers suffer job burnout they are solely responsible for their fatigue, anger and “don't give a damn” attitude. *The Truth About Burnout* clearly shows where the accountability often belongs: squarely on the shoulders of the organization. Burnout is shown to be a sign of a major dysfunction within the organization, and says more about the workplace than it does about the employees.





Prevent Burnout

Resources

41



Do You Feel **Alone** as a Woman Leader?

IF you're a capable, called, and gifted Christian woman in leadership, join the conversation at **GiftedForLeadership.com**. This blog, along with downloadable resources, will help you safely converse with other women about the issues you face. You'll walk away feeling encouraged, supported, challenged, and definitely not alone!



www.GiftedForLeadership.com

**Join the
Conversation
Today!**

A service of  **CHRISTIANITY TODAY**
INTERNATIONAL

