

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

At Wits End

INTRODUCTION

Mark 6:7-13, 30-32

I am told that there are some definite symptoms of someone who is dangerously close to burnout. Here is a description that I read:

“Burnout is commonly described as an exhausted state in which a person loses interest in a particular activity and even in life in general. Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, social, and spiritual exhaustion. It can lead to diminished health, social withdrawal, depression, and a spiritual malaise.”

That sounds pretty accurate to me. It is also discussed that people who are prone to burnout are generally self-reliant, self-sufficient and see their roles as a savior rather than a conduit of God’s wisdom and direction. This can apply to many of us, especially if we have a keen sense of God’s purpose in our life. This perspective takes us to the heart of the matter with how we are easily drawn into a dark place of spiritual burnout, for how we see our self and our life for God’s purpose becomes either a union with Him that leads to balance and much fruit, or we do our work for Him instead of with Him, and we are bound for frustration and disappointment ... and burnout.

Knowing this, and remembering this, goes a long way toward preventing burnout. But what if it is too late to prevent it? What if you are now in the stages listed above? Is there hope? You bet there is. But we need to look to Jesus for the solution. Look what Jesus did for His disciples in the passage above.

Jesus is demonstrating His role as the “Good Shepherd” for He looked at His sheep, the disciples, and saw their condition, which was weary. They had been extremely busy doing great things with Jesus. They were no doubt tired and close to burnout from not only the emotional ups and downs in being part of Jesus’ ministry but as well the sheer exhaustion of serving other people most of the time. Now, this next point is important to understand, for it points out how Jesus sees the priority of getting out of this state of pre-burnout or its presence in our life.

NOTE: In the midst of the busy activity when there were people who still needed to be healed, to be fed, and to be preached to, Jesus told His disciples to, “Come with ME.” “Come with Me, by yourselves.” “Come with Me, to a quiet place.” “Come with Me, and get some rest.” I would say that these are some clear instructions for dealing with burnout, wouldn’t you? I would say that Jesus shows us in this interaction with the disciples how and why He refreshes us. I would also say that it is evident that Jesus sees this as important and is why He intervened to show us this priority.¹

¹ Fleming, Rocky. “Rekindled: Day 2 – Symptoms and Recovery” Devotional found at www.bible.com

OPEN IT

1. Describe a time when your car broke down or ran out of gas on a trip.

READ IT

Mark 6:7-13, 30-32

APPLY IT

Read Genesis 2:1-3 and Mark 2:27

Work is part of the human calling (Genesis 1:28; 2:15; Colossians 3:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Generativity² is a portion of what gives our lives a sense of meaning and purpose. Christians are also expected to be self-sacrificial, at times giving beyond themselves. However, nowhere in the Bible does God equate our acceptability or our identity with our work. And nowhere does God command or condone working so hard that we become burned out. Rather, our work is to be energized by Him. He demonstrated the importance of rest on the seventh day of creation and with the Sabbath command (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27).³

2. How is our work meant to be fulfilling for us as created in the image of God?

² Generativity: a concern for people besides self and family that usually develops during middle age

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-burnout.html>

3. Why is a Sabbath rest important for us as Christians? What does your Sabbath rest look like?

Read Exodus 18:13-27

Moses would have burned out, but for the wise counsel of his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses thought he was doing the will of God by sitting as judge and hearing the people's cases. However, Jethro rightly recognized that this was not a job for one man to handle alone. Eventually, Moses would burn out, and the people would be left unsatisfied. To avoid burnout, Moses had to accept that not every need was meant to be filled by him. God charged Moses with leadership, not with performing every duty. Jethro advised Moses to delegate the task of judging the nation to other trustworthy men. That way, the people were provided justice, others had an opportunity to participate in God's plan, and Moses' need for personal care was met.⁴

- 4. It's been said that burnout often follows the people who see every need as their personal call. How can you determine what needs, ministries, or work God is truly calling you to and where you may need to delegate and let others step in and help? How would you determine which commitments you've made should be dialed back if needed?**

⁴ Ibid

5. How can you evaluate if you have overcommitted yourself by taking on too many responsibilities?

Read what Jesus said in John 15:1-11 below (emphasis added):

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*”⁵

6. How would you describe what it means to “abide in Jesus”? Why is it necessary to continue abiding with Christ each and every day?

7. What dangers could you face by not abiding in Christ? Why might your separation from Christ lead to an inevitable burnout?

⁵ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

8. In what ways is your daily walk with Jesus vital to your joy in life and ministry?

Read Psalm 127:1-2

Ultimately, sleep, like everything else, should lead us to the gospel and the Savior.

First, it prompts us to think about death, that we all shall close our eyes as in sleep, and wake up in another world (1 Thess. 4:14). It also teaches about our Savior. The fact that Jesus slept (Mark 4:38) is as profound as “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). It reminds us of Christ’s full humanity, that the Son of God became so frail, so weak, so human that he needed to sleep. ... It illustrates salvation. How much are we doing when we sleep? Nothing! That’s why Jesus used rest as an illustration of his salvation. “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). It points us toward heaven. There remains a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). That doesn’t mean heaven is going to be one long lie-in. It means it will be a place of renewal, refreshment, comfort, and perfect peace.⁶

9. Psalm 127 says that God gives to his beloved sleep. In what ways is sleep a blessing from the Lord both physically and spiritually?

10. Reflect on the ways that sleep leads us to the gospel and the Savior above. What are your initial thoughts after reading those? Which one stands out to you, why?

⁶ Murray, David. *Reset* (p. 70). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Psalm 46:10 says,

“Be still, and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth!”

11. With increasingly busy lives, how can you be sure to set apart time to “Be still and know that He is God”?

12. When you’re at your wits end, it can feel like the world is spinning out of control. What hope is there in pausing and remembering that God will be exalted in the earth?