

# Quench Burnout by Avoiding These Top Five Ministry Obstacles

The path to recovery will require the burned-out ministry leader to be aware of and adjust for several obstacles to a balanced life. Here are five barriers to be mindful of:

- 1) **Vacation or Sabbatical**
- 2) **Belief in "vertical-only" spirituality**
- 3) **An over-reliance on willpower**
- 4) **A concern about letting others down**
- 5) **A concern about asking for needs to be met**

Let's break these down:

## 1. **Vacation or Sabbatical:**

Ministry leaders (and their boards) often believe that taking an extended vacation or sabbatical will solve the problem of burnout. However, if the leader doesn't address the real issues of burnout upon his/her return to work, they will feel just as disconnected and exhausted as they did before their time off.

**A closed system, over time, will deteriorate** (the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics). An example of a closed system in a leader's life is going on vacation and remaining isolated from healthy relationships. Instead, the leader should consider working with a life coach or mentor during the sabbatical. Engagement with a life coach is confidential and focused on solving the root issues of burnout.

## 2. **Belief in "vertical-only" spirituality:**

"I just need more Jesus." NO!

"I need to read my Bible more." NO!

**God uses people**, and He expects us to be in vulnerable relationships with others. The biblical book of James, chapter four, explains that we are to humble ourselves before God, and James 5 says that we are to CONFESS our sins to EACH OTHER and pray for each other. The word confess means to "tell the truth" about ourselves. That's vulnerable! That's being real! Don't get me wrong, we NEED God in our lives, and we

need to be reading (and applying) the Bible to our life. However, God expects us to be authentic and vulnerable with others too.

3. **An over-reliance on willpower:**

Some leaders might be thinking, "I am going to choose not to be burned out" NO!

This is faulty thinking to the extreme!

If the apostle Paul couldn't live a successful life on willpower, neither can you (Romans 6). Instead, INVEST in "Vulnerable Support People" and learn to ask for help.

4. **A concern about letting others down:**

When a leader has a mindset that they will "let others down" if they don't say YES to every request, they become enablers of others' irresponsibility. Some facts about being in relationship with others include:

- We WILL let others down.
- We will disappoint those we lead.
- We will have to tell others NO (our spouse, parents, the board, church members, that one donor who wants extra access, our children, etc.).

Instead, learn to say, "That doesn't work for me." As you experience internal tension from various requests of your time, learn to say, "that doesn't work for me."

Here's an example, "Pastor, can you stay later on Sunday to do some marriage counseling with my wife and me?"

You say, "I'm so sorry, that doesn't work for me. However, we have a great connection with a counselor in town, and the church will help offset the cost of counseling for you. Give the office a call tomorrow, and we will help you get started."

5. **A concern about asking for needs to be met:** God created us incomplete, so we have to go outside ourselves to get what we need (love, acceptance, reality, encouragement, comfort, containment, hope, forgiveness, celebration, etc.). We know how to do this in other areas of our life (going to the tire store and asking for new tires). However, in our personal life, we succumb to the faulty thinking that we don't need outside help.