
WHAT TO DO WHEN: YOU'RE BURNING OUT

Episode Description

One Sunday morning, a mother went in to wake her son and tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replied, "I'm not going." "Why not?" she asked. "I'll give you two good reasons," he said. "One, they don't like me, and two, I don't like them." His mother replied, "I'll give YOU two good reasons why you SHOULD go to church. One, you're 54 years old, and two, you're the pastor!"

It happens to the best of us. Too much work; too much pressure; too many missed expectations; too much to do and too few hours. The next thing you know it, you don't want to get out of bed, let alone go to work. Burn out is a serious problem in ministry. In this episode, Drs. Bill and Kris tackle this energy-sapping problem with hope for those who find themselves in a spiral.

Episode Outline

According to the NY Times, as of 2010 approximately 1500 clergy leave ministry every month because of burnout, conflict, or moral failure. And in case your wondering about the dated statistics ... it hasn't been getting better over the last few years. We've done episodes in the past about how to avoid burnout. This episode is really for those experiencing some level of burnout.

NOTE: If you're feeling completely isolated and seriously depressed, your first step should be to your doctor. As in, you can watch this show later – go pick up the phone and get started on your recovery now.

Steps to Dealing With Burnout

1. Get Some Perspective

- You are not your job
- You are not the savior
- Not everyone will like you – stop trying to change that
- You are not indispensable
- There are only 24 hours in a day

2. Step Back and Recharge

- Take a spiritual retreat (If you can't "go" somewhere, use the model from: *St. George and the Dragon* – Edward Hays)
- Take your days off

3. Engage Your Ministry Support Team

- Coach
- Spiritual Director/Companion

- Mentor
- Therapist
- Friends

4. Draw Some Lines in the Sand

- There are worse thing than being fired
 - Set appropriate boundaries
 - Make self-care your first priority
 - Limit job expectations (Play the Pastor Priorities Game*)
 - Limit work hours

5. Live Within Those Boundaries

- Use a calendar
- Embrace accountability

Discussion Questions

1. If you're a pastor or church professional, visit <http://pastorburnout.com/burnout-symptoms.html>. How many symptoms are you manifesting?
2. How is burnout affecting your job? Your family? Your spiritual life?
3. Play the Pastor Priorities Game with your board. Were the results surprising?
4. What will you do to find healing?

Rules for The Pastor Priorities Game

1. Create a list of the pastor's job responsibilities.
Include things like Worship Preparation; Sermon Preparation; Small Group, Sunday School, Prayer Group Preparation and Participation; Church Administration – e.g., Bulletin, Newsletter, Report Preparation; Denominational Support and Meetings; Member Visitation; Hospital Visitation; New Member Networking (Evangelism); and so on. Most pastors should have no more than 16 general tasks.
2. Depending on the size of your board (or the small group that's playing the game), divide the tasks into three or more lists.
3. Create Pastor Priorities Game Sheets: Each sheet gets one of the above task lists – each task should appear only once on only one task sheet.

Pastor Priority Game

How many hours per week should your pastor engage in the following tasks?

_____ Task 1

_____ Task 2

_____ Task 3

_____ Task 4

4. Divide your board into small groups of 3 or 4 people. Distribute one Game Sheet per group. Have them discuss the tasks and list how many hours per week the pastor should spend on each one. Remind them that each team has a partial list of the responsibilities and they should not try to compensate for other tasks. Stick to how many hours per week *you* believe *your* pastor should spend on the tasks your group have been given.
5. When everyone is done, tally up the hours.
6. Discuss the results.