Acknowledgments

The identification and prevention of burnout among senior pastors was not the topic I had desired to do as my Doctor of Ministry Thesis topic. It was not even in my top ten. But in the sovereignty of God, Doctors Haddon Robinson and Sid Buzzell dismissed the topics I had selected. Somehow we then came up with the topic of identifying and preventing burnout in senior pastors. God knew what was in store for me. Without my knowing, a friend and staff person was spreading dissension and discord throughout my congregation. Secretly, from the first week he was hired until he resigned two and a half years later, he went from person to person and board member to board member planting the idea that I, the senior pastor, was the cause of all the church’s woes. For this reason he insisted that I needed to go. He accused me of preaching without purpose, without passion and without making a point. He was known for saying: “I didn’t get anything out of your message” and “I didn’t understand the point you were making” and “I didn’t feel challenged” by any of the sermons and “many people in the church feel the same way.”

In the sovereignty of God, immediately after my third year of residency at Gordon-Conwell my family and I were invited to attend Focus on The Family’s first-ever conference for pastors and their families. God knew what was ahead. The conference was very encouraging and inspiring and would become a needed source of insight in preventing burnout in my own life. At the conference I was able to dialogue with many experts on burnout such as: Dr. Archibald Hart, professor of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary’s graduate school of psychology, Dr. Walter and Francoise Becker of Gray Fox Ranch, Rev. Robert and Sandra Sewell of SonScape Re-Creation Ministries,
Dr. Louis and Melissa McBurney of Marble Retreat, Dr. James Dobson, H. B. London and the pastoral counseling team at Focus on the Family. At the time I was just gathering needed information to write my Doctor of Ministry Thesis. However, this material soon became a priceless source of encouragement, direction and hope for my own heart that was burning out in the ministry.

Upon my return from this uplifting family vacation and conference at Focus on the Family in the summer of 2001, I was assaulted by many negative attitudes in the church. I invited the youth pastor to lunch to discuss my plans for turning the attitude of the church around and for countering the actions of the person who was infecting the church with negative and divisive attitudes. At this meeting, he told me that I was the problem. He and many others, who remained nameless, felt I had no preaching skills to connect to people or the personality to lead, so I had better move on to another ministry. He informed me that while I was on vacation he had met with every elder to confirm that I was the problem and needed to be dealt with. I was devastated by this news.

Emotionally I went from a Pikes Peak high to a Death Valley low. I was filled with fear over a possible termination along with great sadness over being betrayed by my fellow worker. I had new insight into David’s words in Psalm 41:9 “Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” I was deeply hurt by his disloyalty. Never in my life had I experienced such betrayal by one whom I considered a friend. It was painful to think about. For over a year I had encouraged him, hired him, ministered with him, prayed with him, ate with him, helped him remodel, plaster and paint his home, yet he was secretly sowing seeds of discord and discontentment about me. During this same year, he had firmly entrenched himself with
most of the elders by spending a great deal of his time with them and their children. In contrast, my children were ignored, not invited to events and falsely accused of bad behavior.

This staff infection soon engulfed the entire leadership and crippled the church. Many long and emotion-filled meetings were held over the next eighteen months. Church attendance fell by 60 to 80 people. I was working longer and harder and getting less and less accomplished. The joy of ministry was gone. Despair gripped and dominated my thoughts. Out of desperation I turned with a new passion and heightened interest to my thesis topic of identifying and preventing burnout in senior pastors. I needed help if I was to survive the stressful situation I was in. Through my research on burnout I found the insight and encouragement I needed to stay in the ministry and avoid burning out. I have witnessed the sovereign hand of God protecting me and providing me the resources and strength I needed to endure.

In the fall of 2002 the staff person resigned under pressure from the deacons. The church has regained a spirit of joy and unity in ministry. Our attendance stabilized at two hundred. At a recent Larry Moyer evangelistic dinner God brought twenty people into His kingdom. In 2003 we added nine small groups, over 100 individuals, to our small group ministry. A mission policy was developed and a mission project was proposed. A new secretary and youth pastor were hired, trained and were making a positive impact in the church. I was more efficient, effective and enjoying the ministry. I wish I could conclude with “and they lived happily ever after.” But the nightmare continued.

The grumblers, family members and friends of our former youth pastor would not rest until they saw me dismissed. In July of 2003, they launched a diabolical scheme that
resulted in my getting forced out within two months. They first gathered names of people who were not happy with the church for numerous reasons – music, sermon, size, children’s programs, salary paid, giving etc. – and attached their ultimatum to it. They demanded that I be terminated as pastor or they would leave the church, along with others who were left unnamed. I was angered that any one in the church would be so divisive and unloving. Initially, three of the five elders promised me their 100% support. But, to my utter shock and dismay, the founding pastor became convinced that the only way to save the church from division was to meet their demands and force me out. I became physically sick and broken hearted when the remaining elders sided with the founding pastor, who agreed to preach again, and not take a salary. Nothing in my life or ministry has been as discouraging as being forced out of a ministry by those I thought were friends and fellow servants of Christ. In addition to losing a job in September of 2003, I had the heartache of telling my son, a freshman at Purdue, my daughter, a senior in high school, two middle school children, and my wife, a senior at Grace Seminary’s counseling program, that I was unemployed and that we would be moving, but I don’t know when or where.

I do not know what the end will be for my former church. But I do know that their idea of an easy transition failed. Many in the community who did not attend our church were outraged by their actions toward me. One elder and many families have left the church. The secretary quit. Others became discouraged.

The circumstances were pregnant for my burnout. I was physically sick, emotionally hurt and spiritually discouraged. Yet, God encouraged my broken heart through friends, God’s Word, and His amazing grace and mercy.
My prayer is that the Spirit of God would use this thesis to alert you to the signs of burnout and prevent you from burning out in your ministry to our Most High God, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our redeemer, savior and friend, to whom we give all the praise, glory and honor, forever and ever. Amen.

Solo De Gloria
Dedication

The project is dedicated to the love of my life, my wife, and to the children I adore, John, Jessica, Rachel and Ryan.

This project would not have been possible without the love and support of my wife, Dee. She refused to give up on me when I felt like throwing in the towel and encouraged me to complete this project even though I felt like quitting months ago.

My children have seen the dark side of church life. They have seen the harshness and cruelty of fleshly believers who contradict their claims to follow Christ by their selfish lives. Though they lost friends and the stability that results from a forced move, they are still walking with their Savior for which I am ever thankful.
Abstract

The identification and prevention of burnout among Pastors is the major focus of this project. The importance of this topic and its impact on Senior Pastors will be discussed. Burnout will be defined and described symptomatically so that it can be correctly identified. Burnout will then be distinguished from stress and depression. The symptoms of burnout and self-administered tests will then be discussed so that burnout can be diagnosed. The prevention of burnout will be examined by first looking at the causes of burnout and then at the good health preventive measures. The preventive measures will target the regular practice of self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and professional – as the best prevention against burnout. The prevention of burnout will be examined first through the literature review. This will provide the framework from which the theological perspective on burnout and its prevention will be examined.
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Chapter 1

The Identification and Prevention of Burnout for Senior Pastors

The Problem of Burnout

Pastoral burnout is a major problem in today’s church. Several studies indicate that religious leaders are among the most susceptible to burnout. Senior pastors are particularly vulnerable to burnout because over a long time period they experience a wide exposure to the needs and emotional demands of people. This is especially true when they hold to high ideals, cannot tolerate failure, lack social support, and place excessive expectations on themselves and others. Burnout is not a syndrome of those who are lazy or irresponsible, but of those who are responsible, caring, and high achievers.

Pastors are not immune from burnout and in fact there is an alarming spread of burnout within the profession. This is particularly true among those who believe they are exempt from such problems and are unwilling to admit their emotional pain and need for help. Pastors are often reluctant to seek help, and when they do turn for help, they often do not have a safe place to turn to.

The senior pastor is at high risk for burnout considering the complex and diverse role expectations he faces. The senior pastor is expected to be an eloquent preacher, interesting teacher, precise theologian, empathetic counselor, efficient administrator, business manager, public relations and marketing expert, organized secretary, helpful

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2 Dr. Archibald D. Hart, “Burnout Prevention and Cure” (Unpublished booklet), p. 16
custodian, staff mentor and supervisor, wise fundraiser, motivational leader, exemplary father, loving husband, deeply spiritual, and a friend to all.

Burnout affects many different helping professions, but the senior pastor’s role lends itself quite well to promote burnout. First, the job of a pastor is never finished, since he faces a continuous barrage of services, weddings, funerals, meetings, crises, conflicts, shut-ins to visit, sick people to see, and administrative tasks to accomplish. This can easily result in working long hours, skipping days off and cutting short needed vacations. Second, a pastor cannot always tell if his hard work is having any lasting results since spiritual growth can be difficult to measure even when attendance is growing. Third, a pastor’s work is very repetitive which can lead to exhaustion and boredom. Fourth, a pastor must also face a multitude of expectations from a variety of people. Unrealistic, unclear, and unstated expectations lead to unmet expectations, conflict, anxiety, guilt and frustration resulting in exhaustion. Fifth, a pastor must work with the same people year after year, including the difficult ones. He must also see friends move to other areas. This can be emotionally draining and discouraging. Sixth, a pastor expends a great deal of energy working with people in need. When a pastor pours emotional, mental and spiritual energy into a person who remains unchanged, the minister can feel depleted and disheartened. Seventh, a pastor deals with many people who come to church not to fulfill the great co-mission (Matt. 28:18-20) but to receive “strokes.” These egocentric people demand a lot of attention. They want their needs met, want to feel important, want to hide from life’s difficulties or want to dominate the situation. When they don’t receive the attention they think they deserve, they can become resentful and vindictive. Eighth, a pastor may be tempted to function in his “persona.” At
times pastors put on a front or a mask before people in order to fulfill their duties. Covering up genuine feelings or assuming a posture that does not belong to him at all is a huge drain of emotional energy. Ninth, a pastor may become exhausted by failure. Unfortunately, most people measure a church’s success or failure in terms of its size and its financial affluence. If a church is shrinking in size and affluence, the pastor and others simply conclude that he has failed.4

**The Importance of Understanding Burnout**

Burnout is debilitating to conscientious and highly motivated ministers. In fact, the tragic paradox of burnout is that it attacks those people who tend to be the most dedicated, devoted, responsible, highly motivated, well-educated, enthusiastic, and energetic. This is especially true if they are idealistic and perfectionistic.5 Dr. Herbert Freudenberger, a psychologist and pioneer in the research of burnout, said that burnout “is a problem born of good intentions. The people who fall prey to it are, for the most part, decent individuals who have striven hard to reach a goal. Their schedules are busy, and whatever the project or job, they can be counted on to do more than their share. They’re usually the leaders among us who have never been able to admit to limitations.”6

Burnout prevention will enable ministers who are caring, competent, and conscientious to have long and fulfilling ministries. Burnout can reduce even the most vibrant, enthusiastic, caring pastors to a heap of emotional rubble. They become exhausted, fearful, lonely, isolated, depressed, hopeless, and unable to give of themselves

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to care for others. Pastors who burn out are unmotivated, unproductive, frequently move, and often drop out of the ministry. Every month the pastoral ministries department at Focus on the Family receives 400-500 calls from troubled ministers. Of those pastors who call, 70 to 80 percent are either in burnout or on the very edge of it. According to the Alban Institute survey, one in five ministers today suffer burnout. Dr. Archibald Hart supported this observation by stating that about one out of five ministers will burn out by their fifth year of ministry, and by the tenth year of ministry this number increases to one out of three. A survey done by Church Growth Network revealed that 40% of pastors who resigned from ministry cited burnout as the cause.

Burnout must be prevented not only for the sake of the minister, but also for the sake of the church. Effective churches need pastors who are highly motivated, productive, and who stay at the same church for a long time. A motivated pastor inspires others to service and sacrifice by his example. So the whole church suffers when a pastor’s inner zeal to serve is replaced by feelings that his work is futile, the future is hopeless, and he is trapped.

Burnout robs the church’s key leader of his or her productivity, negatively impacting the entire ministry. When a pastor is “ready to quit,” ministries are left undone, and the church does not receive the visionary leadership necessary in a healthy church.

8 Frank Minirth, p. 17
11 Ibid., pp. 18-20
As Dr. Archibald Hart, the dean of the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, has said,

In burnout, the victim becomes demoralized and knows things are not going right. People are not affirming him. He begins to lose the vision. He suffers from loss of hope. Burnout often results in a disengagement from the main task. It often has symptoms of depersonalization and detachment. And a state of crushing discouragement—almost despair—sets in. Demoralization is a good way to summarize it.\(^\text{12}\)

Finally, burnout hurts the whole church and causes pastors to leave their church prematurely. Facing burnout, many ministers leave for other churches in search of a place where they can be more effective. However, frequent moves reduce the ability of pastors to develop the confidence in ministry skills associated with longevity.\(^\text{13}\) A pastor’s tenure also seems to be linked to a church’s effectiveness in evangelism. Dr. Thom Rainer has observed, “The church’s evangelistic fervor often became a reality four to six years after the pastor began his ministry at that church. We found that older evangelistic churches tend to have pastors whose ministry is ten or more years. . . We conclude, therefore, that leading a long-standing traditional church to evangelistic effectiveness requires leadership by example, tenacity, and longevity.”\(^\text{14}\) Any church member who has lived through a short pastorate knows the problems created when a pastor leaves prematurely. Attendance drops off along with giving. Questions and disputes arise. The church struggles for direction. Moreover, when a new pastor is hired, time is required to build relationships, gain momentum and develop the chemistry that makes a church more than just a gathering of people on Sunday. Effective churches are usually those in which the pastor stays for a long time.

\(^\text{14}\) Dr. Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), pp. 43-44
Of course, damage to a church can also result when pastors are suffering from burnout continue to function in a church. They will not care whether responsibilities are left undone, whether the ministry is impacting lives for Christ, whether they are growing in their relationship with Christ, or whether legitimate concerns are being voiced. An uncaring ministry along with unmet needs often leads to increased complaints and divisions in the church. In addition, ministers who are unconcerned about their spiritual growth or health are easy prey for our fierce enemy -- Satan, the world and the flesh. The church is always hurt when pastors sin.

Realizing the consequences that result from burnout provides ministers with motivation to avoid it. By understanding the causes of burnout, pastors can make the necessary life-style adjustments to avoid it.

Value and Contribution of this Project

The value of this study is in its integration and application of psychological and biblical insights regarding the identification and prevention of burnout in the life and ministry of senior pastors.

The goal of this study is to:

- Warn senior pastors of the reality and devastating consequences of burnout
- Provide understanding of the nature of burnout
- Identify the key elements of ministry that cause burnout
- Detail the symptoms of burnout
- Provide self-administered tests that alert pastors to burnout
- Offer biblical insights into the prevention of burnout
• Describe the key elements that prevent burnout

• Encourage pastors to make the necessary life changes to avoid burnout

A Brief Definition of Burnout

Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger first identified burnout as a syndrome. He defined it as physical and mental exhaustion and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems of others.15

Another early researcher of burnout, psychologist Christina Maslach, defined burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind. A pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion is at the heart of the burnout syndrome.”16

In burnout one’s emotional gas tank is drained. The barrel is empty. Burnout has been called “compassion fatigue.” One is no longer able to compassionately give to meet the needs of others. The desire to minimize any interpersonal contact intensifies. Personal accomplishment plummets while the feeling of personal inadequacy heightens.

Anyone in a people-helping profession is a potential target for burnout. This is especially true when emotional demands are made over long periods of time. The helper holds to high ideals and has an excessive personal expectation that cannot tolerate failure. And the helper lacks adequate social support to accept personal and organizational limitations of resources.17

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15 Freudenberger, p. 16
17 Hart, “Burnout”, p.16
The symptoms of burnout are escalating among the following professions: physicians, ministers, librarians, child-care workers, veterinarians, pharmacists, attorneys, judges, police officers, dentists, psychologists, parents, computer professionals, corporate executives, managers, nurses, missionaries, teachers, and social workers.\(^\text{18}\)

Dr. Archibald Hart stated that the “heart of the burnout syndrome is a pattern of emotional overload with little reward or appreciation in the context of feelings of helplessness.”\(^\text{19}\) Simply stated burnout is a debilitating, psychological condition brought about by chronic, relentless stress.\(^\text{20}\)

**Burnout Distinguished from Stress and Depression**

**Stress and Burnout**

Burn-out and stress are related but they are not the same conditions. Hans Selye, the father of stress research, has defined stress as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand. He distinguished ‘eustress’ (good stress: joy, fulfillment, satisfaction) from ‘distress’ (bad stress: excessive levels of damaging stress triggered by anger or fear).\(^\text{21}\) Stressful conditions alone are not negative or positive, harmful or healthy, but too much of either type works havoc in your body. The relationship between stress and burnout will be discussed in chapter 2.

\(^{18}\) Frank Minirth, p. 17  
\(^{19}\) Dr. Hart, p. 2  
Depression and Burnout

Depression is often confused with burnout and is nearly always present in burnout. However, when depression is present in burnout, it is a symptom of the disorder. Often depression is seen in high-pressured, over-worked and ambitious people. It can be a precursor to burnout and may even hasten the final ‘giving up’ that characterizes burnout. But it can also be an independent problem never producing the burnout syndrome. The relationship between burnout and depression will be discussed in chapter 2.

The Limitations of this Project

This study was not done by a professional in psychology or medicine and does not offer experimental research in the area of burnout. It will, however, report on research conducted by others in this field. The issue of burnout touches many professions (social workers, nurses, teachers, policemen, doctors) and many different types of Christian workers (youth pastors, evangelists, missionaries). However, this study is limited in its focus to identifying and preventing burnout among male senior pastors in the USA. Particular emphasis will be given to those key elements that will help alert a pastor when he is approaching burnout and to those key elements that can prevent burnout. This study will not address the impact of burnout on the pastor’s wife or children.

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22 Dr. Hart, p. 13
Organizational Structure

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1: The problem and its setting. Chapter 2: The literature review. Chapter 3: The theological framework. Chapter 4: The project design. Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter one focuses on the problem of burnout, the importance of this topic, the definition of burnout, and the parameters and limitations of this study.

Chapter two is a literature review that identifies, summarizes and analyzes books, articles, and other materials that pertain to burnout among senior pastors.

Chapter three gives several biblical examples and insight into the area of burnout. The theological foundation for self-care and the keys to preventing burnout will be examined.

Chapter four is the project that will present the results of this study to a small group of pastors using a lecture format. In session one the teacher will identify burnout by describing and defining it, listing its causes, symptoms, and adverse consequences. For session two the teacher will explain, test and score several tests for burnout. The final two sessions will focus on preventing burnout through biblical insight and balanced living that cares for the whole person – physical, relational, spiritual, emotional, mental and professional.

Chapter five is the results, conclusions and recommendations after presenting session two to a group of pastors.
Chapter 2

Literature Review of Burnout among Senior Pastors

Introduction

The identification and prevention of burnout among Pastors is the major focus of this chapter. In order to clearly identify burnout this chapter will seek to define and describe it. Burnout will then be distinguished from stress and depression. Symptoms of burnout and self-administered tests will then be discussed so that burnout can be diagnosed. The prevention of burnout will be examined by first looking at the causes of burnout and then at the good health preventive measures. The preventive measures will target the regular practice of self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and professional – as the best prevention against burnout. Believers are to utilize the resources God has provided to live in His peace and to maintain healthy self-care so that a believer can avoid burnout and live for God’s glory.

Defining and Describing Burnout

Burnout among Pastors is not really new. In general, the elements of the burnout syndrome were noticeable long before 1974 when the term ‘burnout’ was coined. The signs of burnout could be seen in articles written from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that deal with the emotional struggles among ministers, the high incidence of dropout, and the pressures of role expectations. For example, one article dealt with the pressures of expectations and role conflicts, both of which are linked to burnout.\(^1\) Another focused on

the breakdowns among pastors that resulted from the impossible role expectations and overwork. In looking at why men were leaving the ministry, one author cited reasons of inadequacy, low professional worth, organizational inertia of the local church, and petty prejudices of the congregation. The signs of burnout are seen in many of these articles.

Burnout is best described by the change that occurs in the life of an individual who is suffering burnout. Burnout is a condition that describes a pastor who strives to achieve high goals but is constantly frustrated until he becomes angry, helpless and hopeless. Burnout describes the minister who was dedicated, enthusiastic and highly motivated but now has become indifferent to his ministry and seeks to detach from people. Burnout is seen when an energetic pastor increasingly feels physically and emotionally exhausted and views the future as hopeless. Burnout is seen when a devoted and highly committed pastor becomes overwhelmed by the feelings that his life is empty, without purpose and meaning.

Burnout is defined as physical or emotional exhaustion, usually caused by stress at work. Burnout can also be defined as apathy, disillusionment, or low morale. Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger first identified burnout as a syndrome in 1974. He defined it as physical and mental exhaustion and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems of others. Burnout is the wearing out of oneself by excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or by the values of society. Stated another way he said that a person experiencing burnout is “...someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship

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that failed to produce the expected reward.”\textsuperscript{6} Simply stated, burnout “... occurs when one sets out to move the world a bit, only to find oneself with the world pressing down on one’s shoulder.”\textsuperscript{7}

Another early researcher of burnout, psychologist Christina Maslach, defines burnout as “... a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people-work of some kind. A pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion is at the heart of the burnout syndrome.”\textsuperscript{8} In burnout the emotional reservoir is empty. The desire to avoid any interpersonal contact increases along with diminished feelings of love toward the people one is supposed to care for. The feeling of personal inadequacy intensifies and the feeling of personal accomplishment plummets.

Edelwich and Brodsky, use the term burnout to refer to “... a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of the conditions of their work.”\textsuperscript{9} Minirth and Meier agree with Maslach’s observations and define burnout in similar terms as Edelwich and Brodsky “... as the loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective, and purpose. It is a state of mental, physical, and spiritual exhaustion brought on by continued stress.”\textsuperscript{10}

One group of researchers observed that people most susceptible to burnout were those who initially had been the most idealistic and enthusiastic in their profession. This group defined burnout as “... a state of mind that frequently afflicts individuals who

\textsuperscript{8} Christina Maslach, \textit{Burnout-The Cost of Caring} (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), p. 3
\textsuperscript{10} Frank Minirth et al., \textit{How To Beat Burnout} (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 15
work with people and who pour much more than they get back from their clients, supervisors, and colleagues.”

Donald Demaray declared that the “. . . hallmarks of the burnout experience include boredom, frustration, domestic problems, hopelessness, a sense of helplessness about one’s environment, rejection and paranoia, pessimism, stress, meaninglessness, enervation and irritability.” Myron Rush highlights failed results in his definition of burnout “. . . as a type of stress and emotional fatigue, frustration, and exhaustion that occurs when a series of (or combination of) events in a relationship, mission, way of life, or job fail to produce an expected result.” Archibald Hart stated that the “. . . heart of the burnout syndrome is a pattern of emotional overload with little reward or appreciation in the context of feelings of helplessness.” Hart also reflects the observation of Maslach when he states that burnout comprises most if not all of the following:

Demoralization – a belief that you are no longer effective as a pastor.
Depersonalization – a treating of yourself and others in an impersonal way.
Detachment – a withdrawing from all responsibilities.
Distancing – an avoidance of social and interpersonal contacts.
Defeatism – a feeling of being beaten and a giving up of any hope of being able to avoid defeat.

Gary McIntosh, the founder of Church Growth Network, emphasizes the spiritual component in burnout by defining it as “. . . the exhaustion of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual strength or motivation usually caused by prolonged stress or frustration and inability to appropriate the full spiritual resources of God.”

stated burnout is a debilitating, psychological condition brought about by chronic, relentless stress.\textsuperscript{17}

**Burnout and Stress Distinguished**

Often there is confusion between what constitutes burnout and what constitutes stress. While a few similarities exist between stress and burnout, the causes and cures of burnout are significantly different from those for stress.

Hans Selye, the father of stress research, has defined stress as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand. He distinguished eustress (good stress: joy, fulfillment, satisfaction) from distress (bad stress: excessive levels of damaging stress triggered by anger or fear).\textsuperscript{18} The body can respond in the same manner to many types of pressures – both good and bad. The excitement of preaching a good sermon or watching your home football team win a game can be as stress-producing as meeting a deadline or facing an angry church member. Although the one causes good stress (eustress) and the other bad stress (distress), both make the same demand on certain parts of your body. Too much of either type can work havoc in your body.

Hart describes distress as the most devastating form of stress. He says it is caused by the fight or flight response. This emergency response system of the body prepares you to deal with any physical or psychological threat. The body adapts to this heightened state by producing complex stress hormones from the adrenal glands that prepare the body for a fight or flight. Unfortunately, this state of distress can be stimulating for some pastors

giving them a heightened sense of well being, increased energy, reduced need for sleep and feelings of euphoria. They can literally become addicted to the high level of adrenaline in their blood stream since it is pleasurable. However, this aroused state causes excessive wear and tear on the body and puts one on the road to self-destruction and heart disease.\textsuperscript{19} The warning signs of excessive wear and tear include headaches, teeth grinding, insomnia, muscle tension, gastric disturbances, high blood pressure and rapid heartbeat. These symptoms of distress are designed to warn a person of overstress.\textsuperscript{20}

Prolonged distress can lead to burnout but stress is essentially different from burnout in that its symptoms are the consequences of overuse of the body. The overproduction of adrenaline and the repeated triggering of the fight or flight response cause the symptoms of distress. Distress is often called the hurry sickness. The early warning signs seldom slow the victim down until the ulcer, stroke or heart attack occurs.\textsuperscript{21}

Hart describes the essential differences between burnout and stress in the following way.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement. Stress is characterized by over engagement. In burnout the emotions become blunted, but in stress they become over-reactive. In burnout the emotional damage is primary but in stress the physical damage is primary. The exhaustion of burnout affects motivation and drive. The exhaustion of stress affects physical energy. Burnout produces demoralization, but stress produces disintegration. Burnout can best be understood as a loss of ideals and hope. Stress can best be understood as a loss of fuel and energy. The depression of burnout is caused by the grief of lost ideals and hope. The depression of stress is caused by adrenal exhaustion and the body’s need for self-protection and conservation of energy. Burnout produces a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. Stress produces a sense of urgency and hyperactivity. Burnout produces paranoia, depersonalization and detachment. Stress produces panic, phobic, and anxiety-type disorders. Burnout may never kill
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{19} Dr. Archibald D. Hart, \textit{Adrenalin and Stress} (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), p. 22
\textsuperscript{20} Dr. Archibald D. Hart, “Burnout Prevention and Cure” (Unpublished booklet), p. 12
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 12
you but your long life may not seem worth living. Stress may kill you prematurely, and you won’t finish what you started.22

A stress test was adapted for ministers by Roy Oswald from the Holmes/Rahe Life Changes Rating Scale.23 A stress value has been given for each of the events listed below that a person has experienced during the last twelve months. An individual finds their score by transferring the “average value” for that event to the column labeled “your score,” and then totaling the various values. The significance of “your total score” will depend upon an individual’s stress threshold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Average Value</th>
<th>your score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital separation</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious decline in church attendance</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical relocation</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private meetings by segment of congregation to</td>
<td></td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss your resignation</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of heavy drinking by immediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in health of family member</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem with children</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex difficulties</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation from the association/convention</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain of new family member</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New job in new line of work</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in financial status</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close friend</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased arguing with spouse</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merger of two or more congregations</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious parish financial difficulty</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage over $50,000</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 Ibid., p. 15
23 Roy Oswald, Clergy Stress (Minneapolis: Ministers Life Resources, 1982)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with member of church staff</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure of mortgage or loan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of church by fire</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New job in same line of work</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son or daughter leaving home</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with in-laws</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger of influential church member over pastor’s action</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow, steady decline in church attendance</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of new hymnal to worship service</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure of church to make a payroll</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remodeling or building program</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start or stop of spouse’s employment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday away</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start or finish of school</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of peer</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of call to another church</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in living conditions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of personal habits</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative church activity by former pastor</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in schools</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in social activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death/moving away of good church leader</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage or loan less than $50,000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sleeping habits</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of new friendship</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in eating habits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful continuing education program</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major program change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation at home</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor violation of the law</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Total Score

Add up the numbers in the column titled “your score” to get a Total Score. The significance of the total score in relation to other clergy is given below.

- Below 50: low
- 50 to 150: stress is at a manageable level
- 151 to 200: borderline, reason for mild concern
- 201 to 250: serious concern to be exercised
Burnout and Depression Distinguished

Depression is a morbid sadness, dejection, or melancholy. It includes sad affect, painful thinking, physical symptoms and anxiety that disable the individual biologically and socially. The American Psychiatric Association identifies major depression by sad, empty, or hopeless feelings; slowed physical and cognitive behavior, including cognitive disorientation; changes in weight, appetite, and sleeping patterns; diminished interest or pleasure in activities and time spent with friends; and occasional to frequent thoughts of death and suicide. The presence of several of these symptoms for a period exceeding two weeks and a marked change from previous functioning are sufficient criteria for a diagnosis of a major depressive episode.

Depression is often confused with burnout and is nearly always present in burnout. However, when present in burnout, it is a symptom of the disorder. Burnout produces depression is two ways. First, depression results when our physiological protective system starts to break down due to continuous stresses related to our work environment. And secondly, depression results when a person experiences loss or deprivation. The depression caused by stress is “. . . always the consequence of adrenal exhaustion. The body produces a state of depression in which the low mood, disinterest in

26 Hart, Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Profession, p.114
regular activities, and physical fatigue is designed to pull the victim out of the rat-race and produce a state of lethargy, which allows the body to rest and recover from over-stress.\(^{27}\)

Prolonged stress may also trigger depression of the biochemical sort. This type of depression is seen in high-pressured, over-worked and ambitious people. It can also be a precursor to burnout and may even hasten the final ‘giving up’ that characterizes burnout. But it could be an independent problem never producing the burnout syndrome.\(^{28}\)

The cure for burnout is very complex, requires significant life change, and requires many months or years to fully recover. However effective relief for depression, particularly of the endogenous type, may be only weeks away through appropriate medication.\(^{29}\)

### Symptoms of Burnout

Burnout begins slowly. This is good and bad news. The good news is that a person has plenty of time to take preventive steps. Steps to effective prevention can be taken early in the burnout process. The bad news is that it can creep up so slowly you will not recognize its early stages. Burnout does not strike like a bolt of lightning, but creeps up on a person like a snake in the grass. A person may not recognize burnout unless he is aware of its symptoms. Herbert Freudenberger believes that awareness is an important key to avoiding burnout. Understanding the causes of burnout - dealt with in the next section - and being aware of the symptoms of burnout assist a person in avoiding burnout.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p.13  
\(^{28}\) Ibid., p.13  
\(^{29}\) Ibid., p.10
A pastor could also tell trusted leaders in the church what the symptoms of burnout are so that others can be proactive in recognizing burnout in its early stages.

The signs of burnout are seen in the changes that occur in the life of an individual who is suffering burnout. Victims of burnout do not want to answer the phone. They avoid people at public events. They ignore new ministry opportunities. For no apparent reason, they cancel appointments and meetings. They struggle to get out of bed, experience regular headaches and have difficulty sleeping. A person who is experiencing burnout will resent people who come to them with problems. Burnout reduces a once goal-oriented, dedicated, enthusiastic, highly motivated and joyful pastor to one who feels angry, helpless, hopeless, and indifferent to the needs of others. A person experiencing burnout increasingly feels physically and emotionally exhausted and views the future as hopeless and his life as empty.30

There are many symptoms of burnout. One group of researches listed forty-seven symptoms arranged into the five major categories of health, behavioral, emotional adjustments, relationships, and attitudes.31 Other researchers added a spiritual category as well.32

Health Indicators of Burnout

Exhaustion is one of the first warning signs of burnout. Lack of energy, feelings of tiredness and trouble keeping up with one’s usual round of activities are signs of

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30 Don Hawkins et al., Before Burnout, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), pp. 77-78
burnout. Normally high-energy people find themselves waking up in the morning feeling exhausted and struggling to stay awake in the afternoons. Fatigue, sleep difficulties, headaches, gastro-intestinal problems, increased susceptibility to colds and flu are common physical symptoms of burnout. Other symptoms can include heart palpitations, feeling of tightness in the chest, hyperactivity, trembling, rashes, lethargy and loss of sexual energies.

Behavioral Indicators of Burnout

The behavioral symptoms associated with burnout are primarily work-related behaviors and consumption behavior. Increased consumption of caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and drugs; high risk-taking behavior; increased tendency towards violent and aggressive behavior; over or under-eating; and hyperactivity are common behavioral indicators of burnout.

As burnout increases in people, their ability to accomplish tasks at work decreases, and their impatience and irritability with everyone around them increases. The resulting increase in conflicts with colleagues will cause them to withdraw from leadership or become more demanding and inflexible. Along with being impatient, burnout victims tend to overreact to statements or circumstances and are not able to relax.

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36 Kahill., p.288
37 Carroll and White, p.44
38 Freudenberger, *Burn-out*, p. 64
39 Justice, Gold, and Klein, p.220
Emotional Indicators of Burnout

The common emotional indicators of burnout include emotional distancing, depression, lack of purpose, hopelessness, martyrdom, feelings of being trapped, along with an increase in anger and tension. When burnout begins, even outgoing people will withdraw from others and feelings of anger and resentment increase, because they do not feel appreciated. The bitterness and anger lead to depression and feelings of hopelessness.

Once burnout has taken hold it is one small step from feeling unappreciated to feeling mistreated or threatened. The victim may even sense that someone is out to get him. This paranoia along with a heightened sense of moodiness and irritability over trivial matters signals impending burnout. As burnout grows, a person’s tolerance and patience level drops. They feel emotionally overloaded which makes interacting with others precarious. Often even the slightest inconvenience is enough to make one snap.

As burnout progresses, an individual tends to become increasingly isolated from people along with increased feelings of deep loneliness. Speaking of the loneliness of a pastor Henri Nouwen writes, “The world of loneliness in the life of the minister hurts all the more, since he not only shares in the human condition of isolation, but also finds that his professional impact on others diminishing.” Isolation and loneliness eventually leads to burnout, because of a lack of caring and supportive relationships.

Another emotional indicator of burnout that is very difficult to see is called counter transference. Counter transference is the subjective experience of a therapist during the course of a therapeutic relationship with a patient. In other words, when a counselor or pastor becomes emotionally entangled with another individual so that the

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40 Carroll and White, p.44  
41 Freudenberg, Burn-out, p. 65  
client’s problems become the counselor’s problems, then counter transference is occurring. This is highly stressful and can be very counter productive to the counselor and the patient.43

**Relationship Indicators of Burnout**

The interpersonal signs of burnout revolve around withdrawing from people, interpersonal conflicts, and a mistrust of people. According to Freudenberger, boredom and cynicism are natural companions. One brings forth the other and detachment births them both. The burnout victim begins to question the value of friendships and activities – even of life itself.44 Burnout is always marked by detachment or withdrawing from the very people Pastors are expected to help. “A virtual hallmark of the burnout syndrome is a shift in the individual’s view of other people – a shift from positive and caring to negative and uncaring. People are viewed in more cynical and derogatory terms.”45

**Attitude Indicators of Burnout**

There is a strong correlation between attitude and burnout.46 The negative attitude towards oneself, work, and life in general reflect a heart that is suffering burnout. Cynicism, defensiveness, pessimism, and feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness are symptoms of burnout. Herbert Freudenberger observed, “Where at one time they felt positively about what they were engaged in, they now feel a sense of disenchantment

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43 Maslach, *Burnout*, pp.32-33  
44 Freudenberger, *Burn-out*, p. 63  
45 Maslach, *Burnout*, p.17  
with the tasks, the project or the relationship. This disenchantment shifts some into
detachment, depression, and feelings of loss and thoughts of ‘why bother anymore’.”

One of the sure signs of burnout is the feeling of being beaten and giving up any
hope of being able to avoid defeat. This cloud of defeat will darken one’s view of life and
put out one’s vision for the ministry. The world will seem uncontrollable and the person
will feel totally helpless.48

Burnout victims often experience a loss of confidence and seriously question their
effectiveness. They feel inadequate and incompetent for the job and become demoralized.
Christina Maslach stated, “Burnout victims begin to feel badly about themselves—about
the kind of people they are and about the kind of job they have done or should have
done.”49

Burnout victims may have exaggerated thoughts such as ‘Only I can do this job,
nobody else.’ Sentiments like these are not the expression of a healthy ego. Often the
person who feels he is indispensable is in reality a block to progress and initiative of
others.50

As the burnout process continues over time, the victim will have increasing
difficulty with his thought processes. Speech patterns will falter, concentration spans will
become increasingly limited, and the ability to remember names, dates, or even what he
started to say will decrease. The person may jokingly refer to having a problem of old age
or senility, but agitation and inward stress are the problem.51

47 Herbert Freudenberger, “Counseling and Dynamica: Treating the End-Stage Person,” in Job Stress and
48 Hart, “Understanding Burnout,” p.6
49 Maslach, Burnout – The Cost of Caring, p.75
50 Freudenberger, Burn-out, p.64
51 Freudenberger, Burn-out, pp.65-66
Depression can be a sign of burnout. There is a difference between a general depressed state of mind that affects all areas of a person’s life and the depression associated with burnout. In burnout, the depression is usually temporary, specific, and localized, pertaining more or less to one area of life.\(^{52}\) Over time as depression progresses, the result can lead to suicidal thinking.

**Spiritual Indicators of Burnout**

The spiritual dimension of a person’s life is deeply affected by burnout.\(^{53}\) The realization that your spiritual resources are drained and that your once proudly-held faith is no longer meaningful to you is an important motivator to make changes when experiencing burnout. Many victims of burnout feel that God is distant and deaf to their cries for help.\(^{54}\) These negative feelings are compounded by a lack of spiritual ‘daily bread’. Often, when one feels the pressure of burnout, the first thing to be eliminated is the time for personal Bible reading, reflection and meditation. The pressures of a busy schedule, along with an increasing inability to keep up, crowd out the time needed for meditation of the Word, which is essential to staying sharp spiritually. Rather than thinking about God’s Word, burnout victims spent that time worrying about the problems that are facing them.\(^{55}\)

**Tests for Burnout**

Being aware of the signs of burnout and monitoring personal energy levels and abilities enables one to pull back when overloaded. It is critical that pastors learn to

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\(^{52}\) Freudenberger, *Burn-out*, pp.67-68  
\(^{55}\) Minirth et al., *How To Beat Burnout*, pp. 33-34
monitor their personal energy and make adjustments when they experience over-load. Dr. Freudenderberger spoke to this matter of self-awareness when he said, “To succeed in averting a burnout, it’s imperative to continue monitoring yourself. Only you know when it’s time to stop driving yourself. Only you can tell when your resources and abilities are depleted…You owe it to yourself to keep tabs.” Pastors can train themselves to be aware of when their ministry load is harming their well-being. They can learn when they need an extra day off or a quiet evening with the family or to visit a close friend to replenish their energy. One way of accomplishing this is to routinely take a self-administered test that would indicate if burnout is occurring. The following are examples of such a test that a pastor could take.

**Dr. Archibald Hart’s Test**

Dr. Hart has a self-administered test used to determine if a person is in burnout. Reflect on each of the following questions and rate the amount of change that has occurred during the past 12 months of your life with special emphasis on change that has occurred over the last six months. Rate each question on a 1 to 5 scale. With 1 = little or no change. 2 = just noticeable change. 3 = noticeable change. 4 = fair degree of change. 5 = great degree of change.

1. Do you become more fatigued, tired or ‘worn out’ by the end of the day? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Have you lost interest in your present work? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Have you lost ambition in your overall career? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Do you find yourself becoming easily bored (Spending long hours with nothing significant to do)? 1 2 3 4 5

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57 Hart, “Burnout”, pp.6-8
5. Do you find that you have become more pessimistic, critical or cynical of yourself or others?
6. Do you forget appointments, deadlines, or activities and don’t feel very concerned about it?
7. Do you spend more time alone, withdrawn from friends, family, and work acquaintances?
8. Has any increase occurred in your general level of irritability, hostility, or aggressiveness?
9. Has your sense of humor become less obvious to yourself or others?
10. Do you experience headaches more than usual?
11. Do you suffer from gastrointestinal problems (stomach pains, chronic diarrhea or colitis)?
12. Do you wake up feeling extremely tired and exhausted most mornings?
13. Do you find that you deliberately try to avoid people you previously did not mind being around?
14. Has there been a lessening of your sexual drive?
15. Do you find that you now tend to treat people as impersonal objects or with a fair degree of callousness?
16. Do you feel that you are not accomplishing anything worthwhile in your work and that you are ineffective in making any changes?
17. Do you feel that you are not accomplishing anything worthwhile in your personal life or that you have lost spontaneity in your activities?
18. Do you feel that you are at the end of your rope – that you are at the point of breaking down or cracking up?

Total Score = __________

Your total score on this burnout checklist is merely a guide and is not absolutely accurate or fool-proof. If your score is very high, take steps toward finding help by consulting your family physician or counselor. The first step toward relief from burnout is to acknowledge, without being self-rejecting, that you have a problem. If the total score is between 20 and 30, there is no burnout. You may even be taking life or work to casually. A total score between 31 and 45 is very normal for anyone who works hard. Make sure you relax periodically. If the total score is between 46 and 60, then you are experiencing mild burnout and could benefit from a careful review of your lifestyle. If the
total score is between 61 and 75, you are experiencing burnout and need to take immediate action. If the total score is between 76 and 90, then you are burning out and should seek help immediately.

Minirth and Meier Test for Burnout

The following is a way to test for symptoms of burnout. Check those statements you agree with. Count up the check marks. If you agree with more than 50% of those statements, then you may be experiencing burnout and be in need of professional help, counseling or at least a change in life-style.

1. More and more, I find that I can hardly wait for quitting time to come so that I can leave work.
2. I feel like I’m not doing any good at work these days.
3. I am more irritable than I used to be.
4. I’m thinking more about changing jobs.
5. Lately I’ve become more cynical and negative.
6. I have more headaches (or backaches, or other physical symptoms) than usual.
7. Often I feel hopeless, like who cares?
8. I drink more now or take tranquilizers just to cope with everyday stress.
9. My energy level is not what it used to be. I’m tired all the time.
10. I feel a lot of pressure and responsibility at work these days.
11. My memory is not as good as it used to be.
12. I don’t seem to concentrate or pay attention like I did in the past.
13. I don’t sleep as well.
14. My appetite is decreased these days (or, I can’t seem to stop eating).
15. I feel unfulfilled and disillusioned.
16. I’m not as enthusiastic about work as I was a year or two ago.
17. I feel like a failure at work. All the work I’ve done hasn’t been worth it.
18. I can’t seem to make decisions as easily as I once did.
19. I find I’m doing fewer things at work that I like or that I do well.
20. I often tell myself, why bother? It doesn’t really matter anyhow.
21. I don’t feel adequately rewarded or noticed for all the work I’ve done.
22. I feel helpless. I can’t see any way out of my problems
23. People have told me I’m too idealistic about my job.
24. I think my career has just about come to a dead end.

Total check marks ____________.

58 Minirth et al., How To Beat Burnout, pp.37-38
Dr. Herbert Freudenberger’s Test

Allow no more than 30 seconds for each answer. Then assign it a number from 1 (for no or little change) to 5 (for a great deal of change) to designate the degree of change you perceive.

1. Do you tire more easily? 1 2 3 4 5
Feel fatigued rather than energetic?
2. Are people annoying you by telling you, “You don’t look too good lately”? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Are you working harder and harder and accomplishing less and less? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Are you increasingly cynical and disenchanted? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Are you often invaded by a sadness you can’t explain? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Are you forgetting (appointments, deadlines, personal possessions)? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Are you increasingly irritable? 1 2 3 4 5
More short-tempered?
More disappointed in the people around you?
8. Are you seeing close friends and family members less frequently? 1 2 3 4 5
9. Are you too busy to do even routine things like make phone calls or read reports or send out your Christmas cards? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Are you suffering from physical complaints (aches, pains, headaches, a lingering cold)? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Do you feel disoriented when the activity of the day comes to a halt? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Is joy elusive? 1 2 3 4 5
13. Are you unable to laugh at a joke about yourself? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Does sex seem like more trouble than it’s worth? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Do you have very little to say to people? 1 2 3 4 5

Total Score = ____________

Compare your total score with the following:

0-25 You’re doing fine.
26-35 There are things you should be watching.
36-50 You’re a candidate for burnout.
51-65 You are burning out.
Over 65 You’re in a dangerous place, threatening to your physical and mental well-being.

59 Freudenberger with Richelson, Burn-Out, pp.17-18
The recognized standard test for measuring burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This inventory is currently available through a professional counselor in three forms – the General Survey, the Educators Survey and the Human Services Survey. Pastors are linked with other human service or helping professionals and should use the MBI - Human Services Survey (HSS). The MBI-HSS is designed to assess three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. The Emotional Exhaustion scale assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work. The Depersonalization scale measures impersonal response toward recipients of one’s service, care, treatment or instruction. The Personal Accomplishment scale assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people. A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion (≥ 28) and Depersonalization (≥11) scales and low scores on the Personal Accomplishment (≤33) scale.

The MBI is a simple self-administered test that discovers how helping professionals view their job and the people with whom they work closely with. The three scores are obtained by answering a series of questions using a scale of 0-6 (0 = never, 1 = a few times a year, 2 = once a month, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = a few times a week, and 6 = every day).

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62 Ibid., p.2
63 Ibid., p.4
64 Ibid., pp. 5-6
65 Ibid., p.9
The typical questions used for the Emotional Exhaustion scale are: I feel emotionally drained from my work; I feel wasted at the end of the workday; I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job; working with people all day drains me; I feel exhausted from my work; I feel frustrated; I feel I’m working too hard; I am stressed out from working directly with church members.

The typical questions for the Depersonalization scale are: I treat church members as if they were impersonal objects; I’ve become more callous toward church members; This job is hardening me emotionally; I don’t really care what happens to some members; I feel church members blame me for some of their problems.

Typical questions for the Personal Accomplishment scale are: I can understand how church members feel about things; I deal very effectively with the problems of church members; I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my job; I feel very energetic; I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with church members; I feel exhilarated after working closely with church members; I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job; In my job, I deal with emotional problems very calmly. Of the three scales, Emotional Exhaustion plays the central, but not exclusive role in identifying burnout.

Causes of Burnout

What causes energetic, enthusiastic, and competent pastors to suffer burnout? Researcher David Congo has divided the causes for burnout into two categories: external and internal causes. The external causes center on environmental factors in the ministry context. These factors include work overload, unrealistic expectations of others, lack of

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66 Ibid., p.43
appreciation and support, stress of dealing with other people’s problems, rejection, and conflict. External causes also include the stresses from a pastor’s personal life like marital conflict, problems with children, financial pressures, and other emotional demands that are personal in nature.

Much can be said about each of these external causes, but the following paragraph will expand on only a few. The expectations of others are endless and often contradictory to one another. Without clearly defined boundaries and roles, pastors may be asked or expected to do what would require twenty hours a day to accomplish. Typical expectations may include the style of music, the altar call, church or Sunday school attendance, giving level, types of children’s programs available or the style of preaching.

Another external cause of burnout is the lack of appreciation, recognition and support. One researcher lists the lack of affirmation as the most frequently mentioned reason given for clergy burnout.67 A lack of meaningful recognition for one’s efforts slowly erodes enthusiasm and the desire to work. When volunteers fail to do what they had committed to do, when giving slumps and, when the pastor’s efforts are taken for granted, discouragement can easily come. Another external cause of burnout is failure. Dr. Archibald Hart has said that failure results in burnout.68 This is especially true of those who need to know that they are doing a good job.69 Success in ministry is often uncertain, delayed and certainly difficult to measure. The final external cause expanded on in this paper involves stresses in a pastor’s personal life. The normal reaction to accomplishing less as burnout occurs is to work more hours. This invariably robs time

from the spouse and family, which creates new tensions and problems. A very sick child or family member, a rebellious child, marital conflict, unexpected expenditures, personal health issues all add fuel to fire of burnout. Christina Maslach believes that burnout is primarily caused not by personality but by external or situational sources of job-related interpersonal stress.\(^\text{70}\)

The internal causes focus on the pastor as a person and those personality and internal factors that make him more susceptible to burnout. The internal factors include the pastor’s personality, intensity of emotions, over commitment, unrealistic expectations of one’s self, the need for achievement, affection and approval, feelings of inadequacy, frustration resulting from a failure to attain goals, and an exaggerated sense of responsibility.\(^\text{71}\) Christina Maslach identified five personality characteristics that cause a person to be prone to burnout: impatient or intolerant, weak or unassertive, lack of self-confidence, high need for approval, and the need to be in control.\(^\text{72}\) Christina Maslach has stated, “Burnout is more of a problem for people with a short fuse. If they are impulsive, impatient and intolerant, their level of emotional exhaustion is bound to be high, and their feelings about people are likely to become negative.”\(^\text{73}\) Closely tied to intolerance and impatience are the resulting behaviors – intensity, competitiveness, and high expectations. Intensity is the “. . . zealous overuse of physical, emotional and spiritual energy.”\(^\text{74}\) People who thrive on intensity are burnout personalities.\(^\text{75}\) People who have high expectations often have unrealistic or unattainable goals. This results in frustration,

\(^\text{70}\) Maslach, Burnout, The Cost of Caring, p.9
\(^\text{72}\) Maslach, Burnout - The Cost of Caring, pp.62-70
\(^\text{73}\) Maslach, Burnout – The Cost of Caring, p.70
\(^\text{74}\) G. Lloyd Rediger, Coping with Clergy Burnout (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982), p.19
\(^\text{75}\) Freudenberger and Richelson, Burnout: The High Cost, p.104
failure, and emotional, mental and physical exhaustion as they try to achieve unrealistic goals. 76

Unassertive people fail to set limits in relationships, do not call others to accountability, and passively yield to the demands of others. This behavior usually results in resentment and anger. Closely connected with a lack of assertiveness is a lack of self-confidence. When people lack self-confidence, they are not strong and assertive in dealing with people. They defer and acquiesce, instead of determine and initiate. 77

Closely linked with unassertiveness and low self-confidence is the strong need for approval. Maslach observed, “The need to be liked and approved of by other people is clearly a critical personality factor in burnout.” 78 The need to please others and to measure up to their expectations makes a person susceptible to burnout, because it leads to over-dedication, excessive commitment, and a false sense of responsibility. Two of the common denominators in people experiencing burnout were over-commitment and excessive dedication. 79 Feeling indispensable or overly responsible for a ministry is a factor in the burnout experience of pastors. 80

Prevention of Burnout

Pastor Doug Scott, like many pastors, had the false assumption that if he gave his all to the church, then they would take care of him and his family. But then he learned that this assumption is both untrue and unfair to his congregation. This insight came after

77 Maslach, Burnout - The Cost of Caring, p.63
78 Maslach, Burnout - The Cost of Caring, p.65
79 Justice, Gold, and Klein, p.220
a few months of working at a frantic pace, not spending even one evening at home in weeks. At a board meeting he vented his frustration to others for not following his hectic pace. He received life-changing advice. A wise member quietly responded, “I expect you, as my pastor, to take care of yourself. I think that’s a big part, perhaps the biggest part, of your job. A burned-out priest is of no use to me or to my church. Not one person here can take care of you or set reasonable limits for you. We look to you for leadership in the management of your life. I’m no theologian, but from Scripture and from your preaching about the kingdom of God, I’ve learned that it is our responsibility to be stewards of that kingdom, to manage what we have, including our time and work, in a mature and responsible way. That’s what we brought you here to do.”81 Many pastors would benefit from following these words and avoid burnout. Taking care of one’s self is a main issue in preventing burnout.

Preventing burnout is far superior to walking blindly into burnout and then trying to recover from it. Burnout is an alarm to signal that life is out of balance.82 For most people a balanced life is the most important intervention against burnout.83 The regular practice of self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and professional – is the best prevention against burnout.

82 David Congo, “What Causes Burnout?” Theology, News and Notes (March 1984):8
83 Jerry Edelwich and Archie Brodsky, Burnout (New York: Human Science Press, 1980),240
Physical Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout

Ignoring one’s physical well-being can have devastating results. Just ask Pastor James Johnson who maintained a frantic pace until he had open-heart surgery at the age of fifty. Then he listened to his cardiologist about slowing down from his frantic pace and taking care of his personal needs. There are six key elements in providing good self-care to our physical body so that burnout can be prevented. The first three elements are sleep, relaxation and recreation. The second three are equally important include exercise, proper nutrition and maintaining the proper weight.

Sleep

Sleep is essential to sound mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Burnout victims often have a hard time falling asleep and awake exhausted. They push themselves to maintain a full schedule while feeling tired throughout the day. Some pastors do not feel tired because they cope by living in a heightened state of arousal from excessive amounts of adrenaline. These driven pastors function on adrenaline and are deceived into believing that they do not need much sleep, but eventually they will pay a high price. The price they will pay is the same price you pay for using a small motor to do a big motor’s job – burnout.

Lack of sleep can impact many areas of one’s life. It is easy to see the results of not enough sleep in a small child. They often become irritable, exhibit behavioral problems and are hard to live with. Insufficient sleep affects adults in similar ways.

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85 Minirth, How to Beat Burnout, p.105
86 Hart, Overcoming Anxiety, p.172
Minirth and Meier acknowledge, “When we do not get enough sleep, we tend to be irritable, more critical, more depressed, have a harder time concentrating, work less efficiently, and enjoy life less.” So stabilizing our sleep patterns is vital to reversing these problems and attitudes.

Practicing a consistent sleep-waking cycle is important to maximizing restful sleep. One should avoid alcohol, over-the-counter sleep aids, caffeine, and nicotine for a good night’s rest. Moderate exercise in the early evening may promote deep sleep and engaging in a quiet activity such as reading or handwork, 30 to 60 minutes prior to bedtime can also increase relaxation and encourage sleep. It is important to get up at the same time each day and get enough sleep each night. Enough sleep is the amount that allows one to feel alert and energetic the next day.

**Relaxation**

Relaxation training commonly includes the techniques of Jacobsonian progressive relaxation; autogenic training; alpha-wave, electromyography, and other forms of biofeedback; some forms of hypnotherapy; and meditation and yoga.

Dr. Jacobson, a physician, developed his technique of progressive relaxation for the treatment of anxious patients. The client is to progressively tense and relax major muscle groups over a 30 to 40 minute time period. A variant of this technique is to target only certain body parts for relaxation while concentrating or saying a cue word such as

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88 Minirth, How to Beat Burnout, p.105
89 Benner and Hill, p.1134
90 Yoga is rooted in Hinduism and is contrary to sound doctrine and filling our mind with God’s word
calm, relax or peace. The goal of this variant method is to produce the experience of relaxation by just saying or concentrating on the cue word.\textsuperscript{91}

Progressive relaxation is a common technique in many stress management and anxiety control treatments. It has been shown to be a helpful part of treatment for agoraphobia, social anxieties, and alcohol abuse. It is the treatment of choice for insomnia. It is also a valuable component in the management of chronic and acute pain such as Lamaze childbirth training. This technique is also widely used in the treatment of psychosomatic disorders such as migraine and tension headaches, hypertension and other disorders.\textsuperscript{92}

Christina Maslach summarized the two basic skills that are of central importance in a stress management program as deep muscle relaxation and mental relaxation. She encourages individuals to practice the muscle and mental relaxation drills twice daily.\textsuperscript{93}

**Recreation and Time Off**

The pursuit of hobbies, non-vocational interests and community involvements can bring balance and vitality to life. Outside involvement adds another area where a pastor can experience fulfillment and challenge. Jerry Edelwich sees the importance of a balanced life in avoiding burnout. He stated that those “. . . who successfully avoid severe burnout problems almost invariably cite a degree of detachment from the job as contributing to their emotional balance.”\textsuperscript{94} This detachment from the job is possible due to attachment to other activities and involvements outside of ministry.

\textsuperscript{91} Benner and Hill, p.1019
\textsuperscript{92} Benner and Hill, p.1020
\textsuperscript{93} Maslash, Burnout, p.152
\textsuperscript{94} Edelwich, p.240
Taking time off each week and taking a break during the day to get away from the pressures of work has tremendous value in the long run. A leisurely walk, a brief nap, an extended lunch break with one’s spouse or a vigorous workout can have three beneficial results. First, it can have an immediate energizing effect. Second, taking time off allows a pastor to experience life. Many high achievers race through life to achieve their goals forgetting to enjoy the trip.\textsuperscript{95} Third, time off is a preventive measure against burnout.\textsuperscript{96}

Taking a full day off or a week-long vacation free from all church-related responsibilities allows pastors time to relax and renew their strength.\textsuperscript{97} Vacations allow pastors to make a complete break from the daily routines and demands of ministry. Most pastors are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week so time away is very important to their mental and physical health. The importance of vacations is validated by Daniel and Rogers who said, “A very important service the churches can do for their pastors is to give them long enough vacations to provide them rest, and ...to have someone else available to be on call.”\textsuperscript{98} Time off, whether an hour during the day, a full day, or several weeks, is a vital dimension of helping pastors live a balanced life. This is also an essential ingredient in the prevention of burnout. Churches would do well to consider granting sabbatical leaves of up to six months for study and travel. Many ministers have reported that sabbatical time spent in pastor supervision has been the most effective pastoral care they have ever received.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{95} Myron Rush, \textit{Burnout}, p.141
\textsuperscript{96} Christina Maslach, \textit{Burnout - The Cost of Caring}, p.125
\textsuperscript{97} Maslach, \textit{Burnout-The Cost of Caring}, p.126
\textsuperscript{98} Daniel and Rogers, p.246
Exercise

As someone approaches burnout, recreation and exercise are often the first activities left out of an increasingly full schedule. But research on coping with burnout suggests that exercise is very important.\(^\text{100}\) Giving regular attention to exercise is an important factor for avoiding burnout.\(^\text{101}\) This conclusion is supported by a number of studies dealing with coping with stress and burnout. Those in the studies identified outside activities such as hobbies, recreation, and in particular, physical activity as an important way to cope with stress and burnout.\(^\text{102}\) The medical profession has long supported exercise to promote good physical conditioning as a way to providing a longer life and good health. Regular exercise can control blood pressure, reduce weight, condition the heart, and remove the risk of other diseases.\(^\text{103}\) Exercise contributes to the total physical health of pastors. Good physical conditioning strengthens the body’s immune system and increases endorphins that are the brain’s natural tranquilizers.\(^\text{104}\) It prevents burnout and adds vitality and energy to life.

Olympic champion and member of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Marry Lou Retton recommends that a person exercise in the morning in order to start the day energized. Plus, it is easier to come up with excuses not to exercise by the end of the day. She also recommends that a person start out slow at first, with less strenuous activities such as walking or swimming for 30 minutes two days a week and slowly increase it to an hour four or five days a week. After one’s stamina has grown,

\(^{100}\) Rush, *Burnout*, p.37
\(^{101}\) Benner and Hill, p.168
\(^{103}\) Minirth, *How to Beat Burnout*, p.104
then a person can begin some kind of aerobic activity thirty minutes a day. She also recommends that a person exercises with someone else to encourage them along the way.\textsuperscript{105}

Proper Nutrition and Weight

Given the frantic pace of a minister’s life today, exercising and eating right are two of the most important choices a pastor makes for himself to enhance his well-being.\textsuperscript{106} Everyone can benefit from some form of regular exercise and proper nutrition. But when it comes to avoiding burnout exercise and eating properly are proven ways to combat burnout.\textsuperscript{107} When Olympic gold mentalist, Mary Lou Retton, retired from competitive gymnastics at eighteen, she stopped exercising and eating right. As a result of her poor eating habits and lack of exercise, she put on many extra pounds, her energy plummeted, she couldn’t fit into her favorite clothes, and felt terribly insecure about her appearance.\textsuperscript{108} After a short time she came to accept what she knew to be true, that weight gain and loss is like a math problem. A body’s weight is determined by the number of calories one eats and burns off each day. If a person eats more calories than he burns off, the extra calories get stored in the body as fat. By adding extra physical activity to one’s routine, a person can use up those excess calories. The key to keeping the body slim or loosing extra weight is simple math.\textsuperscript{109}

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\textsuperscript{107} Victoria Rayner, “Burnout: A Risk for Every Working Woman” viewed on June 4, 2001 from http://www.webmd.com/content/article/1758.52408
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p.173
More Calories + Less Activity = Weight Gain
Same Calories + Same Activity = No Change
Less Calories + More Activity = Weight Loss

Mary Lou Retton recommends that a person avoid snacking, avoid fad diets, eat five small portions of healthy food every day (chicken, fish, fruits, vegetables), and do not try to be what you are not. In other words, avoid unrealistic and unhealthy weight goals. Because of one’s genetic makeup, an individual may never be able to look skinny, but they can maintain a healthy weight.\textsuperscript{110} Dr. Kenneth Cooper has suggested an easy method to find one’s optimal weight. For men who have a dominant wrist between six and seven inches, they should multiply their height in inches by four, and then subtract 128. If their wrist measures more than seven inches, they should increase the total by ten percent to find the ideal weight. If the wrist measures less than six inches, men should decrease the total by ten percent. Women should multiply their height in inches by 3.5, and then subtract 108. This is for women with a wrist circumference between six and 6.5 inches. If it measures more than 6.5 inches, then the total should be increased by ten percent. If the wrist circumference is less than six inches, then the total should be decreased by ten percent to find the ideal weight.\textsuperscript{111}

Mary Lou Retton also recommends drinking lots of water, taking vitamins, and replacing coffee with tea – a natural source of flavonoid, like many fruits and vegetables.\textsuperscript{112} Many nutritionalists recommend avoiding diets that contain sugar, salt,

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p.184  
\textsuperscript{111} Kenneth H. Cooper, cassette tape, “How to Live Longer and Love It,” (Dallas: Zig Ziglar Corp. 1980)  
\textsuperscript{112} Retton, p.186
caffeine, and hydrogenated fats. It is also good to avoid fad diet programs such as Weigh Down that distorts the Bible, denies sound doctrine, and inflates their effectiveness.113

**Spiritual Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout**

Most physicians in America would acknowledge the value that a person’s faith has in contributing to his physical health and well-being. A poll taken in 1999 showed that 99 percent of physicians in the United States believe that religious belief contributes to the healing of the sick and over 70 percent said that if asked would join their patient in praying for healing.114 In his book The Healing Power of Faith, Dr. Harold Koenig suggests that there are significant, measurable health benefits to being a person of religious faith and that religious people tend to live longer, healthier lives.115

Five key elements in providing self-care to our spiritual life so that burnout can be prevented will be examined in Chapter 3. The key elements are: (1) a believer’s love for Christ (2) his hope of future rewards from Christ (3) his faith in God as the helper and provider (4) his personal faithfulness and (5) the realization that we live in a fallen world and face a fierce enemy.

The Bible is clear about the importance of faith, hope and love. Faith is trust in a sovereign God who may at times respond to human sufferings and trials in ways we do not understand. Faith or trust must be placed in the God of the Bible not in the God of our own making or desires. When one’s desires are dashed it can lead to disillusionment and

114 Retton, p.214
115 Ibid., p.214
depression. Hope is a necessary ingredient to withstand the stresses and difficulties of life. One of the most common signs of burnout is the loss of hope.116 One way hope is rekindled is by crying out to God for help and insight, and to listen to God as He speaks to us through His word.

Relational Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout

Just as distancing, detachment, and withdrawal are allies of burnout, so fellowship, closeness, and mutual encouragement are foes of burnout. A believer who is experiencing close, sharing fellowship with other believers is much less likely to experience burnout.117

Psychologists have studied friendship because of the evidence that social support is associated with better physical and psychological well-being. Friendship buffers one against a wide variety of stressors that intrude on one’s life. Friendship helps overcome loneliness, develops personal confidence, and assists with socialization tasks. The development of friendships is due primarily to self-disclosure, proximity, and similarity of attitudes and values.118 Proximity allows for multiple interactions over time, and self-disclosure builds trust.

Pastors who struggle with burnout seldom have close friends. Doctors Minirth and Meier state, “Many people who experience depression or burnout do not have even one friend to whom they are close enough to share their personal feelings and still feel loved

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116 Frank Minirth et al., eds., How to Beat Burnout, p.135
118 Benner and Hill, p.476
and accepted.” Pastors often become isolated and needy for the support and love that close friendships can bring.

One reason pastors may not have close meaningful friendships is because of frequent moves. Distance is a detriment to established friendships. The fear of losing new friendships because of a possible future move can deter pastors from forming close relationships. Susan Devogel stated, “Both clergy and spouses said they have experienced too many losses to want to invest themselves in new friendships and run the risk of more pain.”

Another reason friendships can be difficult is that they take a commitment of time and effort to develop and maintain. Friendships do not just happen. Roy Oswald supports this when he wrote, “A quality support network takes hard intentional work…too often they move into new congregational settings and dive into their work, hoping that support will happen by accident or as a natural by-product of the situation.” A pastor must take the time to develop close personal friends.

A final reason pastors may not have close friendships is because of the risk involved. Self-disclosure is the necessary ingredient in any friendship. But with self-disclosure comes the risk of being disappointed, misunderstood or even taken advantage of. Disappointment is a risk in any close relationship, and being vulnerable may be seen as weak to some or as a source of gossip to others.

119 Minirth, The Stress Factor, p.140
121 Martin, p.86
123 Freudenberger, Burnout: The High Cost, p.136
A support network of intimate friends, fellow pastors, and family members are key relational elements in preventing burnout. Supportive people and support groups play a vital role in preventing and coping with burnout. Often, pastors who are weary from ministry demands and people-overload want to escape from people. So they avoid participation in growth groups or in a small group of peers. But, getting together with caring people is just as important (if not more so) than getting away from them.

Small groups and supportive friendships can be very beneficial. They provide a caring setting where meaningful friendships can be developed. In a caring group emotions can be expressed and processed without fear of rejection. It is not uncommon for pastors to feel victimized, hurt, frustrated or angry, and a small group allows him to vent his pain. It has been suggested that pastors need close friends with whom they can regularly share their true feelings and still be loved. Failure to deal with one’s feelings on a regular basis can result in emotional problems and burnout. So to avoid burnout, pastors need to have close friends with whom they can express their personal feelings and still feel loved and accepted.

Small supportive groups also provide the understanding and accepting environment where correction can be given to the pastor. This kind of support group serves as a pastor’s own board of directors who value him enough to correct him when they see destructive attitudes or actions. When this type of accountability is absent, pastors are vulnerable to emotional and moral problems. Kind and loving confrontation

125 Christina Maslach, Burnout, p.111
126 Minirth, The Stress Factor, p.140
127 Minirth, How to Beat Burnout, p.121
129 Hawkins, Before Burnout, p.138
from close friends is a valuable commodity and protection against the destructive lifestyle that leads to burnout.\textsuperscript{130}

Friendships and support groups, especially of peers, offers valuable encouragement and problem solving benefits. The encouragement from a friend is priceless, and often life changing in its impact.\textsuperscript{131} Pastors face many complex problems, and a peer support group allows a forum where pastors can share problems they face and seek wise guidance.

Finally, close friendships can enable pastors to discover that their personal significance is not directly linked to their ministry effectiveness or performance. Personal worth is not gained from performance but in relationships.\textsuperscript{132} Knowing this truth frees one from living under the bondage of performance.

\textbf{Emotional Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout}

Emotionally speaking, pastoral ministry is the most hazardous profession of all and requires the utmost in emotional maturity.\textsuperscript{133} The five key elements in providing self-care include: stress management, practicing intentional assertiveness, living with detached concern, laughter, and learning to cope with the negative emotions in burnout. Before looking at these five key elements, the source of emotions and ways of handling them will be examined.

\textsuperscript{130} Oswald, p.100
\textsuperscript{131} Hawkins, p.141
\textsuperscript{132} Minirth, \textit{The Stress Factor}, p.148
\textsuperscript{133} Archibald Hart, “Healing the Person of the Pastor,” Lecture presented as part of \textit{Family Time Getaway, A Conference for Clergy and Their Families}, at Focus on The Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 20-24, 2001
The Source of Emotions and Ways of Handling Them

Emotions are generated by what we experience, feel, and think. Hart says, “People feel what they think. Their emotions are the complete sum of all their thoughts.”134 This same truth is expressed in the proverb, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”135 The mind can determine if a person will be angry, anxious, and annoyed or calm, and composed. Emotions can be handled in a very negative, destructive way that leads to defeat, or in a very beneficial way that will enhance life. Negatively, there are two extremes that should be avoided. As Hart points out, “There are two extremes of emotional experience and both can produce an attitude toward emotion that is destructive and self-defeating…either we allow our emotions to overwhelm us, and therefore come to fear them as if they were the ‘enemy within’, or we over control them and rob ourselves of the many rich experiences they can bring.”136 In order to experience emotions in a healthy way so that they enhance our life, one must handle them properly. First, since emotions are the sum of all of one’s thoughts, by exercising control over thoughts one can influence his emotions. By controlling one’s thoughts, he has the capacity to intervene between what is happening to him and what he feels. So by being proactive in controlling one’s thought patterns he can influence his emotions.137 Second, it is possible to change one’s emotions. A person’s emotional reactions are not locked into his personality. They are determined by beliefs, ideas, and attitudes. But, these aspects of one’s thinking can be transformed and changed through effort and diligence.138

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135 Proverb 23:7, NKJV
136 Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions, p.10
137 Hart, p. 27
138 Hart, p.28, 29
By altering ideas, beliefs or attitudes emotions can be altered. The right attitudes and thinking will be discussed further under the section, The Mental Aspect of Self-Care.

**Stress Management**

Successful stress interventions are primarily cognitive-behavioral, such as biofeedback, stress management programs and relaxation training. These techniques identify destructive thinking patterns and habits, and provide healthy alternatives to how one thinks and behaves. The admonition to right thinking harmonizes with the biblical exhortation to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.\(^{139}\) They also encourage the realistic acceptance of healthy limits rather than attempts to maintain unrealistic levels of personal control. The biblical perspective that sees God in control of outcomes has been found to reduce the stress that leads to depression when negative life events are experienced. Accepting the sovereignty of God with the practice of casting our cares upon him\(^{140}\) can be foundational in reducing stress in the midst of a stressful society.\(^{141}\)

One key element of stress management is learning to say “no” to opportunities and to the demands of others. This is difficult for some pastors but vital to reducing stress, setting healthy boundaries and being assertive in a healthy way.\(^{142}\)

**Practicing Intentional Assertiveness**

According to Hart, much stress and burnout in pastors and Christian workers is caused by a misunderstanding of how to be assertive and yet have a Christ-like spirit.

\(^{139}\) Romans 12:2
\(^{140}\) 1 Peter 5:7
\(^{141}\) Brenner and Hill, p.1171
Unassertive people have great difficulty in dealing with interpersonal conflicts, manipulative people, bossy or demanding superiors or powerful authority figures. Their inability to say “no” to constant demands results in feelings of being abused, criticized, ridiculed, and humiliated. But they are at a loss in dealing with their feelings or the abusive situation. Suppressed anger and passive-aggressive behaviors then emerge as a lifestyle, which leads to burnout.143

Assertiveness, properly understood, is compatible with the biblical concept of speaking the truth in love144 and in restoring broken relationships.145 Assertiveness has been defined as “. . . the ability to stand up for one’s rights, to express one’s true feelings when appropriate – without fear of reprisal, to be able to say no to unreasonable demands, and to request the things we need and deserve.”146 Assertiveness can be divided into two broad sets of skills: (1) relationship enhancement skills, sometimes called positive assertion and (2) self-protective skills. Positive assertiveness is the ability to give encouragement, receive compliments, initiate, maintain and end conversations comfortably, express love and affection appropriately and deepen friendships. Self-protective assertive skills include the ability to state one’s feelings, beliefs, wishes, attitudes, or rights, disagree with someone else’s point of view comfortably; refuse requests of demands that conflict with one’s priorities; defend oneself against unfair or inaccurate accusations; express anger or annoyance assertively; deal with someone else’s

143 Hart, “Burnout”, p.22.
144 Ephesians 4:15
145 Matthew 18:15-17
146 Archibald Hart, “Preventing Burnout,” Theology, News and Notes (March 1984): p.18
anger comfortably and non-defensively; and make reasonable requests of others.\textsuperscript{147}

Acting assertively usually looks like:\textsuperscript{148}

- When you say no, you mean no, and there is no hedging or letting others decide.
- Your voice is strong and firm, not whiney, harsh, or accusing.
- You use short, concise statements, not long drawn out statements with pauses.
- You try to have others to treat you with respect and fairness - but you don’t demand it.
- You don’t just do something you were asked to do when it sounds ridiculous, you ask for an explanation, listen carefully, and offer suggestions you feel are more appropriate.
- You honestly express your feelings without attacking others, or trying to defend yourself needlessly.
- You express your displeasure with another person because of the way you feel, but do not name-call or demean the person.
- You use I-statements vs. You-statements. An example of an I-statement is, “I feel angry when you call me names, and I would appreciate it if you would stop.”

The way to avoid stress and burnout, proposed by Hart, is to learn how to be assertive in a manner consistent with the character of God, and by improving one’s self-attitude. A good self-attitude is the confidence that I have the right to be myself.\textsuperscript{149} Those who particularly benefit from this training are shy, codependent, or have difficulty managing anger. The actual techniques include making an assertive request, broken record (repeating the same answer), sorting issues, disagreeing, emphasizing thoughts or feelings, redefining, negative inquiry, negative assertion, and repeating the action line.\textsuperscript{150}

It is also important to learn nonverbal assertive behavior that reinforces the verbal

\textsuperscript{147} Benner and Hill, p.98
\textsuperscript{148} Albert Ellis, \textit{How to Control Your Anger Before it Controls You}, (1997)
\textsuperscript{150} Benner and Hill, p.98
message. Nonverbal behavior includes eye contact, voice volume and tone, gestures, distance, clothing and grooming, facial expressions, and timing and pacing.\footnote{Benner and Hill, p. 99}

Common tasks or homework assignments in assertiveness training include:\footnote{Albert Ellis, \textit{How to Control Your Anger Before it Controls You}, (1977)}

- Role playing – practice assertive behavior with a friend or co-worker. Set up an especially anger producing situation. Have your friend play the part of the antagonist, while you practice being calm and assertive in the situation.
- Take specific risks – do something outside your comfort zone. Things like raising your hand in class to ask a question, or wearing loud clothes, or telling someone that you do not like his or her behavior instead of simply keeping it to yourself.
- Risk rejection by asking for something – ask for something you think you might be rejected for. If the other person says, “no”, keep discussing it for a few minutes. If the person still refuses, try again later.
- Risk saying no – find something you commonly do for others, but do not particularly enjoy doing, and when asked to do it say, “No, I really do not feel like doing that right now.” If the person keeps asking, be persistent and firm about your choice.
- Be able to do something ridiculous or shameful – pick something you feel would be embarrassing or out of the ordinary, and do it to prove you will not die from doing it. For example, like wearing clothes that don’t match, singing loudly in public or wearing a coat inside-out.
- Deliberately show that you have failed at a certain task – let people around you know that you can fail at something without becoming depressed or angry about it. Being able to accept failure will also tell others that you are human.
- Assert yourself coolly – learn to express yourself in a calm and cool manner even though you may feel like telling someone off with a loud voice and colorful language. A calm explanation will go a lot farther toward your getting what you want.
- Courageous confrontation – calm confrontation works best but requires courage to do so. The easiest thing to do is to come to the realization that even if the person you confront chooses not to like you, you can still like yourself and feel good about your ability to express your feelings. Once you convince yourself, you still may have to force yourself to confront the person, but it becomes easier when you realize the pain of avoidance is often much worse than the initial pain of confrontation.
- Prior preparation – this is very helpful where you feel taken advantage of by friends. Start by being very specific with your planning.
Living With Detached Concern – Avoiding the Pitfalls of Sympathy

The third key element in providing self-care to our emotional life involves living with detached concern. This term was originally coined to describe the attitude of empathetic physicians who remained objective and detached so they could give sound medical advice while still demonstrating sufficient concern for the patient to provide sensitive understanding and care.153 Detached concern refers to the balance that must be maintained between compassion and concern, on the one hand, and detachment and objectivity, on the other. Pastors need to be close enough to parishioners to show genuine concern for them; however, they also need enough distance and detachment to be objective when dealing with problems.

Pastors can suffer burnout by over-involvement in the pain of others.154 Detached concern is a difficult balance to achieve and maintain, but it is essential in avoiding burnout. Jerry Edelwich stated that people who avoid severe burnout invariably cite a degree of detachment from the job as contributing to their emotional balance.155

Burnout is much more likely in pastors who are unable to keep personal emotions sufficiently detached to avoid over-involvement in the pain of others.156 Christina Maslach recognized this as well and said, “Contact with people can be especially stressful if the individual gets too highly involved at a personal level. The helper may take on someone’s problem as a special cause or may become close friends with the client. Whatever happens to that person then becomes the helper’s special burden as well.”157

153 Pines, p.54
154 Hart, “Burnout”, p.23
157 Maslach, Burnout - The Cost of Caring, p.32
Taking on another person’s problem is emotionally draining especially when dealing with chronic needs. Maslach concluded, “Chronic problems are more emotionally draining and more closely linked to burnout.”

Hart urges pastors to differentiate sympathy from empathy to maintain good mental health. Empathy describes a way of relating to another that shows care and love but does not produce a reciprocal pain. Sympathy is a way of relating that shows one feels the pain of another. Sympathy can become patronizing and robs the person the right to feel pain. It diminishes the importance of what the suffering person feels. The vicarious suffering with another in sympathy can easily become selfish and self-satisfying. Sympathy says in effect, I know how you feel and I feel that way also. Empathy says I can never know what you feel because your pain is unique, but I do want to understand how you feel. Clinical research has shown that empathy is much more helpful and comforting than sympathy.

Laughter and the Joyful Heart

Laughter makes life bearable by helping us to forget our cares and realize that our worries are not permanent. According to James Walsh, people who laugh actually live longer than those who don’t laugh, and that health actually varies according to the amount of laughter. Norman Cousins, the former publisher of the Saturday Review, was diagnosed with a severe and extremely painful disease of the spine that affects the joints. In the hospital he was placed on a regimen of anti-inflammatory medications, but his condition continued to worsen until he changed his treatment to large amounts of

158 Maslach, Burnout, p.23
159 Hart, “Burnout”, pp.24-25
vitamin C and television shows that caused him to laugh. He quickly discovered that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had the anesthetic effect that would give him two hours of pain-free sleep.\textsuperscript{161} The health benefit of laughter has long been recognized anecdotally and intuitively in the medical community. It has also been demonstrated in a variety of settings that laughter has a role in stress hormone reduction, improving mood, enhancing creativity, pain reduction, improving immunity and reducing blood pressure.\textsuperscript{162}

Laughter is the equivalent of light aerobic exercise. It boosts our cardiovascular, respiratory and immune systems by increasing oxygen to the blood and stimulating our muscles. It also relieves stress and tension in the body.\textsuperscript{163}

Laughter helps a person to deal with life’s problems and challenges. Laughter has even been found to help in the grieving process. Psychologist George Bonanno of Catholic University concluded that laughter helps ease the psychological pain of a person who has lost a loved one and makes it easier for friends to give emotional support to the one in grief.\textsuperscript{164}

It is always good to laugh with people but never at them. Who and what a person chooses to laugh at is an important measure of their character. As playwright William Mizner said, “I can usually judge a fellow by what he laughs at.”\textsuperscript{165} Laughter should never be at the expense of another’s reputation. Malicious jokes and humor are never pleasing to God and often result in anger rather than joy. John Quinton said, “Laughter costs too much which is purchased by the sacrifice of decency.”\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p.220
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p.221
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.222
\textsuperscript{165} Cited in Retton, p.228
\textsuperscript{166} Cited in Retton, p.228
While it is unacceptable to laugh at others, laughing at one’s self is a mark of maturity. Ethel Barrymore remarked, “You grow up on the day you have your first real laugh at yourself.”\textsuperscript{167} Laughing at one’s self requires a healthy self esteem and true humility.

The Negative Emotions in Burnout

The fifth key element in providing self-care to our emotional life involves learning to cope with the primary negative emotions in burnout – anger, bitterness, worry, guilt and depression.

Anger

Anger is a feeling of extreme displeasure, hostility, indignation or exasperation toward someone or something.\textsuperscript{168} Anger is an intense emotional reaction, sometimes directly expressed in overt behavior and sometimes remaining a largely unexpressed feeling. Anger can be indirectly expressed by cynicism, sarcasm, projection, or more directly in explosive episodes. Repressed anger prevents people from experiencing and owning their anger and denies them the opportunity to explore it, understand it, confess it when necessary, experience healing, and seek reconciliation. Learning to constructively deal with anger is a peacemaking process that can require great patience, reflective listening, and knowledge of the major alternative strategies. For a believer anger can be understood as a sign that something has gone wrong internally and/or interpersonally.

\textsuperscript{167} Cited in Retton, p.230  
Christianity calls every believer to reckon with truth about oneself, others and with God.\textsuperscript{169}

Hart states that pastors are the angriest people he works with and the most resistant to his lectures on anger. Pastors are often not allowed to express anger in a healthy way so they repress it. The ministry provides a rich source for their anger. Volunteers and committees can create enormous frustrations by their stubbornness, incompetence, slowness, or unwillingness to follow the pastor’s lead. The frustration and emotional hurt in dealing with others is the primary cause of anger.\textsuperscript{170}

It is important for pastors to remember that anger is a feeling and not a sin. Louis McBurney calls anger a natural part of our humanness.\textsuperscript{171} However, sin can result if a pastor allows angry feelings to fester into bitterness or angry behavior. When feelings of anger come, it is healthy and even necessary to talk about these feelings with someone else.\textsuperscript{172} It is important for pastors to deal with angry feelings in a healthy way so that they will not harm themselves or others.

\textbf{Bitterness}

Bitterness, or resentment, is a strong negative emotion that results when anger is held onto over time. Unresolved anger eventually grows into bitterness. Burnout is the result of the pastor who becomes bitter towards the demands and actions of people in his

\textsuperscript{170} Archibald Hart, “Healing the Person of the Pastor,” Lecture presented as part of \textit{Family Time Getaway, A Conference for Clergy and Their Families}, at Focus on The Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 20-24, 2001
\textsuperscript{172} Hart, \textit{Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions}, p.55
church. The four major objects of bitterness include self, others, God and circumstances. Bitterness toward self often grows out of blaming oneself over failures in ministry. Others often become the object of bitterness since they are viewed as the source of one’s hurt, frustration and pain. Pastors can also resent others for not coming to their aid or for their criticism. Resentment toward God, though always wrong, can grow out of a sense of disappointment with God or feelings of being abandoned by Him after following His will. Finally, bitterness can be directed at life’s circumstances in general.

There are four common symptoms of bitterness. The first symptom is griping and complaining. Griping allow one to ventilate, but not resolve anything. The targets of the griping are circumstances and authority figures, including God. The second symptom is interpersonal conflict. A third symptom of bitterness is intense emotions. These people have strong surface emotions that range from high to low. An individual who exhibits a roller-coaster like emotional ride through life frequently does so because of unresolved bitterness. The fourth symptom of bitterness is the inability to trust people.

Bitterness has the power to destroy a person emotionally and spiritually. The biblical solution to bitterness and its underlying emotion of anger is making the choice to forgive. Forgiveness is a matter of the will; it is choosing to put away the hurt or circumstances that caused the resentment in the first place. Pastors who are filled with bitterness and resentment must choose to forgive. Choosing to forgive the one who caused the hurt is the path to wholeness and peace and a preventative against burnout.

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175 Frank Minirth et al., eds., The Stress Factor, p.39.
176 Minirth, How to Beat Burnout, p.57
Worry

Worry or anxiety is psychologically experienced as a combination of looming dread or impending danger and a vague uneasiness. Associated with worry are the symptoms of mild agitation, racing thoughts, impaired sleep, and difficulty in calming oneself. There are parallel physiological experiences of sustained muscle tension, increased heart rate and disturbed breathing. These characteristics produce a sense of heightened awareness or alertness that frequently disturbs concentration, memory, and a person’s ability to feel emotionally comfortable.\(^{177}\)

There is no way to be totally free of anxiety. Hart says, “Anxiety is intricately interwoven with the essence of living. You cannot live and be free of anxiety.”\(^{178}\) Anxiety can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive. Positive anxiety is an asset, a built in alarm system that signals possible danger. Negative anxiety is an alarm system with its wires crossed --- it goes off for the wrong reasons, or no reason, at the wrong times, and often can’t be silenced. This kind of anxiety is not a warning of danger, but a danger itself.\(^{179}\) The difference between positive and negative anxiety depends on the intensity, the length, and the cause of the anxiety. Healthy anxiety can protect a person and give direction to his life and motivation to make necessary changes to his behavior or thinking. Positive anxiety is in response to real threats or demands. Negative anxiety or destructive anxiety can be set off by unreal or imagined dangers and keeps a person frantically trying to accomplish impossible tasks.\(^{180}\) This frantic lifestyle leads to stress damage and anxiety attacks. The pastor who is driven, and who burns the candle at both

\(^{177}\) Brenner and Hill, p.89  
\(^{178}\) Hart, Overcoming Anxiety (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), xi  
\(^{180}\) Hart, Overcoming Anxiety, p.10
ends to make his life count is setting himself up for an attack. Hart states, “They are competent and able to do so much, they tend to be highly driven, deeply committed, and overly stretched people. Their anxiety disorder is the penalty for overusing their normally strong bodies and minds. It is the consequence of too much wear and tear on basically efficient biological and mental systems.”

God’s desire is for the believer to live in His peace and not be consumed by anxiety. A life that is characterized by negative anxiety is displeasing to God and damaging to one’s emotional and physical well-being. The challenge for the believer is to trust God, walk in the Spirit, and depend upon His word every day.

Guilt

Guilt can be used objectively or subjectively. Objectively, guilt is a judicial term referring to one’s condition in relation to a law or to God. Subjectively, guilt is an emotion that follows judging oneself in violation of a standard. Many pastors hold high standards, lofty goals and are performance oriented. So when pastors fail to achieve a personal goal such as finishing a report or making calls then guilt can result. Whenever people violate a personal standard they experience a form of mental and emotional pain, which is guilt. Subjective guilt involves shame, self-punishment and self-rejection. Shame is rooted in the sense of being inadequate. Self-punishment inflicts emotional or physical pain in order to placate the demands of the conscience. Believers no longer have objective guilt before God because Christ paid for all their sins. So, self-punishment is actually a form of self-atonement, which is ultimately a rejection of the efficacy of

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181 Hart, Overcoming Anxiety, p.7
Christ’s atoning death and based on works-righteousness. Self-rejection views self as basically unlovable.¹⁸³

Subjective guilt can also be divided into neurotic guilt (false guilt, punitive guilt, or guilt feelings) and love-based corrective feelings called true guilt (ego guilt, existential guilt, or constructive sorrow). Neurotic guilt is self-punitive and atoning in nature whereas true guilt is love and forgiveness based.¹⁸⁴ True guilt is good in that it motivates a person to be responsible toward his obligations and duties. This guilt, like acid, when used in small doses is a powerful and positive force that can make a godly work of art -- a human being -- even more beautiful. Guilt, properly managed, can shape and even strengthen people.¹⁸⁵

Christ’s work on the cross, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and loving, forgiving relationships with others in the church are the solution to humanity’s objective guilt before God and their subjective guilt feelings. Objective guilt is satisfied in the substitutionary atonement of Christ and freedom from guilt feelings comes with increased awareness of what Christ has accomplished on the cross, the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, and believers who model non-punitive, loving, corrective attitude instead of condemnation.¹⁸⁶ For a believer the confession of sin accompanies the beginnings of Godly sorrow, a love-based corrective feeling, a constructive sorrow motivated by love. So the believer’s awareness of sin actually results in an increased awareness of one’s relationship with God, not an occasion for self-punishment and self-atonement.¹⁸⁷

Hart believes that freedom from neurotic guilt comes from a healthy concept of God, a healthy sin concept, and a healthy forgiveness concept.\textsuperscript{188} This will be explored further in Chapter Three.

**Depression**

Depression and its relationship to burnout was discussed previously under *Burnout and Depression Distinguished*.\textsuperscript{189} Depression is a common human experience that needs to be accepted as a natural and normal response to a particular set of circumstances.\textsuperscript{190}

Pastors are not exempt from extreme sadness or depression. Dr Hart’s experience shows that depression is the most common emotional problem for ministers and their families. In fact, he has stated that surviving in ministry is a matter of surviving depression. This is a normal emotion that must be recognized and dealt with. The Christian faith does not exempt believers from the emotional pain or presence of depression. Often pastors refuse to acknowledge depression as an issue in their lives, but they are nevertheless very susceptible to it by virtue of their profession. Dr. Hart believes there is more potential for depression in pastoral ministry than in any other profession. This is due in part to viewing ministry as a high calling and to having high expectations for one’s self. In addition, pastors often have inadequate recovery time from stressful experiences as well as lack boundaries for their work.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{188} Hart, *Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions*, p.118
\textsuperscript{189} See pages # 9, 19-20 of this Project
\textsuperscript{190} Archibald Hart, *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions* (Waco: Texas, 1984), p.7.
\textsuperscript{191} Archibald Hart, “Healing the Person of the Pastor,” Lecture presented as part of *Family Time Getaway, A Conference for Clergy and Their Families*, at Focus on The Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 20-24, 2001
All depression has a purpose. Hart stated that depression is a healing emotion that is functional and purposeful. He stated, “The depression of stress is always the consequence of adrenaline exhaustion. In other words, the body produces a state of depression in which the low mood, disinterest in regular activities, and physical fatigue are designed to pull the victim out of the rat race and produce a state of lethargy. The lethargy, in turn, allows the body to rest and recover from the over-stress.”\textsuperscript{192} The common symptoms of depression are a significant loss of physical and emotional energy, a loss of interest and zeal in things that were the driving force of one’s life, and viewing life through a negative lens.

Depression caused by stress is a response to loss. It can be a loss of a relationship, loss of a possession, loss of a dream, loss of position, or loss of self-respect.\textsuperscript{193} So pastors must come to grips with the losses suffered in their lives for healing to occur.

The standard treatments for depression are psychotherapy, medication and electroconvulsive therapy. Psychotherapy will be dependant on the therapist’s belief of how early family life, learning, thinking, social circumstances and biology produce depression. For example, interpersonal therapists emphasize the immediate social context of depression and the depressed person’s relationships with other people. Cognitive therapists focus on correcting faulty thinking. Electro convulsive therapy is relatively safe and most often used for severely depressed patients who do not respond to other forms of treatment. Antidepressants are normally prescribed for a period of 6 months to a year. They can vary in effectiveness since they work differently. The three main classes of antidepressant medications currently used are (1) the tricyclics (TCAs), which increase

\textsuperscript{192} Hart, Burnout Prevention and Cure, p.13
the availability of norepinephrine and serotonin at the neuron synapse; (2) monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), which increase transmitter norepinephrine and dopamine; and (3) selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which increase the availability of serotonin at nerve endings. These medications are generally effective in treating depression but each has different side effects.\textsuperscript{194}

A common but often overlooked treatment for depression is proper exercise and nutrition. Exercise decreases vulnerability to the effects of stress, which depletes neurotransmitters and proper nutrition provides the natural manufacturing of essential neurotransmitters.\textsuperscript{195}

**Mental Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout**

The mental aspect encompasses the attitudes of the heart, and the thoughts and decision-making process of the mind. Love, forgiveness and right thinking are the three key elements of good mental self-care. A good thought life protects one against burnout and affects one’s spiritual life, physical well-being, emotions, relationships and job performance.

**Love**

Love has a variety of meanings largely determined by context. The ancients specified four kinds of love. The highest form of love (agape) is a choice to do what is best for another. The most general form of love (philia) is used of friendships or

\textsuperscript{194} Benner and Hill, p.339  
\textsuperscript{195} F.M.J. Brandt, *Victory over Depression* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), p.247
compassion toward others. Erotic love (eros) is an affectionate desire to be united to the one loved. Sexual love (libido) is physical intercourse.196

Mature love has four elements. First, each person should be willing to be involved as deeply as possible – physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Full love involves both a giving and receiving by each partner. In mature love both partners open themselves to joy and sorrow, agony and ecstasy. Mature love includes promise, trust, and a commitment to take the good with the bad.197

Forgiveness

“Forgetiveness is overcoming negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, not by denying the offense or the right to be hurt or angry but by viewing the offender with acceptance or compassion so that the forgiver can be healed. Forgiveness is not denial or indifference, pardon, reconciliation, condoning, excusing, passive forgetting, weakness, or an interpersonal game. Forgiveness does not cancel the crime, but works to take care of the distortions caused by the unhealthy aspects of anger and resentment so that the person may achieve peace of mind and body.”198

This author believes the Bible teaches believers to forgive unconditionally.199 But if the offender refuses to repent reconciliation will not be possible.200 Forgiveness has to do with the past. Reconciliation and boundaries have to do with the future. Forgiveness and opening up to more abuse are not the same things. Forgiveness is very hard since it is

196 Benner and Hill, p.706
197 Benner and Hill, p.707
198 Benner and Hill, p.468
199 See pp. 142-145
200 Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, Boundaries (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), p.251
letting go of something that someone owes us. To forgive means to write it off, to cancel that debt. A person who forgives never gets what was owed him. Forgiveness is painful because it involves grieving for what will never be – the past will not be different.²⁰¹

Overcoming negative thoughts, feelings and behaviors is also possible to the person who believes that forgiveness is conditioned on the offender’s repentance.²⁰² When the offender will not or can not repent then the offended person must turn the situation over to the Lord, the righteous avenger.²⁰³ Whenever angry thoughts or negative emotions reoccur the person must remember that he has give them over to the Lord.

Right Thinking

For a believer right thinking includes knowing and considering as true certain facts about themselves and their new relationship with God and other believers. Right thinking involves living in the present, not in bondage to the past or in fear of the future. Thinking right allows one to take rude comments less personal, admit weakness, and learn from failure.

Chapter Three will deal more with the biblical perspective of what believers are to know and consider as true. One aspect that will be focused on here is self-acceptance. Burnout victims usually view themselves as failures and so are unhappy with themselves. Hart stated that self-acceptance is the key to being happy with self. For some this will not come easy, so active steps need to be taken to achieve a realistic self-image and total,
unconditional self-acceptance. The journey toward self-acceptance begins with a renewed awareness of God’s unconditional love toward the believer. Becoming a new creation in Christ and finding ourselves acceptable to God Himself should revolutionize our view of self. Realizing God’s amazing love toward us and acceptance of us, just as we are, is the foundational step toward self-acceptance. The second step requires a realistic appraisal of one’s personality, abilities, and unique design. Getting a realistic and honest view of one’s strengths and abilities as well as limitations, is what the Bible calls sober judgment. But pride is characterized by unrealistic self-knowledge and self-concealment. Sober judgment should result in being able to accept what can and cannot be changed and moving ahead without self-condemnation. The third step in the journey towards self-acceptance makes allowances for failure. People fear failure and being human means that failure is inevitable. So self-acceptance must make allowances for failure so that when it comes it will not be devastating. Realistic judgment of one’s self must include an honest appraisal of one’s proneness to failure and a review of one’s attitude toward failure. Often it is unrealistic expectations for oneself that result in feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. A healthy view of failure will not be self-destructive but will provide a stimulus for growth.

John Sanford says, “Failure is the most significant source of burnout.” Pastors who have unrealistic goals, high expectations, and are living as if there is no limitation to their time or energy, are strong candidates for failure. It is important for pastors to

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205 Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions, p.102
206 Minirth, The Stress Factor, p.146
207 Romans 12:3
208 Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions, pp.103,105
209 Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of your Emotions, p.106
210 John Sanford, Ministry Burnout, p.15
remember that failure is often the result of unrealistic expectations. They also need to recognize partial successes and celebrate partial gains. Freudenberger urges people in burnout to remember their successes as a means of off-setting the failure that is plaguing them. It is also important for pastors to understand that failure is an inevitable part of helping professions. This point is emphasized every time a case worker is urged not to be totally invested in the outcome of each case. This is a tough challenge for pastors who invest their energy into helping people and couples only to see some fall into sin. Finally, pastors must realize that failure is not always due to some personal fault. Individuals can choose to go to another church without the pastor being at fault.

Closely linked with self-acceptance is the ability to admit weaknesses or needs. McBurney stated, “Many people in the ministry find it very difficult to admit that they have any weaknesses or needs.” People in burnout quickly find their weaknesses exposed and their needs great. McBurney offers encouraging words to those who fear self-disclosure, “By and large, the Christian community can accept a lot more humanity from their pastors than most pastors are willing to give.” In admitting weaknesses, one becomes much more tolerant of self and personally more secure. Acknowledging limitations may also prevent a pastor from pushing himself to the breaking point. Rush observed that dedicated Christian leaders, more than any other group, tended to push themselves too hard and too far. Failing to recognize limits is one characteristic of

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212 Edelwich, p.215
214 McBurney, p.116
215 Rush, Burnout, p.137
those who suffer burnout. Learning to live within time and energy limits is basic to living a balanced life and avoiding burnout.

Right thinking is not necessarily positive or negative, but it is based on reality and truth. The ultimate truth is found only in God and His Word. A person’s thinking can influence feelings, health, and even body chemistry. Persons who are hopeful or grateful mobilize physiological, psychological and spiritual dynamics of health that are unavailable to an ungrateful person. Believers can be optimistic, hopeful and confident because of God’s Word.

Norman Peale and Robert Schuller contend that positive thinking has spiritual and psychological consequences. They contend that positive thinking incites meaning, infuses one with self-esteem, mobilizes healing and growth, evaporates debilitating anxiety, constructively channels misdirected energy, affirms a durable security, and inspires legitimate comfort for life and eternity. For a positive thinker, all of that plus faith in God’s grace in Christ is to be part of salvation – spiritual, psychological and social.

If it is important to have positive attitudes toward self, others, God, and life in general in order to recover from burnout, then certainly a positive attitude can prevent burnout. But a pastor must not forget that attitude is a decision one makes. Circumstances cannot be controlled, but one’s attitude is a choice. A positive attitude does not come easy. It often requires determination, and devotion to change one’s thinking and to focus on the positive. Not taking oneself too seriously and even

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217 Benner and Hill, p.886
218 Brenner and Hill, p.886
219 Rush, p.125
220 Rush, p.127
221 Hart, Adrenalin and Stress (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1986), 178
laughing at one’s weaknesses and difficulties also develop a positive attitude. Even unjust criticism and undeserved suffering viewed from God’s perspective can be considered all joy.

As burnout escalates a person becomes emotionally exhausted, tends to react to negative comments and takes everything personally. Even general criticism about the church can be taken as a personal put-down. Feeling personal rejection over negative criticism or when one’s idea is dismissed at a board meeting can demoralize a person and result in emotional and physical consequences. A caring group of peers or friends can help pastors to be more objective and take things less personally. Learning how to cleanse one’s self from emotional pain is a skill that every person needs to master. Pastors must find release from emotional pain they experience through a caring support network.

Right thinking involves living in the present, not in bondage to the past or in fear of the future. A key to preventing burnout is living in the present one day at a time. Jesus echoed this same idea when He said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” A person can easily be plagued with the guilt over past circumstances. On the other hand, one could also so focus on tomorrow’s challenges and future ministry

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222 Pines, p.166
223 James 1:2-4
224 Maslach, Burnout: The Cost of Caring, p.94
225 Johnson, p.38
226 Hemfelt, Minirth, Meier, We are Driven (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), p.204
227 Hawkins, Before Burnout, p.97
228 Matthew 7:33-34
229 Hawkins, Before Burnout, p.97
opportunities that today is forgotten. One must learn to live in the present without being haunted by the past or overly concerned about the future in order to avoid burnout.²³⁰

Professional Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout

Taking responsibility for one’s life is wise, preventive advice for avoiding burnout. Careful management of one’s professional life is an important dimension to one’s self-care in avoiding burnout, and is really a stewardship issue. When a pastor fails to manage his professional life, he runs the risk of burning out, breaking down, or dropping out. These tragic results are a terrible waste of talent for the body of Christ.

Pastors must develop specific strategies or action plans that will help them manage their professional life so that they will avoid burnout. Brooks Faulkner supports this idea when he said, “With hard work and with intended and deliberate strategies, it is possible to avoid burnout.”²³¹ The professional aspects of self-care needed to avoid burnout include: being purpose driven, having a clear role, setting healthy boundaries, setting SMART goals, living with margins, and maintaining effective time management. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time framed.²³²

Purpose Driven

For many pastors their ministry is like living on a treadmill. They are constantly struggling to stay on top of all the demands around them. They expend lots of energy and

²³⁰ Hawkins, Before Burnout, p. 97  
are involved in lots of activities but have no clear sense of purpose or direction. Without purpose, life becomes a rat race without meaning or influence. And any time a pastor works in a situation in which he feels that he has little or no influence, he runs the risk of burning out.\textsuperscript{233}

A Clear Role

A clear role will help establish realistic congregational expectations and personal goals. The congregational expectations of a pastor and his family are often beyond reason. Ruth Truman summarized these unreal expectations by stating:

There is no other job on earth that expects a man to work every possible waking moment, to comfort the sick and dying, to be the tower of strength for the bereaved and/or the anxious bride-groom, to counsel the maritally afflicted, to pray at a moment’s notice, to be all-wise in the problems of child care and infamily jousting, to administer a (large) budget, to raise money for loan payments without issuing bonds, to run a church program efficiently with an all-volunteer staff that serves when it feels like it, to act as building and grounds maintenance supervisor, to prepare miraculously and preach eloquently, to dress meticulously but not too well, to be a saint in all interpersonal relationships with language that even your grandmother couldn’t question, to love his children and see that they are raised in an exemplary manner, to keep his own marriage and personal habits above question, to be never grossly in debt, and to set a pattern of living that all can follow in personal faith and spiritual development. In case you have forgotten what I am talking about, the above is the job description in abbreviated form for the twentieth-century Man of God, commonly known as minister.\textsuperscript{234}

Unrealistic congregational expectations are controlled by clear goals and a well-defined role for the pastor. One of the major causes of burnout is the unrealistic and undefined role driven by congregation expectations that a pastor is expected to fulfill.\textsuperscript{235}

One pastor sarcastically remarked,

\textsuperscript{233} Beverly Potter, \textit{Preventing Job Burnout} (Los Altos, California: Crisp Publications, Inc., 1980), p.28
\textsuperscript{235} McIntosh, \textit{It Only Hurts On Monday}, p.31
If I wanted to drive a manager up the wall, I would make him responsible for the success of an organization and give him no authority. I would provide him with unclear goals, not commonly agreed upon by the organization. I would ask him to provide a service of an ill-defined nature, apply a body of knowledge having few absolutes, and staff his organization with only volunteers. I would expect him to work ten to twelve hours per day and have his work evaluated by a committee of 300 to 500 amateurs. I would call him a minister and make him accountable to God.\textsuperscript{236} 

It is impossible for pastors to satisfy so many different and sometimes contradictory expectations. Pastors will either become worn out trying to meet these expectations or will become exhausted by anxiety because they are unable to meet them.\textsuperscript{237} Wesley Shrader stated, “So long as lay people keep demanding more of their ministers than they can deliver, ministers are going to continue to break down regardless of their mental and emotional health at the beginning of their pastorates.”\textsuperscript{238} When Pastors allow themselves to be tyrannized by expectations of others or self, they can become nothing more than a puppet on a string “... manipulated by the conscious demands of his people and the unconscious strivings of his own ambition.”\textsuperscript{239} Clarifying the expectations others have of pastors prevents burnout and promotes ministry that is in keeping with their giftedness. But it does require pastors to be assertive, to change job descriptions and to not allow congregations to impose unrealistic ministry demands upon them.\textsuperscript{240} 

Supervisors or board members who have positions of authority over a pastor can be a significant source of emotional stress and subsequent burnout. A mismatch of

\textsuperscript{236} James Hamilton, \textit{The Pair in Your Parsonage} (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1982), 10, citing an anonymous minister’s journal; quoted in London and Wiseman, \textit{Pastors at Risk}, p.54
\textsuperscript{237} Sanford, \textit{Ministry Burnout}, p.9
\textsuperscript{239} Samuel Southard, “The Tyranny of Expectations,” \textit{Pastoral Psychology} (September 1957):9
\textsuperscript{240} Edelwich and Brodsky, p.233
expectations can create mutual misunderstandings and animosity as well as differing ideas about how to evaluate whether the pastor is doing a good job or not.\textsuperscript{241}

**Healthy Boundaries**

Having clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle. A boundary is a personal property line that marks those things for which one is responsible. In other words, boundaries define who a person is and who he is not. Physical boundaries determine who may touch us and under what circumstances. Mental boundaries give a person the freedom to have his own thoughts and opinions. Emotional boundaries help one to deal with emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others. Spiritual boundaries help a person to distinguish God’s will from one’s own and gives him renewed awe for the Creator.\textsuperscript{242}

Pastors have many roles in ministry that require intentional boundary or limit-setting. It is important that pastors be clear about their strengths and limitations in all aspects of ministry, especially pastoral care. Particular attention to clear boundaries must be given when counseling women in dysfunctional marriages, recently separated or divorced, or in highly stressful situations. Pastors who are emotionally vulnerable or sexually attracted to someone they are counseling need to seek the advice of a mental health specialist. Sexual behavior with someone a pastor serves is unethical and immoral as well as spiritually and psychologically damaging to the individual.\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{241} Maslach, *Burnout*, p.45
\textsuperscript{242} Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), pp. 29, 36, 45
\textsuperscript{243} Benner and Hill, p.158
Pastoral ministry is a unique profession because the pastor’s vocation, personal identity, and religious faith are all tied up in the same package. This merging of ministry role, personal life, and faith is a disadvantage especially in times of stress or interpersonal conflict. Pastors are very vulnerable when church members initiate personal attacks against their pastor by circulating rumors, demonstrating uncooperative behavior, stopping regular church attendance, withdrawing financial support, and even petitioning for their removal. People in other professions gain support from the church or other areas of their lives when they experience personal attacks. But not so for pastors, an attack is often experienced as an attack on their total existence or worth. The blending of the professional, spiritual, and personal aspects of a pastor’s life further contributes to burnout when a pastor fails to de-role. A minister does not de-role when he fails to distinguish between himself and his clergy role. A pastor who does not de-role can be characterized as one who eats, drinks, and sleeps ministry. This pastor is unable to relax and focus on anything other than ministry. Their professional life gets the vast majority of energy and focus while their spiritual life is just an extension of their ministry role and their personal life only a minor add-on. This results in pastors being too busy with ministry to devote time to their own family and to proper self-care. At this point ministry becomes the all-consuming passion, pushing their lives out of balance and jeopardizing their own health and family. God’s work becomes their work, and in struggling to succeed they operate in their own strength. They believe they are working for God but actually they are working for themselves.

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246 Myron Rush, Burnout, p.37
Louis McBurney believes that maintaining healthy emotional and professional boundaries is the key to avoiding burnout.247 Christina Maslach agrees with this and stated that burnout rates soar whenever the separation between ministry and private life begins to fall apart and the job takes over.248 Some people-helper professionals, like counselors are ethically and legally mandated to keep certain boundaries. In all mental health professions, treating a friend or family member is explicitly unethical.249 But in the pastoral ministry, personal boundaries are often crossed. Whereas a counselor is restricted against becoming friends with his counselee, a pastor is under no such restrictions, and in fact often counsels parishioners.

Separating a pastor’s personal life from his professional life requires three steps. First, a pastor must give himself permission to care for himself and stop self-destructive patterns. Self-destructive patterns could include working every evening, failing to take a day off or never exercising. Second, a pastor must transfer these permissions into realistic decisions concerning how he will conduct his life. For example, a pastor could decide to exercise three times a week, build friendships with those outside of the church and take two days off a week. Third, a pastor must enforce these decisions with boundaries that will govern his lifestyle on a daily basis, and insist that others honor them as well.250 Examples of boundary violations could be when a parishioner without permission drops in for a visit at the pastor’s home, gives a hug or kiss, calls to chat on the pastor’s day off,

247 Dr. Louis McBurney’s comment at the breakout session at Focus on The Family’s Family Time Getaway, A conference for clergy and their families, June 20-24, 2001
249 Benner and Hill, p.158
expects the pastor to be his friend, or expects the pastor to work every evening. Maintaining healthy boundaries is the key to not experiencing burnout.

SMART Goals

Unrealistic or vague goals are unreachable and not measurable which lead to feelings of frustration and failure. D.K. Kehl added that failing to reassess and readjust unrealistic goals will lead to burnout. Pastors do well to set S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time framed. For example, the goal of impacting a city for Christ is not specific, measurable or timed. But the goal to distribute evangelistic tracts to 2000 homes around the church over a three month period is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed.

In striving to accomplish a goal, one should not overlook the process needed to reach the intended result since that is where many secondary sub-goals are fulfilled. Focusing on the process and not just the end result can give a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment along the way, even when the ultimate goal is missed.

One goal that pastors should adopt is to regularly be involved in some type of continuing education. The ongoing development of a pastor is critical in avoiding burnout. So churches should provide for the care and feeding of a minister on a regular basis. Continuing education helps a minister to stay effective in rapidly changing times.

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253 Edelwich, p.217
255 McKenna, p.25-26
and provides personal enrichment and renewal for the ministry. Continuing education also provides protection against burnout.

**Effective Time Management and Margins**

Effective time management is the ability to manage time wisely. Effective time management minimizes wasted hours and maximizes productive hours. Managing one’s time effectively consists of recording how one spends his day in 15 to 30 minute segments, planning ahead, prioritizing in order of importance or urgency, and learning to say “no” to those things that would overload one’s schedule or rob one’s time to rest and relax.\(^{256}\) As a pastor records the way in which his time is being spent, he can more effectively evaluate ministry needs and have a safeguard against laziness. The easiest place in the world to be lazy is in some ministry settings where the pastor is his own boss accountable to no one, and can give the impression that he is busy about the Lord’s work.\(^{257}\) Keeping a record of time spent is a safeguard against not working enough or working too many hours.

Learning to delegate responsibility to other people is a sound work habit and a preventative to burnout. Daniel and Rogers encourage pastors to delegate responsibility and authority to people, since this is the single greatest change pastors can make to prevent burnout.\(^{258}\) Delegating allows pastors to concentrate on other areas of ministry and keeps them from overloading their life with ministry responsibilities.

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\(^{258}\) Daniel and Rogers, p.246
A margin is the amount allotted beyond that which is required. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Healthy living requires margins in emotional energy, physical energy, time and finances. Margins hold back time, money, energy or finances so that a reserve can be drawn upon for a special need or emergency. When someone lives without margins they over draw the bank account, feel exhausted, rob themselves of necessary sleep, live at a frantic pace, and are prime candidates for burnout.

Summary

The identification and prevention of burnout among Pastors was the major focus of this chapter. Burnout was defined, described, and distinguished from stress and depression. The symptoms of burnout and examples of self-administered tests were discussed so that burnout can be correctly diagnosed for intervention. While the correct diagnosis of burnout is important, the prevention of burnout is equally if not more critical. The prevention of burnout was examined by first looking at the causes of burnout and then at good health preventive measures. The preventive measures targeted the regular practice of self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and professional – as the best prevention against burnout. Believers are to utilize the resources God has provided to live in His peace and to maintain healthy self-care so that one can live out his life for God’s glory and not burnout.

259 Dr. Richard A. Swenson, Margin (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1992) pp. 91,100
Chapter 3

Theological Reflections on Burnout

Introduction

The lack of personal fulfillment, reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that defines burnout is contrary to the peace God wants his children to experience. How is it that peace is displaced by burnout in the lives of God’s servants? What does the Bible say regarding the identification and prevention of burnout? While there is no simple answer to these questions, it is very helpful and healing to explore pastoral burnout from a biblical perspective. This chapter will examine several examples of burnout from the Bible, and expose key insights in preventing this physical, emotional, mental and spiritual exhaustion, called burnout. Although burnout is not a term found in the Bible, its symptoms and causes can be identified in a number of God’s servants as well as practical insights needed to prevent burnout. This chapter will also examine the biblical theology of self-care as it relates to the whole person (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, professional, and relational) and burnout. By being proactive in caring for the whole person, a pastor can avoid burnout and enjoy many years of effective ministry.

Peace

God’s desire is for individuals to experience peace with Him, with one another, and within their hearts. In the Old Testament peace (שלום) includes the idea of completeness, soundness, well being, prosperity, contentment, and friendship with men
and God.\(^1\) Peace is more than the absence of internal or external strife. Implicit in this term is the idea of fulfillment (or completion) in one’s undertakings, and harmony, or unimpaired relationships with others, and with God.\(^2\) In relationship to God, peace becomes the essence of salvation. It represents the sum total of the spiritual blessings given to men by God in His grace and mercy.\(^3\) Yahweh is peace\(^4\) and the giver of peace.\(^5\) The eschatological expectation of the Old Testament looked forward to the Prince of peace\(^6\) establishing an eternal kingdom\(^7\) of peace.\(^8\)

Peace (σιρχήν) in the New Testament has the full content of the Old Testament term for peace (שלום).\(^9\) Christ is peace\(^10\) and the giver of peace.\(^11\) The essence of the gospel may be expressed in the term, peace (cf. Acts 10:36; Eph 6:15).\(^12\) Sinful man must first have peace with God, the removal of sin’s enmity through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.\(^13\) Then inward peace\(^14\) and interpersonal harmony\(^15\) can follow.\(^16\) In

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4 Judges 6:24
5 Isaiah 52:7; 54:10,13; 53:5; Numbers 6:24-26
6 Isaiah 9:5,6
7 Zechariah 9:9-10; Isaiah 65:17-25
9 Ibid., pp.411-412
10 Ephesians 2:14-15
11 John 14:27, 16:33
13 Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20
14 Philippians 4:7
15 Colossians 3:15
other words peace is health and soundness in relationship to God and man. When the fullness of peace is present there is no burnout.

**Biblical Examples of Burnout**

**Moses**

People are prone to place the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles on a problem-free pedestal. But the Bible paints no such picture. God’s servants are not supernaturally shielded from the pressures and problems of life. These men faced similar emotional, financial, spiritual and mental struggles that pastors face in ministry today.

Moses is an example of a highly dedicated, internally motivated, well-educated, responsible, servant of God who showed signs of burnout after facing the emotional demands of people over a long period of time. Moses was the leader and lawgiver of Israel. He was highly educated and mighty in words and deeds. Moses was the greatest of all the prophets; one who knew the LORD face to face. He was called the servant of the LORD. God revealed himself personally to Moses. God spoke audibly to Moses commissioning him to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage by miraculous signs and wonders. Yet, in spite of all his power and special privilege, he was still the most humble man in the world. Moses also had a deep sense of personal responsibility that was seen when he fulfilled a sacred obligation to Joseph in taking his corpse to the

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18 Acts 7:22
19 Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10
20 Deuteronomy 34:5
21 Exodus 3:1-4:31
22 Numbers 12:3
Promised Land\textsuperscript{23} (cf. Exodus 13:19), and by his judging the people day after day from morning till evening.\textsuperscript{24} His great love and compassion for oppressed people was seen in delivering Jethro’s seven daughters from the shepherds,\textsuperscript{25} and in praying on two separate occasions that God would not destroy the disobedient Israelites.\textsuperscript{26} But the pressure of leading 600,000\textsuperscript{27} rebellious, complaining\textsuperscript{28} adults finally took its toll on Moses as seen by what he said in Numbers 11:11-15.

He asked the LORD, Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, give us meat to eat! I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now – if I have found favor in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin.

Commenting on Moses’ change in attitude, Myron Rush observed that “Moses reached the end of his mental, emotional, and physical ropes – he had burned himself out. He could no longer deal with the people or their problems. All he wanted to do was escape – at any price.”\textsuperscript{29} Looking back it is easy to see that Moses was a prime candidate for burnout. He was a responsible, committed, caring, high achiever who became overwhelmed by the chronic problems and complaints of those he led. Even though Moses had an intimate relationship with the LORD\textsuperscript{30} and the special glimpse of God’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} Exodus 18:13-26; Numbers 11:16-17
\textsuperscript{25} Exodus 2:16-19
\textsuperscript{26} Exodus 32:11-14,32; Numbers 14:11-20
\textsuperscript{27} Numbers 11:21
\textsuperscript{28} Exodus 15:24; 116:12; 17:1; Numbers 11:1
\textsuperscript{30} Exodus 33:7-11; Exodus 34:29-35
\end{footnotesize}
glory,\textsuperscript{31} he still faced burnout. It is important to notice how God helped Moses. God talked with Moses and gave him seventy godly men to help bear the burden of the people.\textsuperscript{32} God’s Word and godly friendships are two key elements in preventing burnout.

\textbf{Elijah}

Elijah provides another example of burnout from the Old Testament. His story is recorded in 1 Kings 18-19. He had a ministry that reflected the meaning of his name; “The LORD is God.” Elijah was sent by God to declare to Israel that the LORD alone is God and that Baal, the Canaanite storm god of rain and fertility, was totally impotent before the sovereign LORD. Elijah bursts into this narrative with the thunderous proclamation that there will be no rain until the LORD says so.\textsuperscript{33} The drought and the resulting famine would last for three years and six months.\textsuperscript{34} The famine was just punishment on an idolatrous people\textsuperscript{35} who worshiped the false god of fertility. During the famine, God provided for Elijah,\textsuperscript{36} a faithful widow and her son,\textsuperscript{37} Obadiah and 100 prophets,\textsuperscript{38} and seven thousand faithful people who did not worship Baal.\textsuperscript{39} The LORD also raised the widow’s son from death\textsuperscript{40} in order to confirm Elijah as a true prophet of God.

Elijah is most remembered by his victorious confrontation with the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel. Baal was mocked and shown to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[31]{Exodus 33:18-34:7}\
\footnotetext[32]{Numbers 11:16-17; cf. Exodus 18:17-26}\
\footnotetext[33]{1 Kings 17:1}\
\footnotetext[34]{1 Kings 18:1; James 5:17}\
\footnotetext[35]{Deuteronomy 11:16,17; 28:23,24}\
\footnotetext[36]{1 Kings 17:4-7}\
\footnotetext[37]{1 Kings 17:13-16}\
\footnotetext[38]{1 Kings 18:4}\
\footnotetext[39]{1 Kings 19:18}\
\footnotetext[40]{1 Kings 17:19-24}
\end{footnotes}
be completely impotent. The people turned to the LORD crying out “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God.” The false prophets were put to death and the drought was over. But rather than resting, reflecting, and rejoicing in the victory God had brought at Mount Carmel, Elijah ran 15 to 25 miles to Jezreel, King Ahab’s winter capital. Apparently he was hoping that Ahab and Jezebel would also turn from their Baal worship. But his hope was shattered by Jezebel’s ominous threat to kill him.

The discouraged and disappointed prophet then ran for his life. He traveled 100 miles south to Beersheba and left his servant before traveling another day’s journey into the desert alone. Detached and isolated from any significant person who could offer support, Elijah sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said, “I have had enough, LORD. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” This prayer reflected his despair, disillusionment and depression. Elijah had invested an enormous amount of emotional and physical energy in the intense conflict with the false prophets and was now burned out. This quick fall is not uncommon. “Burnout frequently occurs after intense peak experiences such as Elijah had in his triumph over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.”

Rather than rejecting his prophet, God graciously preserved and enabled him to travel another 40 days and nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. This 200 mile journey to Mount Sinai may have been a reminder of Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the

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41 1 Kings 18:27-29  
42 1 Kings 18:39  
43 1 Kings 18:40  
44 1 Kings 18:41-45  
45 1 Kings 18:45-46  
46 1 Kings 21:1  
47 1 Kings 19:1-3  
48 1 Kings 19:4  
50 1 Kings 19:5-8
wilderness because of disobedience.\textsuperscript{51} It may have also been a reminder of the 40 days Moses spent on Mount Sinai without food or water when he received the Law.\textsuperscript{52} God encouraged Elijah by His self-revelation that came not in a strong wind, nor an earthquake, or a fire, but in a still small voice.\textsuperscript{53} The word of God returned Elijah to a realistic perspective that God was accomplishing His work in Israel.\textsuperscript{54}

Elijah complained to God, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”\textsuperscript{55} Like many victims of burnout, Elijah felt indispensable and yet unappreciated at the same time. He experienced the hallmarks of burnout: helplessness, rejection, paranoia and pessimism. Elijah’s defeatist perspective blurred his vision of the 100 prophets hid by Obadiah, and the people’s repentance and confession of God as the LORD. Elijah’s over-commitment and excessive dedication fits the typical pattern of those who are most likely to suffer from burnout.\textsuperscript{56}

The life of Elijah is a good reminder of the need for rest, reflection, God’s word, close relationships, and rejoicing in the victories God brings personally and to others. Elijah’s life also warns us of the danger of emotional and physical exhaustion after the intense effort invested in producing a great victory. Many pastors crash after investing spiritual, emotional and physical energy to produce a great spiritual victory, such as completing a building program or other large events. These two brief accounts from the

\textsuperscript{51} Numbers 14:26-35  
\textsuperscript{52} Exodus 34:28  
\textsuperscript{53} 1 Kings 19:11-15  
\textsuperscript{54} 1 Kings 19:15-18  
\textsuperscript{55} 1 Kings 19:1-3  
lives of Moses and Elijah are also reminders that even the greatest of God’s servants are vulnerable to burnout and that God delights in renewing his exhauste

Jeremiah was both a prophet and a priest for the Lord.\[^{57}\] His ministry spanned five decades\[^{58}\] even though it was filled with conflict, threats, public ridicule, slander, betrayal, opposition to his ministry, unjust punishments and grief over those who refused to obey God’s word. Jeremiah’s heartfelt empathy with his people’s suffering due to sin earned him the nickname, “the weeping prophet.”\[^{59}\] He was filled with sadness and grief, not for himself but for Judah’s certain fate of divine judgment.

Jeremiah faced his first episode of public opposition\[^{60}\] immediately after he rebuked them for breaking the covenant.\[^{61}\] Rather than repent of their sin the people of Judah sought to kill him.\[^{62}\] People from his own hometown including members of his own family\[^{63}\] assisted in this murderous plot.\[^{64}\] God then promised Jeremiah swift judgment.\[^{65}\] Jeremiah cried out for immediate judgment while questioning God’s justice in light of the prosperity of the wicked.\[^{66}\] God answered the prophet with a challenge: “If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the

\[^{57}\] Jeremiah 1:1-2
\[^{58}\] Jeremiah 1:3; 39:11ff.
\[^{59}\] Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17; 14:17
\[^{60}\] Jeremiah 11:18-23
\[^{61}\] Jeremiah 11:1-17
\[^{62}\] Jeremiah 11:18-19
\[^{63}\] Jeremiah 12:6
\[^{64}\] Jeremiah 11:21-23
\[^{65}\] Jeremiah 11:21-23
\[^{66}\] Jeremiah 12:1-6
Jordan? He wanted Jeremiah to trust Him by persevering through the present trials. God knew more difficult trials were ahead.

Another episode of opposition to Jeremiah’s ministry occurs in Jeremiah 15:10-21. The sting of public criticism caused Jeremiah to despair of life. God reassured the prophet that the righteous would be vindicated and the wicked judged. The disillusioned prophet reminded the Lord of his faithfulness in suffering reproach, his love for God’s word, and his separation from wicked men. Jeremiah revealed his disappointment with God when he questioned if God would disappoint him like a dried up wadi. The LORD rebuked the prophet for doubting His word and encouraged him to allow his present suffering to purify him. God then reminded him of His promise to protect the prophet.

A third episode occurs in Jeremiah 18:18-23 where the people plotted to slander him, malign his message, and ignore his preaching. They even made plans to kill him. Jeremiah responded by praying for God to let his judgment fall upon them. Jeremiah did not take matters into his own hands but kept entrusting himself into the hands of his God.

The final episode from Jeremiah’s ministry that will be examined in this paper occurred in Jeremiah 20. After Jeremiah’s message was once again rejected, he was savagely beaten and put in stocks for public ridicule. At this point his feelings of rejection, paranoia, pessimism and despair are voiced in a prayer of lament to God.

O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up

67 Jeremiah 12:5
68 Jeremiah 15:10
69 Jeremiah 15:15-17
70 Jeremiah 15:18
71 Jeremiah 20:1-2
in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side! Report him! Let's report him!" All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him." But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten. O LORD Almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad, saying, "A child is born to you-- a son!" May that man be like the towns the LORD overthrew without pity. May he hear wailing in the morning, a battle cry at noon. For he did not kill me in the womb, with my mother as my grave, her womb enlarged forever. Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?  

The daily mocking and plotting to kill him drove him to despair. Jeremiah wanted to quit the ministry and stop preaching, but God’s word burned like a fire within him so that he felt compelled to preach. When he remembered the LORD’s mighty acts of deliverance he could once again sing praises to God. However, the moment he lost sight of the mighty, awesome LORD, he fell into despair and cursed the fact that he was ever born. Like Moses and Elijah before him, he had experienced burnout.  

Job  

Job was not a prophet like Moses, Elijah, or Jeremiah, but he was deeply involved in helping people. He cared deeply for his children, was highly respected in his community, and was a fair and honest judge. He helped the oppressed, the poor, the

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72 Jeremiah 20:7-18  
73 Jeremiah 20:8-9  
74 Jeremiah 20:11-13  
75 Jeremiah 20:14-18  
76 Job 1:5  
77 Job 29:7-11  
78 Job 29:7-11
orphan and the widow. Job was an honest employer and known for his hospitality and generosity. People looked to Job for his wise counsel.

Job is one of the best-known examples of seemingly undeserved suffering recorded in the Bible. In a matter of moments, this godly man lost his wealth, all his material possessions, his health and all his children. Job’s intense suffering was financial, emotional, physical and spiritual. Job’s wife, friends, family members, servants and acquaintances abandoned and condemned him rather than comfort him. Even God seemed against him by His silence and seeming indifference to justice and cries for help. Job cried out:

"Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; he has shrouded my paths in darkness. He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head. He tears me down on every side till I am gone; he uproots my hope like a tree. His anger burns against me; he counts me among his enemies. His troops advance in force; they build a siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent. He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. My kinsmen have gone away; my friends have forgotten me. I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me. You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me. You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm. I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.

Yet in spite of his suffering and sense of abandonment by God, Job did not sin with his mouth but feared God and worshiped Him as recorded in Job 1:12-22 and Job 2:7-10. The dialogue beginning in Job 1:12 provides the reader with God’s perspective on human suffering as well as Job’s incredible faithfulness.

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79 Job 29:12-13
81 Job 31:16-21, 32
82 Job 29:21-24
83 Job 19:7-14
84 Job 30:20-23
The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. 85

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. 86

Even though Job was faithful to God, he still felt deep grief over his losses. Job’s extreme grief is underscored by his wish that he never was born and intense longing to die. 87 Job was full of despair, hopelessness and without strength. 88 Job did not sin in asking why 89 or in demanding God answer him. 90 In his grief, despair and bitterness Job,

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85 Job 1:12-22
86 Job 2:7-10
87 Job 3:1-26
88 Job 6:8-13, 7:6-21
89 Job 3:11-12, 16:20
90 Job 10:2; 13:3, 22; 23:1-7
never cursed God but he did accuse God of being silent, unjust and unconcerned about his innocence.

In the midst of his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual exhaustion, Job found comfort in the hope of future vindication since God lives as his defender, protector and vindicator.

Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Job also learned humility and total trust in a sovereign God whose ways cannot be understood. Like Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah, Job was renewed as he stood in awe of the greatness of God’s power and sovereignty. The worship and trust in the sovereign God are key elements to overcoming burnout.

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul’s life and faith is a supreme example in the Bible of someone who faced extreme sufferings and slanderous accusations and yet did not suffer burnout. He was falsely accused of being proud, self-serving, untrustworthy, inconsistent, mentally unbalanced, incompetent as a preacher, and unsophisticated. Those who

91 Job 13:22
92 Job 19:6-7
93 Job 10:7
94 Job 19:23-27
95 Job 40:3-5
96 Job 42:1-6
should have come to his aid abandoned Paul in time of great need. Paul experienced tremendous hardships and a continual thorn in the flesh that would have sent anyone into despair, depression and burnout.

He highlighted some of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.

Are they servants of Christ? I am out of my mind to talk like this. I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

The hardships suffered in the province of Asia, Paul described as a “great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.” With all of the physical, emotional, and spiritual trials that Paul faced, it is amazing that he did not suffer burnout. Certainly, he came close to burnout from his comments in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” How did Paul avoid burnout? If Paul was single as 1 Corinthians 7:7 indicates then he would have been spared some of the stress that marriage and parenting brings. Of course he also missed the companionship and encouragement that marriage brings. But he still faced many stressful situations and avoided burnout. What did Paul do to avoid burning out?

98 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16
99 2 Corinthians 12:7
100 2 Corinthians 1:8
101 1 Corinthians 7:28-35
Archibald Hart stated that the “heart of the burnout syndrome is a pattern of emotional overload with little reward or appreciation in the context of feelings of helplessness.” He went on to say that burnout is comprised of demoralization, depersonalization, detachment, distancing and defeatism. With this description in mind and by looking at Paul’s life, one can see how the apostle avoided burnout.

First, Paul avoided burnout because he lived with the certain expectation and hope of a future reward and praise from the Lord. In order to suffer burnout, emotional overload must be accompanied with little reward or appreciation. Paul often served the Lord with little financial reward or appreciation from those he served. However, he was absolutely convinced that one day he would receive an eternal reward and appreciation from the Lord. This hope inspired his faithful obedience and service in the face of hardship, criticism, and opposition. Paul was not sidelined from his ministry of preaching the Word and living obediently before God because of his focus on the certainty of future rewards. As he said,

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Paul exercised strict self-control as he preached the gospel so that he could win -- not earthly rewards but an imperishable crown from the Lord. This focus is shown when he said,

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102 Dr. Archibald Hart, “Burnout Prevention and Cure” (Unpublished booklet), p.2
103 Ibid., p.14
104 2 Corinthians 11:7-9
105 1 Corinthians 4:6-14
106 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
107 2 Timothy 4:6-8
I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

He also motivated others to work “... with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.”

Rewards provide an eternal significance to all that one does for the Lord no matter how it is received or appreciated by others. So Paul confidently said, “... always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Being judged wrongly or unfairly was a little thing to Paul, since he lived in light of the Lord’s judgment that will reveal the true motives of men’s hearts and reward those found faithful. The prize of a future reward and affirmation from the Lord helped Paul to endure severe trials without suffering burnout.

Second, Paul avoided burnout because of his firm confidence and hope in God as his helper and provider of sufficient grace for any trial. Paul knew that help and strength were only a prayer away, so he never felt helpless. The feeling of helplessness is one of the key elements in burnout. Paul certainly was thrust into apparently hopeless situations, but through it all he learned to depend upon the Lord. Paul believed that God is his ultimate source of comfort. He was sure that God the Father would come along side to comfort, strengthen and encourage him in the midst of any trial or affliction. As he boldly proclaimed,
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles. So that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.\textsuperscript{113}

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired\textsuperscript{114} even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.\textsuperscript{115} But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.\textsuperscript{116}

Paul knew from experience that God would never leave him or forsake him and is a very present help in time of trouble.\textsuperscript{117} In fact, God strengthened Paul so that even in prison he was able to write letters to encourage others.

In addition to God the Father being the helper and comforter, the Holy Spirit also plays that role in a believer’s life.\textsuperscript{118} Paul knew that no one is adequate for ministry without God’s resources and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life.\textsuperscript{119} The Holy Spirit is the personal agent of Christ who leads believers from justification through sanctification to glorification.\textsuperscript{120} As believers manifest the fruit of the Spirit,\textsuperscript{121} they are progressively transformed into the likeness of Christ.\textsuperscript{122} At the moment of salvation God anoints each believer with the Holy Spirit so that he can glorify God with his life.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[113] 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
\item[114] “Despaired” literally means “no passage”, total absence of an exit. McArthur Study Bible, p.1763
\item[115] “Sentence” is a technical term indicating the passing of an official resolution, the death sentence. McArthur Study Bible p.1763
\item[116] 2 Corinthians 1:8-11
\item[117] Hebrews 13:5-6; Acts 26:22
\item[118] John 14:16; 15:26-27; 16:7-9
\item[119] 2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5; Acts 20:32
\item[121] Galatians 5:22-23
\item[122] 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
\item[123] 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
\end{enumerate}
The Holy Spirit is a seal of ownership identifying the believer with Christ and confirming that he is God’s property, protected by Him. The Spirit is also a deposit, guaranteeing that what God has begun He will complete.\textsuperscript{124}

The Lord Jesus Christ is also a source of strength, comfort and grace in time of need. Paul thanked the Lord for strengthening him in ministry\textsuperscript{125} and for giving him the grace needed for any hardship or human weakness.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.\textsuperscript{126}

Believers can avoid burnout if, like Paul, they have a certain confidence and hope in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as their helper\textsuperscript{127} and provider of sufficient grace for any trial.

In addition to Trinitarian help, Paul relied on three other sources of encouragement and aid in times of need. Faithful believers supported and encouraged the apostle throughout his ministry. Paul depended on those who had received the mercy and comfort of God through suffering to be able to comfort him in any affliction with the comfort they received from God.\textsuperscript{128} Believers from the church at Philippi were a constant source of strength and encouragement.\textsuperscript{129} Two examples of individuals bringing comfort to Paul are Titus and Onesiphorus. When Paul was in Macedonia, he was both depressed

\textsuperscript{125} 1 Timothy 1:12
\textsuperscript{126} 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
\textsuperscript{127} The same term for “Helper” (\textit{paravklh\vs{I}s}) is used of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31), the Father (2 Corinthians 1:3), Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:5), the Word of God (1 Timothy 4:13), and the ministry believers have with one another (2 Corinthians 1:4, 7:4, 7). G. Wigram and R. Winter, The Word Study Concordance, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978), p.591
\textsuperscript{128} 2 Corinthians 1:4
\textsuperscript{129} Philippians 1:5-7; 4:14-18
from the conflicts he faced and anxious about the spiritual health of the church in
Corinth.\textsuperscript{130} For this reason he was especially encouraged by the coming of Titus and by
the good news he brought about the church at Corinth.\textsuperscript{131} Late in Paul’s ministry
Onesiphorus brought comfort to the Apostle in prison.\textsuperscript{132}

The second source of comfort and encouragement was the Word of God. Paul
knew that the Spirit with the Word of God establishes believers and gives hope.\textsuperscript{133}
Discouragement can come from persecutions, sufferings, religious impostors and people
who turn from God’s truth. However, it can be dispelled with the inspired word of God
that brings wisdom, rebuke, correction, instruction in righteous living and
encouragement.\textsuperscript{134}

A third major source of help and encouragement for the Apostle Paul was prayer.
Personal prayer and the prayers of others ministered to Paul in a very real way. Paul
knew that “the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective,”\textsuperscript{135} so he enlisted
prayer support from many people. He thanked the church at Corinth for their prayers that
helped him to be delivered from death (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11).\textsuperscript{136} Paul begged the believers at
Rome to strive together\textsuperscript{137} with him in prayers to God for him.\textsuperscript{138} He realized that their
prayers opened doors of opportunity for the Gospel to be proclaimed and gave him
boldness, clarity, and wisdom.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{130} Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament Edition, p. 571
\textsuperscript{131} 2 Corinthians 7:6-7
\textsuperscript{132} 2 Timothy 1:15-18
\textsuperscript{133} Acts 20:32
\textsuperscript{134} 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5
\textsuperscript{135} James 5:16
\textsuperscript{136} McArthur Study Bible, p.1764
\textsuperscript{137} “A Christian’s intercession is a means of sharing in the ministry of others.” Bible Knowledge
\textsuperscript{138} Romans 15:30-33
\textsuperscript{139} Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:18-20
Paul was supported and encouraged by the prayers of others and by his faithful practice of persistent prayer. Paul knew that there were only two options: persistent prayer or fainting. The Lord Jesus told all believers to persist in prayer so that they do not lose heart. Peter, James and John fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane. They failed to persevere in prayer. Paul often mentioned his practice of continual prayer. To the believers at Rome he said: “God... is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.” To the church at Thessalonica, he reminded them of his continual prayer for them.

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Paul’s belief in the staying power of persistent prayer is also seen in his many exhortations to believers to “pray continually” to “devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful,” and to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” One of the reasons Paul did not faint in ministry is because he persevered in prayer.

140 Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8  
141 Matthew 26:37-46  
142 Romans 1:9-10  
143 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3  
144 1 Thessalonians 2:13  
145 1 Thessalonians 3:10  
146 1 Thessalonians 5:17  
147 Colossians 4:2
Summary

As believers learn from the examples of Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Job and the Apostle Paul, they too can avoid burnout.

Paul avoided burnout because he lived with the certain expectation and hope of a future reward and praise from the Lord.

Second, Paul avoided burnout because of his firm confidence and hope in God as helper and provider of grace sufficient for any trial. Paul knew that help and strength were only a prayer away, so he never felt helpless.

Paul also relied on three other sources of encouragement and help in times of difficulty. Faithful believers supported and encouraged the apostle throughout his ministry in times of need and discouragement.

The second source of comfort and encouragement was the Word of God. Paul knew from experience that the Spirit with the Word of God establishes believers and gives hope.

A third major source of help and encouragement for the Apostle Paul was prayer. Personal prayer and the prayers of others kept Paul from fainting even when his personal world was falling apart.

The Biblical Theology of Self Care as it Relates to Burnout

Burnout is the end result of prolonged job-related or personal stress and affects the whole person -- physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, professional, and relational.

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148 Ephesians 6:18
149 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
A biblical understanding of self-care for the whole person is a prerequisite to actually practicing healthy habits that prevent burnout. Ignorance of the basic principles that control the psychological, physiological, and spiritual dimensions of life can eventually destroy any servant of God.\textsuperscript{152}

Unfortunately, many pastors ignore or resist the topic of self-care. Hart offered two reasons for a minister’s resistance to self-care. First, it involves changes in priorities, schedules and activities that many pastors refuse to accept. Second, many ministers believe it is unchristian, unbiblical or selfish for pastors to build self-care into their lives. Caring for one’s self is not a luxury, but a necessity and a spiritual discipline.\textsuperscript{153} A third reason self-care is often ignored is that pastors are afraid to admit any weaknesses for fear that it will be used against them.

**Theological Support for Self-Care**

A clearly defined biblical theology of self-care will correctly interpret the biblical passages used to deny self-care, and then construct a theological foundation based on the concepts of stewardship, Sabbath rest, and the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Common biblical passages that can be taken out of context or misinterpreted to distort the idea of self care are: “deny self,”\textsuperscript{154} “be all things to all people,”\textsuperscript{155} “take up

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., pp.16-17; 24-26
\textsuperscript{154} Mark 8:34
\textsuperscript{155} 1 Corinthians 9:22
your cross,”¹⁵⁶ “lay down your lives for the sheep,”¹⁵⁷ “serve others,”¹⁵⁸ and “seek first God’s kingdom.”¹⁵⁹ These passages call believers to abandon self-centered living, which is to stop orienting one’s life by the dictates of self-interest. Believers are commanded to follow God’s will as revealed in His Word without reservation. A believer’s life is to be marked by a total allegiance and trust in Christ, and humble service to others.¹⁶⁰ It is also important to observe that none of these passages negate the idea of self-care, and the concept of “self-denial” must be qualified. As John Grassmick, explained to deny self is “to say no to selfish interests and earthly securities. Self-denial is not to deny one’s personality, to die as a martyr, or to deny things (as in asceticism). It is the denial of self, turning away from the idolatry of self-centeredness.”¹⁶¹ The call to self-denial applies to our motives and attitude of self-centeredness. It is not a command to ignore our emotional or physical needs.

The idea of not adequately meeting one’s own needs often mistakenly equates self-care with self-centeredness, the core of our sinfulness. But self-care is not selfishness; rather, it is stewardship.¹⁶² Self-care is a God-given responsibility of caring for our physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs. God has created, gifted, and entrusted people as stewards of all that He has given.

The Apostle Paul likens frail human bodies to jars of clay. He wrote, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and

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¹⁵⁶ Mark 8:34
¹⁵⁷ John 10:15; 2 Timothy 4:6-7
¹⁵⁸ Mark 10:43-45
¹⁵⁹ Matthew 6:33
¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.141
¹⁶² Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, False Assumptions (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 15
not from us.” God has placed the treasure of the Gospel to be contained in common clay jars, our lives. Paul probably had in mind the ancient custom of storing silver and gold in earthenware pots. A great treasure is exposed to danger when contained in a perishable jar. Yet, Paul sees the parallel of the glory of God being entrusted to the limitations and weaknesses of our human bodies.

When a pastor neglects or abuses the clay jar, he endangers the treasure God has given to him. When pastors are exhausted, depressed or burned-out, they seriously limit the purpose of God in their lives, which is to show off the power of the glory of God. Self-care is an important stewardship issue. A minister is to care for the whole person because it is a trust from God. When self-care is a priority, it enhances the possibility of God’s power being more visible through common clay pots. As Henry Cloud stated, “having our needs met frees us to meet the needs of others without resentment. Having a full stomach spiritually and emotionally allows us to give cheerfully.”

In addition to the concept of stewardship, the concept of Sabbath rest is important for healthy self-care. The principle of Sabbath rest runs throughout the Scriptures. A Sabbath rest used here means to take one day out of seven off from work so that a person may find physical and spiritual refreshment. Pastors profit greatly by intentionally scheduling a day off during the week so that they can stay physically and spiritually refreshed.

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163 2 Corinthians 4:7, NIV
165 Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, False Assumptions, p. 26
166 Dr. Don Sunikjian, “The Sabbath Rest”, lecture presented as part of the Masters of Theology course “Pastoral Ministry” at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, November 1984
The term Sabbath does not mean Saturday but rest or cessation.167 And the cessation is not from all activity. As Allen Ross said, “this was not to be a day of slothful inactivity but of spiritual service through religious observances.”168 This concept of taking one day out of seven off is introduced in the creation account which reads, “and God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”169 This idea is explicitly given before the law was instituted when God said to his people, “Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.”170 At the giving of the Ten Commandments, God states this idea in the fourth command, which says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.”171 Now taking one day out of seven off from one’s occupation does not mean putting one’s self under the Old Testament ceremonial law, since Christ fulfilled the Law.172 Nor does Sabbath imply that a believer should worship on Saturday since the day of worship was changed to Sunday because of Jesus’ resurrection.173 Unlike most people, the minister’s corporate worship day will not be the same as his rest day. Even in the early church, people had to work on their day of worship. It is vital for Pastors to remember that God instituted the Sabbath rest for mankind’s benefit and refreshment.174 As Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man,

169 Genesis 2:3
170 Exodus 16:23
171 Exodus 20:8-10
172 Colossians 2:13-17; Galatians 3:25; Romans 8:2
173 Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2
not man for the Sabbath.”

Spiritual and physical renewal is important in avoiding burnout.

Additional theological support for self-care is found in the life and ministry of Jesus. As Pastors follow Jesus’ example they will find peace and be filled with the Spirit of peace. Jesus only had a little over three years to accomplish all that God had sent him to do. And at the end of his ministry he said, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” Without panic or living a frantic-paced life, Jesus accomplished the work God sent him to do. Certainly he worked hard and gave himself to serving the needs of others. But he also would escape from the pressures of ministry for time to relax and pray. Luke records that “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed,” and Mark wrote, “very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Now if Jesus, untainted by sin and the fall, needed to renew himself physically, emotionally, and spiritually certainly pastors do as well. Myron Rush emphasized this truth when he said, “If Jesus needed to pace Himself and balance work with spiritual and physical renewal, think how much more we need to. Learning to pace yourself and keep a balance between work, spiritual life, and leisure is the best insurance policy against burnout.”

Not only was Jesus in the habit of withdrawing to a solitary place, but he also instructed his disciples to do the same. Mark records one occasion where the disciples were so busy serving people that they were not even able to eat, and Jesus instructed

175 Mark 2:27; see also Exodus 23:12
176 John 17:4
177 Mark 3:20; 1:32-37
178 Luke 5:16
179 Mark 1:35
them to “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” Jesus knew
their need for physical, emotional, and spiritual renewal in the face of constant ministry
demands and pressures. Ministers of today must also heed Jesus’ words and get away
from the demands and pressures of ministry for personal renewal and self-care.

The Priority of Self-Care

Pastors who desire to avoid burnout must make self-care a priority. Effective
ministry is dependent upon taking care of one’s self. In his book, How to Beat Burnout
Minirth stated, “escaping or reversing burnout primarily involves taking care of yourself
physically, mentally, and spiritually, allowing God and others to help you in that task.”
Once self-care is a priority in our thinking, then it can become a reality in our living.

Brooks Faulkner agrees, “It is not enough to wish away our burnout syndromes.
We must be active and deliberate.” Pastors who have the attitude, “burnout will never
happen to me” should remember Paul’s warning to the Corinthians: “So, if you think you
are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” Burnout can and does happen to some
of the most competent and committed servants of God. When pastors recognize the
potential for burnout, they can take the needed steps to avoid it. Because burnout affects
the whole person, self-care must address the whole person -- physical, mental, emotional,
spiritual, professional, and relational.

The following gives the theological justification for self-care of the whole person.
Although these areas or aspects will be explored individually, they all are interrelated.

181 Mark 1:31
182 Frank Minirth et. al., eds., How To Beat Burnout (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p.103
184 1 Corinthians 10:12
Chapter two addressed these same aspects from the observations and conclusions of researchers and experts in the field of burnout and this chapter is from the biblical perspective.

The Physical Aspects of Self-Care

Researchers have observed six key elements that provide self-care to our physical body. The first three elements involve getting enough rest, relaxation, and recreation. The second three are equally important and involve exercise, proper nutrition and maintaining the proper weight.

Biblical support for caring for one’s body is evidenced from the concepts of stewardship, Sabbath rest and the life and ministry of our Lord as explained above. In addition, the Bible explicitly states, “physical training is of some value.”\(^{185}\) Paul recognized the value of exercise while emphasizing the eternal value and greater scope of godly character. Paul assumed that a man naturally cares for his own body when he wrote, “husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and care for it, just as Christ does the church. . . each of you must love his wife as he loves himself.”\(^{186}\)

Paul does not condemn or degrade people for taking care of their physical bodies. Caring for one’s physical needs is revealed in the apostle’s request to Timothy to bring his cloak before winter.\(^{187}\) If 2 Timothy was penned during Paul’s second Roman imprisonment, these are the last recorded words of the apostle. Paul was not just concerned about his own physical well being as seen in his command to Timothy, “stop

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\(^{185}\) 1 Timothy 4:8 \\
\(^{186}\) Ephesians 5:28-29, 33 \\
\(^{187}\) 2 Timothy 4:13, 21
drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.”¹⁸⁸ Drinking unsafe water was making Timothy sick so Paul urged him to drink wine, which was safer if taken in moderation.¹⁸⁹ Finally, a believer should care for his body since it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul warned the Corinthians to flee sexual immorality: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”¹⁹⁰ By application this verse can also be used to exhort believers to stop other sinful behavior, such as abusing illegal drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.

The Spiritual Aspects of Self-Care

The elements of friendship, forgiveness, and right thinking will be discussed under other aspects of self-care. Five key elements in providing self-care to our spiritual life developed here are: (1) love for Christ, (2) hope of reward, (3) faith in God as our helper, (4) personal faithfulness, and (5) realizing the impact of sin and Satan. Each of these five elements will be developed as follows: (1) Love for Christ is built through faith, Bible reading, journaling, and prayer. (2) A certain hope focuses on the future reward, vindication and justice that will occur at the coming of Christ. (3) Personal faith is encouraged as it focuses not on the trial but on God, our helper and provider of sufficient grace and peace for any trial. (4) Faithfulness in living consistent with our beliefs, calling, and giftedness keeps a believer from sin and guilt, which injures one’s spiritual life. (5) Believers must realize that they live in a fallen world and face a fierce

¹⁸⁸ ¹ Timothy 5:23
¹⁹⁰ ¹ Corinthians 6:18-20
enemy, so they must not be discouraged by attacks and trials that result from living righteously.

**Love for Christ**

Love for Christ is strengthened through faith, Bible reading, journaling and prayer. Having a heart that is filled with peace begins by trusting in the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁹¹ A personal relationship with Christ is begun by God’s grace through faith, not self-effort. Salvation is the gift of God, so that no one can boast.¹⁹²

Not only is our relationship begun by faith but it is also maintained as a believer grows in his faith or trust in Christ. As Paul wrote to the Romans, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith”¹⁹³ One example of Paul’s unwavering trust in Christ was revealed during a ship wreck when he told the crew, “Keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.”¹⁹⁴ Later he urged the crew to eat, reassuring them of God’s promise that none would perish. And as a testimony to his faith in Christ, he “took some bread, and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food

¹⁹¹ Romans 5:1  
¹⁹² Ephesians 2:8-9  
¹⁹³ Romans 1:17  
¹⁹⁴ Acts 26:25
themselves."\textsuperscript{195} Jesus encouraged his own discouraged disciples to trust in God and in himself, as the way, the truth and the life.\textsuperscript{196}

A believer's faith in Christ can result in the desire to know Christ more intimately and to obey him more completely. A deeper intimacy with God is a reward a believer receives when his faith brings forth the fruit of obedience to God's Word. As Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. . . If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”\textsuperscript{197} This passage does not teach a works religion, but teaches that faith results in obedience to Christ's word, resulting in God manifesting his love to the believer.\textsuperscript{198} Jesus again emphasized the need for continual trust for fruit-bearing, complete joy, and intimacy with God\textsuperscript{199} when he said:

\begin{quote}
Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.\textsuperscript{201}

Growing in our faith will express itself by obedience to God’s word resulting in a deeper intimacy with God. A key element in preventing burnout is a growing faith. Paul

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{195} Acts 27:34-35
\item \textsuperscript{196} John 14:1,6
\item \textsuperscript{197} John 14:21,23
\item \textsuperscript{198} Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament Edition, p.324
\item \textsuperscript{199} Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament Edition, pp. 325-326
\item \textsuperscript{200} John 15:4-5
\item \textsuperscript{201} John 15:9-11
\end{itemize}
taught that a growing faith produces obedient living by Christ’s resurrection power resulting in a deeper love for Christ. When Paul stated:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.202

Bible reading feeds our faith and is a prerequisite to knowing Christ more intimately. As people read God’s word they are then able to grow in obedience. Regular Bible reading is very important in avoiding burnout since it deepens our intimacy with Christ.

In addition, the word of God is a great source of encouragement, wisdom and insight. As Paul said, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity. . . ”203

In the previous section on biblical examples of burnout, God’s word was seen to be a powerful element in encouraging men of God, like Moses, Elijah and Jeremiah who were in the pit of despair or burnout. The Bible is a great source of encouragement because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit that makes clear God’s written revelation, the Bible.204 This ministry of the Spirit is often called illumination. The Spirit is able to bring hope and encouragement to the heart of a believer from a multitude of biblical promises and passages. One discouraged pastor205 gained great encouragement when he read, “Never

202 Philippians 3:8-10
203 Romans 15:4-5
204 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:2; John 16:12-15
205 The author, Robert Lundgren
will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Intimacy with Christ is developed through trust, Bible reading and journaling. Journaling is simply taking time to write down personal reflections on the word and works of God in light of current circumstances. These personal meditations can be referred to in the future for encouragement. Expressing one’s thoughts and emotions in light of God’s words and works is often seen in the Psalms. As David wrote,

O God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues. With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause. In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer.

Journaling records our meditations on the words and works of God. The Psalmist declared, “I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.” When persecuted by people of authority or ridiculed for his beliefs the Psalmist gained encouragement by meditating on the word of God. The Psalmist declared, “Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees. Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors... My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to you word.” Mediation allows the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to impact our heart and mind giving encouragement in time of need. Recording these meditations provides a resource of encouragement for future times of need. As noted previously, obedience to the Word of God brings a blessing. The righteous person in

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206 Hebrews 13:5-6  
207 Psalms 35, 69, 73, 109  
208 Psalm 109:1-4  
209 Psalm 77:11-12  
210 Psalm 119:23, 28
Psalm one is blessed in that he is right with God and enjoys the spiritual peace and joy that results from that relationship.\(^{211}\)

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.\(^{212}\)

Intimacy with Christ is developed through faith, Bible reading, journaling, and of course prayer. The apostle Paul found great encouragement from the prayers of others and by his practice of persistent prayer. He knew that the peace of God that overcomes anxiety and is beyond understanding is available through prayer. As he said,

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.\(^{213}\)

God answers the prayers of those who seek Him, as David said, “I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”\(^{214}\) And to those who trust God’s Word Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”\(^{215}\) Prayer brings encouragement, help and deliverance in time of need, while drawing man into the very presence of the Father.

\(^{211}\) Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament Edition, p.790
\(^{212}\) Psalm 1
\(^{213}\) Philippians 4:4-7
\(^{214}\) Psalm 34:4
\(^{215}\) John 15:7
A Certain Hope

The second key element in self-care in one’s spiritual life revolves around the concept of a certain hope of future reward, vindication and justice. Burnout is always accompanied by feelings of not being appreciated, hopelessness or defeat. So burnout can be avoided as one lives in light of the certain reward and praise he will receive from the Lord. Believers are to remember,

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.²¹⁶

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.²¹⁷

Not only is hope an important perspective to maintain in order to avoid burnout, but also the fact that ultimate vindication and victory is found in Christ. As Paul wrote, “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? …But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”²¹⁸ Vindication and justice will ultimately occur when the Lord comes and rewards those who faithfully served him, and punishes the disobedient.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
²¹⁷ 1 Peter 1:3-5
²¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:54-55,57-58
²¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:8-15, 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10
Faith in Christ - The Source of Help and Grace

The third key element in providing self-care to our spiritual life is trusting God as our helper and provider of sufficient grace and peace for any trial. As previously mentioned the Apostle Paul avoided burnout because of his unshakeable belief in God as his helper and strength. The feeling of helplessness is one of the key elements in burnout. So when a believer has a heart filled with the assurance that God is my helper and strength, burnout can be avoided. As the writer to the Hebrews confidently stated, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” The Psalmist declared, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

God’s grace is sufficient even when the pastor is inadequate for a certain undertaking. God helps and sustains the believer even though he falters and fails. Ray Anderson makes this point when he said, “A healthy theology…is a theology of a loving God who knows that to be God is to be responsible, even for our faltering and fallible efforts.” The apostle Paul makes this same point about the sufficiency of God’s grace in human weakness when he said, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

220 Hart, “Burnout Prevention and Cure,” p.2
221 Hebrews 13:6
222 Psalm 46:1-3
224 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
Faithfulness

The fourth key element in providing self-care to our spiritual life is faithfulness in living consistent with our beliefs, calling, and giftedness. Faithfulness should characterize the servant of God.\textsuperscript{225} Jesus contrasts hypocrisy with faithfulness,\textsuperscript{226} and exhorts believers to be faithful even in little things.\textsuperscript{227} When a believer is filled with the Spirit, his life will display the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”\textsuperscript{228} A faithful minister is of high value to God. It has been said that not everyone can be successful, but everyone can be faithful. God will not judge a pastor on the basis of success, but on the basis of faithfulness. Being concerned about faithfulness as one does God’s will is an excellent approach to mental health. Striving for success can bring added stress. Failure in faithfulness produces real guilt both of which lead to burnout. But God will reward the faithful servant, as Jesus said in the parable of the talents, “well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”\textsuperscript{229}

God has uniquely shaped every believer for ministry. Serving in a ministry that fits one’s uniqueness reduces stress and brings maximum effectiveness and enjoyment. Everyone has different spiritual gifts, passions, personality, and life experiences. At birth every person is given talents and personality. People all have different life experiences, education and passions. Passion refers to one’s heart desire, inner conviction, or calling that a believer has from God. As Paul reminded Timothy, “If anyone sets his heart on

\textsuperscript{225} 1 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:2
\textsuperscript{226} Matthew 23:23
\textsuperscript{227} Luke 16:10-13
\textsuperscript{228} Galatians 5:22
\textsuperscript{229} Matthew 25:23
being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” At conversion God gives spiritual gifts to every believer. There are a variety of gifts, but all are to function in harmony and unity for the common good of others in the church. As Peter said,

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

God desires every believer to faithfully function in his area of giftedness and passion. That is why Paul reminded Timothy, “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift.” Later he added, “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.” Paul encouraged Timothy since he was losing confidence in his ability and passion for ministry. Timothy faced the hostility of those in the Ephesian church who resented his leadership, the real threat of Roman persecution, and the assaults of false teachers. Confidence in one’s gifts and abilities will enable a minister, like Paul, to serve in the face incredible opposition and hardship in ministry.

Ray Anderson makes an encouraging point for those who feel trapped and burdened by the thought of being called into the ministry. He states, “There is a subtle shift from the emphasis on the one who calls, to the work of the ministry as a calling. It is one thing to experience God as one’s fate, and quite another thing for the work of ministry to determine one’s fate. When this happens, the calling to ministry comes close

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230 1 Timothy 3:1
231 Romans 12:6-8; 2 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-13
232 1 Peter 4:10-11
233 1 Timothy 4:13-14
234 2 Timothy 1:6
235 MacArthur Study Bible, p.1875
to being fatal.” The ministry can become a joyless task that pastors struggle to endure unless they focus on serving and enjoying Jesus who called them into service. A pastor must also remember that leaving the ministry for another occupation does not necessarily mean that one is leaving the will of God or is being unfaithful. This is especially true for those who lack the needed gifts and abilities to be a senior pastor.

Facing a Fallen World and a Fierce Enemy

The fifth key element in providing self-care to the spiritual life is to realize that one lives in a fallen world and faces a fierce enemy. Pastors who are idealistic about ministry can become very disillusioned by the sinful behavior of Christians. Researcher George Barna has documented how the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of Christians in America are very similar to the general population. For the pastor who desires to bring about life change and produce obedient followers of Christ, this can be frustrating. Disobedient behavior can also provoke anger when the slander, deception or rage is directed at the pastor or his family. A pastor must keep in mind that, “The works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like.” Faithful pastors must rebuke sinful behavior and exhort believers to keep in step with the Spirit, so that they will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness

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238 Galatians 5:19-21
239 Galatians 5:16, 25-26
and self-control.”\textsuperscript{240} Modern day preachers who do not try to please men\textsuperscript{241} are like prophets of old who experienced opposition and persecution from their messages.\textsuperscript{242} A preacher is to speak the truth in love even if it results in persecution. Pastors who have been betrayed and persecuted for preaching the word can identify with David’s anguish in Psalm 41:9, “Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

Pastors face discouragement and disillusionment from their own members, and also a fierce enemy who is seeking their destruction. Peter wrote, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”\textsuperscript{243} The minister’s greatest weapon against Satan’s messengers that torment,\textsuperscript{244} and his schemes that deceive is the grace of God. As Paul instructed the Ephesians,

\begin{quote}
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.\textsuperscript{245}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{240} Galatians 5:22  
\textsuperscript{241} Galatians 1:10-11  
\textsuperscript{242} Jeremiah 26:7-9; Isaiah 6:8-13  
\textsuperscript{243} 1 Peter 5:8-9  
\textsuperscript{244} 2 Corinthians 12:7-9  
\textsuperscript{245} Ephesians 6:10-18
Defeat and discouragement can occur if one loses sight of the battle. Casualties mount from not relying on God’s power and by not putting on the full armor of God.

The Relational Aspects of Self-Care

Developing a support network of intimate friends and family members is a key element in preventing burnout. Having a friend or small group to share the burdens of ministry, and to gain encouragement, prayer support and perspective in difficult times is critical for self-care. Even Jesus chose twelve disciples to be with him.\textsuperscript{246} And from the twelve Jesus chose three, Peter, James and John to be his closest companions. They alone accompanied Jesus on three special occasions: the resurrection of the synagogue’s daughter,\textsuperscript{247} the transfiguration,\textsuperscript{248} and the agony experienced in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.\textsuperscript{249} And from those three, it was John who was known, as “the one Jesus loved.”\textsuperscript{250}

The Apostle Paul also knew the value of having close co-workers and fellow servants in the ministry.\textsuperscript{251} It was his normal practice to travel and minister with several people.\textsuperscript{252} Near the end of Paul’s life, he experienced the agony of being deserted by friends.\textsuperscript{253} and the blessing of having a friend stand by him.\textsuperscript{254} Paul acknowledged the importance of friendship when he summoned Timothy to come before winter and bring

\begin{itemize}
\item Mark 3:13-19
\item Mark 5:37-43
\item Mark 9:2-8
\item Mark 14:32-42
\item John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20
\item Romans 16:3,21-22
\item Acts 12:25; 13:13; 14:21; 15:40; 16:3; 18:18; 20:4-6
\item 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:9,16
\item 2 Timothy 1:16-18; 4:17
\end{itemize}
Mark with him.  

Friends are a constant source of love and encouragement, as the author of Proverbs said, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

The “one another” commands in the New Testament justify developing a support network or small group of intimate Christian friends in order to enhance spiritual maturity and witness. In a small group, believers can share burdens, gain encouragement, prayer support and perspective in difficult times, which is critical for self-care. Believers are instructed to: accept one another, be devoted to one another, be kind and compassionate to one another, bear one another’s burdens, put up with one another, build up one another, care for one another, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, confess your sins to one another, counsel one another, encourage one another, fellowship with one another, forgive one another, greet one another, honor one another above yourselves, be of the same mind toward one another, love one another, offer hospitality to one another, pray for one another, serve one another, spur one another on toward love and good

255 2 Timothy 4:9-10, 21
256 Proverb 17:17
257 Romans 15:5-7
258 Romans 12:10
259 Ephesians 4:30-32
260 Galatians 6:1-2
261 Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:1-3
262 Romans 14:19-20
263 1 Corinthians 12:25-27
264 1 Peter 5:5
265 James 5:16
266 Romans 15:4; Colossians 3:16
267 Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:18
268 1 John 1:7
269 Ephesians 4:30-32
270 1 Peter 5:14
271 Romans 12:10
272 Romans 12:16; 15:5-6
273 1 John 3:11; Romans 13:8; 1 John 3:23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 5
274 Romans 12:13
275 James 5:16
deeds, submit to one another, teach one another, don’t judge one another, don’t lie to one another, and don’t speak against one another. As believers walk in the spirit they will fulfill the one another commands and become mature in the faith.

The Emotional Aspects of Self-Care

Not only must one give attention to spiritual self-care but also emotional self-care. Many times pastors serve others without giving any concern to this aspect of their health. The five key elements in providing self-care to our emotional life include: stress management, practicing intentional assertiveness, living with detached concern, laughter, and learning to cope with the primary emotions in burnout -- anger, bitterness, worry, guilt and depression.

Stress Management

The first key element in providing self-care to one’s emotional life involves stress management. Stress management must be learned in order to avoid burnout. One important aspect needed to reduce stress and anxiety is rest. The authors from the Minirth-Meier Clinic suggest three components to proper rest. These components include: “a change of scene, a change of activity, and adequate time to rejuvenate.”

276 Galatians 5:13-14
277 Hebrews 10:24-25
278 Ephesians 5:21
279 Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:17-21
280 Romans 14:13
281 Colossians 3:8-10
282 James 4:11; 5:9; Galatians 5:15, 26
These three components can be seen in the life of Jesus and his disciples. As discussed above under the physical aspects of self-care, Jesus often instructed his disciples to “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” In following Jesus the disciple had to leave behind the demands and responsibilities of ministry for a time, for personal times of rest and renewal.

Other aspects of stress management will be covered under the professional aspects of self-care and include: setting boundaries, delegating responsibility, having a clear role, setting attainable goals, living with margins, being purpose driven, and effective time management.

**Intentional Assertiveness**

The second key element in providing self-care to one’s emotional life involves intentional assertiveness. Assertiveness has been defined as “the ability to stand up for one’s rights, to express one’s true feelings when appropriate – without fear of reprisal, to be able to say no to unreasonable demands, and to request the things we need and deserve.”

The Apostle Paul exhibited godly assertiveness in his ministry and possessed a good self-attitude. Paul was no doormat, people pleaser, or flatterer. He was a servant of Christ who was not afraid to speak the truth in love. Paul’s desire was to please God, not men. As he said to the Thessalonians, “On the contrary, we speak as men approved by

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284 Mark 6:31
God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery.”

Paul was confident that his gifts and calling were from God allowing him to answer criticism leveled against him. Responding to those who challenged his authority and calling from God, he wrote,

For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

Later he added, “But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those super-apostles. I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.” Paul was not embarrassed that he did not preach like those trained Greek orators, since he desired the life-transforming power to come from the Gospel, not human manipulation. Paul commanded Timothy to be assertive when he said, “Command and teach these things.”

Paul demonstrated his assertiveness in freely expressing his feelings to those he ministered to. To the Church at Thessalonica he wrote, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because

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286 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5a, NIV  
287 1 Corinthians 9:1-15  
288 2 Corinthians 10:8-11  
289 2 Corinthians 11:5-6  
290 1 Corinthians 2:1-5  
291 1 Timothy 4:11
you had become so dear to us. . . for you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God.” 292 Even to the proud Corinthians he said, “I wrote to you with many tears. . . that you might know the love which I have especially for you.” 293

Another way he showed his assertiveness was by freely requesting what he needed. Paul urged believers to pray for him and his ministry. 294 Imprisoned, and abandoned by friends, Paul directed Timothy to come quickly to him before winter bringing Mark, the cloak, scrolls and the parchments. 295 Paul thanked the church at Philippi for their continual financial support. 296 Paul exhibited a life that was assertive and marked by a healthy self-attitude.

Living with Detached Concern

The third key element in providing self-care to our emotional life involves living with detached concern. Detached concern refers to the balance that must be maintained between compassion and concern, on the one hand, and detachment and objectivity, on the other. Pastors can suffer burnout by over-involvement in the pain of others. 297

Pastors are to be all things to all people, to bear one another’s burdens and to weep with those who weep. But pastors must develop some emotional detachment from the pain of others so that they are not destroyed. Paul did not emotionally detach himself

292 1 Thessalonians 2:8,11-12
293 2 Corinthians 2:4
294 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2
295 2 Timothy 4:9-21
296 Philippians 1:5; 4:15-18
297 Hart, “Burnout”, p.23
from people or serve with cold indifference, a characteristic of burnout. He maintained the balance between objectivity and compassion. This balance is seen in his rebuke of the immature Corinthian believers followed by an affirmation of his concern for them. “For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.”

Paul did not lose heart in ministry because of God’s mercy at work in his life and ministry, and his eternal perspective and certain hope. It was God’s grace and mercy that sustained him through many painful experiences that characterized his ministry and enabled him to overcome feelings of despair (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:6). It was his eternal perspective and hope that allowed him to leave the results of his ministry in the hands of a sovereign God. Pastors can avoid burnout by following Paul’s example of leaving the results to God.

Laughter and the Joyful Heart

Laughter in the Bible is usually associated with scorn. The people laughed at Jesus after he told the crowd that the synagogue ruler’s daughter was not dead but sleeping. The Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming. “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.” However, the laughter discussed here is not scorn but the result of positive emotions.

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298 2 Corinthians 2:4  
299 2 Corinthians 4:1,7  
300 2 Corinthians 4:16-18  
301 2 Corinthians 1:3-11  
303 Mark 5:40  
304 Psalm 37:13  
305 Psalm 2:4
Laughter is also used in the Bible to describe a positive emotion. Although misdirected at Job, Bildad’s remarks were true, that God “will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.”

And when the exiles returned to Jerusalem, they were filled with joy and laughter as the Psalmist declared, “Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.”

The writer of Proverbs expresses on multiple occasions how one’s heart attitude affects his physical well-being. Proverbs says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” “A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.” “All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.” “A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.” Happiness is an issue of the heart and not dependent on circumstances. People with a cheerful heart are able to endure difficult circumstances and enjoy life in spite of adverse difficulties.

The Negative Emotions of Burnout

Not only is it critical for pastors to cultivate positive emotions to avoid burnout, but it is equally important to effectively deal with negative emotions. The fifth key element in providing self-care to our emotional life involves learning to cope with the primary negative emotions in burnout – anger, bitterness, worry, guilt and depression. Each one of these negative emotions will be considered from a biblical viewpoint.
Anger

Anger is a feeling of extreme displeasure, hostility, indignation or exasperation toward someone or something.\(^{312}\) In the Bible it is used of people,\(^{313}\) human governments,\(^{314}\) Jesus Christ,\(^{315}\) and God.\(^{316}\) Anger is a normal emotion that can be good or bad depending on motive and purpose. Righteous anger hates injustice, immorality, and sin of every kind. It is unselfish and based on love for God and others. Righteous anger is not only permitted, but commanded. Paul told believers to, “Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.”\(^{317}\) Righteous anger is a legitimate emotion so long as it does not lead to sinful actions or is held onto for more than a day. When a believer fails to deal with anger quickly, the Devil will use it to lead him into further sin. Holding onto anger will lead to bitterness, depression and vindictiveness. Doctors Minirth and Meier have observed that pent-up anger is the root cause of nearly all clinical depressions.\(^{318}\) They believe that there is only one unconscious motive for holding onto anger and that is vengeance.\(^{319}\) But the Bible is very clear about retaining anger or desiring vengeance. Paul commands believers “not to let the sun go down while you are still angry,” and to “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God.

\(^{313}\)Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1:19-20
\(^{314}\)Romans 13:4-5
\(^{315}\)Mark 3:5
\(^{316}\)Hebrews 3:11; John 3:36; Romans 1:18; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10
\(^{317}\)Ephesians 4:26-27, NASB
\(^{318}\)R. Frank Minirth and Dr. Paul Meier, *Happiness is a Choice*, (Carmel, New York: Guideposts, 1978) p.51
\(^{319}\)Ibid., pp.158-160
forgave you.” More will be said about forgiveness below under the Mental Aspects of Self-Care. Anger must not be repressed, nurtured, or expressed in sinful behavior. Remember the words of James: “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” The remedy for anger is forgiveness. Anger that is not handled properly turns into bitterness and results in acts of sinful behavior--gossip, slander, lying, acts of vengeance.

When it comes to vengeance, the believer is to leave retribution up to God. As Paul said, Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Bitterness

The words ‘bitter’ or ‘bitterness’ are used in both the Old and New Testaments for either a literal bitter taste or a strong negative emotion. This strong negative emotion is seen in Peter after he denied Christ three times and “went outside and wept bitterly.” One of the most common symptoms of bitterness is murmuring. Murmuring is to express resentment, dissatisfaction, anger or complaint in low or half-muted tones. It is in

320 Ephesians 4:26, 31-32
321 James 1:19-20
322 Romans 12:17-21
323 Exodus 15:23; James 3:11
324 Job 23:2; Esther 4:1; Matthew 26:75
325 Matthew 26:75
326 How to Beat Burnout, p.51
stark contrast to unconditional obedience and grateful trust.\textsuperscript{327} Examples of murmuring are seen in the Old Testament against Moses,\textsuperscript{328} Moses with Aaron,\textsuperscript{329} and God.\textsuperscript{330} Murmuring against God is referred to as unbelief.\textsuperscript{331}

Minirth and Meier verify the close connection between bitterness or resentment and burnout. Bitterness is the result of allowing anger to smolder over time. Often bitterness is fueled by unrealistic demands and unloving actions taken against a pastor or his family.\textsuperscript{332} Allowing bitterness to take root is devastating to pastors and to those close to them. The writer to the Hebrews warns believers, “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”\textsuperscript{333} The biblical solution to bitterness and its underlying emotion of anger is to forgive. The Bible commands the believer to “. . . get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”\textsuperscript{334} Believers are to, “. . . Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”\textsuperscript{335} Forgiveness is the best solution for anger and bitterness.

Worry

Anxiety is defined as “a state of uneasiness and distress about future uncertainties, persistent doubt or fear that produces strong mental agitation.”\textsuperscript{336} Worry wastes today’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{327} How to Beat Burnout, p50
\item \textsuperscript{328} Exodus 15:24; 17:3
\item \textsuperscript{329} Numbers 14:2
\item \textsuperscript{330} Exodus 16:7-8; Numbers 14:1-3
\item \textsuperscript{331} Numbers 14:11,27
\item \textsuperscript{332} How to Beat Burnout, p.48-49
\item \textsuperscript{333} Hebrews 12:15
\item \textsuperscript{334} Ephesians 4:31,
\item \textsuperscript{335} Colossians 3:13
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
time and clutters tomorrow’s opportunities with yesterday’s troubles. Worry does nothing to empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it does empty today of its strength. The Bible warns believers about the dangers of worry. Worry can block God’s word from bearing fruit in our lives. Jesus said, “The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.” Worry can distract us from listening to Jesus. Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Mary was listening to Jesus while Martha was distracted and bothered about preparing for a meal. The Bible repeatedly commands us not to worry but to trust in the Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly urges believers to stop worrying, and to start worshiping -- living for God one day at a time. Jesus said, “. . . Do not worry. . . but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Jesus supports these commands with five arguments against anxiety.

The first argument can be summarized as, the God who gave us breath will certainly also give us bread. Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"
The second argument is that God loves his children far above any bird, and yet he provides for birds, so he will provide for us. Jesus said, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”\( ^{343} \)

The third argument against anxiety is that worry is futile. Jesus said, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”\( ^{344} \)

The fourth argument is that the God who gives extravagant beauty to seasonal flowers will provide common clothes to His children destined for eternity. Jesus said, “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”\( ^{345} \)

The fifth argument is that worry indicates a lack of trust in our omniscient heavenly Father. Jesus said, “So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”\( ^{346} \)

The Apostle Paul exhorts believers not to worry, but to rejoice in the Lord, pray to the Lord, think right and obey the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your

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\(^{343}\) Matthew 6:26  
\(^{344}\) Matthew 6:27  
\(^{345}\) Matthew 6:28-30  
\(^{346}\) Matthew 6:31-32
hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.\textsuperscript{347}

God does not desire a believer to be consumed by worry, but to live in peace.

\textbf{Guilt}

Worry has its focus on the future, but guilt and depression have their roots in the past.\textsuperscript{348} True guilt is defined as “being responsible for an offense or wrongdoing. It is a remorseful awareness of having done something wrong.”\textsuperscript{349} False guilt is feeling guilty without being responsible for an offense or wrongdoing. Neurotic or false guilt may arise out of not meeting self-imposed standards or the expectations of others. Dr. Hart believes that neurotic guilt is created by an over developed conscience, especially in those who equate God with their conscience.\textsuperscript{350} According to Dr. Hart, freedom from neurotic guilt comes from developing a healthy concept of God, sin and forgiveness.\textsuperscript{351}

Those who struggle with neurotic guilt often have a limited view of God as harsh, judgmental and uncaring. This narrow perception of God often stems from early childhood through internalizing images of our parents. For example, if a child’s father was harsh then God is viewed in the same way. Freedom from neurotic guilt comes from a right concept of God. God is not only righteous, holy\textsuperscript{352} and just,\textsuperscript{353} but also full of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{347} Philippians 4:4-9
\item \textsuperscript{348} Hart, \textit{Overcoming Anxiety}, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1989), p.46
\item \textsuperscript{349} The American Heritage Dictionary
\item \textsuperscript{350} Hart, \textit{Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions}, p.118
\item \textsuperscript{351} Ibid., p.122
\item \textsuperscript{352} 1 John 1:5; Isaiah 6:3
\item \textsuperscript{353} Acts 17:31; Romans 3:26
\end{itemize}
goodness, faithfulness and love. Even pastors need to meditate on the goodness, faithfulness and love of God. The prophet said, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.” The Psalmist declared, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.” Paul stated, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.” John wrote,

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

A healthy concept of God includes all of His attributes. Believers must not limit their perception of God, who is . . . infinite, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent, just, free, holy, truth and love.

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354 Psalm 34:8; 100:5  
355 Psalm 89:1; 117:2  
356 Psalm 136; Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:8  
357 Lamentations 3:22-23  
358 Psalm 136:1  
359 Ephesians 2:4-5  
360 1 John 4:7-10  
361 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28  
362 Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:2  
363 James 1:17  
364 Psalm 139:7-12  
365 Ephesians 1:1-9  
366 Matthew 11:21  
367 Revelation 19:6  
368 Acts 17:31  
369 Isaiah 40:13-14  
370 1 John 1:5  
371 John 14:6  
372 Ephesians 2:4-5
Freedom from true guilt is found in God’s forgiveness and mercy. Freedom from neurotic guilt comes from developing a healthy concept of God, sin and forgiveness. For many Christians an overdeveloped conscience causes them to feel guilty although no sin was committed. They can even confuse violating the rules and the expectations of others as sin. However, true sin is disobedience to God or His Word.\textsuperscript{373} Every person is a sinner by choice. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”\textsuperscript{374} Everyone is also a sinner by birth. We were born with a sin nature -- the capacity and inclination to do those things that displease God.\textsuperscript{375} This is due to our physical and legal connection to the first man, Adam. As a representative of all men, his sin was judicially imputed to all men.\textsuperscript{376} Thus, no one can be saved or forgiven by self-effort, but only through appropriating the atoning work of Christ. The Bible says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,”\textsuperscript{377} and “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”\textsuperscript{378}

A healthy concept of sin allows believers to distinguish between sin and the expectations of others or self. Violating God’s standard is sin and results in true guilt. Failing to achieve a self-imposed goal or the expectation of another may not be sin, but could result in false guilt. False guilt demands punishment and seeks forgiveness, but no punishment is sufficient and no forgiveness is possible, since no sin was committed. Hart calls neurotic guilt a form of self-righteousness and becomes a quest for legalism.\textsuperscript{379} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{373} 1 John 3:4
\item \textsuperscript{374} Romans 3:23
\item \textsuperscript{375} 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1,3; 4:18
\item \textsuperscript{376} Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22
\item \textsuperscript{377} 2 Corinthians 5:21
\item \textsuperscript{378} Romans 6:23
\item \textsuperscript{379} Hart, \textit{Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions}, p.122
\end{itemize}
other words, false guilt may arise out of a failing to live up to expectations, but the true source of those feelings is one’s own pride and self-righteousness. The sin of pride and self-righteousness is what needs to be confessed, not failing to meet human expectations. Living in light of this truth can set a person’s hearts free from false guilt, and help him to find forgiveness from true guilt.

Hart firmly believes that, “The forgiveness of God is the most powerful therapeutic idea in the world. If a person can really believe that God has forgiven him, he can be saved from neuroticism.” The believer never has to wrestle with gaining God’s forgiveness. In Christ, God forgave us from all our sins in accordance with the riches of His grace. The true believer knows that he will sin but rests in the forgiveness he has in Christ. The apostle John exhorts, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Freedom from neurotic guilt comes from developing a healthy concept of God, sin and forgiveness. To this idea Narramore adds that, the doctrine of justification by faith assures the believer that he is no longer guilty before God, but this forensic act does not necessarily relieve the believer of guilt feelings. The dynamics of the heart can be dealt with only by an experiential application of the love of the indwelling Spirit and members of the Christian community to the heart of the believer. Increased freedom from guilt feelings comes with increased awareness of what Christ has done on the cross to pay for all of our sins and a greater dependence on the Holy Spirit and members of the body.

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380 Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions, p.122
381 Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14; 2:13
382 1 John 1:9
of Christ who model non-punitive, loving, corrective attitudes instead of condemnation.  

**Depression**

Depression and its relationship to burnout was examined in chapter two. Depression is a common human experience that needs to be accepted as a natural and normal response to a particular set of circumstances. Earlier in this chapter, several biblical examples were given of men who became discouraged and “despaired even of life.” Although the Bible does not use the term depression, it does describe it in terms such as sad, down cast, and despairing. For example, the Psalmist cried out on several occasions, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?” The prophets often experienced deep despair over the sinfulness of Israel and God’s coming judgment upon her. Nehemiah wept, mourned and fasted for days after hearing a report about the wall of Jerusalem being broken down and its gates burned with fire. Over four months later King Artaxerxes recognizes Nehemiah’s despair and said, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” Even King Solomon in pursuing the meaning of life despaired over all his toilsome labor. And Job, after suffering horrific losses said, “I loathe my very life…and speak

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383 Benner and Hill, p.535  
385 2 Corinthians 1:8  
386 Psalm 42:5,6,11  
387 Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17; 14:17  
388 Nehemiah 1:3-4  
389 Nehemiah 2:2  
390 Ecclesiastes 2:20
out in the bitterness of my soul.” Many more examples could be given as evidence that depression or its symptoms can be found in the Bible. The Christian faith does not exempt believers or pastors from the emotional pain or presence of depression.

Depression caused by stress is a response to loss, loss of a relationship, loss of a possession, loss of a dream, loss of position, or loss of self-respect. So for healing, pastors must come to grips with the loss suffered in their lives. The apostle Paul suffered incredible loss throughout his life and gave us key insights into handling life’s losses.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul reminds believers that gaining Christ as our Savior and Lord far surpasses any gain the world has to offer or loss that may incur. So when a person experiences a loss, it is imperative that he keep an eternal perspective, especially in relationship to Christ. Pastors must let go of their loss, put the past behind, and move toward fulfilling their mission for Christ. Dr. Hart emphasized a similar point when he said, “The problem

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391 Job 10:1
393 Philippians 3:1,6-14
is not our loss only, but our attachment to the loss and the refusal to let go.\textsuperscript{394} In overcoming depression one must understand and grieve the loss, put it in eternal perspective, and press on to know and grow in Christ. Depression is a common emotion that pastors will encounter due to the nature of ministry. The challenge is to follow Paul’s insights into dealing with loss so that maturity will be the result of difficult times.

The Mental Aspects of Self-Care

Of all the aspects of self-care this aspect could very well be the most important. Since the attitude of a person’s heart and thinking affects his emotions, spiritual life, physical well-being, personal relationships and job performance. So it is imperative that great care be given to cultivating a healthy mental self-care. Pastors are not exempt from guarding their thought life if they are to avoid burnout. Love, forgiveness and right thinking are the three key elements of good mental self-care.

Love

Love (\textit{agapē}) in the biblical sense is a decision to do what is best, good, or self sacrificial for another, even if they are undeserving. It is not a feeling but a choice to do good to the one loved.\textsuperscript{395} Love (\textit{agapē}) is used to describe God’s very nature,\textsuperscript{396} and His attitude toward Christ,\textsuperscript{397} humanity,\textsuperscript{398} and believers in Christ.\textsuperscript{399} God’s love is seen

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Archibald Hart, “Healing the Person of the Pastor,” Lecture presented as part of \textit{Family Time Getaway, A Conference for Clergy and Their Families}, at Focus on The Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 20-24, 2001.}
\footnote{1 John 4:8}
\footnote{John 17:26}
\footnote{John 3:16}
\end{footnotes}
in the gift of His son\textsuperscript{400} for those who were so undeserving.\textsuperscript{401} The perfect expression of love among men was Christ.\textsuperscript{402}

Believers are to love God,\textsuperscript{403} one-another,\textsuperscript{404} and all mankind.\textsuperscript{405} For the believer, love is the fruit of the Spirit,\textsuperscript{406} and expresses itself in obedience to Christ’s commands.\textsuperscript{407} Love seeks the opportunity to do good to all men,\textsuperscript{408} especially to those in the household of faith.\textsuperscript{409} Love does not just express itself with words but in loving actions.\textsuperscript{410} Eloquence of speech, the gift of prophecy, and a self-sacrificial death are meaningless without love.\textsuperscript{411} Love is described in 1 Corinthians 13.

\begin{quote}
Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. . . and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.\textsuperscript{412}
\end{quote}

The believer is to live a life of love in the power of the Spirit. Love is the basis of loving acts and forgiveness toward those who do not deserve it. Paul revealed his loving heart to the Corinthians when he said: “For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.”\textsuperscript{413}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{John 14:21} John 14:21
\bibitem{1 John 4:9-10} 1 John 4:9-10
\bibitem{Romans 5:8} Romans 5:8
\bibitem{Ephesians 3:18-19; 5:1-2; 1 John 4:9-10} Ephesians 3:18-19; 5:1-2; 1 John 4:9-10
\bibitem{Matthew 22:37} Matthew 22:37
\bibitem{1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 16:14; Matthew 22:39} 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 16:14; Matthew 22:39
\bibitem{Galatians 5:22} Galatians 5:22
\bibitem{John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3} John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3
\bibitem{Romans 15:2} Romans 15:2
\bibitem{Galatians 6:10} Galatians 6:10
\bibitem{1 John 3:16-18} 1 John 3:16-18
\bibitem{1 Corinthians 13:1-3} 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
\bibitem{1 Corinthians 13:4-8,13} 1 Corinthians 13:4-8,13
\bibitem{2 Corinthians 2:4} 2 Corinthians 2:4
\end{thebibliography}
Forgiveness

Forgiveness involves passing over or excusing a fault or offense; pardoning the offender without resentment; releasing the offender from punishment or payment.\footnote{The American Heritage Dictionary} Forgiveness is a choice. It is a matter of the will. It will take time to forget and to work through the emotional feelings that are involved. However, forgiveness is an immediate act of the will.\footnote{Happiness is a Choice, p.156} Pastors must chose to forgive and not hold onto bitterness, anger or past hurts. Forgiveness is a key element in good mental health and in preventing burnout.\footnote{How to Beat Burnout, p.57}

There are many New Testament passages that expand our understanding of forgiveness. God fully and freely forgives the sinner who believes in Christ. God removes the charges against the sinner who believes because Christ has made atonement for the sins. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.”\footnote{Ephesians 1:7} And to the Colossians he wrote that in Christ “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”\footnote{Colossians 1:14} “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.”\footnote{Colossians 2:13} Christ epitomized a forgiving heart as he cried out from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”\footnote{Luke 23:34}

The believer’s mandate is to forgive others as God has forgiven them. The apostle Paul told believers to, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may
have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you,”⁴²¹ and “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”⁴²² Paul modeled this truth to the church at Corinth when he wrote, “If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-- if there was anything to forgive-- I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake”⁴²³

A believer’s forgiveness must be comprehensive, all-inclusive and without limit. Jesus made this clear in response to Peter’s question, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”⁴²⁴ On a separate occasion Jesus added, “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”⁴²⁵

Those who have experienced God’s forgiveness are obligated to forgive those who sin against them. Jesus gave a sober warning to those who would refuse to forgive, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors…for if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”⁴²⁶ Jesus gave additional warnings about refusing to forgive in the parable of the unmerciful servant. He concluded the story with the forgiven man who refused to forgive others as being “turned over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.”⁴²⁷ Jesus applies this warning

⁴²¹ Colossians 3:13  
⁴²² Ephesians 4:32  
⁴²³ 2 Corinthians 2:10  
⁴²⁴ Matthew 18:21-22  
⁴²⁵ Luke 17:3-4  
⁴²⁶ Matthew 6:12, 14-15  
⁴²⁷ Matthew 18:23-34
to his disciples at the end of the parable when he said, “this is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brothers from your heart.”\(^{428}\) God disciplines believers who refuse to forgive those who offend them.

Another aspect of forgiveness is giving up the right to take revenge. Hart says, that the essence of forgiveness is “surrendering my right to hurt you back if you hurt me.”\(^{429}\) Jesus affirmed this truth when he stated, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you; Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”\(^{430}\) The apostle Paul also emphasized our responsibility to not take revenge when he said,

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.\(^{431}\)

Right Thinking

The Bible has much to say about the attitudes and thoughts of the heart and mind. The term mind describes the place where thinking and decision making takes place. However, in biblical times the heart was the place where thoughts and decisions were made. W.E. Vine defines the heart as standing “for man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements.”\(^{432}\) There are dozens of terms in

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\(^{428}\) Matthew 18:35
\(^{429}\) Hart, Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions, p.65
\(^{430}\) Matthew 5:43-44
\(^{431}\) Romans 12:17-21
\(^{432}\) Vine, Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, pp.546-547
the Bible that refer to our thinking, decision making and thought life. These terms are translated as think, know, consider, reason, imagine, meditate, ponder, reckon, reflect, understand, learn, think upon, think deeply, think soberly, high-minded, thoughts, mind, and heart. The Bible speaks often about a person’s thought life.

The slogan, “you are what you eat,” is not nearly as important as the biblical idea, “you are what you think”. What a person puts into his heart and mind, the thoughts he dwells on, affects who he is and what he does. The Psalmist reflected this truth when he declared that the wicked, “From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.” Paul adds, that believers “must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”

Jesus stated this truth as, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”

Thoughts lead to actions and actions become habits and habits turn into life styles. God knows the thoughts and intents of hearts. God describes the wicked and the righteous in terms of their thoughts and heart. The wicked have hearts that are far from

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433 Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p.977
434 Psalm 73:7
435 Ephesians 4:17-19
436 Matthew 12:34-35
437 Mark 2:9; Luke 16:15; Psalm 139:2
God,\textsuperscript{438} full of sinful desires,\textsuperscript{439} entertain evil thoughts in their heart,\textsuperscript{440} are futile in their thinking, having their foolish hearts darkened,\textsuperscript{441} have stubborn and unrepentant hearts,\textsuperscript{442} and trust in their own heart which is foolish.\textsuperscript{443} In contrast, the righteous seek after God’s own heart,\textsuperscript{444} trust in God,\textsuperscript{445} who is the strength of their heart,\textsuperscript{446} love one another from a pure heart,\textsuperscript{447} call upon the Lord from a pure heart,\textsuperscript{448} sanctify the Lord in their heart,\textsuperscript{449} love the Lord with all their heart,\textsuperscript{450} have a heart directed by the Lord,\textsuperscript{451} ruled by His peace,\textsuperscript{452} and where Christ dwells.\textsuperscript{453}

For this reason the Bible commands believers to regulate their thought life. Pastors, also, must be vigilant about what they accept into their minds and hearts. The Bible says to pay attention to God’s wisdom\textsuperscript{454} and “above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”\textsuperscript{455} In other words, actions will result from the thoughts and values of the heart, so the heart must be protected. The apostle Paul commanded all believers to put away childish thinking, “Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.”\textsuperscript{456} Maturity comes when the truth of the word of God is grasped. God’s truth is able to demolish false philosophies, vain

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{438} Matthew 15:8
\item \textsuperscript{439} Romans 1:24
\item \textsuperscript{440} Matthew 9:4; 15:19; Genesis 6:5
\item \textsuperscript{441} Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:18
\item \textsuperscript{442} Romans 2:5
\item \textsuperscript{443} Proverb 28:26
\item \textsuperscript{444} Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14
\item \textsuperscript{445} Psalm 28:7; Romans 10:9-10
\item \textsuperscript{446} Psalm 73:26
\item \textsuperscript{447} 1 Peter 1:22
\item \textsuperscript{448} 2 Timothy 2:22
\item \textsuperscript{449} 1 Peter 3:15
\item \textsuperscript{450} Matthew 22:37; 1 Timothy 1:5
\item \textsuperscript{451} 1 Thessalonians 3:5
\item \textsuperscript{452} Colossians 3:15
\item \textsuperscript{453} Ephesians 3:17
\item \textsuperscript{454} Proverbs 4:11,20-21
\item \textsuperscript{455} Proverb 4:23
\item \textsuperscript{456} 1 Corinthians 14:20
\end{itemize}
speculations and ideological fortresses that oppose Him. As Paul said, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

The best guard for the mind and heart is the truth of God’s Word. It is God’s Word of truth, the Bible, that will keep pastors from being deceived and protect them from sin. Just like the Psalmist declared, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” “I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.” “Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me thorough your law.” The apostle Paul also emphasized the importance of biblical truth when he said, “We will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. . . therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” The inner life of a Christian can be a mixture of motivations both genuinely spiritual and fleshly. The Word of God penetrates the innermost being of a person and is able to distinguish between these contradictory motives of the heart. As the writer to the Hebrews said, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates

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457 2 Corinthians 10:4-5  
458 Psalm 119:11  
459 Psalm 119:104  
460 Psalm 119:29  
461 Ephesians 4:14-15, 25
even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

It is imperative for believers to know and to consider as true certain facts about their new life in Christ, so that they will act accordingly. The letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, and Romans begin with a focus on what is true about the believer. They later shift in emphasis to what the believer should do, the imperative. For example, the Bible reminds believers to consider “yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body.” Believers are “to consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” They are to think about what we were when we were called, to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” and to “consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

The Bible exhorts believers to know certain truths and to consider, or reckon as true certain facts, so that they will live as a Christian. For example, the Bible tells believers to know that, they are united with Christ, and that their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in them. Believers are to know “that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him,” and “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Believers are to know that they will judge the world, and

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462 Hebrews 4:12
463 Romans 6:11-12
464 Romans 8:18
465 1 Corinthians 1:26
466 Hebrews 10:24
467 James 1:2
468 Romans 6:15-19
469 Romans 6:9
470 Romans 8:28
that “those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”

Children of God “know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,” “that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. . . and that no murderer has eternal life in him.” We know “what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” Believers “know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.” John wrote his epistle so that those who believe in Christ may know that they have eternal life, and that God hears the prayers of those who ask according to His will. “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

It is important that pastors think right about themselves. Not positive or negative thoughts but correct thoughts in light of who they are in Christ. They are not to be high minded or self-debasing but to think correctly about themselves and the gifts God has given to them. The apostle Paul stated this truth in Romans 12:3, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you; do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” Thinking rightly about ourselves would include accepting failure and admitting limitations as well as recognizing strengths and rejoicing in achievements.

471 1 Corinthians 6:2-3
472 1 Corinthians 9:13
473 1 John 3:2
474 1 John 3:14-15
475 1 John 3:14-16
476 1 John 5:2
477 1 John 5:13-15
478 1 John 5:20
Rather than being high-minded, a believer is to be humble-minded, and like Christ consider others before himself. As Paul said,

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.\(^{479}\)

The apostle Paul gives believers a description of a wholesome thought life. This list of six items can be used as a checklist or mental survey for evaluating thoughts. Each item is introduced with the plural term ‘whatever’ suggesting that several things could be included under each heading.\(^{480}\) Paul wrote,

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.\(^{481}\)

The list begins with thinking about what is true, and not what is positive or negative. Since God is truth and Satan is the ultimate liar, it is important to focus our thoughts on what is true. True things are the opposite of dishonest or unreliable.\(^{482}\)

Second, our thoughts are to be noble. Noble refers to what is dignified, worthy of respect, and awe-inspiring. One noble area would be the sacred as opposed to the profane.

The third item to evaluate our thought is the question “is it right?” Right refers to conformity to God’s standards. The believer is to think and act in conformity with God’s

\(^{479}\) Philippians 2:2-5  
\(^{481}\) Philippians 4:8-9  
standard of holiness. The contrast to right thinking is expedient and pragmatic thinking that looks for what works and the easy way out.

Fourth, believers are to think about what is pure. Pure refers to what is wholesome, morally clean and undefiled, not mixed with what is morally impure. Impure thoughts result in impure words -- gossip, slander, swearing, and the like. The believer is not to “let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

The fifth focus for our thoughts is that which is lovely. Lovely speaks of that which promotes peace rather than conflict. It includes thoughts that are pleasing, amiable or gracious. Thoughts that lead to anxiety, doubt and turmoil are not lovely. Lovely thoughts lead to a tranquil mind. Ugly thoughts of vindictiveness, bitterness and hostility lead to thoughts and actions of conflict rather than peace.

The sixth focus for our thoughts is that which is admirable. Admirable relates to what is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. While it is easy to focus on the negative and to be critical, the believer must direct his thoughts to what is of good report. Admirable is that which is highly regarded or thought well of such as kindness, courtesy and respect for others.

Paul summarizes these six items that comprise a wholesome thought life as excellent and praiseworthy. In other words, thoughts are to be morally clean and carry praise, in contrast to immoral, critical, sarcastic or negative thoughts.

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484 Ephesians 4:29
Having the proper attitude allows any believer to live in contentment no matter what the situation since Christ will strengthen us. As the apostle said, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”\(^{487}\)

The Professional Aspects of Self-Care

As an employee of a church, a pastor is responsible to fulfill certain functions and duties. However, the manner in which a pastor fulfills his obligations can promote or inhibit burnout. The professional aspects of self-care include: being purpose driven, having a clear role, setting boundaries, delegating responsibility, setting attainable goals, living with margins, and effective time management.

*Purpose Driven*

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ is the ultimate example for believers to emulate. From Christ’s life one can observe that his purpose was to do the will of the Father. Throughout the gospels Jesus indicates that his one consuming purpose was to do the will of the Father who sent Him.\(^{488}\) Jesus fulfilled this purpose in a balanced way. He

\(^{487}\) Philippians 4:11-13  
\(^{488}\) John 5:30; 6:39; 7:17; 9:31; Matthew 26:42
took time to sleep, to eat meals, and to fellowship with friends.\textsuperscript{489} He took time to visit those in need\textsuperscript{490} as well as to take time to rest.\textsuperscript{491}

Having a stated purpose gives meaning and motivation to life, aids in clarifying roles in the church, and helps in simplifying goals. Having a purpose brings fulfillment and focus to life rather than frustration and confusion. A pastor’s purpose should answer the question, “Why am I here?” Rick Warren in \textit{The Purpose-Driven Life} identifies five purposes God gives to every believer -- worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.\textsuperscript{492} Certainly every minister should desire to fulfill these five purposes -- to be pleasing to God in worship, to participate in God’s family, to grow in Christlikeness, to use one’s gifts in service to God, and to fulfill the mission of reaching the lost for God.

These general purposes become more specific as each pastor evaluates these purposes in light of his spiritual gifts, passions, natural abilities, personality, education, and life experiences. For example, one purpose of a pastor could be to unleash God’s power by faithfully proclaiming God’s Word in the power of the Spirit with accuracy and relevancy in order to transform people into fully devoted followers of Christ. In other words, proclaim the Bible with passion, precision, persuasion, and practicality, so that people are impacted. Preaching was one of Paul’s primary purposes. He told the Corinthians, “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”\textsuperscript{493} Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel.\textsuperscript{494} No matter what hardship he faced, Paul stated that his purpose was to “finish

\begin{footnotes}
\item[489] Luke 10:38
\item[490] Luke 18
\item[491] Mark 6:31
\item[492] Rick Warren, \textit{The Purpose Driven Life} (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002) p.136
\item[493] 1 Corinthians 1:17
\item[494] 1 Corinthians 9:16
\end{footnotes}
the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” He did not use human wisdom or persuasive eloquence to win the hearts of people but the foolish message of the gospel. Paul said, “We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Paul commanded the young preacher, Timothy, to “... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” Preaching the gospel was a primary purpose to Paul, so before he was martyred he urged Timothy to:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

A second purpose of ministers is to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” This purpose is to equip others to serve Christ in their area of giftedness.

A pastor’s third purpose is to disciple others to become like Christ. Paul told Timothy, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be

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495 Acts 20:23-24  
496 2 Corinthians 4:2  
497 1 Timothy 4:13  
498 2 Timothy 4:2-4  
499 Ephesians 4:12-13
qualified to teach others."\textsuperscript{500} Pastors are to grow in Christ and help others to mature in Christ, so that at the end of our time on Earth we can say like Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”\textsuperscript{501}

A fourth purpose is to keep watch over the elders “and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”\textsuperscript{502} Giving spiritual oversight of doctrine, worship, and spiritual care is the task of a minister of God. The elders are to hold one another accountable, but it is usually the pastor who will initiate leadership development among the elders.

A fifth purpose is to do the work of an evangelist.\textsuperscript{503} Every minister must be involved in fulfilling the great commission and in encouraging others to witness. Pastors have the ability to initiate corporate programs for evangelism and encourage others to reach out to those who have not trusted Christ.

A sixth purpose is the ministry of encouragement. We are to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”\textsuperscript{504} Fellowship is a powerful influence to bring believers to maturity in Christ. In fact, obedience to the “one-another” commands requires believers to share their life with other believers.

\textsuperscript{500} 2 Timothy 2:1-2  
\textsuperscript{501} 2 Timothy 4:7-8  
\textsuperscript{502} Acts 20:28  
\textsuperscript{503} 2 Timothy 4:5  
\textsuperscript{504} Hebrews 10:24-25
A Clear Role

Purpose answers the question why? But a role answers the question what am I to do and not do? Roles also determine responsibility. One of the major causes of burnout is an undefined role and confusion over what a pastor is responsible for.

The Bible says that a pastor is to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”505 Pastors are not to do the entire ministry but are to equip other believers for their ministry so that the church can be built up or edified.

Ministers are also called to have a discipleship ministry to other faithful men. Paul commanded such a ministry to Timothy when he said, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”506 This method of multiplication is God’s way of preserving and propagating the truth of the Gospel.

A minister’s role also includes preaching the Word of God not the ideas of men or psychologists. Paul gives pastors a very serious charge, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”507

As a pastor endures hardship, he is to do his part in fulfilling the great commission, in which Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to

505 Ephesians 4:12-13
506 2 Timothy 2:2
507 2 Timothy 4:2-3
me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.\textsuperscript{508} Paul repeats this idea to the minister, Timothy, “Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”\textsuperscript{509}

Pastors, as elders, are to oversee the ministry in order to protect people from false doctrine. This is clear from Paul’s command, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.”\textsuperscript{510} Pastors are to keep watch over the church as those who will give an account, and\textsuperscript{511} submit to the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus.\textsuperscript{512} There is a particular danger in today’s culture of doing what is pragmatic, without theological evaluation, because it results in increased giving or attendance.

A pastor should also remember what his role does not include. A pastor is not responsible for another person’s obedience or disobedience. He is responsible to share the Gospel but is not responsible for a person receiving the Gospel. Even a pastor’s church and ministry is ultimately God’s. God is the source and power of all ministry and is responsible for the ministry.\textsuperscript{513}

\begin{thebibliography}{5}
\bibitem{508} Matthew 28:18-20
\bibitem{509} 2 Timothy 4:5
\bibitem{510} Acts 20:28
\bibitem{511} Hebrews 13:17
\bibitem{512} Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25
\end{thebibliography}
Healthy Boundaries

While most ministers would consider themselves servants of Christ, they do not want to be slaves to a congregation. Maintaining healthy emotional and professional boundaries are keys to avoiding burnout. A pastor must learn to say “no” to unrealistic demands of assertive people along with a multitude of expectations from a congregation. Having a clear role, knowing your personal limits, and practicing healthy assertiveness are keys to maintaining healthy boundaries.

Having boundaries and being responsible for what is inside one’s own area is a sound biblical concept. The Bible instructs us to carry our own load. Every believer has personal responsibilities that he is to carry. Believers are expected to deal with their own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as the responsibilities God has given to every believer. Believers also have a responsibility to others who have fallen under a crushing weight too great to carry alone. Coming to the aid of a fellow believer who does not have enough strength, resources, or knowledge to carry the load is fulfilling the law of Christ. Denying one’s self to do for others what they cannot do for themselves is showing the sacrificial love of Christ. Ultimately, all believers will be held accountable before Christ for the quality of their service and their faithfulness in using the talents God has given to them.

The concept of boundaries is reflected in the very nature of God. God is distinct from his creation. He defines and takes responsibility for his personality by telling people

2 Corinthians 6:4
Dr. Louis McBurney’s comment at a breakout session of “Family Time Getaway, A conference for Clergy and their Families” at Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 20-24, 2001
Galatians 6:5
New Testament Bible Knowledge Commentary, p.610
Galatians 6:2
Galatians 6:2
1 Corinthians 3:10-15
Matthew 25:14-30
what he thinks, feels, plans, allows, disallows, likes and dislikes. Within the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit are one but distinct persons with their own responsibilities or boundaries.

Every time the Bible instructs believers to walk in God’s Word and wisdom, and to avoid worldliness, it is gives them boundaries. God’s truth puts limits on people. They can live in light of that reality or suffer the consequences. A common boundary problem is to disown one’s choices and lay the responsibility for them on someone else. However, the Bible repeatedly reminds people of their need to choose wisely and to be responsible for their choices.

The most basic boundary-setting word is “no”. Saying “no”, asserts to others that they do not control you, and it communicates boundaries to them. The Bible supports this idea about being clear about what one loves or hates, about what one will or will not do. One’s “yes” should mean “yes” and one’s “no”, “no”. No is a basic boundary setting word, but it is very important in setting limits on abuse. Many Bible passages urge believers to say “no” to another’s sinful treatment of them.

Smart Goals

S.M.A.R.T goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timed.

Setting attainable goals are particularly important for the perfectionists who tend to make

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521 Proverbs 4:10-13; Ephesians 5:8
522 1 John 2:15-17
523 Galatians 6:7
524 Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend, Boundaries, p.42
525 Joshua 24:15; Romans 8:13; Matthew 20:13-15
526 Matthew 5:37; James 5:12
527 Matthew 18:15-20
lofty goals. Goals are small steps to fulfill a pastor’s role and accomplish his purposes.

The Bible not only does not condemn wise planning or goal setting but commends it. Proverbs tells us “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”

Paul and James both believed in planning. Paul told the church at Rome of his ministry and travel plans. James reminds believers to submit all of their plans to the Lordship of Christ.

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

Goal setting is a wise practice for any pastor who desires to accomplish his purpose.

Effective Time Management and Margins

Time management recognizes the wisdom in using time wisely. The Bible reminds us that life is very brief, especially in light of eternity. Job exclaimed, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again."

"My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy. They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey."

In light of the shortness of life believers are to evaluate how they spend their time. Moses urged, “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of

529 Proverbs 6:6-8
530 Romans 1:13; 15:22-33
531 James 4:13-16
532 Job 7:6-7
533 Job 9:25-26
wisdom.” Paul repeats this idea when he said, “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” Believers are to make the most of their time on this earth in fulfilling God’s purposes. Managing time wisely is being a good steward of the life God has given.

Delegating responsibility to trained people is a wise use of time. The Lord showed the value of delegation to Moses when he commanded him to gather to himself seventy men who shall bear the burden of the people with you. Even Jesus did not minister by himself, but chose twelve disciples to learn from him. Mark records, “He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles-- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.” Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus to whom he had delegated the churches at Ephesus and Crete.

A margin is the amount allowed beyond what is required. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Healthy living requires margins in emotional energy, physical energy, time and finances.

Summary

Although burnout is not a term found in the Bible, its symptoms and causes were identified in a number of God’s servants as well as practical insights needed in preventing burnout. The examples of burnout in famous people from the Bible exposed key insights in preventing this physical, emotional, mental and spiritual exhaustion, called burnout.

534 Psalm 90:12
535 Ephesians 5:15-16
536 Numbers 11:16-18
537 Mark 12:14
538 I Timothy 1:2-3; Titus 1:4-5
539 Dr. Richard A. Swenson, Margin (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1992) pp. 91,100
Pastors who desire to avoid burnout must make self-care a priority. Once self-care is a priority in one’s thinking, then it can become a reality in one’s living. Burnout is the end result of prolonged job-related or personal stress and affects the whole person -- physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, professional, and relational. By being proactive in caring for the whole person a pastor can avoid burnout, and enjoy many years of effective ministry.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Implementation

Session two was presented to a small group of pastors over a two hour period. This session was chosen so that the pastors could be tested for burnout and have a simple way to evaluate others who they feel might be burning out. An extensive review of session one was needed before the testing was done. Burnout was defined and described. The consequences of burnout were listed and illustrated. The major internal and external causes of burnout were described. The signs and symptoms of burnout were arranged into the six categories of: physical, behavioral, emotional, relational, attitudinal and spiritual. Questions and answers were taken and a short break given at this point. Each test was explained before it was taken and scored. A question and answer time followed each test. An overhead was used to project the outline and tests for session two and are included in Appendix A. This session’s evaluation was then conducted. The participants were asked questions related to the content, delivery, personal levels of stress and burnout, and how this course could be improved.

Results

Overall this learning experience was enjoyable and educational for everyone. They thought the Holmes/Rahe test was the best because it was very specific. Those who once were senior pastors but who are now serving in other capacities said that their scores would have been higher if they were senior pastors. They explained this by stating that
senior pastors come under much more stress than associates, since they field more complaints and have far greater responsibilities.

The all agreed that my presentation of burnout’s cause, consequences, definition, description, signs and symptoms were very clear. Some questioned the validity of the tests for burnout for someone who is currently burning out because the tests measure change. I pointed out that the Maslach Burnout Inventory seems to be more accurate at this point since it measures the frequency of an event rather than one’s perceived change over the past six months. For example, Hart asks to rate the degree of change in the last six months on a scale of 1 to 5 “Do you become more fatigued, tired or worn out by the end of the day?” Maslach asks a similar question, “I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.” But has the person rate it on a scale of 0 to 6 where 0 = never, 4 = once a week and 5 = few times a week and 6 = every day. This author believes that the other tests could be improved upon if they used a scale like the MBI.

Several in this group thought the testing would be improved upon if it was done in conjunction with a close friend or spouse. They felt that a pastor could lie to himself or be blind to the symptoms of burnout, but a close friend or wife would seldom miss the symptoms. The necessity of accountability and close friendships was seen by the group as key ingredients in preventing burnout. I agreed with them and the research confirms the importance of friendships in preventing burnout.

This group also wondered if senior pastors’ wives were not more susceptible to burnout than other women since they feel the pressure and complaints their husbands
experience, but don’t always see the blessings in ministry. That topic was beyond the scope of this study but would serve as a helpful topic.

With the rise of postmodernism in our culture and the emergence of super-sized churches several in the group wondered if burnout is not increasing at a greater rate than it did in the past. I do not have any research to confirm or deny this statement. But it is clear that burnout is linked with stress. So it is reasonable to assume that as a senior pastor’s job becomes more stressful then burnout will become more likely.

At this point I mentioned our current focus of identifying burnout and that two additional sessions could be given concerning the prevention of burnout in senior pastors. The group wanted to spend more time discussing the prevention of burnout but we were out of time. I was encouraged by the groups’ belief that this information should be made available for other pastors.

If a person only had a short time to present the material in this thesis, then I would give session two as it is outlined in Appendix A. When I present this material again I will add more illustrations and visuals during the presentation.

**Conclusions**

This study seeks to identify and to prevent burnout in senior pastors. The identification of burnout was accomplished by carefully defining it and distinguishing it from stress and depression. The symptoms of burnout were examined and self-administered tests provided so that burnout could be easily diagnosed.

The prevention of burnout was accomplished by emphasizing the need for self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and
professional. Additional insight in preventing burnout was gained by examining several key biblical characters.

Burnout is a serious problem in our day among senior pastors. It is a deadly reality with devastating consequences. Knowing these consequences provides the motivation needed to make life changes necessary to prevent burnout from ever occurring. Knowing the symptoms of burnout and having self-administered tests provides a simple way to identify this syndrome. Realizing the causes of burnout and the key elements to healthy self-care provides the best preventative path against burnout.

This study was instrumental in this author avoiding burnout and not leaving the ministry. In the author’s experience, the top three elements in preventing burnout were prayer, God’s word and good friends who never abandoned him in his time of need and distress. The next three elements that pulled him out of the downward tail spin toward burnout were forgiveness, hope of future reward and physical exercise.

The author has shared this information in an informal way with four pastors to date who were burning out. They all were encouraged by this information and motivated to make the necessary changes needed to avoid burnout. These results are so encouraging that the author is thinking of ways of putting this information out in a more readable format so that others in the ministry can be helped by it.

**Recommendations**

Additional research is needed to answer many questions. How does burnout impact a pastor’s wife or children? Does burnout affect associate pastors the same way it impacts senior pastors? How does burnout affect ethnic churches and their pastors?
serving in the United States? How does burnout affect those serving in para-church ministries such as missionaries, evangelists, or youth workers? Is their a distinction in burnout among those who serve in urban areas verses suburban or rural areas? Does burnout affect men differently than women? Is age a factor in experiencing burnout? In addition to these unanswered questions, each of the six aspects that are critical in providing self-care to the whole person could become its own separate topic of research.
Appendix A:

Overheads for presenting Session #2

The Identification and Prevention of Burnout

**Burnout Defined & Described**

Burnout is a condition that describes a pastor who strives to achieve high goals but is constantly frustrated until he becomes angry, helpless and hopeless.

Burnout describes the minister who was dedicated, enthusiastic and highly motivated but now has become indifferent to his ministry and seeks to detach from people.

Burnout is seen when an energetic pastor increasingly feels physically and emotionally exhausted and views the future as hopeless.

Burnout is seen when a devoted and highly committed pastor becomes overwhelmed by the feelings that his life is empty, without purpose and meaning.

Burnout and depression are often confused since depression is nearly always present in burnout. However, when depression is present in burnout, it is a symptom of the disorder. But it can also be an independent problem never producing the burnout syndrome.

Burnout is defined by Herbert Freudenberger as physical and mental exhaustion and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems of others. Burnout is the wearing out of oneself by excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or by the values of society. Stated another way he said that a person experiencing burnout is “... someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward.” Simply stated, burnout “... occurs when one sets out to move the world a bit, only to find oneself with the world pressing down on one’s shoulder.”
Christina Maslach defines burnout as “. . . a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people-work of some kind. A pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion is at the heart of the burnout syndrome.”

Minirth and Meier define it “. . . as the loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective, and purpose. It is a state of mental, physical, and spiritual exhaustion brought on by continued stress.”

Burnout is a debilitating, psychological condition brought about by chronic, relentless stress.

Archibald Hart stated that the “. . . heart of the burnout syndrome is a pattern of emotional overload with little reward or appreciation in the context of feelings of helplessness.”

Burnout comprises most if not all of the following:
Demoralization – a belief that you are no longer effective as a pastor.
Depersonalization – a treating of yourself and others in an impersonal way.
Detachment – a withdrawing from all responsibilities.
Distancing – an avoidance of social and interpersonal contacts.
Defeatism – a feeling of being beaten and a giving up of any hope of being able to avoid defeat.
Consequences of the burnout syndrome

Burnout is debilitating to any conscientious and highly motivated ministers.

Burnout can reduce even the most vibrant, enthusiastic, caring pastors to a heap of emotional rubble. They become exhausted, fearful, lonely, isolated, depressed, hopeless, and unable to give of themselves to care for others.

Burnout shortens the tenure of ministers who are caring, competent, and conscientious.

Frequent moves associated with burnout reduce the ability of pastors to develop the confidence in ministry skills associated with longevity.

Burnout causes pastors to drop out of the ministry. Every month the pastoral ministries department at Focus on the Family receives 400-500 calls from troubled ministers. Of those pastors who call, 70 to 80 percent are either in burnout or on the very edge of it.

The whole church suffers when a pastor’s inner zeal to serve is replaced by feelings that his work is futile, the future is hopeless, and he is trapped.

When a pastor is “ready to quit,” ministries are left undone, and the church does not receive the visionary kind of leadership necessary in a healthy church. Burnout often results in a disengagement from the main task of ministry.

A church’s effectiveness in evangelism is hurt by pastors with short tenure.

When a pastor leaves prematurely attendance drops off along with giving. Questions and disputes arise. The church struggles for direction. Moreover, when a new pastor is hired, time is required to build relationships, gain momentum and develop the chemistry that makes a church more than just a gathering of people on Sunday.

Pastors who are burned-out will not care whether responsibilities are left undone, whether the ministry is impacting lives for Christ, whether they are growing in their relationship with Christ, or whether legitimate concerns are being voiced. An uncaring ministry along with unmet needs often leads to increased complaints and divisions in the church. In addition, ministers who are unconcerned about their spiritual growth are easy prey for Satan.
Causes for burnout among senior pastors

Senior pastors are particularly vulnerable to burnout because they experience a wide exposure to the needs and emotional demands of people over a long time period. This is especially true when they hold to high ideals, cannot tolerate failure, lack social support, and place excessive expectations on themselves and others. Burnout is not a syndrome of those who are lazy or irresponsible, but of those who are responsible, caring, and high achievers.

External causes of Burnout

1. Work overload – lack of boundaries and a clear role

2. The ministry
   - The job of a pastor is never finished
   - A pastor cannot always tell if his work is having any lasting results
   - A pastor’s work is very repetitive which can lead to exhaustion or boredom.
   - A pastor faces a multitude of expectations from a variety of people.
   - A pastor must work with the same difficult people year after year.
   - A pastor works with people in need requiring a great deal of energy.
   - A pastor deals with many people who come to church not to serve but to be served.
   - A pastor may be tempted to function in his “persona.”
   - A pastor may become exhausted by failure.

3. Unrealistic expectations of others

4. Lack of appreciation, recognition and support
5. The stress of dealing with other people’s problems
6. Rejection
7. Church conflict

8. Stresses from a pastor’s personal life
   - Marital conflict
   - Problems with children
   - Financial pressures
   - Other emotional demands that are personal in nature.
Internal causes

1. A pastor’s personality
   - Impatient or intolerant
   - Weak or unassertive – do not call others into account
   - Lack of self-confidence
   - High need for approval
   - Need to be in control

2. A pastor’s intensity of emotions – competitiveness and high expectations

3. Over-commitment

4. Unrealistic expectations of one’s self

5. The need for achievement, affection and approval

6. Feelings of inadequacy

7. Frustration resulting from a failure to attain goals

8. An exaggerated sense of responsibility.

**Signs and Symptoms of Burnout**

The signs of burnout are seen in the changes that occur in the life of an individual who is suffering burnout.

Victims of burnout do not want to answer the phone. They avoid people at public events. They ignore new ministry opportunities. For no apparent reason, they cancel appointments and meetings. They struggle to get out of bed, experience regular headaches and have difficulty sleeping. A person who is experiencing burnout will resent people who come to them with problems. Burnout reduces a once goal-oriented, dedicated, enthusiastic, highly motivated and joyful pastor to one who feels angry, helpless, hopeless, and indifferent to the needs of others. A person experiencing burnout increasingly feels physically and emotionally exhausted and views the future as hopeless and his life as empty.
The symptoms of burnout arranged in six categories: Health, behavioral, emotional, relational, attitudinal and spiritual.

Health Indicators of Burnout

Exhaustion - Lack of energy - Feelings of tiredness - Trouble keeping up with one’s usual round of activities - Waking up in the morning feeling exhausted and struggling to stay awake in the afternoons – Fatigue - Sleep difficulties – Headaches - Gastro-intestinal problems - Increased susceptibility to colds and flu - Heart palpitations - Feeling of tightness in the chest – Hyperactivity – Trembling – Rashes - Lethargy - Loss of sexual energy

Behavioral Indicators of Burnout

Increased consumption of caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and drugs - High risk-taking behavior - Increased tendency towards violent and aggressive behavior - Over or under eating – Hyperactivity - The ability to accomplish tasks at work decreases - Impatience and irritability with everyone around them increases - Increase in conflicts with colleagues – A withdraw from leadership – Overreacting to statements or circumstances – The inability to relax

Emotional Indicators of Burnout

Emotional distancing - Withdrawing from others – Depression - Lack of purpose – Hopelessness – Martyrdom - Feelings of being trapped - Increase in anger and tension – Not feeling appreciated - Feeling mistreated or threatened - A paranoia along with a heightened sense of moodiness and irritability over trivial matters - A person’s tolerance and patience level drops - Feeling emotionally overloaded - Increasingly isolated from people along with increased feelings of deep loneliness - Counter transference or becoming emotionally entangled with another individual so that the client’s problems become the counselor’s problems

Relational Indicators of Burnout

Withdrawing from people - Detachment - Interpersonal conflicts - A mistrust of people - People are viewed in more cynical and derogatory terms - Questioning of the value of friendships, activities and even of life itself
Spiritual Indicators of Burnout

A once proudly held faith is no longer meaningful or an important motivator to make changes – The feeling that God is distant and deaf to one’s cries for help - A lack of reading the word for personal development – Worry – Fear

Attitude Indicators of Burnout

The negative attitude towards oneself, work, and life in general - Cynicism, Defensiveness – Pessimism - Feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness - A sense of disenchantment – Detachment –Depression - Feelings of loss and thoughts of why bother anymore - Feelings of being beaten and giving up any hope of being able to avoid defeat – A loss of confidence and seriously question their effectiveness - Feel incompetent - Exaggerated thoughts - Speech patterns will falter - Concentration spans become increasingly limited - The ability to remember names, dates, or even what one started to say will decrease - Depression - Suicidal thinking.
### Testing for Burnout

**Holmes/Rahe Life Changes Rating Scale.¹**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Average Value</th>
<th>your score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital separation</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious decline in church attendance</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical relocation</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private meetings by segment of congregation to</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss your resignation</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of heavy drinking by immediate family member</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in health of family member</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem with children</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex difficulties</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation from the association/convention</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain of new family member</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New job in new line of work</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in financial status</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close friend</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased arguing with spouse</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merger of two or more congregations</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious parish financial difficulty</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage over $50,000</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with member of church staff</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure of mortgage or loan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of church by fire</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New job in same line of work</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son or daughter leaving home</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with in-laws</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger of influential church member</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over pastor’s action</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow, steady decline in church attendance</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of new hymnal to worship service</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Roy Oswald, Clergy Stress (Minneapolis: Ministers Life Resources, 1982)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure of church to make a payroll</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remodeling or building program</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start or stop of spouse’s employment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday away</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start or finish of school</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of peer</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of call to another church</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in living conditions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of personal habits</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative church activity by former pastor</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in schools</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in social activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death/moving away of good church leader</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage or loan less than $50,000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sleeping habits</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of new friendship</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in eating habits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful continuing education program</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major program change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation at home</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor violation of the law</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your Total Score**

Add up the numbers in the column titled “your score” to get a Total Score. The significance of the total score in relation to other clergy is given below.

Below 50  low
50 to 150 stress is at a manageable level
151 to 200 borderline, reason for mild concern
201 to 250 serious concern to be exercised
251 to 300 more serious concern to be exercised
301 to 350 to be taken seriously
Above 351 to be taken very seriously
Dr. Archibald Hart’s Test

Rate the amount of change that has occurred during the past 12 months of your life with special emphasis on change that has occurred over the last six months. Rate each question on a 1 to 5 scale. With 1 = little or no change. 2 = just noticeable change. 3 = noticeable change. 4 = fair degree of change. 5 = great degree of change.

1. Do you become more fatigued, tired or ‘worn out’ by the end of the day? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Have you lost interest in your present work? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Have you lost ambition in your overall career? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Do you find yourself becoming easily bored (Spending long hours with nothing significant to do)? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Do you find that you have become more pessimistic, critical or cynical of yourself or others? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Do you forget appointments, deadlines, or activities and don’t feel very concerned about it? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you spend more time alone, withdrawn from friends, family, and work acquaintances? 1 2 3 4 5
8. Has any increase occurred in your general level of irritability, hostility, or aggressiveness? 1 2 3 4 5
9. Has your sense of humor become less obvious to yourself or others? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Do you become sick more easily (flu, colds, and pain problems)? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Do you experience headaches more than usual? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Do you suffer from gastrointestinal problems (stomach pains, chronic diarrhea or colitis)? 1 2 3 4 5
13. Do you wake up feeling extremely tired and exhausted most mornings? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Do you find that you deliberately try to avoid people you previously did not mind being around? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Has there been a lessening of your sexual drive? 1 2 3 4 5
16. Do you find that you now tend to treat people as impersonal objects or with a fair degree of callousness? 1 2 3 4 5
17. Do you feel that you are not accomplishing anything worthwhile in your work and that you are ineffective in making any changes? 1 2 3 4 5
18. Do you feel that you are not accomplishing anything worthwhile in your personal life or that you have lost spontaneity in your activities? 1 2 3 4 5
19. Do you find that you spend much time each day thinking or worrying about your job, people, future or past? 1 2 3 4 5
20. Do you feel that you are at the end of your rope – that you are at the point of breaking down or cracking up? 1 2 3 4 5

Total Score = __________

If the total score is between 20 and 30, there is no burnout.
A total score between 31 and 45 is very normal.
A total score between 46 and 60 indicates mild burnout.
A total score between 61 and 75 indicates burnout.
A total score between 76 and 90, indicates severe burnout.

2 Hart, “Burnout”, pp.6-8
Minirth and Meier Test for Burnout

The following is a way to test for symptoms of burnout. Check those statements you agree with. Count up the check marks. If you agree with more than 50% of those statements, then you may be experiencing burnout and be in need of professional help, counseling or at least a change in life-style.

1. More and more, I find that I can hardly wait for quitting time to come so that I can leave work.
2. I feel like I’m not doing any good at work these days.
3. I am more irritable than I used to be.
4. I’m thinking more about changing jobs.
5. Lately I’ve become more cynical and negative.
6. I have more headaches (or backaches, or other physical symptoms) than usual.
7. Often I feel hopeless, like who cares?
8. I drink more now or take tranquilizers just to cope with everyday stress.
9. My energy level is not what it used to be. I’m tired all the time.
10. I feel a lot of pressure and responsibility at work these days.
11. My memory is not as good as it used to be.
12. I don’t seem to concentrate or pay attention like I did in the past.
13. I don’t sleep as well.
14. My appetite is decreased these days (or, I can’t seem to stop eating).
15. I feel unfulfilled and disillusioned.
16. I’m not as enthusiastic about work as I was a year or two ago.
17. I feel like a failure at work. All the work I’ve done hasn’t been worth it.
18. I can’t seem to make decisions as easily as I once did.
19. I find I’m doing fewer things at work that I like or that I do well.
20. I often tell myself, why bother? It doesn’t really matter anyhow.
21. I don’t feel adequately rewarded or noticed for all the work I’ve done.
22. I feel helpless. I can’t see any way out of my problems
23. People have told me I’m too idealistic about my job.
24. I think my career has just about come to a dead end.

Total check marks ____________.

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3 Minirth et al., How To Beat Burnout, pp.37-38
Dr. Herbert Freudenberger’s Test

Allow no more than 30 seconds for each answer. Then assign it a number from 1 (for no or little change) to 5 (for a great deal of change) to designate the degree of change you perceive.

1. Do you tire more easily? 1 2 3 4 5
   Feel fatigued rather than energetic?
2. Are people annoying you by telling you, “You don’t look too good lately”? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Are you working harder and harder and accomplishing less and less? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Are you increasingly cynical and disenchanted? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Are you often invaded by a sadness you can’t explain? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Are you forgetting (appointments, deadlines, personal possessions)? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Are you increasingly irritable? 1 2 3 4 5
   More short-tempered?
   More disappointed in the people around you?
8. Are you seeing close friends and family members less frequently? 1 2 3 4 5
9. Are you too busy to do even routine things like make phone calls or read reports or send out your Christmas cards? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Are you suffering from physical complaints (aches, pains, headaches, a lingering cold)? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Do you feel disoriented when the activity of the day comes to a halt? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Is joy elusive? 1 2 3 4 5
13. Are you unable to laugh at a joke about yourself? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Does sex seem like more trouble than it’s worth? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Do you have very little to say to people? 1 2 3 4 5

Total Score =

Compare your total score with the following:

0-25 You’re doing fine.
26-35 There are things you should be watching.
36-50 You’re a candidate for burnout.
51-65 You are burning out.
Over 65 You’re in a dangerous place, threatening to your physical and mental well-being.

*Freudenberger with Richelson, *Burn-Out*, pp.17-18*
The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)\textsuperscript{5}\textsuperscript{6} is a simple self-administered test designed to assess emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

Unlike the other tests, the MBI can only be administered by a trained professional. The three scores are obtained by answering a series of questions using a scale of 0-6 (0 = never, 1 = a few times a year, 2 = once a month, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = a few times a week, and 6 = every day).\textsuperscript{7}

The questions used to determine emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment can not be shown due to copyright restrictions.

\textsuperscript{5} Christian Maslach, Susan Jackson, \textit{Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey} (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. 1986)


\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p.9
The Prevention of Burnout

Burnout is an alarm to signal that life is out of balance. The regular practice of self-care of the whole person – physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, mental and professional – is the best prevention against burnout.

1. Physical Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ Sleep
   ➢ Relaxation
   ➢ Recreation and Time Off
   ➢ Exercise
   ➢ Proper Nutrition and Weight

2. Spiritual Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ The theological support for self-care
   ➢ Love for Christ
   ➢ A certain Hope
   ➢ Faith in Christ
   ➢ Faithfulness
   ➢ Facing a fallen world and a fierce enemy

3. Relational Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ Close friendships
   ➢ Mutual accountability

4. Emotional Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ The Source of Emotions and Ways of Handling Them
   ➢ Stress Management
   ➢ Practicing Intentional Assertiveness
   ➢ Living with Detached Concern
   ➢ Laughter and the Joyful Heart
   ➢ The Negative Emotions in Burnout
     - Anger
     - Bitterness
     - Worry
     - Guilt
     - Depression

5. Mental Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ Love
   ➢ Forgiveness
   ➢ Right Thinking

6. Professional Aspects of Self-Care and Burnout
   ➢ Purpose Driven
   ➢ A Clear Role
   ➢ Healthy Boundaries
   ➢ SMART Goals
   ➢ Effective Time Management and Margins
Appendix B

Illustrations for presenting

The Identification and Prevention of Burnout

Illustration #1

“He always said he would preach five services before he’d start another building campaign.”
Illustration #4

**Wanted**- A rector for St. James' Church. He must possess all Christian graces and a few worldly ones; must have such tact and disposition as will enable him to side with all parties in the parish an all points, giving offense to none; should possess a will of his own, but agree with all the vestry; must be socially inclined and of dignified manners--affable to all, neither running after the wealthy nor turning his back upon the poor; a man of high-low church tendencies preferred. Must be willing to preach first-class sermons and do first-class work on second-class compensation--salary should not be so much of an object as the desire to be a zealous laborer in the vineyard; should be able to convince all that they are miserable sinners without giving offense. Each sermon must be short, but complete in itself--full of old-fashioned theology in modern dress: deep but polished, and free from the eloquence peculiar to newly-graduated theologians; should be young enough to be enthusiastic, but possess judgment of one of ripe years and experience. Only he who possesses the above qualifications need apply. To such a one will be given steady employment for a term of years.

*Milwaukee Sentinel, June 16, 1875. Leadership, Vol. 2, no*

Illustration #5

The Perfect Pastor:

Results of a computerized survey indicate that the perfect pastor preaches exactly 15 minutes. He condemns sin, but never embarrasses anyone. He works from 8 a.m. until midnight and is also the janitor. He makes $60 a week, wears good clothes, drives a new
car, and gives $50 a week to the poor. He is 28 years old, has been preaching for 25
years, is wonderfully gentle and handsome, loves to work with teenagers and spends
countless hours with senior citizens. He makes 15 calls daily on parish families, shut-ins
and hospital patients, and is always in his office when needed.

Illustration #6

“Come in, Mr. Fenster. Tell me about your problems.”
"You've got to admire him. He's always quick to leave the ninety-nine to search for the lost one."
“Good news, Reverend. The board has voted to pray for your recovery . . . the vote was 5-4.”
Illustration #9

WHY MORE PASTORS DON’T PURSUE THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFESTYLE...

IS SOMEBODY AROUND TO UNLOCK ROOM 217?

GOTTA CALL BOB.

CAN MY LAPEL MIC BE FIXED?

IS EDITH WATSON’S SURGERY ON WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY?

OOPS, WAS THERE A TRUSTEES’ MEETING LAST NIGHT?

DID PHIL CHANGE THE OIL IN THE BUS?
Illustrations #10 and 11

"Oh, I'm sure he won't mind our interrupting his hectic schedule to chat for a while.... Well, that's funny. He was here a minute ago."

"Is the coast clear?"
"That cloud looks like Mrs. Cheezeeder complaining about my hymn selections. That cloud over there looks like Mr. Barkwell complaining about the budget for youth ministry. That other cloud looks like Mrs. Lintcatcher complaining about the women's fellowship meetings..."
"It's time to be prophetic," you said.
"No more mincing words..."
"Look, Stan, I'm sorry about your car. But, frankly, I'm appalled that you, being a pastor, would allow yourself to become upset over something like this."
"I was going to phone the police, but then I thought, 'No, what they need is a pastoral call.'"
“I heard you were here, Pastor, but I didn’t want to cancel our counseling session.”