

BURNOUT IN THE MINISTRY

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Some pastors have experienced, heard, and read about burnout, yet they do not realize they have it until they leave the ministry. Many think that burnout is a syndrome that affects only people who are in an environment or an organization where the style of leadership is compulsive, aggressive, relentless, and oppressive. However, burnout is common among professionals who are engaged in the helping professions, and that includes ministers.

In 1994 the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists conducted a survey which revealed that 65 percent of the North American Division ministers were threatened with burnout, while another 67 percent expressed that they had experienced a certain degree of burnout.¹

What Is Burnout?

A large number of ministers go to physicians with varied chronic psychosomatic complaints, ranging from a simple headache to more debilitating chronic fatigue.

These complaints are often diagnosed as gastritis or weak immune responses and are sometimes mistaken as excuses in order to escape work assignments. In most cases, these people receive pills ranging from simple pain killers, antacids, minor tranquilizers, to antidepressants. The most common prescription is multivitamins. This is so because the physician is unable to find any pathology despite the presence of an array of symptoms. However, the problem may become chronic and lead to decline in and dissatisfaction with the quality of work.

Dr. Hans Selye, guru of stress and Director of the University of Montreal's Institute of Experimental Medicine, defines stress as "a nonspecific response of the body to any demand upon it."² Stress is not always bad; it is essential to life. Any work that is free of stress is work without achievement and motivation.

¹James Kilmer, "Stop the Burnout, Enjoy the Ministry," *Ministry*, June 1996, 19.

²Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 1.

In 1975 Herbert J. Freudenberger defined burnout and explained its mechanics. Burnout, he says is “to fail, wear out or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resources.”¹ Hence, although stress is important, it should not be so intense and so extended as to result in burnout, which results in a loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective and purpose in life and work.

For LeRoy Spaniol, an assistant professor at Boston University, burnout is “feeling locked into a job routine.”² Psychologist Christina Maslach states that burnout is a “syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind.”³

Gospel ministers use tremendous amounts of energy to meet the demands of multiple roles in their unique position in the work environment. The sense of being “on call” demands a lot of energy. Oftentimes, ministers, still not able to recuperate from previous energy depletion, need to address another demand, thereby leading them to energy exhaustion. The rapid expenditure of, or even borrowing from, energy stores leads to burnout.

In William H. Willimon’s book, John Sanford expresses a different view on burnout. He believes that burnout “may arise from a lack of meaning in life rather than from lack of energy.”⁴ When one experiences stress, the body responds by attempting to restore balance. This is called the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). This syndrome has three phases: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.

The *alarm phase* prepares the body for the fight or flight response. This response is regulated by the sympathetic nervous system, which results in an increase in rate of all body functions, thereby increasing the speed of release of energy by the body cells. This reaction is very important because it supplies physical strength to protect one’s self. Physical changes during this phase usually last for only a few seconds.

The *resistance phase* keeps the energy levels under control and returns the body to normal functioning. The parasympathetic nervous system regulates this activity by slowing down all the systems previously stimulated. This phase follows immediately after the alarm phase has started.

The *exhaustion phase* results when all the energy used to fight a stressor is depleted and there is inability to replenish the energy that was lost.

¹Herbert J. Freudenberger, “The Staff Burn-out Syndrome in Alternative Institutions,” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 12 (1975): 73.

²LeRoy Spaniol, “Teacher Burnout,” *Instructor* 88 (1979): 57.

³Christina Maslach, *Burnout—The Cost of Caring* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 3.

⁴William H. Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout*, Creative Leadership Series (Nashville : Abingdon, 1989), 25.

Why Burnout?

Burnout among ministers has many causes. These causes may be self-imposed, may come from external sources, or may even result from interaction with the environment. Because ministers are in constant interaction not only with their church members but also with other people not in their church, their susceptibility to burnout increases. The lifestyle and home life of the minister may influence the degree of acceleration in the burnout process or may slow it down.

The minister performs a number of roles in a single week. He¹ serves as a referee in church fights during board meetings, as a preacher during the midweek prayer service, as an educator, a comforter in times of suffering, a counselor, a theologian, a project promoter, and a financial adviser in church matters as well as in church-operated schools. These are only a few of the roles that a minister needs to fulfill. This is referred to as role overload. He encounters these roles day after day, week after week, because church work is unending. In addition to the routine, the minister works with almost the same people year after year.

David Congo,² in a survey conducted among ministers in thirty-two denominations in thirty-eight states, reported that 70 percent worked more than sixty hours a week; 85 percent spent two or less evenings a week at home; 75 percent spent less than one evening per month purely for social time with their wives and other couples; and 61 percent spent less than one hour a week talking with other pastors.

A minister also succumbs to ill-defined expectations from the church's world leaders, the local conference, and the local congregation. The church's world leaders may expect the minister to be mission oriented; the local conference's emphasis might be on the number of annual baptisms and the tithes and offerings collected; and the local congregation may hold many other expectations that he just cannot completely meet. By trying to satisfy all these expectations, a minister wears himself out.

At times, ministers need to put on two masks because of their high public visibility. They are expected to be spiritual, to behave differently from church members, not to have problems like those of other people, and not to need a day off. Their families are expected to be exemplary and perfect. They are supposed to have well disciplined children and wives who are very supportive in response to the demands of the ministry on top of their mother-wife responsibilities. All of these are subject to public observation. Thus, the minister and his family often have to put aside their true feelings and personal needs to accomplish the roles imposed upon them.

¹"He" is understood herein to indicate both genders.

²David Congo, "What Causes Burnout?" *Theological News and Notes*, March 1984,

John Carter and Janelle Warner point out that loneliness is a contributing factor in burnout among ministers, based on a study where a selected group was chosen among Presbyterian ministers and their wives. The findings revealed that both ministers and their wives experienced loneliness and that burnout was related to lack of support. They also observed that couples spent less time together because of the demands of Christian service, which led to less marital satisfaction.¹

William Willimon quotes Gary Harbaugh as saying that

the two major frustrations in ministry may be related to two fundamental facts of life: time and space. Stress is produced when a person feels there is never enough time . . . , when there appears to be either a too restrictive environment in which to function freely or a too open-ended environment to manage effectively.²

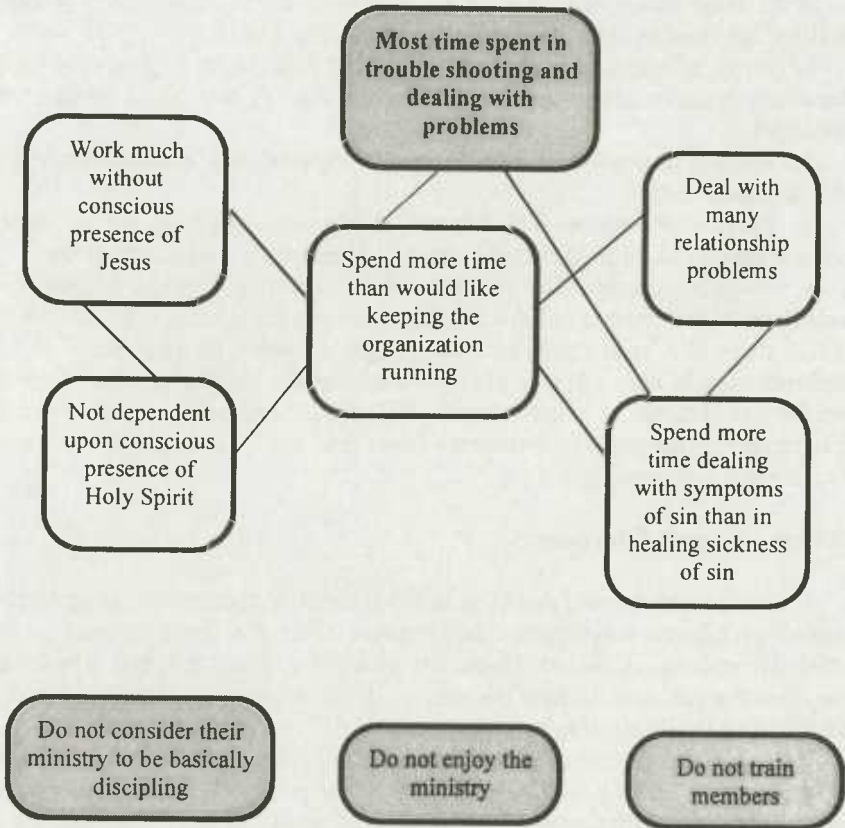
Because of these factors, most ministers feel they are always short of time, which leads to a neglect in the care and nurture of their bodies. With a very hectic schedule and multiplicity of roles, a minister needs to take charge not only of his spiritual needs but also of his physical, mental, and social needs. Because of the tendency of ministers to agree to all sorts of demands imposed by the church, they tend to neglect their own physical health and that of their families in the name of God. When the physical health is neglected, it is easy to experience burnout.

Some ministers are often so frantically busy that they end up in a tangled web, dealing with a style of ministry that is oriented to troubleshooting an overabundance of relational problems and their symptoms. These are ministers who keep their ministry always on the go, independent of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Graphically, James Kilmer illustrates that those who tend to experience burnout follow the patterns of ministry indicated in the following diagram:³

¹John D. Carter and Janelle Warner, "Loneliness, Marital Adjustment and Burnout in Pastoral and Lay Persons," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (Summer 1984), quoted in Frank Minirth, Don Hawkins, Paul Meier, and Richard Flournoy, *How to Beat Burnout* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 87.

²Gary Harbaugh, *The Pastor as Person*, quoted in William H. Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout*, Creative Leadership Series (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 45.

³Kilmer, 20.



He describes how to interpret the diagram:

Look at any circle. Follow lines from that circle to others to observe correlations. For example, those who spend most of their time troubleshooting and dealing with problems also tend to spend more time than they would like keeping the organization going and dealing with symptoms of sin rather than with healing. If you look at the circle representing those who spend more time than they would like keeping the organization running you can see that they also spend a lot of time dealing with relationship problems, deal primarily with the symptoms of sin, and work without the conscious presence of Christ in their daily life.¹

¹Ibid.

In the book *Stress Management for Ministers*, Jerry Edewich and Archie Brodsky¹ are cited as observing that burnout has four stages:

1. *Stage of enthusiasm*. This is a stage of high hope, high energy, and unrealistic expectations, when one is new on the job and has a number of challenges.

2. *Stage of stagnation*. The thrill begins to wane during this stage because the job becomes a routine.

3. *Stage of frustration*. The minister, at this stage, questions the job itself, with a feeling of unfulfilled expectations and diminishing accomplishments.

4. *Stage of apathy*. The minister develops strong feelings of personal inadequacy, which further reduces his accomplishments, leading to helplessness. At this stage, the local conference may begin to notice the problem, and the administrators, in their effort to alleviate the situation, more often than not will transfer this minister to a new church. However, it has been observed that a transferred minister tends to deteriorate faster than one who remains in the same church while recuperating.

Biblical Account of Burnout

It is interesting to note that even in Bible times, in the absence of advanced technology, burnout was present. The Scripture is full of accounts of people who suffered from burnout. Included in the list are Moses, Elijah, and Peter. The Bible also reveals Jesus' secrets, how He, despite His multiple roles, remained healthy and effective in His ministry.

The account of Moses and the Israelites in the desert of Paran shows how Moses felt after leading God's people out of Egypt. As the Israelites began to murmur about the hardships they had experienced when they left Egypt, they began to compare their life in the desert to their life in Egypt. The conversation between Moses and the Lord in Num 11:10-15 indicates how desperate Moses was. He showed signs of burnout as he questioned God and pleaded for God to take away his life.

1 Kgs 19:1-18 relates the experience of Elijah as he was threatened by the wicked queen Jezebel. The conversation between Elijah and the Lord, Elijah's constant running away from difficult situations, his feeling of despair, his suspicion that somebody was trying to kill him, and his isolation are all signs of burnout. Elijah also mentioned that he had enough burdens and wanted God to take away his life.

A few hours before Jesus was arrested, He went to the Mount of Olives with His disciples to pray. When Jesus came back after praying, He found His disciples

¹Jerry Edewich and Archie Brodsky, *Burn-Out: Stages of Disillusionment in the Helping Profession* (n.p.: Human Sciences Press, 1980), 14, quoted in Charles Rassieur, *Stress Management for Ministers* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 18-19.

sleeping because they were so exhausted from sorrow (v. 45). Because of this exhaustion, several things can be observed from Peter: signs of decreased tolerance to the situation (v. 49), loss of self control (v. 50), and denial of his Master and friend (vv. 57,58,60).

Of Jesus, on the other hand, Ellen G. White writes,

Jesus was an earnest, constant worker. Never lived there among men another so weighed with responsibilities. Never another carried so heavy a burden of the world's sorrow and sin. Never another toiled with such consuming zeal for the good of men. Yet His life was a life of health.¹

Matt 9:35 states that "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness."² Jesus, during His ministry on earth, was very vulnerable to burnout, but He remained in a state of health. Hence, His ministry is a model for all ministers of today.

Effects of Burnout on the Wholeness of Man

It is important to recognize that not everyone will manifest burnout exactly the same way as others. Burnout is revealed in varied physical manifestations and, because of this, it is often forgotten that burnout affects the whole person—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.

Physically, a burned-out minister may continue to pump adrenaline into his system, which will negatively affect some vulnerable system of the body. These systems include the cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, musculo-skeletal, and immune systems. Thus, burnout can lead to hypertension, strokes, and atherosclerosis. It can also result in loss of appetite, bouts of noninfectious diarrhea, acid stomach, and ulcers. A burned-out person may also complain of back and neck aches, migraine-like headaches, and even bone pains. An affected immune system brings frequent colds, allergies, and even the dreaded cancer.

Burnout involves the mental dimension, too. The presence of negative emotions leads to very low tolerance to discomfort, which will eventually end up in loss of control. A burned-out minister may suffer from feelings of helplessness, increased irritability, self-doubt, confusion, and difficulty in concentrating. He is also very vulnerable to temptations of sexual attraction and involvement which he may fail to recognize. He may even grow spiritually weak or stagnant. He may read the Bible and meditate, but he will still have feelings of emptiness. He will develop independence from God and the Holy Spirit. Ellen G. White stresses that

¹Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 51.

²Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

the relationship between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life force and to invite decay and death.¹

Burned-out ministers will begin to question friendships and even blame their families for their failures. They will have less time for themselves and less time to develop friendships. They will experience boredom and cynicism, often expressed by being late or absent from meetings, and they will engage in sidelines. Burned-out ministers may also have less confidence in the local conference or congregation and become suspicious towards the organization. All of these consequences will result in job dissatisfaction, in some cases ultimately ending with the individual leaving the ministry.

Burnout is one of the devil's tools to decrease the minister's chance of thinking correctly and serving the Lord efficiently. The devil will attempt to create guilt, worry, discontent, and feelings of failure and inadequacy, to the extent of prompting ministers to neglect the care of their physical bodies. This dulls the thinking process and leads to failure to discriminate right from wrong. During physical illness, the mind is able to cope with the illness, but when the mind, the center of all activities, including the control of the coping mechanism, becomes ill, the worst is next to come.

A Prescription

Diseases produced by burnout have been considered postponable diseases because they can be postponed indefinitely by prevention and rehabilitation. Ministers cannot totally avoid burnout, as at times they may experience some degree of burnout in their lifetime, but it can be prevented and stress can be kept at a manageable level. The human machinery has an advantage over that of animals in its ability to do something about an uncomfortable condition. Human beings have the choice and the ability to manage their stress or burnout.

Dr. Peter G. Hanson proposes in case of stress, "Learn to ignore what you cannot control and learn to control what you can."² In this manner, a minister experiencing burnout will opt not to abandon the ministry but instead to develop strategies that will help him to function more efficiently in his calling.

Dr. Michael Murray states that "to deal effectively with stress, an individual must concentrate on four equally important components which are like four legs on

¹Ibid., 241.

²Peter Hanson, "The Joy of Stress," quoted in Winton H. Beaven, "The Crisis of Stress," *Ministry*, May 1996, 11.

a table.”¹ He emphasizes a holistic approach in the management of stress. A balance in these components is very important in the life of a minister, otherwise a minister will consume almost all of his time and energy in the fulfillment of his realistic and unrealistic functions, resulting in a risk of burnout. Professional help is very important in stress management, but the minister, as an active participant in the management process, plays a major role.

Some guidelines have been formulated by different authors on how to prevent burnout. These can be grouped in five categories.

I. Role expectations

Donald P. Smith states, “For most clergymen today, role ambiguity and role conflict are the heart of the most difficult problem that the minister faces.”² To minimize the risk of these taking place, he suggests that, when considering a new call, ministers should give careful consideration to questions like

What is the mission of this particular congregation? What do people of this congregation expect in a minister? Are those expectations relevant to their goals? Does the minister share the understandings and goals of the congregation? Do their [the congregation’s] expectations fit reasonably well with the minister’s expectations, professional concerns, spiritual needs, predispositions and style of ministry?³

II. Physical components

A. *Nutrition.* According to Murray, “The delivery of high quality nutrition to the cell is the critical factor in determining the strength of the human system in response to stress.”⁴ The food that one eats can either create stress or add to the stress of daily life.

1. *Avoid coffee or tea.* These are sympatho-mimetics (mimic the effect of adrenaline). They cause a stress response when consumed.⁵

2. *Avoid alcohol.*⁶ Once consumed, alcohol enters the system and is

¹Michael Murray, *Stress, Anxiety and Insomnia: How You Can Benefit from Diet, Vitamins, Minerals, Herbs, Exercise and Other Natural Methods* (Rocklin, CA: Prima, 1995), 11.

²Donald P. Smith, *Clergy in the Cross Fire: Coping with Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 85.

³Ibid.

⁴Murray, 27.

⁵John A. Romas and Manoj Sharma, *Practical Stress Management* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1995), 191.

⁶Ibid., 210.

transported to the brain—the center of all activities—to cause mental confusion and weaken self-control. Intake of alcohol also causes the blood cells to agglutinate, thus hindering the transport of oxygen to the brain and other tissues of the body.

3. *Eat a well balanced diet with fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables.*¹ A balanced diet will provide enough Vitamin B complex, which is very important in the ability to cope with stress.

4. *Eat only at regular times.*

5. *Eat a low-salt, low-fat diet.*²

6. *Drink at least eight to ten glasses of water.*³ This will help eliminate toxic wastes produced by the body in response to stress.

B. *Exercise.* Hypotonic fatigue is commonly experienced by ministers, and many believe that increased rest is the solution, when, in fact, it worsens the situation. Physical exercise is the answer to this condition. Like good food, exercise increases the amount of oxygen in the brain.

C. *Rest.* Rest is not only acceptable but essential and sacred. Floyd Bresee says that “some thought that because work is a virtue then overwork is doubly virtuous. The purpose of recreation is not an escape from life but a help in coping with life.”⁴

III. Mental components

A. *Attend professional conferences and seminars.*⁵

B. *Renew yourself by doing something different from the regular routine.*

C. *Do an inventory of your responsibilities compared with your resources.*⁶

D. *Don't “play God” over your congregation.* A minister can be a coordinator in building up, but should not necessarily be the sole activator. The minister can delegate tasks and responsibilities to capable church members. Ministers who spend time training and discipling members experience less burnout. Preparing church members for works of service and organizing them for action according to their spiritual gifts is a help to the pastor. According to Jack Ferner,

Delegation doesn't mean abdicating one's responsibility, or assigning detailed tasks, or parceling out work while retaining authority. In a more formal sense, to

¹Ibid.

²Armand Fabella, *You Can Cope with Stress* (Manila: Philippine Pub. House, 1988), 119.

³Romas and Sharma, 202.

⁴Floyd Bresee, “Our Lives for His Glory,” *Ministry*, July-August 1995, 63.

⁵Jose Fuentes, “Recognizing and Handling Burnout,” *Ministry*, July 1987, 15.

⁶Edward Dayton, *Tools for Time Management* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 23.

delegate is to achieve specified results by empowering and motivating others to accomplish some of the results for which you are ultimately accountable.¹

Another study observed,

In most churches, 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people. And if the pastor feels that he himself is doing that 80 percent then he needs to spread out the work, not just to one or two members, who may then reach burnout themselves, but to many people.²

E. *Manage your time well.* Eccl 3:1 says, "There is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven." The minister deserves the best in his ministry despite a very hectic schedule.

Few ministers are aware that the way they start the day determines how they will work for the rest of the day. The short ministry of Jesus on earth is a picture of unhurried and balanced priorities despite a very hectic round of activities. Jesus showed His disciples that even with a schedule like His, one can still be effective in the ministry without being burned out.

Everyone is a steward of his time, so God is interested in how the minister effectively utilizes his time. Some ministers are too busy and always short of time because they fail to organize their time effectively. Different authors have offered suggestions on time management:

1. Before sleeping, ask yourself, "What would Jesus want me to do tomorrow?" List the things you need to accomplish the next day.³ Prioritize them, then follow through accordingly. Control of time begins with planning and setting of priorities.⁴
2. Try to get things done as quickly and efficiently as possible early in the day.⁵
3. Minimize interruptions.⁶
4. Start meetings on time and end them promptly.⁷
5. Prepare agendas for meetings and stick to them.⁸ Go through paper work only once.⁹

¹Jack Ferner, *Successful Time Management: A Self-Teaching Guide* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995), 155.

²Minirth et al., 95.

³Dayton, 218-19.

⁴Ibid., 149.

⁵Ibid., 212.

⁶Ferner, 141.

⁷Dayton, 107-8.

⁸C. Michele Haney and Edmond W. Boemisch, Jr., *Stress Map* (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact, 1982), 134 .

⁹Ibid., 133.

6. Learn to say “No,” and mean it. A pastor will not have enough time if he agrees to every request. Time management expert Alec Mackenzie offers this four-step plan on how to say no:

Listen—to show interest and understanding of the request. Say no immediately—to avoid building up false hopes. Give reasons—so the refusal will be understood. Offer alternatives (if possible)—to evidence good faith.¹

7. Take one day off for relaxation and recreation.²

8. Have enough time with the family.³ A pastor must recognize that quality time with his spouse and children is very important. An experienced pastor once observed that if a pastor cannot care for his family, then he cannot really be expected to meet the needs of other people.

9. Recognize your own limits.⁴

IV. Spiritual components

Spiritual fitness is very important in strengthening the pastor’s physical health. Some pastors have the notion that, because they are called by God and the work of the church is God’s work, they are spiritually healthy. Michael McBride contends,

The primary spiritual focus must be the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the role model for ministry, and thus He serves as the paragon upon which pastors pattern their personal and professional behavior.⁵

Barry C. Black has proposed five spiritual disciplines that can help to produce spiritual fitness:⁶

A. *Study*. The study that the apostle Paul engaged in “went beyond preparing sermons or doing research to write an epistle. Paul studied to nourish his soul, to prevent spiritual malnutrition.”⁷ Kilmer observes that pastors who begin the day with significant quality devotional time show a pastoral profile that resists burnout. He says,

They focus attention on the presence of Christ in them and in their ministry. They spend time in prayer and the ministry of the Word. . . .

¹Alec Mackenzie, quoted in Victor Parachin, “Twelve Ways to Slow Down and Take Care of Yourself,” *Signs of the Times*, July 1994, 17.

²Parachin, 17.

³Dayton, 77, 84.

⁴Fuentes, 15.

⁵Michael G. McBride, “Managing Ministerial Stress,” *Ministry*, March 1989, 10.

⁶Barry Black, “The Pastor: Maintaining Spiritual Fitness,” *Ministry*, January 1996, 17-

18.

⁷*Ibid.*, 17.

From personal devotion comes a conscious presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit that helps the pastor to meet every crisis with calm assurance. . . .

Pastors who depend on the real presence of the Holy Spirit also enjoy the ministry.¹

B. *Self-examination.* Reflection on how well the pastor has mastered his spiritual gifts and virtues can make the difference between a productive or an unproductive ministry. Pastors who find themselves busier than Jesus should investigate their spirituality. Pastors must also reflect upon whether they are too busy doing good, to the extent of exhaustion, or less busy, to the point where they feel bored and frustrated.

C. *Prayer.* Concerning the importance of prayer for a pastor, Charles Spurgeon attests,

If there be any man under heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept—“Pray without ceasing,” surely it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and remarkable duties; he has to deal with God in awful relationships, and with men in mysterious interests; he therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength and say, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”²

Søren Kierkegaard compares “prayer to breathing. It is an apt analogy for the choked feeling of stress.”³ The benefits of prayer, he adds, “are for the self what oxygen is for breathing.”⁴

D. *Silence or meditation.* This helps the pastor find inward energy, which is a powerful force for growth. It helps the pastor get in touch with nature and the realities of life. Matt 14:22-23 reveals that Jesus Himself went into seclusion in the mountains away from His disciples to meditate and pray. This also helps the pastor to gain new perspectives in the ministry.

E. *Submission.* Pastors need to submit their lives to God. This involves more than just praying. It means giving up plans, hopes, and dreams to the will of God. Some pastors suffer from their own unrealistic ideals. The Lord declares in Jer 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you, . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

¹Kilmer, 21.

²C[harles] H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students, new ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 42.

³Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 173.

⁴Ibid.

V. Administrative components

There are some approaches that cannot be implemented by the pastor himself but must be accomplished at the administrative level. Church administration can help lessen the stress of ministers to the extent of preventing burnout by

- A. Recognizing promptly the signs of stress and burnout among its pastors.
- B. "Taking time to let the burned-out pastor know that he is important."¹

C. Involving the pastors in making decisions that affect them. T. Beehr advises,

Autonomy is the strongest and most consistent moderator of the relationship between role ambiguity and role strain. Organizations that wish to reduce the role strain associated with ambiguity should increase the autonomy in their employees' roles.²

Summary

Stress is a part of life. Whether the pastor likes it or not, he will experience the pain of vocational stress in his ministry. Stress cannot be eliminated in the religious profession, because as a care giver and shepherd the pastor has extensive responsibilities. Pastors are priceless resources God has given to the church. However, either boredom or too much activity will lead the pastor to lose effectiveness as well as to become dissatisfied, which often prompts the pastor to leave the ministry. The pastor's family, a very vulnerable segment of the society, will also suffer.

The fall of the pastor will have a very strong impact on the church. The church with a burned-out pastor is exposed to a dangerous future. Burnout is one of Satan's devices to destroy the pastor and God's flock. A burned-out pastor can endanger the sheep.

Pastors need to be aware that burnout is predictable, and adopting the right lifestyle will prevent its occurrence. Pastors need to gain insights into the ministry of Jesus. They need to be awakened to the reality that unless they themselves are whole, they cannot be effective in bringing healing and wellness to His church. To develop a Christ-like life and a meaningful ministry, the pastor needs to deliberately balance family, church, and self.

¹Fuentes, 16.

²T. Beehr, "Perceived Situational Moderators of the Relationship between Subjective Role Ambiguity and Role Strain," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 61 (1977): 35-40, quoted in McBride, 10.