**Why Some Leaders Burn Out – And 4 Ways to Prevent It**

**By Joy Allmond**

Why do pastors leave the pulpit?

Findings from a 2016 LifeWay Research study found several reasons, but the third highest was burnout (19%).

On a recent episode of “Ask Me Anything” on the LifeWay Leadership Podcast Network, J.D. Greear, lead pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina, addressed what can cause burnout in ministry—and what to do about it.

THE ROLE OF IDOLATRY IN BURNOUT

For himself, Greear says, idolatry has been a driving factor in times of ministry burnout.

“That’s because idolatry always puts something out there that you have to obtain in order to get satisfaction or security,” he says.

“And so there’s always somebody … some success to match. The church has got to be this size. I’ve got to be invited to do this. I’ve got to have this many followers.”

Greear says the key to preventing burnout is finding rest in Christ and incorporating a rhythm of rest and sabbath practices.

“I don’t have to have the biggest church I don’t have to have everyone call me a success in order to find rest,” he says. ”

I think Tim Keller says it like this: ‘Until you find your identity in Christ, you’re going to work even when you’re resting.’ Because while you’re resting, your mind is always going to all think about the things you should be doing to achieve success.”

Greear explains that a key for him in finding rest in Christ was understanding that he didn’t need to prove anything to people. His work—and his rest—is unto the Lord.

“I’m supposed to Sabbath because I realized ultimately God is the one who makes the ends meet,” he says. “One of my favorite Psalms I go back to over and over again is Psalm 127, where I’m reminded that the Lord builds the house.”

COMBATING BURNOUT: PRACTICAL WAYS TO INCORPORATE A RHYTHM OF SABBATH

Greear says he has taken some cues from writings by Archibald Hart, a seminary-trained clinical psychologist who has written on people in ministry.

“He said whenever you’re in front of people doing something public, whether that’s acting, singing, or preaching, in the space of about 30 minutes your body releases the same amount of toxins, adrenaline, and various hormones to deal with the stress of being in front of people that the average person does an eight hours,” Greear explains.

“So if you’re preaching two and three times on the weekend, you’re literally poisoning your body. There’s got be a time where you disconnect, otherwise you burn out.”

Greear shares some of the practices he has incorporated.

1. GET MORE SLEEP.

“Everybody needs to be getting more sleep, not just church leaders,” says Greear.

And sleep isn’t just good for the body; it’s good for the mind.

“It releases a certain hormone that carries away the waste that your mind produces and it only comes out when you’re sleeping, which means after you’ve been working for a while and you feel like your mind is all gummed up, it’s because it is,” he says.

“When you don’t get adequate sleep, your body hasn’t been able to cleanse your mind and so physical rest actually makes you way more productive. In the morning, I’m just way sharper and more creative and I write better when I get a good night’s sleep.”

2. PERIODICALLY DISENGAGE FROM WHAT YOU TYPICALLY DO.

Greear says leaders can learn from the example of Winston Churchill, who called painting one of his pastimes.

“In the highest, most crucial days of World War II, Churchill would go in his basement and paint for about two hours a day,” he says.

“He knew that in order to be able to renew his mind, he had to disengage. He said, painting is a great way to get your mind active. Doing something that doesn’t normally do and that’s the best way to get refreshed.

And, Greear adds, “The best way to get refreshed is not to watch TV.”

3. CONNECT WITH PEOPLE WHO ENERGIZE YOU.

Hart, in his writings, explains that at least one night a week, it’s important—and life-giving—to spend time with people we enjoy.

“My family moved into a neighborhood with two or three other families we’re pretty close to,” says Greear.

“Sometimes, that means getting together after the kids go down. Other times we go to each other’s house and watch a football game or basketball game, or we’ll sit around and talk. We’ve become intentional about living that way.”

4. GET SPIRITUAL RENEWAL.

“For me, that’s expressed in my quiet time in the morning,” says Greear. “But I found it helpful to also spend a few minutes at night wrapping up the day and leaving some burdens at Jesus’ feet.”

Another idea, Greear says, is to schedule pockets of time throughout the day to reconnect with God.

“One minister said he schedules prayer time before every major appointment,” he says. “That way, he walks into these meetings not with a burden, but resting in Christ.”

Greear adds that church leaders should fight against the tendency to be people who only work on the church without being in the church.

“I need a small group I need people praying for me. I need people holding me accountable. I need to be involved in normal evangelism,” he says.

“That’s life-giving and I wouldn’t trade that for the biggest stage in all the world. So be a part of the local church and let it minister to you.”

The above article, “Why Some Leaders Burn Out – And 4 Ways to Prevent It,” was written by Joy Allmond.

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”