



BURNING WITHOUT BURNING OUT

Rev. Jonathan C. Roach, Ph.D.

“Being a minister today is like being nibbled to death by
ducks” -- Hauerwas and Willimon (1990)

FORMATION:

- Formation is the process of becoming prepared
 - Shaped
 - Formed
 - Tested
 - Made Ready





CLERGY FORMATION:



- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Physical

DEFORMATION:



- Deformative issues are forces that prevent a lifetime of faithful service. These issues break, warp, and rip away the healthy ministerial role that has been formed:
 - Spiritual
 - Emotional
 - Cognitive

DEFORMATION:

- Anger
- Disillusionment
- Depression
- Bitterness
- Failure
- Burnout
- Grief



Memorial Church, Berlin, Germany



DEFORMATION:

“If our students are formed with strong biblical studies, a strong background in church history, a solid systematic theology background, and excellent homiletics preparation, yet have little built into their lives during the formation process to help them withstand the deformative forces commonly encountered in ministry, all may be lost when they fail under pressure and are blown out of the ministry.”

James Flynn (2009)





WHAT'S BURNOUT?

- **Burnout**

is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and/or spiritual exhaustion related to a person's job that leads to decreased motivation, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, negative attitudes towards self and others, lowered job performance, and/or compassion fatigue.



BURNOUT II:

- Burnout is work-related; it happens to normal people who do not have a history of mental or emotional problems and negatively impacts the effectiveness and performance of their work





WHO GETS BURNOUT?



- Lukewarm Professionals Never Burnout
- Mostly People Who Are:
 - Passionate
 - Deeply Committed
 - Loving and Caring
 - Invested
- All Kinds of Factors:
 - Personality
 - Lifestyle
 - Experience
 - Education
 - Coping Skills
 - Spirituality
- But Mostly It's About the Work



BURNOUT LEVELS:

- “The *first level* is characterized by signs and symptoms that are relatively mild, short in duration, and occur only occasionally...The *second level* is reached when signs and symptoms have become *more stable, last longer*, and are *tougher* to get rid of...The *third level* is experienced when signs and symptoms have become *chronic* and a *physical illness* has developed.
 - (qtd. in Wicks 2010, 32)



BURNOUT:

Engagement ←-----→ Burnout





THREE ASPECTS OF BURNOUT



- Emotional Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Lack of Personal Accomplishment



CAUSES OF BURNOUT:

- The causes of burnout include work overload (including working intensity, amount of time, work ambiguity, and complexity), which creates exhaustion, lack of professional control over the work (including the amount of control and the burden of micromanagement), insufficient reward for the work (getting less reward for more work and losing intrinsic satisfaction), the breakdown of the work community (including fragmenting personal relationships, undermining teamwork, and working in isolation), an absence of fairness in work, and conflicting values between the work and the person.





CLERGY BURNOUT:

- “It is still not unusual to come across the view that ordination or life vows bestow a kind of immunity from the effects of stress and that the religious professional should not have symptoms of stress and anxiety. Because it is assumed in such a belief that the symptoms of anxiety, stress, or depression mean that something has gone wrong with the individual’s relationship with God or their spiritual and prayer life.”
 - Turton, 2010, p. 18

CLERGY BURNOUT:



- Present in all faith traditions
 - 20% of clergy are in burnout at any one time
- When in Clergy careers
 - After first 12 months
 - 6 to 8 years into ministry
 - From age 54 to retirement
- Education
 - More likely with a master degree
 - Less likely after a doctor of ministry
- Models
 - Traditional: High EE, High Depersonalization, Low Accomplishment
 - "Get-it-Done:" High EE, High Depersonalization, and High Accomplishment

CLERGY BURNOUT II:

- Toxic congregations
 - 10.5 time more likely to burnout again
- Boundaries
 - Time
 - Professional
- Mundane Work
 - Work that you are not trained to do but need to do
- Conflict between Values and Reality





CLERGY BURNOUT AND SPIRITUALITY:



- Spiral effect
 - What comes first?
 - Spiritual dryness causing burnout
 - Burnout causing spiritual dryness
- Not called to be Messiahs or walk on water
- High level of spiritual activities lowers stress
- Swimmers and floaters – Thomas Green



DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS:

“A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him, “Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it.” So he did. The old man then said, “Shoot another,” and he did so. Then the old man said, “Shoot yet again,” and the hunter replied “If I bend my bow so much I will break it.” Then the old man said to him, “It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down and meet their needs.” (*Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 1984, 5)





ENGAGEMENT:

- Engagement is the polar opposite of burnout.
- “...engaged workers are pulled to work because they enjoy it for its own stake, whereas workaholics are pushed to work because they have to obey their obsession”
 - (Taris, Schaufeli, and Shimazu, 2010, p. 42)



PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO BURNOUT:



- Traditional Approach
 - A test to show that you are burned out or on the road to burning out
 - Then “teaching” skills on time management, organization, boundaries, advice on relaxing more, suggestions that you need a new hobby, self-help therapies, and advice on changing your personality
- Problems
 - Guilt
 - Blame
 - Self-Dislike
 - Spiritual dryness



BURNOUT AS METAPHOR

- Three Different Models

- Burnout

Keep going until you use up all your emotional, mental, and spiritual fuel and you burned out

- Preservation

trim the wick, cut back on your activity, preserve your fuel supply to make it last longer

- Refuel

Keep burning but find methods to refresh and refill your mental, emotional, and spiritual fuel supply



THREE WAYS OUT:



- Change Yourself
 - Trim Your Wick
 - Preserve Yourself
- Change Your Work
 - Find the Mismatch
 - Quit
- Change Your Relationship With Work
 - Find Ways to Recharge
 - Build a Solid Support System and a Positive Work Environment



COPING:

- Ways of dealing with something:
 - Positive Coping
 - Negative Coping are maladaptive activities that serve to maintain the disorder
 - Overeating
 - Addictions
 - Yelling
 - Taking frustration out on something or someone else
 - Over sleeping
 - Spending money you don't have
- Passive aggression
- Obsessive or cynical
- Working harder
- Denial
- Self-distraction
- Self-blame





CLERGY CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF MUNDANE WORK:

- Theocentric
 - consecrates the ordinary work by centering them upon the full expression of God
- Non-dualistic in separating types of work
 - “the daily work is definitely an important part of ministry - fixing things, resetting thermostats, clipping a hedge, chatting with someone who stops in for a minute, it is all ministry.”
- Focusing upon self-care that is not self-centered



THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES:



- **Call and Vocation**
 - dynamic sense
 - Centered in call to ministry not to parish
- **Spiritual Gifts**
 - BE in ministry
 - charisma
- **Priesthood of All Believers**
 - In and for

THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES II:

- **Cosmology**
 - a strong call to till and keep
 - not creators but ground keepers
- **Grace**
 - providential grace highlights God's continuous care for
 - incarnational grace or grace wearing skin
- **Justice**
 - shifting paradigm of clergy supply
 - rapid technological change
 - financial strains
 - clergy for continual development and theological growth as self-care





WHAT DOES WORK?:



- Having a voice that is expressed and heard
- Reconnecting with the Divine and your sense of call
- Prayer and meditation
- Storytelling
- Creativity and play
- Rest and reflection / boundaries
- Sabbaticals (But only if they create change)
- Building support systems
 - Community
 - Sharing, especially with other clergy

OTHER HEALTHY RESPONSES:



- Integrated Opportunities for Theological Reflection
- Formation of Professional Identity
- Spiritual Exercises
- Group Work
- Building Support Networks
- CPE, Continuing Education, Conferences
- Holistic Responses
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Spiritual
 - Cognitive



REFLECTIONS:

- What do you think and feel about these topics?
- How can your formation prepare to encounter deformation?
- What do you want to do with the rest of your ministry?





“A ZEN BUDDHIST SAYING NOTES THAT ‘BEFORE ENLIGHTENMENT, I CHOPPED WOOD AND CARRIED WATER; AFTER ENLIGHTENMENT, I CHOPPED WOOD AND CARRIED WATER.’ SURELY, THIS SAYING DESCRIBES VITAL, HEALTHY, AND CREATIVE MINISTRY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. VITAL MINISTRY EMBRACES THE WHOLE OF A PASTOR’S LIFE, INCLUDING THOSE SIMPLE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TASKS WE DO DAY AFTER DAY.”

(EPPERLY AND EPPERLY, 2008, P. 159)



REFERENCES:

- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William Willimon. 1990. "The Limits of Care: Burnout as an Ecclesial Issue." *Word & World* 10: 247-253.
- Flynn, James T. 2009. "Firewall: Health Essentials for Ministers and their Families." *Christian Education Journal* 6(2): 309-324.
- Wicks, Robert J. 2010. *Bounce: Living the Resilient Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turton, Douglas W. 2010. *Clergy Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion: a Socio Psychological Study of Job Stress and Job Satisfaction*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. 1984. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications.
- Taris, Toon W., Wilmar Schaufeli, and Akihito Shimazu. 2010. "The Push and Pull of Work: The Difference between Workaholism and Work Engagement." In *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*. Edited by Arnold Bakker and Michael Leiter, 39-53. New York: Psychology Press.
- Epperly, Bruce Gordon, and Katherine Gould Epperly. 2008a. *Feed the Fire!: Avoiding Clergy Burnout*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press.
- Epperly, Bruce Gordon, and Katherine Gould Epperly. 2008b. *Four Seasons of Ministry: Gathering a Harvest of Righteousness*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.