

When Springs Dry Out: Burnout among Leaders in Ministry

As Christian leaders, it can be all too easy to give to the point where there is nothing left to give. Jelena will share from her own personal story about being in ministry, serving, and coming to the point where giving up was looking more and more attractive. What is burnout and what are the signs of experiencing burnout? Can we prevent burnout? Where is the way out?

Jelena Sivulka was born and raised in Serbia, where she got her master's degree in psychology and master's degree in theology. She became a Christian 25 years ago and a few years later got involved in ministry with her husband Greg, planting churches, distributing humanitarian aid, and partnering with Joni and Friends, serving people with disabilities. Jelena has also worked as a counsellor in Serbia's schools and a social worker, and she is currently working as therapist in a medical clinic. She is the Founder and Director of the non-profit organisation Hana's Hope. She has been blessed with three children: Benjamin, Sara, and Hana, who has autism.

I. Introduction

A. When people become numbers

What are the stats showing?

II. What exactly is burnout?

A. Stress vs. burnout

III. Signs and symptoms of burnout

A. Physical

1. Exhaustion
2. Health risk
3. Appetite, sleep
4. Cognitive problems

B. Emotional

1. Detachment
2. Cynicism
3. Frustration, helplessness, self doubt
4. Depression

C. Behavioral

1. Isolation
2. Procrastination
3. Interpersonal problems

IV. Causes of burnout

- A. Ministry related causes
- B. Lifestyle related causes
- C. Personality traits

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”
Charles Spurgeon

V. Running the race, advice from the runner

- A. Never underestimate the power of Presence
- B. We are supporting actors in our lives
- C. We all have an expiration date
- D. Learning to love ourselves

"Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us." Hebrews 12:1

VI. On the path to recovery

- A. Reframe the way you look at ministry
- B. Practice having soul feasts
 - 1. Hunger and thirst for the Spirit
 - 2. Chewing the Bread of Life
 - 3. Communication and communion with God
 - 4. Corporate Worship

VII. Conclusion

“You called, you cried, you shattered my deafness, you sparkled, you blazed, you drove away my blindness. You shed your fragrance, and I drew in my breath, and I pant for you. I tasted and now I hunger and thirst. You touched me, and now I burn with longing for your peace.

Saint Augustine

Suggested Readings:

Corderio, Wayne, *Leading on Empty*, Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2009.

Keyers, Dick, *Seeing Through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Jackson, Anne, *Mad Church Disease*, Zondervan, 2010.

Winter, Richard, *When Life Goes Dark*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Thompson, Marjorie J., *Soul feast*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2005.