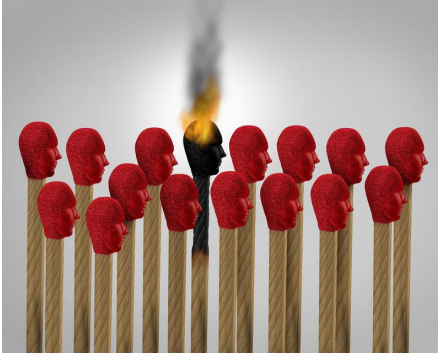




How Do I Avoid Burnout? (Part 1)

Job 10:1: (KJV) *My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.*

Special Guest: **Hannah Pop, DNP** (Doctor of Nursing Practice), **ACNP** (Acute Care Nurse Practitioner)



It is a common saying that the two things you can count on in life are death and taxes. While that might be true, there is another thing lurking in the background of the lives of more and more people every day: BURNOUT. With all of the overstimulation a technology-based society produces, we are set up for burnout. With what seems like ever-increasing job demands, we are set up for burnout. With personal communications being instant, always available and on multiple platforms, we feel we need to respond instantly as well. This sets us up for - you guessed it - burnout. This is just what applies to the average, “go to work and make a living”

person. Medical professionals, first responders, military men and women - all set up for burnout! This is serious. What can we as Christians do to recognize, respond to and relieve this dangerous pattern in our lives and in the lives of others? We all probably know someone who is burned out - and maybe it is you.

(Julie is sitting in for Jonathan who is unavailable this week.)

Listeners can send us podcast episode topic ideas at:

inspiration@christianquestions.com.

Julie has a lifelong friend named Hannah, who is in the medical field. She suggested we do a program on the topic of burnout.



Hannah, give us a little of your background as a health care professional and as a Christian. Why is this topic important to you?

(Hannah's comments are in purple and have been edited for brevity or clarity.)

Thank you for having me on the podcast. As a medical professional, I have been a bedside nurse for 15 years. I have worked in emergency departments in multiple states in large urban academic medical centers, so I am constantly surrounded by a lot of stress. I was raised as a Christian. I grew up going to church on Sunday and to Bible camps. In my adulthood, I have come to appreciate my relationship with God, Jesus' sacrifice and the Bible as the word of God. These things opened my heart to being a Christian and letting my light shine in my work, as well as in my worship.



Why this topic? Burnout is universal. It is everywhere, not just in health care. With the increase in connectivity, the fast pace of life and the demand to keep up, many people have found this to be unsustainable. There is personal and professional burnout. I have experienced some burnout myself, which we will discuss a little later.

When discussing burnout with Hannah in preparation for this podcast, we came up with three aspects of burnout. The first one is in the medical industry, which seems to have coined the term. The second one is for the average person, which we will talk about more in Part II. This involves chronic workplace stress that has not been managed and leads to exhaustion, reduced effectiveness and negative, disconnected feelings about a job. The third aspect we will discuss is spiritual burnout.

Burnout in the medical industry:

We are discovering something in healthcare called “compassion fatigue.” Compassion fatigue has two main components: Burnout and secondary traumatic stress (STS).



Burnout in this context has three components:

- **Emotional exhaustion** arises as emotional resources are depleted; workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level.
- **Depersonalization** occurs when workers develop negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients.
- **Reduced personal accomplishments** refers to reduced productivity where you cannot perform as you would like. This includes the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly in regard to one's work with clients.

On top of the element of burnout is secondary traumatic stress (STS).

- **STS** is the negative effects associated with witnessing the trauma, pain and suffering of others.

Combining burnout with STS, the result is a lack of empathy and a decreased ability for healthcare providers to nurture and give the care they optimally would like to.

Patients want empathy during their hard experiences. We want someone to put an emotional arm around us while they are helping us. Burnout diminishes that ability.

Anyone in the medical field from nurses and doctors to first responders can feel this. It is a cumulative, progressive process that distances them from the people they provide care for.

Everyone experiences stress. When is it stress and when is it burnout?



There is no clear-cut diagnostic criteria. When it starts to become overwhelming, that is when it manifests as a problem, affecting patient care relationships. It can start small and build.

What is “moral injury”?

Moral injury: describes the mental, emotional and spiritual distress people feel after perpetrating, failing to prevent or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply-held moral beliefs and expectations. (This was originally described by Veterans Administration clinicians to account for the way that the suffering of some military veterans did not respond to standard treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.) Moral injury includes the mission to promote health care vs. the business of health care. “The agony of being constantly locked in double binds when every choice one makes yields a compromised outcome and when each decision contravenes the reason for years of sacrifice.” (Source: STAT “Moral Injury and Burnout in Medicine: A Year of Lessons Learned,” by Wendy Dean and Simon G. Talbot)

In the medical field, we are trained to give of ourselves. We take oaths upon graduation that we will do the best that we can for our patients. But the real world is based on productivity, compliance and reimbursement. You find you are unable to meet your own moral and professional standards. This is the intersection where the care of the patient meets the business of health care. We feel compromised in our actions.



Burnout for the average person:

A syndrome resulting in chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterized by feelings of exhaustion, reduced effectiveness and negative or disconnected feelings towards one’s job. (Source: World Health Organization) We will address this more in Part II.

Spiritual burnout:

Whatever factors lead to spiritual disconnection, doubt and lack of peace and passion for the ministry. This can be from working too hard/spreading ourselves too thin in the Lord’s service OR being so distracted by the cares of life that we get too far away from God. This is especially prevalent in church leaders.

For the average believer, spiritual burnout is a weariness in the Christian walk, or when coldness has set in and God seems far off.

All audio clips are excerpted from an article in the Chicago Tribune dated May 9, 2019, by John Kass. The article is called: *Paramedic on abandoned newborn baby found in alley: 'Death wanted him. But this day, God said no.'*



River of violence, Paramedic Story, Chicago Tribune, May 9, 2019

- *The river of violence that flows through Chicago takes not only the dead and the hearts of their loved ones, but it also takes something from those who witness the death day after day: the paramedics and the patrol officers, the detectives, the ER nurses and the doctors. But not the other day at Norwegian American Hospital in the ER, with a baby found abandoned in an alley on top of a garbage can, clinging to life, and a crowd around the baby, begging that*



little boy to keep fighting and live. Death grabs at their souls, too, and tries to break them.

Burnout is more complicated than we would like to think. Problems always have more to them than meets the eye.

Burnout is a broad topic! Where can we begin our understanding process so we can learn to cope?

Experts blame a dysfunctional health care system for the distress many experience in the industry. Left unchecked, burnout can lead to depression, anxiety, insomnia, obesity, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide. Patients experience a decreased quality of care and an increase in medical errors. Clearly the implications are far-reaching.

How do you know if you are burned out?

If these apply to you, there is a chance you may be dealing with burnout:



- Do you feel emotionally drained from your work, and feel “used up” at the end of the workday?
- Are you feeling fatigued in the morning at the thought of having to face another day on the job?
- Do you feel frustrated by your job, or feel you are working too hard?
- Have you become more callous toward people since you took this job?
- Do you feel this job is hardening you emotionally?
- Do you not really care what happens to some recipients of what you are doing at your work?

Agreeing with any of these statements may indicate you are dealing with some element of burnout. Referring to a “job” in the above questions means anything that occupies our time, even if we are retired.

We can substitute “job” in the above questions for “caregiving.” While we will not be exploring extreme stress for caregivers in this program, it is very real and important to recognize.



Mirror Question:
HOW am I doing with
WHAT I am doing?
HOW is my stress/burnout
 affecting others?



The baby was a fighter, *Paramedic Story, Chicago Tribune, May 9, 2019*

- *Chicago Fire Department paramedics and firefighters and Chicago police detectives and officers formed a second ring around the infant. Tough men and women yelling, “Fight, kid! Fight!” and offering advice and biting their lips and bargaining with God.*
- *“The baby was such a fighter. And these are tough people, too, they are fighters,” said the doctor who led the resuscitation unit. “And I told them as soon as the baby moved, open-eyed, turning pink, I asked them, ‘Come and see, you did a good job, guys.’ And they have tears, you know. Tears.”*
- *They cried? Men and women who’ve seen too much, and everything they’ve seen brutalizes them. The indifference, the brutality, the rage. They just don’t talk about it.*
- *“Yes, it bothers them,” the doctor said. “And as they cried - and we all did - and prayed, and I told them, ‘Continue saving people.’ It’s all so emotional, you know? I won’t forget their faces around the baby, the way these tough guys and women were sobbing, the tears coming, the baby moving. It was a feeling like we really did something together. We really did. And he’s a very lucky little boy.”*

It is okay to experience feelings on the job. There is a stigma to burnout that you have to be strong, resourceful and not vulnerable. This story says it is okay to rely on your friends, open up and feel feelings.



I was dealing with a lot of burnout at work, punctuated by moments of STS. I love being a nurse. This is my dream job, and I assumed every day would be amazing at work. For ten years it was steady and solid, and I was really engaged in my job. It started innocently where I would go to work and see unaddressed problems and better ways we could take care of patients. I took these to management and was met with radio silence. I would try again to bring up different issues but they were dismissed.

My passion slowly turned into frustration and then disengagement. I found myself going to work and putting in the absolute bare minimum just to get through the day. I realized I had a problem. As Christians, we are taught Ecclesiastes 9:10: (NASB) Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might... Colossians 3:23: (NASB) Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men. I looked at my own performance and would have given myself a complete “F.” I was never unsafe with patient care, but I was not connecting with people the way I should be, with the way they deserved to be connected.

A big part for me was not being in denial, and saying, “I am doing a really bad job at work. I am burned out.” That was the first step to addressing it and taking it to the Lord.

My last few years were accentuated with many different instances of STS, really traumatic examples. I worked in the inner city of Chicago and there is a lot of loss. A particularly traumatic incident was when we had a teenager suddenly collapse on the basketball court. It was so sudden. Everyone did everything right - the coaches, the bystanders, the emergency medical



personnel, the ER staff - but it just wasn't enough. There is nothing worse than telling parents, "It's time to stop. We have done everything we can and there is no bringing him back." Handing his parents his jersey and belongings was the worst feeling. This stays with you. When you see other youngsters in your life, you flash back to that moment. You lost the patient, you lose a little confidence in yourself, and you relive it every day.

My story is not unique. There are many nurses and first responders going through this - shades of burnout with their management punctuated by traumatic stress incidences. This brings you to a point where you ask if you are cut out to do this. Is this what I should be doing with my life?

Are there physical effects to burnout? How do we help our friends who may be going through this?

For me, I would relive moments quietly. There are a range of different symptoms anyone can feel - fatigue, forgetfulness, isolation, apathy. Physical issues might include difficulty breathing, rapid heart rates and insomnia. This is a spectrum; there is no one particular symptom that indicates burnout.

For friends, I encourage people to stay vigilant and watchful. Watch for changes in behavior, and it is okay to ask, "Are you okay?"

We have called on Hannah for various medical emergencies within our church functions. "Get Hannah! She will know what to do!"

Did we inadvertently contribute to your burnout?

My friends and worship are my outlet, my "go to" home base. I find it refreshing. It brings me back to who I am. Despite difficulties at work, when I am not at work, being with you helps me to prevent bringing those negative experiences into my personal and family life. Spending time with like-minded Christians who have hope and a solid foundation keep those other things at bay and in their proper place.

Hearing from someone who knows is comforting. Now let's focus ourselves on finding and using solutions.

**We now know what burnout is and what it does.
How do we to recognize its presence in our lives?**

For the average person, burnout can be predictable. When life falls apart due to illness or tragedy or some external circumstance it can creep up on us and hit us hard. We find ourselves needing to cope with unexpected experiences that require massive effort. It is here that burnout waits.



Baby brought to a firehouse, *Paramedic Story*, Chicago Tribune, May 9, 2019

- The newborn was found Tuesday afternoon, abandoned on a dumpster in the Hermosa neighborhood on the Northwest Side of Chicago. A mother and her daughter brought the infant to the nearby firehouse.*



- *“It’s a good thing they made the right decision and brought the baby to the firehouse,” said Paramedic Fire Chief Patrick Fitzmaurice. “It was rush hour. They wouldn’t have made it to the hospital in time.” When the baby arrived, firefighters scrambled, administering CPR, trying to warm the infant and coordinating with police to make sure an ambulance could get through the traffic. And at the hospital, Fitzmaurice bargained with God and prayed like so many others before him.*

Often we find ourselves bargaining with God because we do not know what else to do.



What are the effects of resilience in terms of managing and potentially overcoming burnout?

Resilience refers to an individual’s capacity. It is the combination of their strengths and resources allowing them to bounce back and thrive during stressful situations. In the Bible, the words used are “perseverance” or “endurance.” These are linked to resiliency as well. A hallmark of resilience is its link to increased hope. It is the healthy balance between the positive and negative aspects of life. We will always have good experiences and bad experiences. Resilience is the ability to balance both of those.

Job is a great example of the resilience process:

James 5:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

We often assume that the endurance spoken of here is a bulletproof, no-wavering approach to the trials of life. Usually, that is not the case, and it certainly was not the path that Job took. Job was not perfect in dealing with his issues.



Job was righteous. His life reflected what he believed in:

Job 1:1-3: (NASB) ¹There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. ²Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Job was well-renowned, not only for his physical wealth but for his character.

To be resilient, one must have a sound starting point. Resilience is being able to bounce back - but to what starting point?

Job’s character is clearly laid out as godly, full of integrity, wise and righteous. He stood for something very significant...the righteousness of God.

When looking at Job’s story, we want to ask ourselves, “What about me?”



**RESILIENCE demands
a BASELINE.**



To cope with burnout, we must know what our core values are. Bouncing back to our core values is a stronger response than bouncing back to, “I do not know what I am about.”

God allowed Satan to seriously test Job beyond his (or our) imagination.

(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) In rapid fashion, Job's sons and daughters are killed and all his flocks are driven away by his enemies. Finally, Job himself is stricken with a terrible skin disease. In his sorrow he sits mourning on an ash heap, scraping his sores with a piece of pottery while he laments his misfortune...

Satan tempts by breaking the link between righteousness and blessing, trying to expose Job as a fraud. Did Job love the gifts but not the Giver? Was he “religious” and “good” because it pays?

This was the deal Satan made with God. The premise was that Job was righteous and loved God because he was not lacking anything. What if it was all taken away? Would he still love God when times were bad?



Job's initial response to the utter calamity of his life was predictable, knowing what we know of him:

Job 1:20-22: (NASB) ²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹He said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD. ²²Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

I really like this response. I wish I could say this when calamities come upon me.

There was no spirit of rebellion. He was in the right heart condition, and most importantly, he was able to guard his heart and lips to only say things that were blessed. The implication for us as Christians is we, like Job, should realize everything we have is the Lord's blessing bestowed upon us, whether great or small. These are all gifts from the Lord. By seeing everything as a blessing and by counting our blessings, we come to a greater appreciation of those things.

Job essentially lost everything. He had three servants and his wife left and still said, *blessed be the name of the LORD*. Job's initial response to the trauma and tragedy is shocked and bewildered...but faithful. This is his resilience. This is the core of Job.



How do I

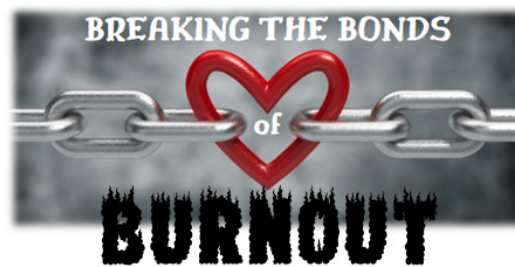
RESPOND?

Resilience responds by claiming and clinging to that which we already know to be precious. If we do not have anything that fits into that category, when trial and difficulty come, we will not be able to find our footing.

Joshua 1:9: (NASB) *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Joshua 24:15: (NASB) *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

That should be the basis for Christian resilience. We will all come across times when we approach burnout.



To know who we are and what we stand for gives us a foundation on which to stand. The stronger the foundation, the easier the battle against burnout.

Know WHO we are, know WHAT we stand for and WHY we stand there. Do this when life is going well, so we have something to lean on when it does not.

It seems like for many of us, burnout is coming. It is a good idea to be aware of what drives us.

What changed Job that sent him the wrong way?

Burnout gets tricky here. We can know all the right answers and respond in all the right ways, but it is the unknown variables that can creep up and sabotage us. In Job's case, this variable was outside influence. The tricky part was that the influencers were true friends who meant well.

Let's go back to the story about the abandoned infant and watch the response of these hardened professionals called upon to rally around this tiny infant who is literally clinging to life.

 **The umbilical cord was white, *Paramedic story, Chicago Tribune, May 9, 2019***

- *"The woman who found the baby didn't know what to do," said Fitzmaurice. "They were scared. But they cared more about that baby than whether they were getting involved. The umbilical cord was white. There was no blood in it, and that's bad. The first fireman didn't find a pulse. The boy was as cold as a stone. So, we started working the baby and let the hospital know we're coming in with an infant cardiac arrest. When we got there, well, that's when you ask for help. And that kid was like Jake LaMotta. He just kept fighting."*



- *Fitzmaurice is pugnacious and a fighter, too, a real one, a boxing aficionado who can throw a mean left to the body and follow it with a left hook to the head. Years ago, a baby left in the trash would have driven him into a dark rage. I know, because I've seen it.*

Hannah, the drama of that story reminds us of the drama of your job. Talk to us about dealing with burnout and dealing with peers around you who may be well-meaning. Have you ever had the experience where “well-meaning” did not actually make you well?

Absolutely. I liked in that story where he talked about how before, it would have driven him into a dark rage. Sometimes our peers can exacerbate that dark rage or bring out things in us that are not Christlike when we are in a stage of burnout. On the most extreme end, friends can suggest we go out and partake in alcohol or even drugs. On the other end, well-meaning peers may encourage us to complain or vent about the job or give criticism. While these things may seem harmless, they are not things a Christian should be engaging in. While the venting and talking about the frustration of the job may make us feel better for the moment, later on we may realize we let ourselves down. We are not building up and being constructive; we are only adding to the problem.

This can easily happen in a professional environment, but it also happened in the Bible.

Let's return to the story of Job:

(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) ...This is when Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, arrive to mourn with him and to offer their comfort. But instead of comforting Job, these friends launch into long lectures and philosophical debates to show Job the reason for his suffering. Their line of reasoning follows the generally-accepted view of their time - that misfortune is always sent by God as punishment for sin. Job argues just as strongly that he is an upright man who has done nothing to deserve such treatment at the hand of God.

Again, we encourage everyone to read the book of Job. For the first seven days Job's three friends did and said nothing. They sat quietly and mourned with him. They were supportive. This is a beautiful thing we can do when someone experiences trauma.

After that, they tried to reason with Job about why this was happening to him. In the Old Testament, this was how God dealt with Israel. If they obeyed and were righteous, they received physical rewards. Disobedience brought calamity. Job's friends were not bad people. They were just trying to make the misfortunes stop by getting Job to admit and atone for whatever he did, be done and move on. It is important to realize the friends genuinely wanted to help. They gave of their time to help but ended up not helping.

Let's drop in on one of Job's responses to each of these three friends. Each response offers a slightly different perspective from Job.

Job gets frustrated with his friends trying to get him to admit he did something wrong.



Job's view of his own traumas: After being “counseled,” Job can now only see the crushing weight of his experience. Job's first response to Eliphaz: Job 6:2-5: (New Living Translation) ²*If my misery could be weighed and my troubles be put on the scales, ³they would outweigh all the sands of the sea. That is why I spoke impulsively. ⁴For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows. Their poison infects my spirit. God's terrors are lined up against me. ⁵Don't I have a right to complain?...*

What a difference from Job's initial response we read in Job 1:22: (KJV) *Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.* Job's view of his own trauma was that God was shooting him with poisoned arrows, leading him to a slow and painful death.

Let's look at ourselves in the mirror and put ourselves in Job's place with our own experiences.

What is my view of my own traumatic burnout experience? Do I fixate on the *weight of the experience* or the *weight of God's providence* in the experience?

Am I fixating on ruin or resilience?

1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

This reminds us of a friend of ours named Marge who said she never had a trial in her life. If we looked at her life from the outside, we would see nothing BUT trials. She had a husband who was handicapped, she had cancer and continually opened her home to people who were in need. While her whole life appeared to be a trial from the outside, she said everything that was happening to her was God's will, and she wanted it to be her will also. This shows us what resilience can bring based on her true core values.

Job's view of God's perspective: Under the weight of trials and the steady influence of well-meaning advice, Job sees God as dark.

Job's first response to Bildad:

Job 9:22-23,29-31: (New Living Translation) ²²*Innocent or wicked, it is all the same to God. That's why I say, He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. ²³When a plague sweeps through, he laughs at the death of the innocent. ²⁹Whatever happens, I will be found guilty. So what's the use of trying? ³⁰Even if I were to wash myself with soap and clean my hands with lye, ³¹you would plunge me into a muddy ditch, and my own filthy clothing would hate me.*

Job seems to be getting more manic. We know Job knew better, but his friends were pressing him. His frustration is overwhelming him. Job's view of God's perspective became warped. He was experiencing spiritual burnout.

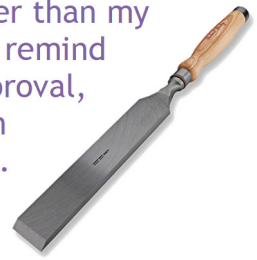
What is my view of God's perspective in my own burnout experience?

Under the weight of overwhelming trials, we sometimes lose sight of the might, mercy and mission of God in our lives:

Hebrews 12:11: (NASB) *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*



When I am in these situations, I have to know God's ways are higher than my ways, and His thoughts higher than my thoughts. I always need to remind myself that affliction for the Christian is not a sign of God's disapproval, and prosperity is not a sign of approval. Even if we feel slighted in life's experiences, we should not be misrepresenting God's justice. We know He uses that chisel of adversity to produce in us the reward of a steadfast character through our trials.



Job's view of God's attentiveness: As Job continues to be assaulted with well-meaning advice, his view of God descends into that of an uncaring, inattentive Father.

Job's second response to Zophar:

Job 21:4,7-14,18: (NLT) *⁴My complaint is with God, not with people. I have good reason to be so impatient. ⁷Why do the wicked prosper, growing old and powerful? ⁸They live to see their children grow up and settle down, and they enjoy their grandchildren. ⁹Their homes are safe from every fear, and God does not punish them. ¹⁰Their bulls never fail to breed. Their cows bear calves and never miscarry. ¹¹They let their children frisk about like lambs. Their little ones skip and dance. ¹²They sing with tambourine and harp. They celebrate to the sound of the flute. ¹³They spend their days in prosperity, then go down to the grave in peace. ¹⁴And yet they say to God, Go away. We want no part of you and your ways. ¹⁸Are they driven before the wind like straw? Are they carried away by the storm like chaff? Not at all!*

How many times do we look at others who we know are wicked but seem to have a great life? Job is asking: Why wouldn't God punish them like he is punishing me? Job was missing the point.

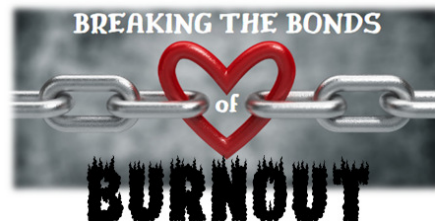
What is my view of God's attentiveness? Do I view God's attention to me in my experiences as harsh or even careless, or do I see my experience as within the control of my loving Father?

Hebrews 12:7: (NASB) *⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

We know the Lord does not sleep or slumber. **Luke 12:7** assures us the very hairs of our heads are numbered. In today's medical profession we can say even the very cells of our body are numbered. We should not think at any point He is not attentive or caring for us the way we would like Him to be.

When we get into that burnout scenario, suddenly we are blaming God instead of seeing the beauty of His character.

We need sympathy during burnout, but we cannot use



The way we see our burnout experiences depends on how we process the input we receive. Sympathy is not a solution! How broad, godly and open-minded are the sources we most trust?

the sympathy of well-meaning individuals as a stepping stone for healing. Often sympathy eggs us on and tells us we deserve to be upset. The solution has to come from the resilience of going back to what drives our character - it should be godliness. Think twice before going along in order to get along with those who mean well. Do you want agreement or answers?



Being careful with the advice we take is one thing, but what can we actually do to alleviate burnout?

While the question of action is the most important question, it could not have been appropriately addressed until we put whatever outside influences we are receiving in their proper place. *Any action that is not focused and filtered may too easily contribute to the problem and not the solution.* It is too easy to engage in a non-productive action that feeds the frustration.

 **God said no, *Paramedic story, Chicago Tribune, May 9, 2019***

- *But when he talked to reporters about this the other day at a news conference, I heard the Chicago Fire Department's message of compassion from tough Pat Fitzmaurice. A message about not judging the young mother, a message asking other young women in a similar situation to bring their infant to a firehouse instead. And no questions would be asked, and no judgments made.*
- *"You know me, I've got Irish Alzheimer's, I forget everything but a grudge," Fitzmaurice said. "But I've been going back to church. And I was thinking about the young woman, the mom, desperate. We don't know what went on with her. I'm this way now: Let God judge."*
- *When Fitzmaurice was a kid on the job years ago, he answered a call of a woman whose children had died. She'd scalded them both with cauldrons of boiling water.*
- *"She had this thousand-yard stare in her eyes. And I thought, God will somebody explain this to me. I almost quit. And the other day, in the ER with the baby, I said, 'God, if You don't save this one, I'm done. It'll be my last day.' But he lived. Death wanted him, but this day God said 'no.' He just said no."*

There is so much evil in this world. There is a lot going on under Satan's control, but God has greater control of it all. We have to trust in this.

What I like about this story is this transformation we see in this main character. He has come through these very dark experiences and dark places. At the end he is able to say, "I will let God be the judge." He has come to the place of acceptance, perspective, compassion and proper coping with the trials that accompany this type of work. This is an excellent story of that transformative power we can have when we see he went back to church and put God in the center of his life.

That is the key. He found something to be able to bounce back to that was bigger than he was. Let's get back to the story of Job.

After all the commiserating, accusations, arguing, support, anger, soul-searching and tears, FINALLY, Job is ready to see clearly. This is a huge turnaround because Satan was expecting Job would completely and permanently turn away from God.



Job is dramatically confronted by God:

Job 38:1-5: (NASB) ¹Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ²Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! ⁴Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, ⁵who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?

Those are just the first questions God asked Job. He goes through several chapters questioning Job and revealing information. Job starts to get the point.

Job's response to God goes far beyond that of his advisors. He is not only back to a God-honoring attitude where he started, but a *deeply educated and humble* God-honoring attitude.

The resilience worked, but the education of Job's faltering became vital, as Job is now even stronger:

Job 40:1-5: (NASB) ¹Then the LORD said to Job, ²Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it. ³Then Job answered the LORD and said, ⁴Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. ⁵Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.

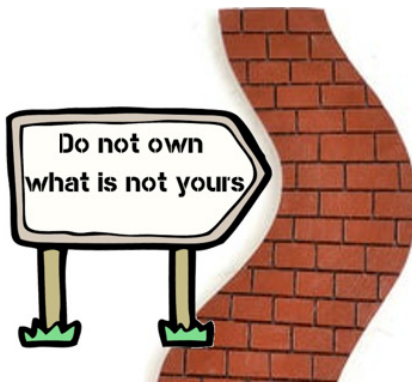
Job is basically saying: I will be quiet now. He is seeing life clearly. It is helpful to read the entire 38th chapter to see how God speaks to Job about nature, creation and scientific things that no one in that time period could have known.

Job realized he was off the path. What is the pathway we need to follow in terms of dealing with burnout?



Life is like a pathway. We have to lay the foundations of faith, brick-by-brick. We need to lay these foundations when things are not quite as stressful. To get to the other side of an experience we want to walk on this pathway that unfortunately is never straight. Life is never straight; there are always things that happen we do not expect, but the trick is to not veer off the path. This is our path of righteousness, our connection to God. Things may try to blow us off that path, and like Job's friends, they may try to entice us off the path. If we have built a firm foundation, we will not step off, and God will deliver us to the other side.

We will go through five pieces of this pathway. In **Ep. 1117: How Do I Avoid Burnout? (Part II)**, we will refer back to these five pieces as a basis to further examine, understand and overcome burnout.



Your trauma, your circumstances and your future all belong to God's providence:

Matthew 6:8: (NASB) *So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*

It is okay not to know the path in front of us. We are not always meant to understand all of God's dealings with us. There is no better place to be than in the hands of the Almighty God.

We need to take small steps. God will always give us the next small step. Leave what is beyond that to Him.



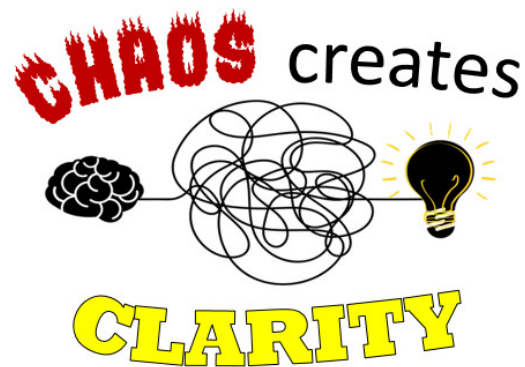
What is the next right thing to do?
What is the next thing NOT to do?

Colossians 3:23-24: (NASB) ²³*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,* ²⁴*knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

Sometimes when an experience comes to us we get so overwhelmed we do not know which way to turn. The answer is to take a baby step forward and figure out what is our next right thing to do.

Every day I can go out there and make the decision to either cultivate positivity and count my blessings, OR I am going to let that criticism grow, become disgruntled and play into this burnout. It can be moment-by-moment and day-by-day trying to cultivate a better character as we are moving through this present time.

Hannah, you made choices in the middle of the difficulties of burnout and decided not to go down the easy path, but to go up the hill on the path that says, "I have to get to higher ground." This is how we overcome and put burnout in its place.



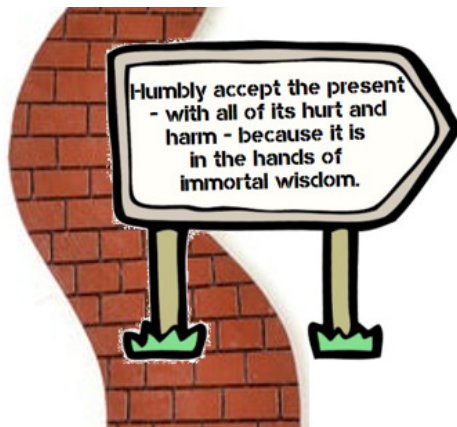
It is in the chaos that all of the elements are displayed that need to be dealt with. If we examine the chaos and find the pieces, we can then piece together where we need to go.



Romans 5:3-5: (Young's Literal Translation) ³And not only so, but we also boast in the tribulations, knowing that the tribulation doth work endurance; ⁴and the endurance, experience; and the experience, hope; ⁵and the hope doth not make ashamed, because the love of God hath been poured forth in our hearts through the holy spirit that hath been given to us.

It is important to count the victories as much as the defeats. When we see the defeats, we only see what we have as lost. We do not see the character-building experience underneath. We need to balance both of those in our minds to keep a good perspective.

The defeats are even more important because they bring us out of the mire of burnout which not only affects us, but also those around us.



Job 42:1-6: (NASB) ¹Then Job answered the LORD and said, ²I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? (speaking of himself - repeating what God said to him earlier in Job 38) Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁴Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me. ⁵I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; ⁶Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.

We need to remind ourselves that for the followers of Christ, we are given exceeding great and precious promises. These are the basis of our faith and help fuel us and energize us when we are in trying hours. Jesus gave a lot of promises to his followers. We can use those while we are in this situation and claim them for ourselves.

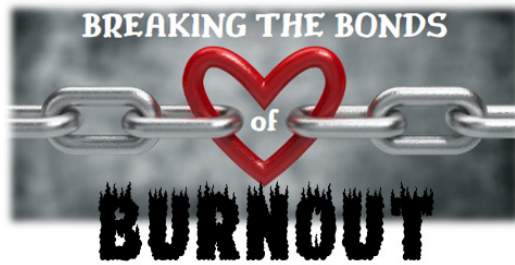
Job's response is that he had always heard God, but now he has seen God with his eye. He was now more mature. All of this tragedy built up Job's character stronger than when he started.



Job 42:7-9: (NASB) ⁷It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. ⁸Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job. (And Satan lost!)

We are told to encourage each other and build each other up into good works and deeds, but it is hard when we ourselves are burned out. There is always a little part of us that can try to help someone else.

The power of prayer is enormous. We should get outside of ourselves and pray for others. God told Job to pray for his friends, and his prayers would deliver them.



Burnout can be burned out if we reset our foundation, find godly counsel and input, seek God's will, and DAILY and DELIBERATELY act in accordance with ALL of these things.

Advice I have received: "Christian, never give up."

Thank you, Hannah, for sharing your story with us, and for your incredible professionalism, helping us understand what you dealt with and the things you do to help people. Most importantly, thank you for the Christian insight to look at your own life and say, something is wrong, I need to change and seek God's will and way in making that change. It is helpful to see the real-life experience of someone who has been through it. Take heart in that experience. Apply it to your own life and realize that burnout can be beaten. We must be resilient and look for higher strength, faith and promises in God.

Burnout is conquerable!

*So, how do I avoid burnout?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Hannah and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on March 16, 2020
Ep. 1117: How Do I Avoid Burnout? (Part II)

Bonus Material

Burnout is what happens when you try to avoid being human for too long. — Michael Gungor

Matthew 10:28-31: (NASB) ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.



Job 9:14-18: (NLT) ¹⁴So who am I, that I should try to answer God or even reason with him? ¹⁵Even if I were right, I would have no defense. I could only plead for mercy. ¹⁶And even if I summoned him and he responded, I'm not sure he would listen to me. ¹⁷For he attacks me with a storm and repeatedly wounds me without cause. ¹⁸He will not let me catch my breath, but fills me instead with bitter sorrows.

Job's second response to Eliphaz:

Job 16:12-17: (NLT) ¹²I was living quietly until he shattered me. He took me by the neck and broke me in pieces. Then he set me up as his target, ¹³and now his archers surround me. His arrows pierce me without mercy. The ground is wet with my blood. ¹⁴Again and again he smashes against me, charging at me like a warrior. ¹⁵I wear burlap to show my grief. My pride lies in the dust. ¹⁶My eyes are red with weeping; dark shadows circle my eyes. ¹⁷Yet I have done no wrong, and my prayer is pure.

Eliphaz's first speech to Job:

Job 5:17-19: (NASB) ¹⁷Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. ¹⁸For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal. ¹⁹From six troubles He will deliver you, even in seven evil will not touch you.

The Apostle Paul quotes from his story:

1 Corinthians 3:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness. ([Job 5:13](#))

Resilience training

Practical Remedies - Resilience and Compassion satisfaction

Current evidence shows that compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout are influenced by an individual's resilience level (Cocker & Joss, 2016).

Resilience is the capacity of an individual's strengths and resources that help them bounce back and thrive during stressful and adverse conditions (Flarity et al., 2013).

Compassion satisfaction is the positive feeling resulting from helping patients and their families through traumatic situations and is often characterized as the protective factor in the development of compassion fatigue (Cocker & Joss, 2016; Sacco et al., 2015).

Additional studies concluded that higher levels of resilience were closely linked with increased hope and reduced stress (Rushton et al., 2015).

Establishing a healthy balance between compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction, or in other words, the positive and negative aspects of caring leads to an increased professional quality of life (Sacco et al., 2015).

Resilience training has been found to not only decrease burnout, but also decrease other psychological effects of stress and witnessing traumatic events, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Mealer et al., 2014).



Practical exercises like deep breathing and reflection may help burnout.

But more effective for the Christian than practical exercises are the higher spiritual remedies:

Psalms 34:15-19: (NASB) ¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. ¹⁶The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Spiritual burnout:

2 Corinthians 1:8-11: (NASB) ⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; ⁹indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; ¹⁰who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, ¹¹you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12: (NASB) ⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death works in us, but life in you.

2 Corinthians 11:23-29: (NASB) ²³Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane - I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

