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## SELF CARE ESSENTIALS

How do pastors and leaders practice self care when there are so many demands?

### Hosted by:

**Cid Latty**

*Congregational Development Associate,  
CBOQ*

### Guest:

**Marc Potvin**

*Pastoral Leaders Development Associate,  
CBOQ*

Self care is difficult. It requires mental and emotional energy that can be hard to muster. It can raise feeling of guilt or shame: “I’m unworthy and selfish for putting myself before others.” But burnout can sneak up on us when we ignore self care.

You can [watch the recording here](#) and use this summary as a resource for next steps.

### What do we mean by “burnout”? Why is it important?

Burnout is defined as feeling depersonalized (what is my identity), emotional exhaustion (feeling overwhelmed), and lacking a sense of accomplishment (what I do doesn’t seem to matter).<sup>1</sup>

A Canadian study found that 3% of clergy were very high on the burnout scale. 26% had low-level burnout and 38% were borderline. It is real and prominent in vocational leaders. Elijah is a good example of what burnout looks like.<sup>2</sup>

### What are the signs that a person is approaching burnout?

- Feeling like a hamster on a wheel, unable to slow down, especially when one knows he or she should; being unable to relax even when one feel exhausted; high stress levels and one’s brain does not want to shut down; emotionally exhausted; head overfilled and soul feels jammed; easily irritable; feeling detached; overuse of sarcasm and cynicism
- Unwillingness to care for oneself, including one’s spiritual well-being because there is too much to do is a warning sign of burnout in clergy
- Getting angry and justifying our work behaviour when a close confident tells us we are working too much, need to rest, take a vacation or go on retreat is another warning sign.

### Why does burnout take us by surprise?

42% of surveyed Canadian pastors described themselves in low to poor health. 30% were dissatisfied to very dissatisfied with their health situation. What does this say about how we treat God’s Temple?

<sup>1</sup> Byassee, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason. *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, P. 29

<sup>2</sup> Beales, Cheryl-Ann, *The Art of Belonging: Clergy Formation and Wellness*. Wolfville: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 2016.

## STAYING GROUNDED

Three elements that help keep us grounded in who we are:

- Close relationships with those with whom we can be “real”: a small group of pastors, a spiritual director, a solid friend
- A proper sense of our identity in Christ. We are not saviours, he is.
- Proper boundaries: between ministry/work, personal life, family life, etc.

Recovering healthy behaviours is essential to recovery from the path of burnout:

- Exercise
- Healthy nutrition and diet
- Spending time in nature
- Relationships
- Recreation and enjoyable activities
- Relaxation and stress management
- Contribution and service (outside “work”)
- Religious and spiritual involvement

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- If you have identified that you are at a low or high level of burnout, reach out! Do not keep those feelings secret. There is no shame in sharing it. Almost 1/3 of clergy are there and more have experienced it.
- Burnout is not a sign of weakness or letting God down. It is a sign that you care deeply for people and desire to continue to care for people but right now, you need care. You are not alone. Let anyone from the Church Life and Leadership Team walk with you.
- Burnout does not have to be the end of your vocational ministry. Rather it is a time to rest, learn and be restored.

Think of a time when you felt closest to God. How did you lead and respond to adversity when you felt this closeness? Sometimes we forget that the times we are the best leaders are when we have paid attention to a personal encounter and an ongoing relationship with God. As Song of Songs 1:6 says, “*They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have neglected.*”

Today take some time to reset the balance by seeking God, to be with him and taking some time to look after yourself in a way that refreshes you.

## UPCOMING SESSIONS

REDEFINING THE CHURCH  
January 12, 10:00 am

Stay tuned for more topics!

What new patterns will we need to understand and what new forms do we need to embrace to advance the Gospel?

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

## CONTACT

**Cid Latty**

Congregational Development Associate

[clatty@baptist.ca](mailto:clatty@baptist.ca) | 416-620-2937