

**Peace Under Pressure #8**  
**“How to Prevent Burnout”**  
Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

**Today we have come to the last segment on *Handling Life's Pressures*.** In the last few weeks we have looked at how to be at peace under pressure. We have looked at the stress of *time, money, jobs, and change*. Today, I want to talk about, "How To Prevent Burnout."

**What is burnout?** *Burnout* is a term that came in with the space age and it actually meant when a rocket ran out of fuel. Nowadays it describes emotional, spiritual depletion, when you are mentally fatigued, physically under the weather, frustrated. All of those things compile to cause you to be burned out.

**Ecclesiastes is a book written by Solomon.** It is probably one of the most misunderstood books because many people read it and take verses out of context. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon was searching for life. He was looking for life in all the wrong places. He tried every kind of different thing. In the meantime, before he came to the conclusion, he gave some real off the wall statements. There is some advice in Ecclesiastes that, if you don't look at the whole book, you will take it out of context and think God is telling you to do something God is not telling you to do. But Solomon, eventually in his journey, came to the right conclusion. When you read the book of Ecclesiastes, don't miss the last two verses in the book. Although he gets off on some tangents and gets some wrong ideas in the middle part, by the end of the book, the last two verses, he comes to the right conclusion.

**If anybody in life was ever burned out, it was Solomon when he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes.** This guy was fed up, discouraged, depressed, disillusioned, bored, and frustrated. He was very burned out.

The book of Ecclesiastes begins this way in the Living Bible, "The author Solomon of Jerusalem, king David's son, the preacher. In my opinion, nothing is worthwhile. Everything is futile for what does a man get for his hard work? Generations come and go but it makes no difference. The sun rises and sets and hurries around to rise again. The wind blows south and north, here and there, twisting back and forth, getting nowhere. The rivers run into the sea but the sea is never full and the waters return again to the rivers and flow again to the sea. Everything is unutterably weary and tiresome. No matter how much we see, we're never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we're not content. History merely repeats itself. Nothing is truly new. It's all been done and said before." **Can you identify with Solomon?** He is really bummed out. He continues, "What can you point to that's new? How do you know it didn't exist long ago? We don't remember

what happened in the former times and in the future generations, no one will remember what we've done back here." **This guy has a Grade A depression. He is really down and burned out.** In chapter 2:17 he says, "So now I hate life because it's all so irrational. All is foolishness, chasing the wind and I'm disgusted that I must leave the fruit of all my hard work to others." In verse 20 he says, "So I turned in despair from hard work as the answer to my search for satisfaction." He continues in verse 23, "So what does a man get for all his hard work. His days are full of sorrow and grief and restless, bitter nights. It's all utterly ridiculous." **That guy was burned out. He was depressed. He had a problem.**

**Fortunately, Solomon did not just leave us there.** In his search for **What's Life All About?** he came up with some right conclusions. While he was checking out all the different tangents of life, he comes up with some preventative steps for burnout. **That is what we are going to look at today.**

### How to Prevent Burnout from Solomon's point of view?

**First of all, he says we are to maintain balance in our lifestyle.** That is the first key to dealing with burnout. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and uproot. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance." **And in the next few verses he gives fourteen different contrasts.** He is saying that life is composed of opposites. If you want to prevent burnout in your life, you must learn to maintain balance in your lifestyle.

**Life is a balancing act.** There is a time and a place for everything. In verse 11 he finally says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time." **Solomon said that thousands of years ago.** He is saying that the first key to dealing with burnout is to maintain balance in your life. There is a time to be happy, a time to be sad, a time to work, and a time to play. **Each of us needs balance.** As I have talked to people who are burned out, the number one characteristic I see of someone who is burned out is a lack of balance in their life. There are areas in their lives that are being neglected.

**What was Solomon's problem?** His weakness, you will discover in the first two chapters, was he was a *workaholic*. Five times in the first two chapters, he brags about his hard work. He mentions, "I'm such a hard worker!" And he worked himself into burnout.

**To prevent burnout we must balance our lifestyle.** We must balance the professional with the personal. We must balance *work* with *play*, *being* with *doing*, the *physical* with the *spiritual*, *intake* with *outgo*, *giving* with *receiving*. **All of life is to be balanced.** He is saying, there is a time and a purpose for

everything. Balance *speaking* with *listening*, *crying* with *laughing*. A person who does not have balance in his life will burn out.

**Second, he says to develop some strong personal relationships.** After all this searching through his life he says in Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up. Also if two lie down together, they will keep warm. How can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves and a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

**Solomon says, the second great cause of burnout is a lack of emotional support.** You think you are out there all by yourself and the fact is we all need *constant love* and *constant attention* and *constant care* and *constant affirmation*. **Solomon says develop some strong personal relationships.** Two are better than one. If one is down, the other can lift him up. Pity the person who does not have anybody there to give him support when he is emotionally drained.

**The fact is, everybody needs at least one person they can totally count on in life.** Walter Winchell said, "A friend is somebody who *walks in* when everybody else *walks out*." Everybody needs a friend.

**Personal support is critical to your emotional survival in today's age.** That is why the Bible says, "Choose your friends wisely." Psalm 1:1 says, "Don't associate with cynical, negative, sarcastic, skeptical people. Don't make them your friends." Why? **Because a negative person, a negative friend is a stress rather than a support in your life.** They tend to tear down rather than build up. Everybody needs strong personal relationships.

**I am so grateful for my wife for she is my closest friend.** She has given me the support that I have needed to go on with my life. She deserves a lot of credit for things I have done in my life. **You can do just about anything if somebody believes in you.** You are way out in front. You need strong relationships.

**Thousands of years ago Solomon said, if we are going to make it through life, we need to develop strong relationships.** In other words, we need each other, and we need someone to be a good friend. When you are down, they can lift you up. The Bible says, "Though one may be over-powered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

**But, how does one go about developing friendship?** Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly." You make friends by being a friend. God expects us to take the initiative in building friendships.

The Bible says in Hebrews, "Encourage one another unto good works." **The book of Hebrews was written to the church.** In other words, we need to be encouragers to other people while we are here at church. **How do you do that? You take the initiative.** Instead of talking to the same little group that you always fellowship with, you look for visitors. You let them know that we are interested in their being here and we want to meet the needs in their life. **Now that takes effort, that takes time, and for some of you that means getting out of your comfort zone.** But that is exactly what God expects us to do.

Solomon says, "I have tried it all. I have looked for life everywhere and I am burnt out, I am fatigued. But here are some things I have learned: One, maintain balance in your life. Realize there is a time for everything. Two, develop some strong relationships, so they will be there in the clench when you need them."

**Third, he say take time to enjoy the present.** Ecclesiastes 5:18 says, "Then I realized that it's good and it's proper for a man to eat and drink and find satisfaction [underline "satisfaction"] in his toils and labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him. For this is his lot. Moreover when God gives any man wealth and possessions and enables him to enjoy them [notice the word "enjoy"], to accept his lot, and to be happy [notice this] in his work, this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life. [He is not worried about his past, bound up with regrets] because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart."

**Solomon is saying to take time to enjoy the present.** Life was meant to be *enjoyed*, not just *endured*. **Stop and smell the roses. Enjoy life's pleasure.** Go it with gusto! It is a gift from God. **Enjoy life! He knew this from personal experience.** You can get so busy working that you never stop to enjoy the result of that work. **Here is the prescription for burnout: always working and never enjoying today.** Always regretting the past, always worrying about the future, always missing out on the present pleasures of life - a good meal, a friend, enjoying your family, enjoying a sunset - the pleasures of life.

**So many times you have seen people work real hard at the office then they get a well-deserved vacation.** What do they do on vacation? **Take a briefcase full of work with them to work on vacation.**

**Solomon said, we need to make up our minds to enjoy the present.** Make the most of now.

**Let me give you a couple of characteristics of people who have never learned to enjoy the present:**

1. They feel guilty any time they relax.
2. They take everything greatly too seriously.
3. They never stop to laugh at themselves.

**One of the healthiest habits you can get involved in for your life is to develop a sense of humor.** Proverbs 17 says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine." Laughter is a tremendous coping device. **It is therapeutic. It is relaxing.** It helps you handle the bumps in life. **The healthier you are the more you can laugh even at yourself.** The mark of maturity in a person is that they are able to laugh at their inconsistencies.

Solomon says, "I tried it all and I was bummed out. Fed up, frustrated, disillusioned. But I have learned these things: There is a time and a place for everything so keep balance in your life. Don't just focus on a few things. Manage to have balance." Then he says, "Develop some key relationships because two are better than one and if one falls down the other can hold him up. Pity the person who doesn't have any relationships." Then he says, "Learn to enjoy the present and make the most of it and enjoy life."

**Do you think God has a sense of humor? He made us! Sure He's got a sense of humor. Have you ever stood naked and looked in the mirror?**

**Fourth, he says we need to learn contentment.** Contentment allows you to enjoy the present while you are working on your goals for the future.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 reads like this in the Living Bible, "He who loves money will never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness. The more you have the more you spend right up to the limits of your income. So what's the advantage of wealth except, perhaps, to watch it as it runs through your fingers? The man who works hard, sleeps well whether he eats little or much. But the rich must worry and suffer insomnia." Ecclesiastes 6:6 says, "Though a man live a thousand years twice over, but doesn't find contentment, what's the use?" **Why live if you never find contentment? That does not mean you don't strive to better yourself. That does not mean you don't have some objectives in life. But stop and smell the roses and take advantage of what you have got right now. It is a gift from God.**

**Last of all, he says recognize God for who He is.** In verse 13 he says, "Fear God and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil."

**In other words, accept God's direction for your life.** When a person ignores scripture, ignores the principles that God's laid out, he is going to get all kinds of problems in his life. He is going to have all kinds of emotional conflicts. He is not living in harmony with the pattern for which he was made.

**Some of you are modern day Solomons.** You are just like him. You are saying, "I have tried it all. I have looked for life everywhere. I have looked for life in pleasure and I have looked for life in power. I have tried possessions. I have tried position. I have tried all different things but it is not there. I feel like I am burned out." **You have been searching, just like Solomon.** You have tried it all, and your life is still running on empty.

Jesus Christ says, "I want to be at the center of your life." **When you put Christ at the center of your life, you restore a sense of balance and harmony you have been missing.** You will tap into a source of strength that will never run dry. There is enormous energy there.

**You are here today by divine appointment.** You are *fed up* and *frustrated* and *disillusioned* and *discouraged* and really feeling like your life is coming unraveled. My advice is to put Christ at the center of your life and let Him bring everything else into harmony and balance. **That is the way you were made to live.**

If you have never been saved, why not today?

**Everyone please stand for prayer.**

Father,

I know Your Word is true. Give me the courage to put You first in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.