Burning Out or Burning Up

*And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.* Exodus 3:2

Sometimes you just want to crawl into bed and never get up again. That feeling of wanting to escape everything could be a sign of burnout. When you’re burned out, problems seem insurmountable, everything looks bleak, and it’s difficult to muster up the energy to care, let alone take action to help anyone, including yourself. The sadness and detachment caused by burnout can threaten your relationships, your job, and your health. But by recognizing the early warning signs, you can take steps to prevent it. Or, if you’ve already hit the breaking point, there is something you can do to re-energize and start feeling positive and hopeful again.

You may remember the story of Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha, who are sisters, opened their home to Jesus and his disciples. As Martha hurried around making preparations for this large group, Mary simply sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to him speak. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” Jesus replied, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38-42.)

Jesus offered the solution to Martha’s stress-filled existence, which is often the first sign of burnout. He explained that the only thing needed is to focus on the presence and the Word of God. While Martha was obsessed with worry about preparing their home for guests, she missed the opportunity to hear Jesus speak. All Martha needed, and all you need, is to give your full attention when in the presence of the Lord. Listen to Him speak personally, as Mary did, or when reading the Word of God as we do now. Spending time listening to the Word will reassure you that God will help you accomplish the work He gives you to do. Sitting in His presence daily will remind you that His grace is sufficient for every challenge you face. Reading and hearing the Word gives you peace to face each day.

If you feel like you’re carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders without any help, then you may have Martha Syndrome and be heading for burnout. Burnout is an undeniable sign that something important in your life is missing. Take time to develop your relationship with Jesus. Stop neglecting time spent in the Lord’s presence. Let the Spirit of God set a fire inside of you and make you His dwelling place. Instead of burning out, you will burn with an inextinguishable fire through the ups and downs of this ordinary, sometimes extraordinary, and always crazy life.



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Janie is passionate about the Word and discipleship—especially helping others by demonstrating the love of Christ through acts of kindness. She loves hosting gatherings for family and friends, and she has the privilege of being married to John White for 23 years. Together Janie and John have a blended family of four children, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Her favorite scripture is Ephesians 3:20, which encourages her to say, “Yes Lord!” to whatever challenges come her way.