

Spiritual Burnout: The Danger of Doing Good

Studies estimate more than 5 million Christians are working in full-time ministry. More than a million of them are taking the gospel message to non-Christian parts of the world, with some risking their lives.

Now, Hope International President Peter Greer is sounding an alarm about a different danger in doing good: spiritual burnout.

Greer, a leader in the global fight against poverty, has spent his professional life doing good works in the mission field.

"I'm part of a generation that has grown up believing there are huge needs in the world and the church needs to respond," Greer told CBN News.

"We have thrown ourselves into causes of social justice," he said. "We have thrown ourselves into missions and we have been burned out as a result. And I think a lot of this burnout comes because we have forgotten why we serve."

Greer believes charity and service have a dark side, a message he addresses in his book, *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good*.

"How do we run over our family or give our family our leftovers because we are too busy doing good work?" Greer challenged. "How is it that we forget who we are becoming in Christ because we don't have time? We are doing such great things that we don't have time to grow in a real relationship with Christ."

Greer says those at work in the mission field are usually aware of their sacrifices of time, money, and even safety.

Still, they don't expect to feel their motivation starting to

slip. It happened to him more than 12 years ago while distributing blankets to poor refugees left devastated after a volcano eruption.

"I remember at that moment as I was giving away blankets that one of my friends was not far away snapping pictures. And I was not thinking about the individual in front of me," Greer recalled.

"I was thinking about the pictures that were being taken and the reaction my friends were going to have back home when they saw these pictures of a masculine Mother Theresa giving away and serving the poor," he continued.

"And I was so hit by my own hypocrisy that I was not loving the individual who was in front of me. I was play acting for someone very far away," he said.

Greer warns those kinds of spiritual dangers don't only happen on the mission field – they can hit right here at home.

"It doesn't matter if you are giving in your local church or you are giving internationally. I think the principles and the underlying issues are the same. We give. We give. We give. We give. We give. And we burn out," he said.

"And the question is why is that? I think part of it is because we buy into a lie that giving to God means we go without ever resting. It means we go without ever being refreshed ourselves and I don't think that honors God," he said.