

Burning in the Spirit

I submitted a theme in an English Composition class one day in which I described watching a house burn down. I received a Pavlovian reward in the form of an A, but a question my teacher posed disturbed me:

“Does a house burn up or burn down?”

That question burned me up for years. I certainly never wrote the phrase again until now. But the word-choice challenge did prepare me to consider other similar quandaries: write down or write up, beat up or beat down, tear up or tear down?

I recently finished reading Joseph Mattera’s book *The Jesus Principles*. He wrote it to help readers unleash greatness in themselves, their homes and their circles of influence. The principles he shares are those Jesus used to unleash human potential.

The book grabbed my attention quickly with seven questions to help me consider whether I’m currently living a directed life or drifting aimlessly toward the latest shiny object.

One of those questions took me back to that high school English Composition class: “Are you suffering burnout?”

The Mayo Clinic describes burnout with a non-medical description: “Job burnout is a special type of work-related stress—a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.” The clinic offers the following list to consider:

Have you become cynical or critical at work?

Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?

Have you become irritable or impatient with co-workers,

customers or clients?

Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?

Do you find it hard to concentrate?

Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?

Do you feel disillusioned about your job?

Whether we believe we're suffering from burnout or not, we all sometimes feel as though we are drifting through our work, our relationships and our spiritual walk. Some of us haven't recovered from the multiple impacts caused by COVID.

Things simply feel harder. Progress comes with more struggles, more effort and many more distractions. Some days, it just feels as though we are tied by a leash.

Another question Mattera asks cuts straight to the heart of a drifter: Are you experiencing continuous frustration?

If we aren't pursuing God's specific path for our life, it's likely that we experience many frustrations throughout the day. God lets us know when we are drifting. He sends us several wake-up calls.

When we lose our passion and purpose, it's a good sign that our boat is adrift. We may feel increased anxiety with every project we attempt and feel blocked by circumstances and feelings. We know the motions to go through and boxes to check. But motions and checkmarks don't satisfy the sense that God has more for us.

Frustration breeds more frustration. How can we influence others when we lack clarity of purpose?

Jesus accomplished more in his three short years of ministry than we can hope to accomplish in a lifetime. Yet we see no signs of frustration as the Savior walked through life. We see

no signs of burnout, even when He spent hours ministering to large crowds.

Instead, Jesus offered a simple, wise solution: “‘Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.’ He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat” (Mark 6:31, NLT).

If you’re feeling frustrated or burned out, check your rest meter. Find that quiet place with Him. Only He can transform a life of burnout to one burning with the Spirit of God.

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