

8 Reasons Why Christians Get 'Taken Out'

I watch it all the time. Well-meaning believers getting "taken out."

They served for 20 years and then all of a sudden they are checked out and want nothing to do with building the church or serving people anymore. They don't even seem to carry a love for God. They wear that burned-out look in their eyes. A deep cynicism and hardness shrouds their words and perceptions. What happened?

What does it mean to get "taken out?" It really speaks to getting out of the growth curve that God has you on and out of the assignment He has put over your life. When we stop pressing in, believing and growing in overcoming, the temptation to take the easy road of complacency is so near. In addition, most people who get taken out often express a fatigue of helping people and dealing with all the "stuff" that comes with that.

We've all been tempted. I have been tempted. In fact, I get tempted all the time. If you are not tempted, then you may have already been taken out.

Anyone who steps out into uncharted territory and plows new ground gets tempted just to bail and do something without the daily resistance. I have watched too many friends get taken out. I grieve seeing them step off their potential. They take an easier route. They leave the church. Their marriage falls apart. They get deeply hurt and never recover. Affairs take place. Their sanity breaks down. Or they just simply check out emotionally and spiritually.

So what happens along the way that leads to this?

Of course this kind of issue never happens overnight. There are snares along the way that entrap believers but take time to have a full effect. They appear as speed bumps, but if these deadly traps are ignored, they paralyze us later on in life.

Here are some of the things that work to take us out over the long haul.

1. We get weary in doing good. This first one may come as a surprise, but one of the greatest ways the enemy gets to us is simply by wearing us out. In Daniel 7:25, it is said that the enemy persecutes or wears down the saints. Quite often the biggest snare is that people get burned out doing good stuff—loving on people, helping those in need, teaching and going out of their way to serve.

The command in Scripture tells us to not be weary in well doing, for in due season This means that a growing patience is needed in the journey. But how easy it is to lose focus on the prize, disconnecting to the reason we began this journey to begin with? We lose connection with why we chose to follow Christ. Maybe our “why” was not a good one to begin with.

Losing hope is a big contributor to this. When hope is waning, we lose passion and our vision becomes blurry. I myself have experienced deep times of disorientation and confusion over where I am and where I am going.

2. The journey gets “too hard.” I get concerned we often present a life in Christ as something that will take all your problems away and be an easy life. We portray a gospel that has all the sacrifice eliminated from it. Our modern soul-winning techniques remove the “all-in” call that Jesus brought.

Whenever He would speak to someone about following Him, He always brought a strong demand—“sell everything you have, let

the dead bury the dead, leave father and mother”—to shake off the hindering attachments that could derail their commitment down the road.

Today, Christianity can be very lazy in America. We want maximum miracles with minimum effort. We even gravitate toward teaching that seems to convey a life of absolute blessing without much effort on our part. So when the battle gets intense and certain things don't change easily, too many get taken out and go into a neutral posture spiritually. They still go to church, pay their taxes and pray over their meals, but inside, they are checked out from overcoming.

3. We lose who we are. A classic mistake we can make is when we get so lost in a role or mission, that we lose our identity into it. Men usually do this as they soak who they are into their work. Women often get trapped into having no identity other than being a mom. This can be so easy to occur, because if we do not have a solid identity in our hearts to begin with, it is very easy to immerse ourselves into a vocation, position or role.

The problem is that when that “role” ends, when we lose the job or when our kids grow up and are out of the house, we have nothing to fall on, so we begin to crumble internally. Our whole sense of well-being was not in who we are as God's son or daughter, but was instead hard-wired to that role.

4. The people we help bite back. One day God spoke to my heart about helping people. The thought came to my heart, “Are you willing to help people who will bite you back?” This was a very sobering question because one of the most challenging things about helping people is that those with hurt will often hurt back—often and hard! People have certain expectations of what you need to be for them. If those standards are not met, the fury of offense comes out and they lash out of their hurt. Quite often, they are projecting their hurt from the past on you.

This can be a huge trap for single people. In over 20 years of ministry, I find this can be the top thing that will sidewind a work of God in a single person's life. Just when they become on fire for God, suddenly a person of the opposite sex who does not have that same spiritual fire comes into the picture. The surrendered believer becomes quickly seduced into being tied to someone that does not fuel their walk with God, which sidelines their progress.

Sometimes all it takes is a family member. It's important to know that sometimes Satan will simply use a family member and our ties to them as a bridge to pull us back into toxic ways. I watch people who make full decisions to serve God with a greater tenacity and surrender. Then suddenly, a family member starts increasing their interaction and influence. The person then becomes swarmed by the fumes in the family that do not encourage the ways of God. Very quickly the old patterns kick back in.

6. We get offended. It's quite simple: if we are easily offended, we are destined to get taken out. That is why everyone has to work on this issue to grow to the next level. I am concerned that our politically correct culture is affecting the "all-in" call that Jesus brought, causing us to give a lukewarm invitation to the kingdom of God. I find this produces believers who cannot handle being offended well. They often go quickly into bitterness and anger, without doing proper conflict resolution. The unity of the body suffers and eventually the offended heart will grow cold and hard.

7. We get disappointed. When I sit down with people who have checked out and somehow got taken out in their journey, usually there is some major disappointment in their life they have not handled well. They prayed for someone to get healed and that person died. They took a major risk and it didn't pan out anywhere near where they expected it to. They stepped out and people abandoned them.

All of us experience those disappointments. They challenge us to the core, tempting us to bail out and leave what God puts on our hearts to pursue. These disappointments cause us to silently feed an anger with God, feeling like He left us hanging. What we do with these disappointments will make or break the giants that press into victory and those who fall to the wayside.

The danger of getting “taken out” is that our hearts get hard. Once we flip the switch in our hearts to the “off” position, it can be very hard to flip it back effectively.

8. We lose the simplicity of a love relationship with God.

Everything we do needs to stem from a love relationship with Father in our lives. But many get deterred into a complex lifestyle in which they are bombarded with demands, pressures and distractions that keep them from the simplicity of that love relationship.

Jesus simplified it. Love God. Love yourself. Love your neighbor. Everything hangs on this.

Sometimes we compromise, so our passion for God wanes. Most of the time, we just get so busy that we forget our first love. We often just get too busy to see the value of investing in day-to-day love relationship, where we learn to be still and let God refresh us.

Sometimes all the enemy needs to do to take us out is to blur the lens of our love relationship with God. And the call to bring us back is the same as that to the church of Ephesus: Get back to your first love.

Question: Which reason in this list sticks out the most to you? What reason would you add to this list? {eo}

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