

# Radical Social Change: A Letter To Philemon

*“Injustice: unfairness, unjust act, Unfair: not equitable or honest, not impartial or according to rules, society: organised and interdependent community, system and organisation of this”* – The Australian Oxford Dictionary, Third Edition

The issue of social injustice\* has always been one that is close to my heart. It’s something that I like to talk to my kids about often, to try to impress upon them just how fortunate they are in many aspects of their life. They live in a modern, western country and are possessors of freedoms and rights still not available to many other peoples of the world. My daughters, particularly, have liberties still not accessible to many other [girls and women](#). And on the delicate subject of race, my children haven’t had to endure the criticism or racial bigotry experienced by those who clearly display the truth of their indigenous ancestry by the colour of their skin (and who have been and are still being treated unjustly because of it).

Historically, social injustice has often been tolerated or, even worse, promoted on the basis of prejudice and [erroneously applied religious doctrine](#). Religious intolerance has fuelled many of this world’s wars and God has been made the “scapegoat” for much of what is the worst of humanity.

One only needs to look, for example, at the [founding document](#) of the devoutly Christian American nation, the Declaration of Independence, to see that what people say and what people *do* are often two quite different things.

The statement in the second paragraph, **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,**

**that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”** did not prelude American citizens from denying those same rights to thousands of men and women during the infamous period of slavery, based simply on the colour of their skin.

Mistreatment of slaves was further bolstered by their ignorant and prejudicial application of Bible passages. It took nearly 250 years for the official practice of human trafficking and slavery to be abolished in America and yet the affects of slavery are still felt and are at work today in many parts of America, and indeed the world.

Social injustice, however, is not just an American problem, or a historical problem. It's a world problem, manifested in many different ways, and is still a very relevant conversation for modern times.

*“Over and over again, in the history of the world, man has made life into chaos.” – Oswald Chambers*

## **What Does God Have To Say About Social Injustice?**

God, the creator of all, made all equal. The only difference commented on in Genesis, at the creation of humanity, was our genders – both uniquely special and individually reflective of God's glory. We're told throughout the Bible that God makes no distinction between people based on their social status (Jeremiah 22:3), their ethnicity (Acts 10: 34-35), or their gender (Galatians 3:28).

In fact, we're told that God is just, fair, and completely impartial (Deuteronomy 10:17, Romans 2:11). He despises mistreatment, discrimination or prejudicial treatment:

*“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” | Isaiah*

1:17 (ESV)

*“This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other’ | Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)*

*“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” | John 7:24 (NIV)*

This impartiality is thrown into sharp relief against the story found in the letter to Philemon.

Philemon, squeezed between the epistle to Titus and the letter to the Hebrews, is often overlooked and under-read. But it is a truly astonishing and socially radical exposition of exactly how God views all men and women. It tackles the serious and often difficult shift in thinking that is required and shows that belief in and love of God must affect our relationships with others in positive ways and with complete impartiality.

Sometimes, these effects are profound and far-reaching, as in the case of Philemon.

## **Who Was Philemon?**

Philemon was a wealthy, Christian slave owner, living in Colosse, a city which is now in modern Turkey. The area of Asia Minor was a huge melting pot of ethnicities and also one of the [first areas to flourish with converts to the new religion of Christianity](#). Overlaying this was the fact that this area was part of the hugely expansive [Roman Empire](#), at the height of its glory and, as such, was subject to Roman law and Roman customs.

In many cities in the Roman Empire, up to [30% of the](#)

[population were slaves](#). They undertook the bulk of the work required to keep the empire running and were considered to be the legal property of their owners. There were some rules against cruelty, but we would recognise them as the equivalent of 'animal rights', certainly not as human rights. Owners, like Philemon, essentially had the right to treat slaves however they wanted.

## **Who Was Onesimus?**

Typically, a slave would take on the religion of his or her master and Onesimus, the subject of the letter to Philemon, was one such slave. Having converted to Christianity, he then, at some point, fled his master's household and travelled hundreds of miles to where Paul was, the heart of the empire itself, to Rome. Rome differed from Greek city-states in that freed slaves were allowed to become citizens and perhaps this was Onesimus' objective in seeking out Rome.

The testimony of a slave could not be accepted in a Roman Court and they had no rights at all under the law. A master could punish a slave, however he wanted, and punishments included branding, scourging, torture or death. The punishment for a runaway slave was often branding in the forehead and the deliberate breaking of bones or joints.

This was Onesimus' expected fate, under Roman law, and Philemon had every right, as a master and Roman citizen, to enforce such punishment.

## **Jesus Changes Our Culture**

Paul's letter, however, is full of warm entreaty on behalf of Onesimus. He reminds Philemon that God's rule of love transcends any man-made law and that, in Jesus, both slave and master are equal. They are considered brothers, both children of a Heavenly Father. Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, not as just a slave, but as family.

Paul tells Philemon to add any debt owed by Onesimus to his own account but, in fact, considers it a favour to be done for Jesus. Paul is more than confident of Philemon's response and gives much emphasis to "this faith we hold in common...and that people recognise Christ in all of it".

The remarkable transformative power of the Gospel spills from the words in this letter – showing the dramatic ripple effect a response to God has in our personal lives. It challenges everything we do, our belief systems and possibly even misplaced prejudices about others. It compels us to behave justly to others, with impartiality, even though the world around us might not be just or impartial. **It compels us to do better and be better, simply because Jesus is.**

The Gospel of Good News often causes radical upheaval in our own lives as it forces our practices and beliefs to fall into line with the ideals of a true, loving, and socially just God.

*"He's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what GOD is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple. Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously." | Micah 6:8 (The Message)*

---

**\*In this article, "social injustice" is used in conjunction with the dictionary definitions noted at the beginning. Social injustice can be considered to fall into two categories, which are often inter-connected. These categories are defined as 'Inter-Social Treatment' and 'Unequal Government Regulation'. "Inter-Social Treatment involves unequal treatment of a group(s) of people within the local and regional scale. The basis for this unequal treatment is usually due to a personal belief about that group(s): Unequal Government Regulations are laws and regulations that purposefully or otherwise,**

discriminate a group(s) from the same opportunities and resources, based on differences that are unique to that group(s)”

(cited: <https://www.pachamama.org/social-justice/social-justice-issues>) Examples may include: unfair labour practices, racial, gender, age or ethnicity discrimination, inequality of health care or education based on certain criteria and to the worst degree, systematic genocide based on certain criteria.

This article was first published 25 February 2018

---

## Discipleship: Developing Your Authentic Self

When considering the ideas and thoughts surrounding [Church burnout](#), it became apparent that there is another serious issue facing many Christians today – in both their personal and church lives. The issue is a lack of spiritual and emotional maturity, leading to the cultivation of a ‘false self’ and a layering over our true self.

*“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” | 1 Corinthians 13:11, NIV*

### Layering Over Our True Self

When we accept the saving work of Jesus in our lives and commit to a life lived in him, we become a new creature. It is a metaphorical rebirth to ‘newness of life’. We are, as Corinthians explains, like little children, with all the wide-eyed wonder of this new life stretching out before us. This faith and dependence on God to undertake great things for us is commended by Jesus and he goes so far as to say that

*“...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 18:2-4, NIV). This childlike faith is essential to beginning a relationship with God, through Jesus, and this kind of faith needs to remain a constant in our lives.

And yet, many Christians never develop further than this moment. They remain as children, spiritually immature and never attaining to the radical transition of living faithfully to their true selves in Christ. Instead of genuine spiritual growth, beginning from their core and being demonstrated exponentially in their lives, Christians layer over their potential true self with a false reality of who they are.

They are concerned about who other people think they are rather than being concerned about **who God thinks they are**. They are emotionally disconnected from the reality of what life with Jesus really looks like, in real and practical terms. Christian life becomes theory rather than practice. This process of layering – creating and developing a false self over the top of core emotional truths – ensures that we remain entrapped and enslaved to ‘the old man’, rather than liberated in Jesus as a new creation.

## **The Deception Of The False Self**

The deeply entrenched false self is actually a refusal to accept God’s grace and its transforming effect on our life. Instead of being defined by what **God has done for us**, we become defined by who we perceive we are. We tell ourselves, ***I am what I do; I am what I have; I am what others think I am***. We are driven by performance, possessions or popularity, rather than by who we are to God.

The broader culture around us certainly substantiates this point of view and it can be very difficult to dismantle the false self and allow our true self in Christ to emerge. Yet, this is our life’s work and is the essence of what

discipleship really means. To think otherwise is to be deceived.

## **Following God Into The Unknown**

Getting to your core requires following God into the unknown – to being committed to emotional and spiritual reality, not denial or illusion. It means developing a relationship with Him and becoming who God has called you to be. Initially, it requires that childlike faith, but on that faith must be built conviction, through the process of discipleship.

Jesus' life was dominated by his conviction that he was sent to do his Father's will. This conviction produced a deep awareness of his life's purpose and he remained deeply connected and authentic to his true self. When people develop Christlike convictions, they too will develop a sense of purpose in life.

At times, our false self has become such a part of who we are that we don't even realise it. However, the consequences – fear, self-protection, possessiveness, manipulation, self-destructive tendencies, self-promotion, self-indulgence, and a need to distinguish ourselves from others – are harder to hide.

## **Discipleship: Developing Your Authentic Self**

To be a disciple, in the biblical sense, is to be actively imitating both the life and teaching of the master. It isn't the same as being a student, by today's modern understanding, but is rather a deliberate apprenticeship which makes the fully formed disciple **a living copy of the master.**

This process of discipleship is a principle-centered, character-based "inside out" approach to developing our authentic self in Christ. It means to start first with

ourselves; even more fundamentally, to start with the most **inside** part of self – our core – and to honestly analyse our paradigms, our character and our motives.

*“The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It says that it is futile to put personality ahead of character, to try and improve relationships with others before improving ourselves” | Stephen Covey*

It is a process that moves us from being a spiritually and emotionally immature child to being a fully mature and developed adult – *“a person dedicated to God, and capable and equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:17, NET).

## **Discipleship Comes From Differentiation**

A helpful way to clarify this process of growing in our faithfulness to our true selves is by using the term ‘differentiation’. Differentiation is a person’s capacity to “define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them.” The key emphasis of differentiation is on the ability to think clearly and carefully as another means, besides our feelings, of knowing ourselves.

People with a high level of differentiation have their own beliefs, convictions, directions, goals and values apart from the pressures around them. They can choose, before God, how they want to be without being controlled by the approval or disapproval of others.

People with a low level of differentiation are those with little sense of their unique God-given life. They need continual affirmation and validation from others because **they don’t have a clear sense of who they are**. They depend on what other people think and feel in order to have a sense of their

own worth and identity.

## **Church Life Shouldn't Come At The Expense Of A Personal Relationship With God**

A healthy church life provides many benefits. We find peace and fulfillment in Jesus. Our lives become enriched, our burdens are eased, and we develop supportive relationships to help us in hard times. Service within our church becomes something that fills us with joy and deep personal fulfillment.

However, we need to remember that the most important relationship in our life is the one between God and ourselves. He is the one who sees clearly to [the heart of us](#). He can distinguish between our authentic self and the cultivated 'false self' that others may see. And He, alone, judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

Our church life should therefore become an extension of our relationship with God. As church or Christian communities, we need to ensure we develop strategies and skills to grow in our discipleship and to move towards being emotionally and spiritually mature. This includes biblical ways to integrate emotions like anger, sadness or fear and being able to deal with these in authentic ways.

### **Four Ways To Develop Your Authentic Self**

1. Pay attention to your interior (the "heart of you") in silence and solitude.
2. Find trusted companions to help you along the way.
3. Move out of your comfort zone.
4. Pray for courage.

As Christian people, one of the greatest gifts we can give our world is to be a community of emotionally healthy adults who love well. This will take the power of God and a commitment to

learn, grow and break with unhealthy, destructive patterns that may go back generations in our families and cultures – and in some cases, our Christian [culture](#) also.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you should love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among one another.” | John 13:34-35, BLB*

---

I owe a great deal of thanks to the following authors; Peter Scazzero, Rick Warren and Stephen Covey, for their insight, wisdom and valuable words regarding this subject. I have quoted extensively from their works. In particular, I would highly recommend the book “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” by Peter Scazzero as an excellent starting point for anyone genuinely interested in investing in a deep, beneath-the-surface spiritual formation paradigm.

This article was first published on 20 June 2018

---

# Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

*“It’s impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.” | Peter Scazzero, Emotional Healthy Spirituality*

## Emotions Make Us Human

Do you have emotionally healthy spirituality? Are you emotionally mature? Or are you, perhaps, deeply uncomfortable

being intimate with your emotions? Did you realise that emotional maturity and spiritual health are intrinsically linked? Our emotions are at the core of what it is to be human and the journey of genuine transformation to emotionally healthy spirituality begins with a commitment to allow yourself to feel.

## **Are You Emotionally Mature?**

Are you as emotionally mature as you'd like to think you are? Ask yourself the following questions and you may be surprised and somewhat perturbed with the answers:

- You find it difficult or impossible to be transparent about your life struggles or how you *really* are. If someone asks, you reply "I'm fine", "all good", or "great week – yours?".
- You take any suggestion as a personal attack or rejection, rather than seeing it as an opportunity to improve or grow.
- You are intolerant of different views to your own and often tend to speak in very black and white terms about differences ie "right" or "wrong".
- You may be outwardly helpful, friendly, or giving to others but in private, you're actually a lousy spouse, parent, or family member.
- Others may describe you as unteachable, proud, insecure, or defensive.
- You may deal with conflict or turmoil with others by using methods that emotionally distance you from the very person you need resolution with. You often choose to talk with someone other than the person you are in conflict with. You avoid face-to-face conversations or simply pretend a situation doesn't exist.

You might be feeling somewhat dismayed to find yourself in one or more of the above scenarios. The good news is you're definitely not alone. Many (or most of us, if we're honest)

find ourselves somewhere in the middle of thinking we're emotionally mature and discovering that, in reality, we're not. But what does our emotional maturity have to do with our spirituality?

## **Humanity – Made In The Image And Likeness Of God**

Humans are incredibly complex creatures. yet we can divide all these complexities into five general parts or components that, put together, make us a “whole” or “complete” human:

**Intellectual** – Humans are created superior to animals; we're able to reason and make decisions for our own lives. The pursuit of knowledge is inbuilt in humans and the acquisition of knowledge is considered to be highly valuable and profitable.

**Spiritual** – Humans are also able to comprehend and make decisions based on more than just logical conclusions, knowledge or experience. We have the ability, if we choose, to base our reasoning on spiritual values with moral considerations. We're able to comprehend “higher ideals”. [Vines Expository Bible Dictionary](#) defines “spirituality” as *“things that have their origin with God and therefore are in harmony with His character”*. The ability to comprehend spiritual things makes us uniquely different to animals.

**Physical** – Humans aren't insubstantial, rather, our very essence, our consciousness, the thing that makes us, US, is contained within a literal, physical body. We *feel* things physically; touch, cold, heat, hunger, thirst, tiredness, and our physical state can be nurtured or abused (by ourselves or others). Our bodies are incredibly designed and are, as [the Psalmist](#) so aptly described them, “fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

**Social** – Humans have a natural desire to belong, to be loved, to be “part of something”. We're generally extremely social creatures. We tend to develop our circle or tribe and

cultivate that to our benefit because we enjoy company and friendship. We hate loneliness or the feeling of being unwanted or not needed. Social rejection or disconnection is actually one of the major causes of depression in humans.

**Emotional** – Finally, humans are emotional and our emotions are actually connected to all the other parts of us. Our emotions are the very core, the heart, of what it is to be human. We *feel* elation when we *learn* something new (intellectual). We *feel* pain when our bodies experience *hurt* (physical) and we *feel* acceptance and love when we *belong* (social). It should make sense to us that our spirituality and our emotions are deeply connected. But, somehow, we struggle to recognise this connection and, in fact, we often actively seek to disconnect the two. Yet, our spirituality and our emotions are inseparable.

*“The call of emotionally healthy spirituality is a call to a radical, countercultural life. It is a call to intentionality, rhythm, and expectation of a life transformed by the risen Christ, with the power to see through the illusions and pretense of our world.” | Peter Scazzero*

Emotions are data and this data gives us important information, enabling us to make values-based decisions. The problem with ignoring the connection between our emotions and our spirituality is that we then ignore important information about ourselves, how and why we’re feeling certain things, and the need to deal with those feelings.

Without acknowledging our emotions and using that information, our values-based decisions, those *“higher ideals”* or *“things that have their origin in God”*, can’t be acted upon in a deeply connected and meaningful way.

We become one-dimensional creatures, stagnant and immovable, rather than multi-faceted and growing towards being *“thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17),* and

we certainly don't have an emotionally healthy spirituality.

*"There is no greater disaster in spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality. In fact, the true spiritual life is not an escape from reality but an absolute commitment to it."*

| Peter Scazzerro

## **The Iceberg – What's Really Going On Beneath The Surface**

Unresolved or ignored emotions don't just go away. They grow, unchecked, beneath the surface of our life. What people see really is only "the tip of the iceberg." Above the waterline, we may appear to be doing fine, we will often say we *are* fine, but beneath the surface rage, all the unacknowledged and unresolved emotional feelings that we pretend don't exist. We're not being true to ourselves or others and we're not living authentic, meaningful lives. Here's what happens when we ignore our emotions:

- We become fearful
- We become intolerant
- We become critical
- We become ignorant
- We become disconnected
- We become discontented
- We become disillusioned

## **Still Not Sure About Being Emotionally Connected? Jesus Was Emotional!**

We're told that Jesus was like us, in all aspects of his humanity (Hebrews 4:15). He felt every human need and experienced the broad spectrum of human emotion. However, his emotions were always deeply connected to his spirituality. He felt sadness (Luke 19:41), joy (Luke 10:21), anger and distress (Mark 3:5), sorrow (Matthew 26:37), compassion (Luke

7:13), astonishment (Luke 7:9), stress and anxiety (Luke 12:50), and desperation and emotional vulnerability (Mark 14:32-36).

*The challenge to shed our “old false” self in order to live authentically in our “new true” self strikes at the very core of true spirituality. Paul the Apostle, expressed this as, “to put off your old self...and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22, 24).” | Peter Scazzero*

Emotional courage is listening to what your heart is telling you, ensuring you are emotionally connected with your spirituality and therefore able to make important, values-based decisions. Knowing yourself completely is critical to knowing God. Ignoring your emotions is ignoring the very way in which you draw closer to and become more like God.

Sometime, discomfort may be the price of admission to a meaningful life. Emotionally healthy spirituality is about reality, not denial or illusion and it's an essential part of being human.

---

**Further Recommended Resources:** [Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Peter Scazzero](#). [The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage, Susan David, TEDWomen2017](#)

**This article was first published 2 April 2018**

---

# Avoiding Church Burnout

(Not a reader? Take a listen instead ↓)

**Burnout** is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands, whether real or perceived. Eventually, you find you literally have nothing left to give, either emotionally or physically. This state often leads to a range of issues including anxiety, depression, insomnia, anger and ill health.

---

## Church Burnout

Burnout, particularly in relation to church life, is a subject that doesn't get as much discussion as it should. Perhaps it's because we tend to think that 'doing lots of stuff' and 'attending lots of events' is a requirement of any conscientious church member. We dutifully fill our calendars with copious church events, often to the exclusion of personal time, family time or, most importantly, time *with* God.

We curate an 'all-or-nothing' mentality in relation to church service; and any spare time we *do* find ourselves with is spent wracked with guilt, thinking about all the things we "should be doing". Frankly, if we're not *dying* from exhaustion, we conclude that we lack any kind of serious commitment.

After all, church life is supposed to be all-encompassing, exhausting, limiting (of our 'own time') and (between you and me) somewhat boring, right?

**Wrong!**

A church is like the human body, a living thing – made up of real people (1 Corinthians 12:12). Real people have their

limits, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Not only that, our levels of limitation will fluctuate during different stages of our lives.

We cannot be the same person once we have a partner or children as we were when we were single.

We don't have the same strength or 'spring-in-our-step' in our older years as we did when we were younger.

Our capabilities and energies ebb and flow, along with the ups and downs of our lives, and **we can only give what we can give** in the very moment of **right now**.

And church life should be rewarding, fulfilling, energising and motivating! Being at church should feel like being part of the family – comfortable, welcoming and with a real sense of belonging. The minute we stop seeing the value in what we're doing is the minute we need to stop and rethink the **why** of what we're doing!

*“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household” – Ephesians 2:19, NIV*

## **A Church Is Only As Healthy As Its Members**

It's important to remember a church will only be as healthy and balanced and energised as the sum of all its members – those real people who make up the congregation.

If, individually, the members are exhausted and overloaded, the church will display signs of exhaustion too. It will become unbalanced, unhealthy and stunted in growth. It's also important to remember that **we** don't grow our church – God does the growing. Sure, we all have our part to play but no single person is responsible for, or indispensable to, God's plan for

the growth of a church or community.

*“The key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth.” – Rick Warren*

## **What Does Church Burnout Look Like?**

Have you heard yourself saying this recently?: “I’m so exhausted”, or “I just *can’t* go to another thing this week”. Maybe you’ve found yourself thinking, “I’m *never* at home” or “Why can’t *someone else* do this for once?”. If you have, you may be suffering from church burnout.

Here’s what church burnout looks like, in real life:

1. You’re always busy, at everything, constantly in motion. You find yourself overcommitting and double booking.
2. You have idealistic standards about what a ‘real church’ should look like.
3. Your day always seems to arrive with constant low-grade stress and periodic crisis.
4. You often decline offers of help and assistance.
5. You feel a strong sense of responsibility, even when others don’t.
6. You feel extremely guilty about not attending church events or activities, even if you’ve already attended several that week.
7. You feel a strong sense of expectation from other church members.
8. You have an inability to say no and if you do, it’s with reluctance and guilt.
9. When you think about church, you feel suffocated, resentful, despondent and angry.

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” –*

Church life – life with Jesus – is for those who are weary and burdened – because in Jesus we find rest.

Church life becomes a natural extension of the peace and fulfilment that we've found in Jesus. It's designed to enrich our lives, ease our burdens, and provide supportive relationships for hard times. It develops character growth and maturity so that we can support others, when needed. And service within our church should be something that fills us with joy and deep personal fulfillment.

**Church life is the natural outworking of a life based on *being* a certain kind of person, not *doing* certain kinds of things.**

## Tips For Preventing Church Burnout

- Emphasise grace over works in your personal life. Concentrate on who you're ***being*** rather than what you're ***doing***. Remind yourself that we don't earn God's blessings by the amount of work we do. He wants us to lead healthy, balanced lives where ministry service is a joy, where giving becomes as simple as *doing because it has been done for us*.
- Make time for regular recreation. These are the times when you can pause, reset and renew. Without recreation, burnout is inevitable.
- Know your limits and set reasonable, achievable boundaries for the work you take on. Giving of yourself is a valuable and worthy service, but sometimes giving isn't always possible or profitable. If you need to say "no", then do so, with **no guilt attached**.
- Remember that the work is God's, not your own. Seek His guidance and help when you consider your responsibilities and commitments within your church.
- Learn to put [first things first](#). Being involved within

your church community is a valuable part of a fulfilling spiritual life – but never at the expense of your time with God or your family. Set priorities and look for ways to involve your partner or family in church activities. Be willing to occasionally say no to low priority church activities when they conflict with quality family time.

- Listen to your body's warning signs, such as headaches, backaches, dizziness, insomnia, and unexplainable fatigue. Learn to slow down and be less anxious. **You can only do what you can do, right now** – nothing more.

Ultimately, you are in control of you – your decisions, your motivations, your attitude and your abilities. You, alone, can gauge whether a task or event is too great for you to take on or attend, or whether it's something that you can fit into your life.

The most important part of church life is focusing on **who you are being**, not what you are doing. Focusing on your 'being', rather than your 'doing' will bring things into perspective and make it easier to see what's important and what's not so important. When **being** becomes your focus, rather than **doing**, you will go a long way towards avoiding church burnout.