

When Spencer turned 18 last month, we gave him our truck, so I had purchased another one for me to drive. It was a used vehicle, but appeared to be in good condition and very clean, though now I'm beginning to suspect that was done to throw potential buyers off, like when my mother made me dress up for church so I would look more virtuous than I really was. Because ever since I've bought this truck, there have been little things wrong with it. Every day is a new discovery.

When I had bought the truck, I had read an article about a guy whose Ford pick-up had gone 700,000 miles on the original engine and was still running fine. So when I saw this nice clean truck with only 100,000 miles, I thought it still had 6/7 of its life left and I bought it.

Joan and I were driving it to Paoli this week to attend a family funeral, and were a bit south of Bloomington when the thermometer registered 100°, and the air conditioner stopped working. Burn out.

I'm beginning to suspect that truck has been driven hard and needs an overhaul. It happens you know, even to Jesus. Matthew tells about the crowds around Jesus, how everyone wanted something from him.

There's that odd story, in Matthew 14, about Jesus walking on water, which when I was a kid I thought he did that to show off, but now I think he did it to get away from people. It was either stay with those people or jump in the water, so he chose the water. But he is no sooner ashore than people begin badgering him, so he leaves again, this time to Tyre and Sidon, which were located on the southern coast of Lebanon, on the Mediterranean. The Bible says he "withdrew" which is Bible-speak for vacation. He went to the beach. Took a few friends with him. A Gentile woman is there whose daughter is mentally distressed. Back then they attributed such things to demon possession. She asks for the disciple's help. They are as weary as Jesus and complain to Jesus about her. So she goes directly to Jesus and he dismisses her, saying, "I only have a certain amount of bread and it's for the children of Israel. I don't have enough to go around."

That is the language of a man at the end of his tether. "I don't have enough to go around. I've given all I have. What little I have left will have to go to my people." He's rather abrupt with her.

And she said, "How about the crumbs? How about the littlest scraps? Will you give me just a little help, like the dogs getting the crumbs that fall to the floor? Just a scrap of help."

Moved by her need, Jesus helps her, and the crowds gather again. He goes to the mountains—I'm thinking he's got a little cabin up there—but they follow him there. There was no escaping, no getting away.

We've been thinking about passages in our lives, those common events we all experience, and what they say about us and God. We've been focusing on largely positive experiences—births, first loves, graduations, independence, marriages. Today, I want us to focus on a less positive experience, but one that seems common to so many people and that is burn-out or exhaustion. I'll define it as the mental, spiritual, or physical depletion that occurs when the demands and expectations placed on us are so high, they can no longer be met despite our best efforts.

I was speaking with a young man last month. He'd graduated from college five years ago and got a job and he told me he was already burnt out. He wanted to quit but he didn't want to tell his parents because his father worked the same job for 40 years without ever complaining. He said, "How can I be so tired after only 5 years?"

I thought of my truck and said, "Well, it just depends on how hard you've been driven."

The Labor Department this past Tuesday announced that worker productivity fell .09% in the second quarter of 2010. They believe it's because American companies have been laying people off, while expecting their employees to shoulder a bigger load, which we can do for awhile, but then we become weary and burnt out and less productive.

Sometimes those demands and expectations are placed on us by others. And sometimes those demands and expectations are placed on us by ourselves, when we push ourselves to do more and more, finally outstripping our capacity to function.

Burn-out happens in marriages, when the demands a spouse might make on us are so high, we can not meet them despite our best efforts.

Burn-out happens in our jobs, when the requirements placed on us exceed our ability to meet them.

Burn-out happens in our religious lives, when the expectations placed on us surpass our capabilities.

And I believe it happened to Jesus when he met a Gentile woman in need and said, “I can only do so much. I was sent to help the lost sheep of Israel. There isn’t enough of me to take on your concerns, too.”

I think the remedy for this mental, physical, and spiritual depletion is found in another story in the Bible. In fact, in the very first story, in the story of creation. *“By the seventh day God had finished his work. On the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day. He made it a Holy Day because on that day he rested from all the work he had done in creation.”* (Genesis 2:2-4, The Message)

I know all of us know how to work. Do we know how to rest?

A little while back, I wanted to meet with my editor, so I called to suggest a time for a meeting. She said, "I'm on vacation that week."

I said, "That's okay. Just give me your cell phone and I'll call you."

She said, "I think it's out of cell phone range."

And because I can be clueless, I said, "Why don't you take your laptop and we can conduct our business via e-mail?"

She told me she didn't take her laptop on vacation. Then she asked, "Phil, do you not know what the word vacation means? The suspension of work or study, usually used for rest, recreation, or renewal. What part of that don't you understand?"

But this is the way we live now. There's this unrelenting pressure to always work, to always be available and accessible. Sometimes people place this pressure on us; sometimes we place it on ourselves. The antidote is Sabbath, a day of rest. Not once a month, not one week a year during the summer. Not just when we can find the time. But regularly, incorporating this pattern of rest into our lives.

"Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy."

“Holy.” Do you know the history of that word? It’s Old English, and it’s related to the word “whole” as in *complete* or *in one piece*. Isn’t that interesting? If *whole* means to be *in one piece*, when we’re not whole, we’re fractured and broken. We have stress-fractures.

So the words *holy* and *whole* share a common root. “Remember the Sabbath. It’s your day to become whole, to become complete.” Don’t let your life be so lopsided with work and stress and pressure, that you are unable to be whole and well. Sabbath is about backing off the gas pedal. We do that, and we just might last 700,000 miles.

We were not created for exhaustion, for crossing the finish line gasping for breath and broken. We were created to live, love, and grow. Fatigue and stress are not spiritual fruits. On the seventh day, God stepped back, rested, and enjoyed what she had done. It is good and wise for us to regularly do the same.