



AUTHORS OF  
*THE  
COME BACK  
EFFECT*

**DON'T BURN OUT**  
**BURN BRIGHT**

*HOW TO THRIVE IN MINISTRY  
FOR THE LONG HAUL*

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**JASON YOUNG & JONATHAN MALM**

“Leaders get into ministry because they want to be part of great things. But too often, leadership can lead to burnout. It doesn’t have to. In *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright*, Jason and Jonathan provide a framework that will help you thrive.”

**Andy Stanley**, senior pastor, North Point Ministries

“Navigating the complexity of life and leadership seems to get harder every year. In this book, replete with stories and real-world examples every leader can relate to, Jason and Jonathan offer a practical guide to making it through leadership in a healthy way.”

**Carey Nieuwhof**, bestselling author of *At Your Best*, podcaster, and founder of [TheArtOfLeadershipAcademy.com](http://TheArtOfLeadershipAcademy.com)

“Jason and Jonathan have hit the nail on the head in their new book, *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright*. They address a problem that has been ignored for too long—burnout in leadership—with real, attainable solutions. Thank you for bringing this valuable resource into the leadership world.”

**Charles Nieman**, founder and senior pastor, Abundant Church

“Faced with the demands of life, family, and ministry, pastors are burning out at a seemingly higher rate than ever before. In *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright*, Jason Young and Jonathan Malm provide spiritual and practical guidelines for pastors struggling with balancing the demands of pastoral leadership with life. Young and Malm provide keen insight into the subtle nuances of perfectionism, control, and boundaries and their impact on the pastoral leader. This book can easily be contextualized across ministry expressions and is a must-read for every pastor in need of striking the balance between life and pastoral leadership.”

**Dr. Craig L. Oliver Sr.**, pastor, Elizabeth Baptist Church

“*Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright* achieves a striking balance between idealism and practicality. At a time when leaders—especially ministry leaders—are under pressure like never before, its call to careful circumspection is helpful at any level of responsibility. I hope young leaders in particular heed its advice and follow the path to shining brightly over an entire career.”

**Dr. Gene Fant**, president, North Greenville University

“The journey of providing pastoral leadership is fulfilling, yet many leaders burn out in the process. In *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright*, Jason and Jonathan provide practical insights to help leaders take a careful inventory of their lives and take the necessary steps to be effective for the long haul. Because of the authors’ experience and proximity to leaders, readers are provided with indispensable wisdom to assist them in impacting others and remaining emotionally, mentally, and spiritually vibrant.”

**Jason Caine**, lead campus pastor, Bayside Church, Blue Oaks Campus

“It is tragically ironic that those serving the Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd are regularly burning out and growing discouraged. Jason Young and Jonathan Malm demonstrate that leaders should expect challenges but

not burnout. You will find much wisdom and practical examples in these pages to help you thrive throughout your calling.”

**Dr. Richard Blackaby**, author and president,  
Blackaby Ministries International

“Every week, I hear from pastors who are exhausted, ready to quit, or recovering from personal failure. The polarization in our culture and congregations puts a can’t-win pressure on those who lead our churches. Mental health challenges are front and center among pastors more than I’ve ever seen. I’m grateful for the incredibly practical tips found in these pages. The recommended rhythms from Jason and Jonathan are life-giving and will help you regain your joy and passion for people.”

**Tim Stevens**, executive pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

“As a church leader with over forty years in ministry, I can say that *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright* by Jason and Jonathan is greatly needed for every church leader who wants to go the distance in a healthy and productive way. Their new book delivers practical insights for ministry in a complex and fast-paced world.”

**Dr. Dan Reiland**, executive pastor, 12Stone Church

“What I really love about this book is the unapologetic way it speaks to reality. Most pastors and Christian leaders understand the reality of discouragement and exhaustion. The call to serve our Savior carries the highest honor and the greatest joy, but the demands of ministry can lead to the depths of despair. Every leader should read these words from Jason and Jonathan. They are well crafted, highly practical in application, and written with solutions in mind. They are very encouraging words for which I am most deeply grateful.”

**Dr. Don Wilton**, pastor, First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC; preacher,  
*The Encouraging Word* broadcast; author of *Saturdays with Billy*

“One of the great challenges of ministry is learning to manage and cope with the inevitable ups and downs that plague and push us. Resources that are targeted toward keeping leaders motivated and encouraged during challenging times are scarce. Survival through these seasons is best done when we have put mechanisms of prevention from and barriers to discouragement in place. Jason Young and Jonathan Malm have written a life-changing and ministry-saving resource that focuses on preventing burnout and discouragement. I wholeheartedly recommend *Don’t Burn Out, Burn Bright* for every leader and pastor. Make the kingdom investment to survive and thrive in life and ministry.”

**Dr. Charles E. Goodman Jr.**, senior pastor/teacher,  
Tabernacle Baptist Church

“After serving in ministry for forty-four years, I’ve realized that many fellow pastors never complete the task God set before them. Why? Emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical burnout. Jason and Jonathan have put their years of experience together in this incredible book to encourage you for the long haul.”

**Sam Davis**, associate pastor, First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

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**BURN BRIGHT**

*HOW TO THRIVE IN MINISTRY  
FOR THE LONG HAUL*

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JASON YOUNG AND JONATHAN MALM



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# FOREWORD

How have I stayed strong in ministry for over forty years? That's the question Jason and Jonathan asked me to write about for this foreword. My answer ultimately comes down to staying encouraged. Over the years, I've learned that the combination of people, processes, and my own personality can hinder or contribute to success in my life and ministry.

When I first began the journey to plant Bayside Church, I did it kicking and screaming. God and the people around me kept pushing me to start the church, but I had fears. I was afraid to be a pastor. I was afraid to start a church. I was afraid no one would come. I was afraid no one would help. I was afraid to construct a building. I was afraid to raise money. I could have easily felt discouraged before even getting started.

Through each stage of the process, though, God showed me that my fear didn't limit what he was able to accomplish. People showed up. They volunteered. They gave. Families were healed. Communities were impacted. I've seen God's faithfulness as the church became one of the fastest-growing churches in America.

One thing we find abundantly clear in the account of the Israelites in the book of Exodus is that seeing miracles doesn't keep discouragement from creeping in. And I found myself having to battle it at every stage of growth in my ministry.

Maintaining health in ministry for the long haul has been about remembering challenging times and letting those moments turn into hope inside me. You see, hope is a by-product of something you do. Underneath every thriving person, church, business, and relationship is one factor: hope. I had to evaluate what I was doing that would consistently yield hope.

Discouragement precedes destruction. Discouragement drains our energy and pulls us down. But encouragement restores our energy.

I deeply value energy when it comes to leadership. I stay away from things that drain it. Over the years, I've learned I need an intentional game plan because encouragement and energy don't happen accidentally. Practically speaking, I evaluate what will boost energy and keep discouragement at bay. I've noticed patterns in my life. Encouragement comes from seeing people versus noticing people, doing more of what I love, getting away from work more often, riding the highs, embracing the lows, bouncing back after something hard, keeping impact above ego, and passionately loving my family and being present with them. If I can figure out ways to keep my energy up, the by-product is hope. That helps me be in ministry for the long haul.

That's why I'm so excited Jason and Jonathan wrote this book. They understand the importance of energy and hope. I encourage you to lean into the lessons in this book. Let it change you and help you rediscover your impact.

Nothing great happens through you until it happens in you. My hope is that *Don't Burn Out, Burn Bright* will start a change inside



you that overflows into every area of your life and leadership. My prayer is that you'll let hope replace fear, energy replace exhaustion, and joy replace dread in your ministry and in your leadership.

Ray Johnston  
Founding Senior Pastor, Bayside Church  
President, Thrive Communications, Inc.



# 1 | LEADERSHIP IS EXHAUSTING

*Burnout in leadership is not inevitable.*

When leaders operate with strength and health, it's like a life-giving fire. It provides warmth, light, and protection for those around it. Strong, healthy leadership provides a sense of belonging, clear vision, and protection from outside threats.

## **STORY: Jonathan**

My grandpa was a Cajun from deep in the swamps of Louisiana. He'd had a hard life. His leg was stiffened from polio at an early age. His brother had been murdered in a bar fight and lay on their kitchen table for days until the family could do a proper burial. He'd worked in oil his whole life, and he loved getting his hands dirty on his property.

I was and am the opposite. We couldn't relate on a lot of shared emotions or interests. The one thing, though, that connected us was building fires in his woodstove.

The first time my grandpa had me help him stack the logs, I found it annoying. He was so precise with the way he wanted me to build the fire:

Some of the newspaper had to be bundled tightly so it wouldn't burn too quickly.

Some had to be loosely crumpled so it caught. (That had to be in the front of the woodstove.)

There had to be a big log in the back to provide lasting heat.

There had to be twigs beneath the other logs that could catch the flame from the newspaper.

And there had to be just the right amount of space between the logs so air could flow through but heat could also build and combust.

As a six-year-old, I felt this was all tedious and unnecessary. But when the ritual was complete and I held the match to the paper, my eyes lit up as I saw everything working together just as my grandpa had explained. The wood caught quickly, and the heat it produced was satisfying.

That was our thing. I was always the first to volunteer to build the fire, and he kept correcting my technique for as long as he was alive.

I still get a bit smug when I see others try to build a fire. I even feel a bit superior when someone uses starter logs—it feels like cheating to me.

Building a fire is a sacred art form for me. It connects me to my grandpa, but I also know the power of a well-built fire. There's life in a well-lit, well-contained fire.

Fire is a beautiful picture of leadership. We've all known people who have tried, figuratively, to douse their leadership in lighter fluid. They want to infuse energy and impact into their job, so they add a bunch of hype, hoping that will do the trick. They burn hot and bright, but they quickly burn out. There's no sustaining the fire.

We've also seen people whose leadership passion is a smoldering coal—they are barely hanging on and wallowing in discouragement.

Good leadership is like a good fire. And just like building a good fire, good leadership requires the right elements put together in the right way.

Here's the good news: We believe you have all the right elements to be a healthy, high-capacity leader. We want to help you assemble them so you burn brightly. There are a lot of things that would seek to put your fire out, but we believe it's possible to keep the fire going.

We know you signed up to lead because you wanted to burn brightly despite the obstacles you would face. You didn't sign up because it would be easy.

You love the challenge of leadership. You love the high stakes of leadership—especially in ministry, where eternities hang in the balance.

The problem is, leadership is exhausting.

We googled that phrase—"leadership is exhausting"—and over 165 million results showed up. It doesn't even seem like there are 165 million leaders in the first place. Yet that's how much of an issue this exhaustion is.

It doesn't matter if you're working in ministry or in an industry. Leading other people can be tiring.

One thing to remember about leadership exhaustion is that it's a slow road to get there. You might not even realize you're getting tired as you go along. And if you aren't careful, exhaustion can lead to burnout.

That burnout is like a snap. It's like a broken bone. Burnout can feel like a break in its devastation, but not in the way that it happens. It isn't a sudden thing.

Just like a broken bone, though, healing from burnout takes a long time. There's no swift bouncing back. In fact, recovering from

burnout takes at least as long as it took to get there, and sometimes longer. And some leaders are never the same after it.

It's not like any leaders are intentionally doing things that lead to their exhaustion. Nobody looks in the mirror in the morning and says, "Today's the perfect day for unhealthy decisions."

Still, those decisions happen. One step at a time. One choice. One compromise. One time of taking the easy way out. One shortcut. One yes that should have been no. It's so easy to take small steps toward exhaustion.

If we were to examine our motives for these steps, we would find they're often rooted in things like

- addiction to motion
- insecurity
- fear of rejection
- fear of failure
- fear of irrelevance
- procrastination
- pride
- laziness

We're all at risk for exhaustion in leadership because we all have internal dysfunction. In fact, think about the greatest leader you've ever worked under. They were struggling with one or a combination of these dysfunctions, but they still found how to lead in a healthy way. It is possible.

### **STORY: Jason**

I experienced exhaustion when I worked under a high-level leader. When he promoted me and told me he wanted me to work for him, I didn't

calculate the time and energy this new role would require. In a couple of years, I found myself exhausted.

As my leader, he was partly responsible for my exhaustion. But the bigger responsibility rested on my shoulders. I tried to do more than I could and for longer than I should have. I pushed to prove to myself (and to him) that I was worthy of the promotion instead of simply focusing on adding value. You see, he already knew I was worthy of the promotion, but my insecurity didn't let me believe that. I refused to ask for help. I felt like I always had to be "on."

When I look back on the experience of leading in that organization, I see how many times I showed up to all service times when I should have probably stayed home. One time I had bronchitis and I was still there. The fault was my own. Nobody was pushing me to work in spite of illness. Yet I felt such a weight of responsibility to execute my job and never have an off day.

When I'd first begun working in the organization, I loved leading. But two years later, without my realizing it, I disliked it. I was in the opposite place from where I'd wanted to end up two years prior. I'd drifted there and found myself in survival mode.

The by-products of this exhaustion were obvious. I was

- discouraged
- lacking energy
- no longer caring as deeply for people
- no longer caring about some things
- not as creative
- experiencing brain fog
- shorter with my family
- unwilling to try new things
- unwilling to reach out to people
- slacking on my time with God

The last one was the most devious. I should have been drawing strength and energy from the Lord, but instead, my exhaustion kept me away from him. It touched every area of my life, but I had dug myself into such a hole that I felt like I couldn't let people know. I acted as if everything was under control, and that in itself was exhausting.

Hiding made me try harder, but I didn't really care about what I was doing. I just kept up the ruse so nobody knew.

I wish I could say I bounced back, but "bounce" is the worst word I could choose. It took me time and energy to crawl out of exhaustion and back into health again.

## **Hustle Culture**

Over the last few decades, a culture has sprung up in most of the Western world. It's a hustle culture that celebrates working hard as the ultimate virtue. It's an unhealthy form of entrepreneurship, and it's become so pervasive because the internet has made it possible for anyone to become an entrepreneur. Whether we're a social media influencer, manage an Etsy shop, or have some other side hustle, we are doing some form of entrepreneurship. And the hustle culture has made us believe that we have to post every day, sell just one more product, gain more followers . . . It's a perpetual "more, more, more" mentality. We never seem to arrive, and the cycle leads toward burnout.

First of all, churches should be speaking into this topic because it's fostering many unhealthy habits in our society. Second, we have to identify that this culture has infiltrated ministry. This isn't just a worldly mentality. It has infected the church.

Most church staff members have a side hustle of some type. And many pastors feel the pressure to become social media influencers, though they would say it's for the purpose of ministry. Even

megachurch culture has become a reflection of this hustle-culture mentality: “We need more people in the seats because each person represents an eternal soul.” That’s true, but if you don’t approach that concept in a healthy way, it can become a rallying point for hustle culture within the church. That “one more soul” can become a relentless goal instead of something we trust in the hands of God.

Our goal should be health, not hustle.

Now, that isn’t to say hustling is bad. Seasons of intense, hard work are a part of any high-performing leadership role. The problem is when hustle becomes a lifestyle instead of a short-term sprint to accomplish a goal. We can’t sprint a marathon. Neither can we sprint our entire leadership life. We have to understand how to pace ourselves.

Another way this hustle culture works itself out is the idea that we can’t have a bad day. We always have to be “on.” We have to appear that we’ve got everything together, we have to put on a smile, and we have to do our best 100 percent of the time.

In business, this is called “emotional labor.” It’s the barista who puts on a cheery face each morning even when they’re discouraged. We applaud people who can do this and look down on people who can’t. That isn’t to say every emotion should be out there for the world to see, but neither should we walk around 24/7 with a fake smile plastered on our faces.

Some of this feeling of always having to be “on” is self-inflicted. But a lot of it is a reflection of the shift in our culture. Deep down, we’re all worried about making the mistake that absolutely ruins us. Maybe we tweet something without fully thinking through the ramifications of what we’re saying, and a powerful interest group takes offense. Or we say something from the stage on a bad day, and that sound bite gets around the whole world, with news media demanding a statement. We’ve all seen the consequences of small



mistakes within the church, and they can be devastating. They're just another reflection of this unhealthy leadership culture that has wormed its way into our everyday lives.

Should it be that way? No.

Unfortunately, this reality of hustle culture will always be an expectation placed on high-level leaders until culture changes. And that likely won't be for a few more decades. Many have identified how unhealthy the concept can be, but few have made any changes to fix it. It'll be a slow recovery, just as it slowly crept into culture.

Here's the good news, though: Hustle culture doesn't have to take you out. You can be healthy for the long haul. That's the goal, and it's possible to get there. But how?

Take stock of where you are. Do you find yourself heading toward exhaustion or, even worse, toward burnout?

If you were to rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10—1 being exhausted and 10 being energetic and healthy in your leadership—where would you be? We created a leadership health assessment in appendix A. Take a moment to identify just where you land on that scale.

If you're at a level 1, you're probably either burned out or one small mistake away from it. We encourage you to get a counselor. There are many out there to help you recover, but you need to be realistic and realize it's a long road to recovery.

This book isn't really about burnout. The market is saturated with books about burnout recovery, yet burnout is higher than ever. We want to help you stay far away from it. We believe you can follow the principles in this book to help you get healthy if you've found yourself in a place of burnout. But the best thing you can do is get to a place of healthy, high-capacity leadership and maintain it for life.

If you're at a 2 or 3, we believe we can get you back to a place of health, energy, and functionality. And the best news is, you won't even need to start over somewhere else. That's one of the temptations when you're exhausted in ministry. It's easy to think starting over will fix the problem. But it won't. The thing that made you valuable to your current organization will be expected at the new one. And the bigger issue—your unreasonable expectations of yourself and your unhealthy habits—will carry over to the new organization. You don't need to start new. You need to get healthy and break the cycle of the things that were leading to exhaustion.

## **How to Ramp Up Your Health**

If you find yourself on the lower end of the spectrum of health in leadership, there are a few steps to take.

### ***1. Evaluate where you are.***

Take a break from the hustle. Give yourself some space to become a bit more self-aware and acknowledge your reality. What are you feeling? Do you feel unhealthy? Do you feel exhausted? Evaluate what's going on in your heart and in your leadership.

Are you showing some of these warning signs of unhealthy leadership?

- Feeling discouraged
- Lacking energy
- No longer caring for people
- No longer caring about some things
- Feeling less creative
- Experiencing brain fog

- Responding more aggressively to family
- Unwilling to try new things
- Unwilling to reach out to people
- Slacking on time with God
- No longer brilliant at the basics (the things you expect others to do too)

Take some time to pray about this. Ask God to show you where you are in this journey toward health.

## *2. Admit and accept where you are.*

One of the worst things you can do in leadership is deny your current reality. Problems don't go away. They fester, grow, and eat away at the health of any organization until it ultimately crumbles. The same is true for the lives of individuals.

Admitting where you are is one of the first things therapists have you do when you sit down with them. And admitting sounds easy, but it isn't. If it was so easy, you would have already done it.

If you're unhealthy, truly one of the best things you can do is go to a counselor and admit where you find yourself. There's value in counseling, because a counselor is someone who cares about you but is less connected emotionally to your success. It can be hard to admit you're unhealthy to people like bosses, coworkers, employees, family, or even friends. You don't want them to worry. You don't want them to think less of you. You don't want them to start looking for your replacement. A counselor can help you talk through the reality of your situation without making it about themselves.

But if you're against counseling or feel like you can't make time for it, find someone you can trust. Find someone who cares about you but doesn't have an emotional stake in your success, and talk

things through with them. Let them help you reclaim a better picture of and for your life.

Dr. Tim Elmore, generational expert and leadership author, says,

Change doesn't happen until you:

1. know enough that you are able to,
2. care enough that you want to, or
3. hurt enough that you have to.<sup>1</sup>

### ***3. Give yourself permission to move forward toward health.***

Don't beat yourself up if you find yourself in an unhealthy place. Remove the guilt and shame from the equation. Shame tries to keep you stuck, but freedom propels you forward.

A scene in the show *Yellowstone* creates a beautiful picture of this. Kevin Costner's character, John, owns a ranch. His grandson has come to live with him for a bit, and John tells him to go inside the house and choose a donut before he goes to school. After a few minutes, John goes into the house and sees his grandson staring at the donuts, seemingly unable to make a decision. The boy says, "I want to get the biggest one, but I can't figure out which one that is."

John suggests that he take them all off the plate and line them up.

The grandson replies, "I can do that?"

John says, "Grandson, you can do whatever you want when you're here."<sup>2</sup>

Isn't that just what a good grandfather says to his grandkids? It's like he gives them the keys to his kingdom: "My house is your house. Make yourself at home and do whatever you want."

That's the mentality we're trying to give you here. We want you to wander through your soul and take inventory of what's in there. So rearrange things. Explore. Take ownership of what's there.

Denial keeps you as a guest in your own home.

More importantly, we want you to invite the Holy Spirit into your situation in the same way. Let *him* rearrange and reorder things in your heart. Let *him* take stock of what's in there.

That's what David did. In Psalm 139:23–24, he says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (TLB).

Once you have permission to analyze your soul and rearrange some things, imagine yourself a year from now. Describe what would make that vision remarkable. What's in the way of that? What do you need to make that day happen?

We're willing to believe that everything you just imagined is fully possible.

#### *4. Create a circle of trusted people to help you move forward.*

Evaluate the people in your life. Use the following list of eleven types of people to see what you're missing. Lean on them and let them know what you're working toward. Burning bright means bringing things to light; just make sure you're confiding in the right people.

1. *Clarifier*: someone who asks helpful and difficult questions. It's easy for us to assume that everyone knows what we're talking about. Clarifiers make sure that happens.
2. *Specialist*: someone who provides precision focus. These people keep the conversation moving toward the intended target.
3. *Challenger*: someone who implores us to act boldly. We might be tempted to leave these people out of the mix, but they bring a lot of energy and direction to the conversation.

These are the people who will help us see the viability of a solution by encouraging action.

4. *Creator*: someone who brings an idea into existence. Creators will help craft workable plans of action from a conversation that might have included few actionable points.
5. *Connector*: someone who leads us to other people. We all need connectors in our lives. They have the ability to size up a situation and identify others who might be able to make a contribution.
6. *Wise Elder*: someone who lends learned experience. It's easy to overlook these people, but they make an incredible contribution to the conversation and provide a viewpoint others don't have.
7. *Friend*: someone who shares life's journey without judgment. These are the people who love us without regard for our accomplishments or positions. These people know us deeply and accept us freely. They stick with us.
8. *Strategist*: someone who maps out steps for our vision. These people are able to create step-by-step simplicity from complex data and conversations. They will help make sure the project has a path to success.
9. *Dreamer*: someone who motivates us to dream without fear. There's a little dreamer in all of us, but these people have a unique ability to see the future and motivate us to go there.
10. *Coach*: someone who builds out our strengths. Coaches correct us when we're performing incorrectly and encourage us when we are losing energy.
11. *Pastor*: someone who can provide spiritual guidance through life. Pastors or spiritual mentors are able to provide insight from a unique perspective.

***5. Get freedom from the symptoms that led you to exhaustion or burnout.***

There are ten key things that lead people toward exhaustion in leadership:

- perfectionism
- constant need for approval
- need for control
- ego and pride
- lack of values
- addictions or vices
- difficult relationships
- incessant hurry (accomplishment, distraction, motion)
- wounds that haven't been healed
- spiritual shallowness

Throughout the rest of this book, we'll be exploring the flip side of these ideas, giving you building blocks for freedom and renewed energy in your leadership.

***6. Draw a mental line in the sand, stating that from this point forward you will move toward burning bright in a healthy way.***

Today is the day it all turns around. Today is the day you identify both what should be and what could be. Today is the day you reimagine what it would look like to be the healthiest version of yourself—the day you imagine what it would look like to stand up in front of people and not feel like you have to hide a piece of yourself.

What's your original vision of what leadership should look like? Leadership is likely not quite what you thought it would be when

you first got into it, but there's a good chance *something realistic* attracted you to it. Let's get to the thing that attracted you to leadership in the first place. We won't be naive, but we will be hopeful in the way we approach it.

Back when Michael Jordan was playing basketball, he negotiated a unique clause into his contracts. It was dubbed a "For the Love of the Game" clause. Essentially, it prevented his team managers from keeping him from playing basketball in the off-season, for exhibition games, or for any other purpose (which team managers often did). Michael Jordan loved the game of basketball so much that he didn't want anything to stand in the way of him getting to enjoy the purity of it.

Imagine if you felt that way about leadership again. Imagine if you were so in love with the "game" of leadership that you didn't let anything stand in your way.

That's what burning bright can look like, and we believe you can get there again.

### **STORY: Kevin Thompson, Married Life Pastor at Bayside Church, Sacramento, California**

I got a wake-up call. When I went to my grandmother's funeral and felt no emotion, I knew something was wrong. It was what made me finally realize that for the last five years of ministry I had been heading toward burnout.

For those five years, I had felt so guilty for not being able to figure out what was wrong with me. I'd hacked my way to avoiding all the "burnout indicators" that I'd heard about. I had my Sabbath day of rest and my group of people, and my schedule was good. I thought studying burnout would be enough to keep me from it, but it wasn't.

To recover, I got counseling. I began a season of personal reflection. It led me to realizing that leadership is indeed exhausting, and the only way I would survive was to train. I began seeing things like an athlete does.



Everyone knows that being a professional athlete is exhausting. No matter how well the best tennis or soccer players train, at some point they will experience cramping and be unable to compete. No one questions their toughness or ability in those situations. They take time off, recover, and then play again. Yet for some reason, in leadership we convince ourselves that we can avoid exhaustion. But maybe the better way is to embrace that at times we will need seasons of recovery.