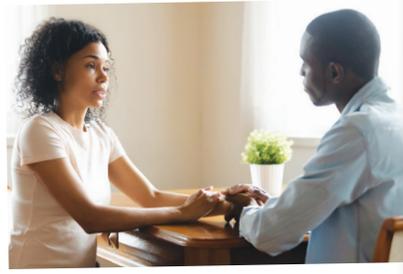


iStock.com/fizkes

iStock.com/Pra-chid



Sources
tinyurl.com/burnoutiscinical

²White, Ellen. "The Cause of Perplexity," *The Gospel Herald*, April 23, 1902, par. 2.

stays at a local retreat center, spending the time with only herself and God—and some chocolate chip cookies. (COVID version: Spend time with God in your room, with the door locked.) Someone else I know soaks in the tub when she starts to approach her limit. My husband gets up early and goes for a walk in the woods by himself from time to time. I make time to read in the quiet minutes before my kids get up in the morning. Another friend we know keeps a box of instant oatmeal packets in his desk so he can prepare a cup of comfort food when necessary.

My sister hit the nail on the head: "I cannot take care of others if I am falling apart. With just a few simple changes in how we handle our ongoing to-do list, my family is now closer and healthier, all because I realized I need care, love, and grace, too."

Whatever self-care looks like to you, it is important that you be a good steward of your own health—mental, spiritual, and physical—so that you can live the full, healthy, happy, and less stressful life God wants for you, and so that you have the strength and stamina to get yourself and your family through the current public health situation.

And remember: You don't have to do everything yourself. Ellen White wrote in *The Gospel Herald*, "All your trouble comes because you are so anxious to run things yourself..."² (It's like she knew me!) Build a support system for yourself and use it. Rely on it. Trust in it. And offer yourself some grace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer living in the Bay Area with her husband and three young children. She's an avid reader with a passion for storytelling, the ocean, Thai curry, rainy days, writing actual letters, and travel, which she unfortunately does rarely. In her free time, Becky enjoys playing percussion with the Pacific Union College Symphonic Winds Ensemble, exploring the California coast, and discovering San Francisco.



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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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SELF-CARE = SELF-GRACE

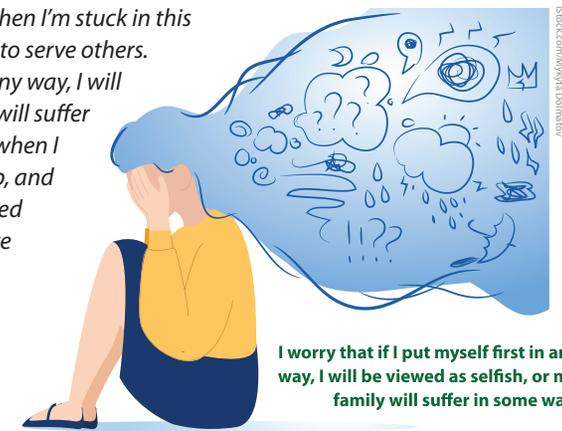
THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR LIMITS

Recently, my sister and I were talking about life and how it never quite works out the way we plan or expect. What instantly came to mind as we discussed this was stress, anxiety, and exhaustion—you know, the "glorified busy" with which we all carry on a love-hate relationship. My sister then told me of an experience she had dealing with those very things a few weeks earlier.

Just before Christmas, my family was planning a trip to pick up my four stepchildren for a visit. I was extremely stressed, what with preparing to have all six of our children under one roof for a couple of weeks, while also getting through an endless stream of holiday parties, class events, and end-of-the-year work tasks, as well as prepping for our big family Christmas. My personal task list kept growing until I, in a moment of desperation, called my sister-in-law and found myself sobbing on the phone.

Chronic anxiety doesn't help when I'm stuck in this cycle of neglecting my own needs to serve others. I worry that if I put myself first in any way, I will be viewed as selfish, or my family will suffer in some way. But the truth is that when I slowed down, reached out for help, and recognized how much I truly needed to care for myself, I was able to give myself a little grace.

With her sister-in-law's help, my sister created a to-do list, communicated her needs to her husband, and scheduled some intentional downtime before



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STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

“We can all recall those times when we’ve felt broken and undone with too much on our plates, more on the way, and likely too little sleep.”

they headed out of town. “The result was a more calm and collected version of myself—a mother who was more present and a wife who was more attentive,” my sister said.

Her story isn’t unique. I nodded as she shared it, as I’m sure you’re doing while reading this. We can all recall those times when we’ve felt broken and undone with too much on our plates, more on the way, and likely too little sleep. In those moments, we feel as though we’re losing control.

But at the pace of today’s American society, can we avoid it? Are we supposed to avoid it? How do we manage everything we feel we need to do without crashing and burning?

To be honest, this “crazy busy” we find ourselves in day to day is not a new concept. In Mark 6 we find the story of Jesus and His disciples, who are surrounded by people, interacting with them all day, and overwhelmed by meeting their needs. Jesus points out that they haven’t even had time to eat and invites His disciples to come away to a quiet spot with Him to rest and eat. (Of course, you’ll note that it doesn’t work. The people find them anyway, which reminds me of the times I attempt to sneak away for a breather, only to have my kids follow me!)

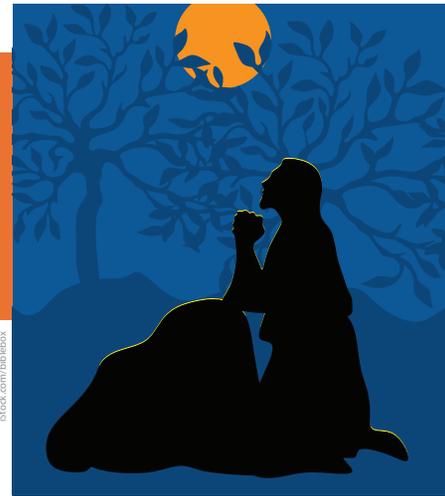
You don’t have to look very deep into the Bible to find examples that show God understands our need for a time out. Genesis 2:2 says that on the seventh day, “[God] rested from all of his work (NIV).” In Matthew, Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (11:28, NIV). He also prioritized rest for Himself, often withdrawing into a quiet space to pray (Luke 5:16).

Clearly it is important to God that we take a break and rest from the stress and burdens of our lives, even if what keeps us busy is generally something we enjoy and want to do. After all, isn’t that the purpose of the Sabbath—to rest?

“But at the pace of today’s American society, can we avoid it? Are we supposed to avoid it?”

It’s incredibly easy to say, but how do we actually implement this rest known as “self-care”? Here are a few pointers:

- Make time to consider and determine your limits. (Don’t wait until you “have time” to do this!)
- Share your struggles with someone close to you—a spouse,



Jesus “also prioritized rest for Himself, often withdrawing into a quiet space to pray (Luke 5:16).”

older or adult child, mentor, or trusted friend.

- Ask for reasonable help from those who can give it.

- Talk to your doctor and/or counselor about ways to reduce and relieve stress.
- Make healthy dietary choices.
- Get outside on a regular basis. Take a walk; go canoeing or swimming; play tennis.
- Go to bed at a time which allows you to get sufficient sleep.
- Consider which responsibilities you may be able to take a break from.
- Allow yourself to say “no” without fear or shame. Don’t take on more than your limits will allow.
- Pray. Ask God to help relieve your anxiety and stress and to give you wisdom to do so as well.

Did you know burnout is an official clinical syndrome, according to the World Health Organization?¹ We have made the stress of being busy such a regular part of our lives that it is now a legitimate health issue. And given the current public health situation, this fact takes on a different tone than it would have two months ago.

We now find ourselves in the unique situation of being forced to cut all the “extra” from our lives and spend significant time together with our families. Regardless of where you fall on the joyful vs. crazed scale of dealing with shelter-at-home orders, taking care of yourself is still crucial, though it might look a little different than usual. We must learn to recognize and acknowledge our personal limits, make ourselves comfortable asking for help when we need it, and identify ways to step aside and care for our mental and physical health so that we can more effectively care for others—just as Jesus did. This is especially important when we’re stuck inside the same building with the same people for weeks on end.

My sister schedules time to go to the gym alone a couple evenings a week. (COVID version: Reserve time to do a workout in a quiet space of your home, alone.) A friend of mine reserves occasional 24-hour

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