

# EDIFY

The Newsletter of Character Building Ministries

Fall 2008

Edify is the FREE newsletter of Character Building Ministries for leaders and directors of Christian youth camps who are concerned about the spiritual growth and development of their staff.



## Being Consumed

Some of my most tenuous moments as a camp counselor were spent trying to build fires. I remember the anxiety I would feel after holding a match to a little teepee or



By Bill Klees

log cabin constructed from twigs and adorned with pine needles and bits of paper. Would the flame spread as it consumed the kindling, or would it merely burn itself out?

I don't want to stretch the metaphor too far, but this image of a campfire is what I have in mind as I think about avoiding burnout in camp ministry. I think of the moment when a flame runs out of fuel and begins to turn in on itself before dying out completely.

This turning inward is what we want to keep from happening. But this is something that we cannot prevent on our own. Only God, who has ordained our work, can sustain us in it by His grace.

We cannot solve the problem of burnout with a checklist or a series of steps. This kind of approach only perpetuates the attitude of "everything depends on me" that causes the problem in the first place. Just as a fire needs fuel to keep going, we need support from outside our sphere of ministry,

Continued inside

Equipping Camps With God's Word

and from outside ourselves, in order to avoid burnout.

We need to be able to step back from our ministry and remember that it does not depend on us, or belong to us. It is not really ours; rather, it is part of Christ's work of redemption and restoration, in which He has invited us to participate. His grace transforms our small efforts, working through and sometimes despite them to accomplish His perfect will.

Other believers remind us that God's work is bigger than us or our sphere of ministry. We need other people, outside of this sphere, to share joys and struggles with, to experience fellowship and accountability and support. These outside relationships provide perspective, but more than that, they keep us from being consumed in our work.

I am living and working in a small Christian community and at times I feel myself becoming consumed in it. I sense this when I am driving off the property and realize that I'm leaving behind what has begun to feel like a relational vortex. I know that I need this rhythm of leaving and coming back in order to maintain perspective.

I am daily blessed by the believers I live and work with, but I know that I cannot depend on them to meet my emotional needs. My ministry (and I am using the word in the narrow, vocational sense here) and social spheres may overlap, but I cannot allow

them to be collapsed into one.

It is all too easy to do this under the guise of 'investing' in my ministry relationships, and equally easy to forget that I am actually strengthening my work when I look *outside* of it for support. This outside support must be spiritual as well as social and emotional. Because my daily routine involves

prayer, worship, and Scripture reading, I often find it easy to rationalize a lapse in my personal devotional life—but this is like neglecting to feed a fire and expecting it to keep burning.

I can receive grace and strength from other people, and through their supporting presence in my life—yet they cannot seek God for me. What could be more sustaining than deepening my relationship with Him? If we don't want to burn out as

we minister to others, we need to be fueled by time spent alone with the Lord.

The spiritual disciplines can help to guide us as we seek to become more like Christ. If He drew His strength from time spent in prayer, silence, solitude, fasting, and worship, then how can we expect to serve Him well without leaning on those same things? When we practice the disciplines, we learn to turn away from our self-seeking impulses, and direct not only our hearts but our minds and bodies as well towards the Lord.



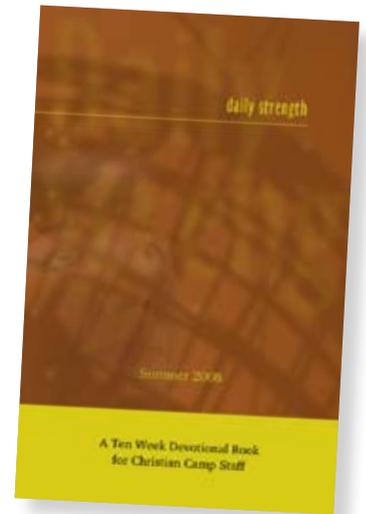
## Practical Prevention

In addition to having your walk with God in step, here are some additional areas to consider.

1. Clarify your goals — What are you doing that isn't necessary for you to do, and is God a priority?
2. Focus on strengths — Do what you do best and find others to assist in the other areas.
3. Communicate with others — You are not alone in ministry, and God desires to use you in partnership with others. Burnout is not a sign of failure; refusing help is.

# From the Pages of Daily Strength

From the pages of Character Building Ministries 2008 devotional book, *Daily Strength*, this devotion helps to put into perspective the need to live for Christ in all areas of our lives. Without an eternal perspective the burdens and responsibilities of the urgent can squeeze out the joy of serving our gracious Savior. Begin praying now to God for Him to help make that a reality at your camp.



## Living for Him

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

~ Colossians 1:16

Discover the Context  
Colossians 1:9-23

 What does it mean to live for Christ? In what ways is working at a Christian camp easier than living for Christ at school or at a secular work place? How does your faith impact decisions like what movies you watch or what music you listen to? What will be your biggest challenge this Fall in living for Christ?

 1 John 1:5 says that God is light. What does light do? Think about how light helps things grow and how light reveals things hidden in darkness. Can light and darkness occupy the same space at the same time? How does this analogy apply to your Christian walk?

 To learn more about fulfilling God's purpose for you as a light-bearer, read Charles Colson's *The Good Life* (Tyndale, 2005).

You have probably read in school about all the different theories of how the world came into being. Many of these theories contradict what the Bible teaches—how God created the heavens and earth in six days. God is so closely connected to His creation that creation cannot exist without Him. For what was nothingness and darkness was overwhelmed by something and light.

This verse in Colossians will help to clarify this. Paul is talking about two different things. Creation is one of them. The other is Christ, who is the light of the world (John 8:12). Since Christ was deeply involved in the shaping and molding of creation, all of creation is designed to live for Him.

You may be asking yourself, "What can I do for the Creator of the universe? How can I please Him?" When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are transformed from darkness to the light of the Lord, and the way you can please Him is to walk as a child of the light (Ephesians 5:8).

High school and college is a hard place to be the light of Christ. You have probably realized that it takes spiritual power to make a stand for what you believe in. You need the help of Christ to live your life in a manner that sets you apart from the world.

Living the Christian life is full of ups and downs. Maybe God is convicting you right now about pleasing Him better and living for Him as you were created to do. This should be your prayer—"May everything that I do, say, and think bring glory to You, O Lord." Make this your prayer every day, and rely on Him to help you live for Him. If He created the whole universe, surely He can enable you to serve Him faithfully. [KMP]

Digging Deeper – 1 Corinthians 8:1-6; 1 John 1



Make sure your staff is getting their strength from the Lord. Provide them with the power of God's Word through CBM resources.

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*Continued from inside*

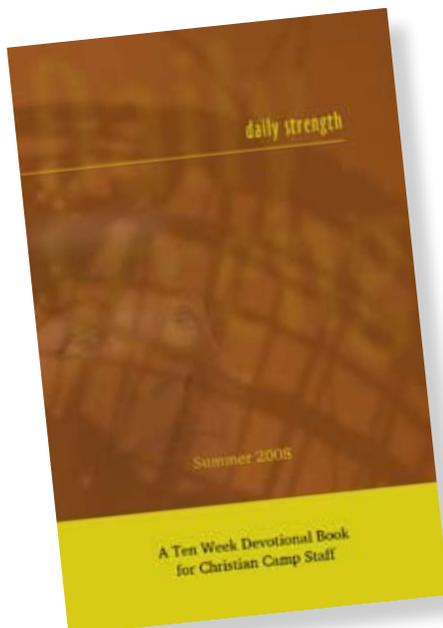
To conclude, let me return once more to my camp counselor days. I remember one particular time when I had tried over and over to start a fire, but each promising little flicker of flame only lasted about a minute before burning itself out. One of the camp directors happened to walk by at this point, and threw a couple of logs and an entire cardboard box on top of my careful but futile attempts. The flame caught and blazed; it had only needed more fuel!

When we turn inwards instead of looking outside of ourselves for strength to keep

going, we will quickly exhaust the meager supply of fuel within us. This is how burnout happens. By God's grace, we can avoid being consumed by the work He has given us to do by stretching beyond ourselves in order to draw strength from the community of believers, and from our relationship with Him. We take comfort in knowing that He is the Author, Sustainer, and Perfector of our faith and ministry.



Anne Hartman has been involved in camp ministry for over ten years and worked on staff at Trinity Forum as Resident Director of their staff in close quarters. She currently is teaching in Maryland and enjoys the extra space. She can be reached by emailing [info@CBMinistries.com](mailto:info@CBMinistries.com)



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