



PREACHING ON EMPTY MAY LEAD TO BURNOUT

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I used to have the habit of driving my car until the gas gauge was on empty. I had the attitude that I could make it to a gas station before I ran out. My wife and family more than once sat on the edge of their seat while we made it to a station.

One summer, however, I broke the habit in Nova Scotia, Canada. I was driving from a motel to the church building where I was preaching a meeting. I knew the needle had been on E for some time, but I knew I could make it to the meeting and get gas afterwards. Wrong. I ran out of gas about a half-mile from the church building. I had my family with me and we walked in the hot July sun to the meeting. I have never again ignored the gas gauge and running on empty. In fact I now refill when the needle hits $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank.

I have had the experience of preaching on empty several times in my ministry. Yes, I am human too. Like with my car many times I didn't heed the warning signs of the approaching emptiness. I had a stroke. Through my 45-years of preaching I have learned to spot the E gauges in my preaching ministry. Here are some signs:

YOU MAY BE PREACHING ON EMPTY...

...if you dread the idea of having to prepare and preach another sermon

...if there is no joy in preaching as there once was

...if you continually think about quitting or throwing in the towel

...if little things that didn't used to bother you now drive you up the wall

...if you have started making excuses for poor sermons

...if you are continually finding fault with everything in the church

...if you resent the happiness of church members while you are miserable

...if you are neglecting your prayer and meditation practices

...if you hold resentments and can't forgive



- ...if you are starting to experience headaches, back pains and other health issues
- ...if preparing sermons is drudgery
- ...if you are constantly searching the want ads for preaching or other job opportunities
- ...if you have started to doubt your relationship with God and the value of ministry
- ...if you are in an ongoing conflict with your elders and other leaders in the church
- ...if you are having increased arguments and conflict at home
- ...if members start noticing and making remarks about changes they see in you
- ...if you find yourself weeping or with tears in your eyes for no apparent reason
- ...if you feel like you are burned-out; you have nothing left to give to others
- ...if you dread to see Sunday morning come and are glad when it is over
- ...if you feel all alone, abandoned with no one to share your feelings with

These are only a few of the **E** signs on your ministry tank. How you feel about your preaching and function as a preacher are major indicators of how stressed or burned-out you may be in your ministry. This is serious! If you have several of these signs take some time to respond to them in a positive way. You CAN reignite and preach on a full tank again (cf. Jeremiah 20:9).

Take a few minutes and go back to the above list and place a number beside how you relate to the sign: place a **1** if not at all and a **5** if major problem and **2** to **4** as where you feel you are in between.

The **Jeremiah Institute** exists for the purpose of producing materials, books and seminars to help preachers and church leaders deal with burnout. Visit us often and take a look at our BOOK section