Before Burnout

This review is on the book, *Before Burnout,* by Frank Minirth, M.D., Don Hawkins, Th.M., Paul Meier, M.D., Chris Thurman, Ph.D., the ISBN # is 0-8024-0879-6. The forward by Gary Smalley hit me straight in the face, it was me, he was describing himself, nonetheless he was describing me. I started reading this book at 10:11 p.m. thinking it would help me be able to fall asleep, HA, all it did was arise in me the desire not to put it down. Then I got to page 16 where Paul Meier was describing himself and again there I was in the pages. I know of all the men above I have books they have written, I have listened to them on the radio faithfully and admire their expertise, experience and value their advice. If you feel like you may be on the verge of burn-out or are obsessive-compulsive or “Type A” personality then this little book is for you. Not only will you find yourself traveling through the pages with the light bulb going off in your head; but you will also find so much help within the golden nuggets in between the two outside covers.

Chapter one has a fourteen point checklist, out of twenty-nine, to determine if you are O-C (obsessive-compulsive). I was all fourteen and would assume that I am all twenty-nine. How about you, take the time to check out this list it could be extremely helpful (pg 18-19).

Chapter two explains “Perfectionist,” which again I found myself starring in the mirror of the pages and reading about myself. There is a man named Harry whom I related to exactly (pg. 23). They about, “*The One-Minute Christian,* (possibly a future book with titles such as) “Instant Spirituality,” Fifteen-Second Devotions,” “How to Share Your Faith in Half a Minute,” “The Forty-Five-Second Prayer Life,” Instant Maturity,” “How to See Positive Growth, Grace, and Knowledge in Less Than a Minute.” Sounds absurd doesn’t it? But it is not far off the mark as a description of life from the point of view of the Type A obsessive-compulsive struggling to cope in a fast-track society.” Do any of these sound familiar to you? If they do you should read this book, get this book for your library, and review it from time to time.

Chapter three is titled, *Road Hazards of the Obsessive-Compulsive,* and covers in detail additional extreme tendencies of this personality type. These types are broken down into the *Perfectionist, the Detail-Oriented, the Project-Directed, the Dirt-Obsessed,* and *the Money Focused.* Then, the authors describe the *Temptations of the O-C, “*three such patterns outlined for us in 1 John 2:13-15 are the lust of the flesh, sexual and other physical enticements:, materialism… and power struggles” (pg. 35). The detail given in these descriptions and the reference to 1st John is eye-opening.

Chapter four covers the irrational beliefs held by Type A obsessive-compulsives. It is titled, *Is My Thinking Straight?* This chapter analyzes nine ways this personality trait person thinks. The authors also discuss ways to avoid and repair these ways of thinking so that the Type A O-C person can be more effective in relationships, in job functions, in church missions, and in life overall. They reference several scriptures throughout this chapter that help the reader go to the Word and relate it to the stinkin thinkin.

Chapter five is titled, *Facing My Feelings,* because many Type A O-C’s do not face their feelings they turn them inward and this results in outward negative behavior or a feeling of no balance in their lives. The authors indicate that typical emotions of the O-C are: *Anger, Fear, Dependency,* and *Guilt.* “Because of the tendency to deny feelings or to turn them inward, O-C’s tend to experience a greater degree of depression than almost any other personality type” (pg. 51). They explain a classic example of anger is in Numbers 20:2-13 where Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it (pg. 52) this example and the way they describe it really struck home so to speak. The authors list defense mechanisms of the O-C which are: *Denial, Intellectualization, Isolation, Reaction Formation, Phariseeism, Magical Thinking,* and *Undoing.* They assert that “though it may be painful to discover the truth about our emotions, such as guilt, fear, and anger, as well as about or dualistic and inappropriate thinking, it is important for us to progressively give up our defense mechanisms in order to become emotionally and spiritually healthy” (pg. 57).

Chapter six, *How Did I Get This Way?,* will tear at your heart as a parent. The authors explain several studies that have been done and how those studies determine the traits for the O-C and Type A personality person. These traits are not inhereited as far as the studies show; they are developed during the young years in your life specifically during the ages of four to six. This chapter needs to be read with caution and an open heart for your own errors as a parent due to your childhood.

Chapter seven, *Perfect or Perfectionist? A Theological Perspective,* give the reader insight into *Hidden Personal Doubts* and *Inability To Trust.* The authors indicate that, “because a great deal of our thinking about our heavenly Father is formed by our earthly father, it makes sense that if our earthly father loved us conditionally and rejected us when we failed to perform, we attribute the same responses to our heavenly Father when we fail Him. Thus, when O-C’s rebel against God, disobey, fall into sin, or even when they are rationally working out their salvation, they often begin to experience doubts about their salvation” (pg. 70). I completely understand this and get it because I fall into that category. They also write that O-C’s make excellent theologians, gifted pastors, biblical expositors, and highly competent teachers. [But we must gain insight into the relationship between theological positions and adapt our personality traits.]

I am combining chapters 8, *At The End Of My Rope,* and 9 *Reaching Balance or Burnout,* because they are both intertwined with the other. In these chapters the authors discuss unfulfilled expectations in *Idealism*, and *Bitterness*. They stress Ephesians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:15 and how not conforming to these two scriptures infects those around us. On page 77 there is a chart for *Measuring Burnout,* then give a number of steps to *Beating Burnout.* They quote Mark Twain, “It’s not what you eat that destroys you; it’s what eats you!”

They also address *Marital Conflict* because of the O-C’s limits of intimacy; need to control everything and everyone, and unspontaneous routine sexual functions. They encourage O-C’s to give up perfectionism in marriage, avoid bitterness, and work on sharing personal communication verbally and physically. Then they can enjoy their partner as a good friend and a fellow heir of the “grace of life” (pg 83)! Chapter nine is about reaching balance; the authors suggests that even though the O-C is aware of their unbalanced obsessive behavior they realize that simply understanding it, or even tracing it to its early childhood origin, doesn’t do anything to reverse it. So now we cover how to revamp attitudes necessary to gaining insight into the thought processes, developing interpersonal relational skills, and acquiring the motivation to change. This chapter if foundational in confronting the O-C condition to burnout. Being able to move beyond it and to find some normalcy in life is the primary focus of correcting the flaws. One such suggestion is to for the O-C to write down self-critical thoughts and statements and as they write them down they can develop more objective and appropriate ways to handle the daily lifecycle. On page 92 there is the *Facing Distorted Thinking Checklist,* I copied this list and put it on my mirror, in my kitchen and beside my backdoor. This will help keep focus on the priorities and the non absolutes. Page 93 reveals having a personal goal of developing ONE good friendship every two or three years is beneficial. However, for the O-C developing close good friends is a hard task because of the trust issues. Finding a group through your church for O-C’s is another way of improving our ability to relate to others.

Chapter 10 is about *Human Ability and Divine Enablement,* covers our power struggle with temptation and God’s Divine resources such as the WORD, the Holy Spirit, and Prayer. Chapter 11 covers *Solving Our Relational Problems,* and acknowledges that our first responsibility is our ultimate foundation and proper relationship with God; secondly, when we have that foundation it is easier to relate to others around us. Chapter 12 covers *Relating Positively to Others,* this chapter is a positive overview of how to effectively relate in from the O-C perspective of life, ideas and problem areas of relating to our responsibility to love our neighbor. It speaks in depth to the friendship and relationship between Jonathon and David. These friendships help the O-C in relational communications with others. Chapter 13 discusses *Handling the Circumstances of Life,* is about handling the circumstances of life and establishing priorities. It focuses on learning how to deal with interruptions and ensuring our continued growth. Setting goals and objectives keep you sharp and help keep spiritual maturity developed. The goals set need to be *attainable, measurable, flexible,* and remembering that growth is not *instant (pg. 154-155).* Chapter 14 is titled *Beyond Death – the Last Enemy,* speaks of the final chapter all humans face – death! Nevertheless, death is not the end it is the beginning, it is coming home for the Christian believer. This chapter brought tears to my eyes in it there are “three timely exhortations from Paul to help the O-C person live in light of eternity” (pg. 166). All of these are worth covering, but for the sake of this paper you will have to get the book to read them.

In conclusion, I found this book to be an excellent read. The information and techniques provided by these four men were not only insightful, helpful and very informative, but also eye opening. This book is not only informative but can also be very healing for anyone who suffers from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Type A personality. Equally important, is that this book is helpful for everyone to live a balanced life before burnout. I highly recommend this book for anyone in leadership, dealing with O-C, dealing with a spouse or family member who may be this type of personality, or just to have a better understanding of people overall. I myself have been richly blessed by reading and reviewing it.

Works Cited

1. Frank Minirth, M.D., Don Hawkins, Th.M, Paul Meier, M.D., Chris Thurman, Ph.D.. *Before Burnout*. Chicago, IL.: The Moody Bible Institute, 1990. Pages 189. Print.