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The Faithful Frontline

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By Rev. Dawn Spragg

Deacon, Central Rogers and The Teen Action and Support Center

I cannot tell you how many clients have come into my office and begun their session with the words, "When COVID hit!"

COVID-19 has created an overwhelming need for physical, emotional and spiritual care.

There is no doubt that people in the church are struggling right now. The pandemic has made it difficult to worship together. Pastors may not be able to visit people in the hospital, have memorial services or weddings. Music, youth and children's ministries have

all changed. And if the pandemic isn't creating enough hurt for our communities and churches, people are encountering the pain of racism, social injustice, and political division.

As pastors and ministry leaders, you are aware that God's flock is hurting. You are the spiritual frontline and I am sure you are faithfully caring for as many people as you can.

You have thought outside the box.

You have, or still are, adjusting to new technology.

You are following guidelines and explaining safety needs.

You are preparing for a "new normal."

You have adopted a "no rest for the weary" motto.

It isn't working. You're tired. Your exhaustion doesn't mean your faith is not strong enough. Being weary doesn't mean you don't trust God enough. It means you are a faithful frontline worker. What you are experiencing is normal for what is happening around you and in your ministry setting.

The phases people experience in times of collective trauma are well documented.

First, we respond. This is the Active Crisis phase. We wholeheartedly engage when things first erupt. We jump in with energy and conviction. We encourage one another. We find a way to get things done.

Next, we work together for a period of time, feeling good about the decisions we are making. We collaborate and collectively we feel good about the work we are doing. This is the Honeymoon phase.

After some time passes, weariness creeps in. The energy and conviction we had at first has faded. The work is overwhelming and decisions are difficult. This is the Disillusionment phase or it is also referred to as the "6-month wall." After six months of ministering amid many challenges and much pain we find ourselves here. We are weary. You are weary.

And Jesus is calling.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:28-29 (NLT)

Rest- it's what you need right now. Rest from the heavy burdens and rest for your soul. Yes, God has called you to serve others but today you need to find rest. This is not another thing to add to your self-care list. It is an invitation to be still and know God is with you in these moments. The Lord your God is wanting you to find a quiet place, perhaps beside still water, and lay down for a nap. You need some rest.

After your nap, you could think about what your soul needs right now. If you are carrying burdens and frustrations, it is a good time to release some of those.

Are there disappointments you have been holding on to?
Are there harsh words or criticisms stuck on repeat?
Do you feel the weight of dissatisfaction pulling you down?

Jesus has offered to take these from you if you would like to hand them over. Whatever burdens you feel you have, you do not have to carry them alone.

I don't want you to get the impression I am casually saying "You can do it!" You can, but you cannot do it alone. And the good news is, you don't have to! You are yoked to Jesus.

The collective trauma and weariness you are experiencing will soon lead to a Reconstruction phase. Sometime after the "6-month wall" we breakthrough and begin anew. I want to encourage you to refill your spirit with words of God's promises. Read (or listen) to an inspiring book. Create a new playlist filled with your favorite songs of hope or hymns of praise.

We are all navigating our way through some challenging times. So rest, let Jesus lift the burdens from you, and receive the joy that comes with whatever is next.

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