



EAS Syndrome: Healing Burnout in Adults Lacking Parental Affirmation

Trevor Walters

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By Trevor Walters

With Jim Stanley, M.D.

Why do so many pastors burnout and leave the ministries they've diligently shepherded? The phenomenon is epidemic, with record numbers leaving monthly. Writing in professional partnership with a psychiatrist, Trevor Walters shows that midlife burnout is not caused by stress, as we thought, but by an inner conflict strong and persistent enough to ignite burnout in professional men and women. From decades of counseling burned out clergy and other professionals, the author concludes that in most cases the operative inner conflict is *affirmation deficiency*. When parents fail in their task of affirming a son's or daughter's unique *personhood*, the child embarks on a life long quest of seeking after affirmation elsewhere. This is a pursuit they can maintain only so long before burning out around age 50. No book until now has explained External Affirmation Syndrome (EAS), its consequences, and therapy for healing. This will enrich readers and all therapeutic counselors, Christians especially.

In this groundbreaking new book, Bishop Trevor Walters draws on his more than three decades as an Anglican priest and marriage and family counselor to show why high-functioning professionals break down in midlife. Contrary to the popular assumption, Walters explains that the primary cause of burnout isn't stress. (Some very high-stress professions have low burnout rates.) Rather, burnout results from an internal conflict. Adults lacking affirmation from parents – particularly fathers – during the formative years will go about seeking it from those whom they serve – an inevitable path to burnout.

In collaboration from psychiatrist Jim Stanley, M.D., Walters offers hope by demonstrating that recognizing this hidden source of burnout, far from being a dire diagnosis, is the first necessary step to seeking healing available through the Great Physician, Jesus Christ. Walters looks to the example of the Heavenly Father's relationship with Jesus during his incarnate earthly ministry as a heavenly pattern for relationships. When earthly fathers fall short, real injury is done to their children. Identifying, acknowledging, understanding the nature, and the full extent, of this injury can set the course for genuine healing and forgiveness.

The insights this milestone book offers to psychologists, psychiatrists, and religious counselors are very accessible to anyone seeking to understand their own struggles, and to employers and loved ones concerned about a fall-off in the performance or wellbeing of another. This is neither a man's nor a woman's book, nor is it a book for any particular age or group.

Individual chapters identify and explain the following:

- The usual cause of midlife burnout is not stress as we thought, but inner conflict.

- Observable symptoms of burnout are catalogued.
- The heavenly template: Jesus was affirmed at the Jordon *before* he had done anything to earn it. He was able to slough-off his temptations and challenges knowing that that his Father affirmed him.
- The behaviors Jesus modeled are not beyond our reach today.
- EAS people live in subjectivity (internalizing happenings according to their feelings and previous experiences) rather than objectively; hence their addiction to affirmation.
- How childhood affects you; e.g., resentment begins at home, caused by lack of affirmation.
- Unpacking co-dependencies of the growing-up years. A reprise of the therapy so far and an outline of the next steps to healing.
- How misapprehending the Fifth Commandment (Honoring your father and your mother) gets in the way of healing.
- Victims of abuse accept responsibility for what happened. Children attribute lack of affirmation to being unworthy of it, with harmful consequences in life.
- Cataloging parental failures is a necessary step to assigning blame where it belongs and to true forgiveness. Excusing parental failures in the guise of forgiveness allows wounds to continue festering.
- One must know the extent of the damage done before choosing to forgive.
- Grieving the loss of what could have been when growing up, and grieving for one's parents, who also missed out on God's plan.
- An imaginary return to one's home of origin in order to offload toxic emotions generated there.
- Coaching for the imaginary trip to the home of origin.
- The preeminence of Christ and what he has in store for those who seek his healing touch.
- Seeking out people of godly wisdom. St. Paul's affirmations in the introductions to his letters.
- Living into words of affirmation given by discerning people.
- Building healthy peer-to-peer relationships to replace shallow "best friend" relationships.
- Persons healed of EAS must parent themselves. Doing it well.
- Advice about affirming children.

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