

7 - Compassion Fatigue

In the previous study, we looked at Elijah from a nurse-to-patient perspective. What if we were in Elijah's shoes? Often nurses give to the point of exhaustion. Let's explore some ways to prevent burnout while still giving quality care to patients. Read these passages to see how Paul deals with compassion fatigue:

Philippians 1:3-8. ³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴...I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:1-14. ¹Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

²I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength. ¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

For discussion and reflection:

1. What phrases demonstrate Paul's compassion for the Philippian people?
2. Describe several of the scenarios that are causing Paul's anxiety and turmoil?
3. Discuss the ways that Paul encourages the Philippians to deal with challenges in their lives. What methods has Paul found to help him cope with his circumstances?
4. Which of these ideas would you like to adopt into your life so that you can practice nursing in a way that is healthy for both you and your patients?