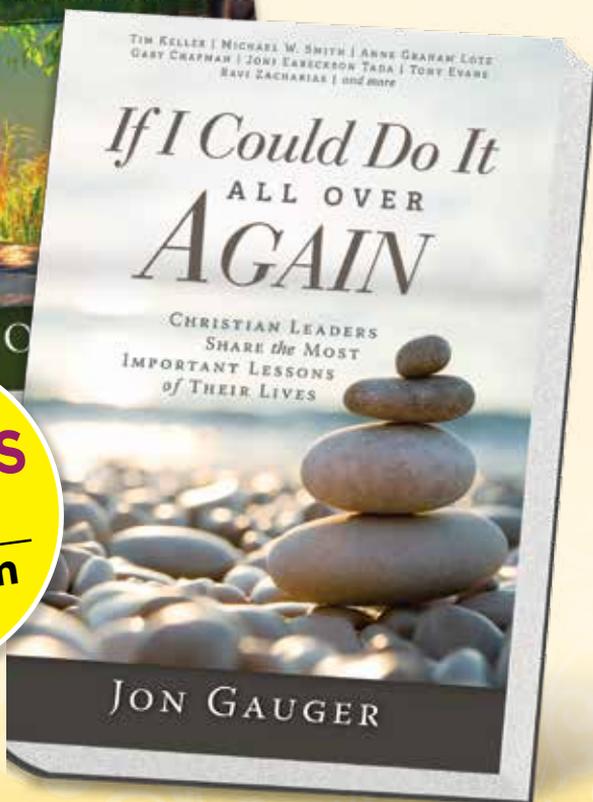


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Just Enough Light

“I’m fed up and burned out. I’ve just plain had it!” I said to a friend over the phone one morning after waking up feeling overwhelmed.

“What you need is a day in the mountains,” my friend said. “Remember last year when . . .”

I remembered well the event she referred to. An important decision about my life direction was looming. I needed time alone to think and pray. I had always found God’s voice to be especially clear when I walked in the woods, so I drove out to Morena Park, about an hour outside San Diego, and pulled into the campsite with an expectant heart.

“Lord,” I said in prayer while walking that afternoon, “please speak to me. Shed Your light on my path – on my writing, on my home and family, on my church work. I feel in the dark about what to do next.” I took a deep breath and tried to relax, surrendering to His time frame.

That evening, after a bit of conversation around the campfire with others, I excused myself early and started down the path to my tent some distance away. I had deliberately chosen a spot where I would have privacy and peace. A sudden chill came over me, however, as I realized how dark it was on the road and how inadequate my small flashlight was. I had only enough light to cover one foot – step at a time.

“Lord, I’m scared,” I suddenly cried, my voice shaking as I walked between a large grove of towering pines without even a sliver of moonlight to guide me. “Please, I can’t see but a step at a time.”

I had no sooner finished my prayer than the realization came. I did have enough light. Enough for one footstep at a time. And wasn’t that all I really needed? A Scripture from Isaiah came into my mind that settled the matter right then. I didn’t know the passage by heart, but I knew enough of it to encourage me. “Yes, Lord, yes,” I shouted into the trees. “You never forsake me. Thank You.” I felt God’s strength fill me up in that moment. I didn’t need a bright flashlight or a full moon to guide me.

When I reached my tent, I used my concordance to locate the passage in Isaiah. Sure enough, there it was in chapter 42, verse 16: “I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight” (KJV).

Maybe you sometimes feel as I do, especially as you grow older. You’re on the go and then suddenly run out of fuel or light. During the past 10 years or so, I’ve found several ways to shake the fear and futility and then carry on, knowing that God is with me no matter how I feel.

Simplifying is one way. We can all use a fresh wind of renewal at home, at work, in our personal lives. And it’s available as we surrender to the discipline of simplicity. Embracing it, however, involves trust and prudence—two virtues that are easier talked about than practiced. A simpler life – one that is free of baggage, bulging calendars, demanding people and unrealistic expectations – can be challenging to come by. But when we commit to simplifying our lives, to clearing out the clutter – from old magazines to old acquaintances who no longer nourish us – oh, the freedom and the strength we feel.

We can learn to say no without feeling guilty, to refuel ourselves with a good night’s rest after a day’s work, and to carefully consider our choices and decisions ahead of time so that we don’t overcommit ourselves and risk illness and irritability. Simplicity is the discipline that brings us down to where we ought

to be so that we can be lifted up by the strength of God when we need it most.

Being silent is another way. To most people, silence is the absence of sound. But it is also a presence – God’s presence in quiet communion with our presence.

In returning and rest you shall be saved (Isa. 30:15, KJV).

Be still, and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10).

Despite these encouraging words, however, many of us are so fearful of being silent that we carry around our familiar blanket of noise wherever we go – and then wonder why we don’t hear God! We depend on the hum of radios and televisions and DVD players.

Silence can be an intruder. Maybe as a child you were punished with the silent treatment. Or, if you came from a large, noisy household, maybe you longed for a few moments of silence and never got them.

Silence is not an easy discipline to embrace. But, oh, the fruit the tree of silence bears when we sit under it. Agnes Sanford, a pioneer in the prayer and healing movement in the Christian Church, said that she never could have done the work the Lord gave her to do without regular, committed times of silence. Wisely, the writer of Ecclesiastes said there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (3:7). Those of us who wish to refuel when we feel burned out will heed those words.

Solitude is something I’m learning to love. My husband has discovered it too. He drove a delivery truck for a short time during our early marriage, and one of his favorite aspects of the job was the solitude it offered. Each lunch hour, he parked on a hill in his territory that overlooked the Pacific Ocean. “I look forward to that time alone,” he often said over dinner at night. “It’s my time. No one but God knows where I am. I relax, enjoy my food, read the Bible and even snooze! Everyone deserves such an experience.”

I have taken up this practice in my life too. I spend at least a half hour each day walking – alone – reading, praying or simply being, eager to remain available to God’s voice and direction. Whenever I notice that feeling of being over – whelmed come on me, I know immediately I need a time-out – for solitude...

You can, too. Why wait?

GRACE

Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

GRATITUDE

Lord, thank You for refueling me when I’m burned out and for providing light when I am caught in darkness.

GRIT

Today, I will take time to simplify one area of my life, to keep silent for at least an hour, to spend a few moments in solitude, to enjoy some time of serendipity-walking, dreaming, driving-and be open to a surprise!



Excerpted from *If I Had It to Do All Over Again*.

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What I Would Do More Of

Joe Stowell, Internationally-respected author and speaker

I would do more feeding of my soul...If I could do all of this again, I would take more time for meditation, just to sit for 20 minutes and say, "Lord, speak to me. Let me hear Your voice." I would take more time to reverse the ultimate shallowness that busyness threatens to bring.

June Hunt, Author and speaker; Founder of Hope for the Heart

What would have made a huge difference in my life would have been to learn much earlier not to be manipulated...I was allowing others to have undue control over me. At times, that control violated what I really believed was right. I needed to change – and coming to grips with that was a huge turning point for me.

Why Can't I Do Better?

Michael Card, Widely-acclaimed author and musician

I recently heard somebody say that what we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. I think that's partly because of the fall. The fact that I'm fallen and fragmented internally means I habitually say and do the wrong things. Even people with good intentions often end up doing the wrong things. That's just part of the fall.

Tony Evans, Senior Pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas

I think one of the reasons we don't leverage lessons from the past is because we face a spiritual enemy. He knows our weaknesses individually, and he can attack them individually. So while we may have heard something yesterday, from our parents, or from the past (you see this in the Bible too), people make the same mistakes. We

are under a fresh attack. The freshness of the attack assaults us in a direct way. The reality is, having yesterday's knowledge doesn't necessarily transfer to the fresh attack of today.

A Principle I'm Eager to Pass On

Dee Brestin, Author of bestselling books and Bible studies

I want to pass on the importance of praying the Psalms. I learned from Dietrich Bonhoeffer that it's a common error among believers to think the soul can pray by itself. In order to pray with real efficacy and strength, we need God's prayer book. We need the Psalms, and that has radically changed my prayer life. I'm teaching my children and grandchildren how to pray the Psalms.

Jill Briscoe, Author and speaker; Founder of Just Between Us magazine

Don't waste the pain. Let it drive you deeper to God, and use the pain that comes into your life as a place of blessing for others. Learn to maximize the good times instead of just coasting. Learn to handle success, which is far harder than handling failure and pain.

A Favorite Quotation of Mine

Stuart Briscoe, Pastor, Bible teacher and author of more than 40 books

Albert Einstein is said to have kept this quotation on his desk at Princeton: "Not everything that can be counted counts. Not everything that counts can be counted." This has become a favorite of mine.

Tony Evans

Corrie ten Boom said, "There is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still." When ministry seems overwhelming, this quote gives me comfort that God will meet me at my lowest point. There was a time where it looked as if the church would not be able to pay its bills, and I had to hold on to that truth.

