

I'm Exhausted

What to Do When You're
Always Tired

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If you're reading this minibook, it's likely that you or someone you love is struggling with profound, long-lasting fatigue. After open heart surgery, I experienced shattering and debilitating fatigue for five years. I said to my wife many months after surgery, "I feel like someone who took his car in for repairs. The car I got back turned out to be a junker." The wounds had healed, but my body didn't work.

Fatigue destroyed much of my life. I had no resilience. I was able to do only the bare minimum in every area of my life. I had to let go of many things that were valuable, gratifying, and joyous. My social circle became smaller and smaller, finally narrowing down to family and a few friends. My ministry life—counseling and teaching—was severely curtailed. You've probably experienced similar losses in your struggle with fatigue.

Although I lost much of my social connectedness and ministry, God's ministry to me and his social life with me became incalculably precious and sweet. Because of my deep need for God, my relationship with him became more intimate. Psalm 46 assured me, "God is an ever-present help in trouble." The essential dynamic of my moments and days became, "Lord, this *is* trouble. Help!" And he helped.

God will also help you. Extreme fatigue strips life down to the bare basics of human need and God's grace. As you learn to call upon God, you will find him. He will meet you, sustain you, comfort you, and give you hope. God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). God comforted me in my affliction. This small book is one way God has given me to offer that same comfort to you. I want to share with you the things that God has taught me through one of the hardest times in my life.

Perhaps you are too weary to read this in one sitting. Take a few days. Read one section at a time. As you read, ask God to give you his perspective on your battle with fatigue. Ask him to meet you.

Causes for Debilitating Fatigue

Some people are diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or depression,¹ but those are only two of the possible causes of fatigue. What are the reasons why you might be struggling with fatigue?

- **Physical Problems:** allergies, arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome, cancer, hypoglycemia,

fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, thyroid dysfunction, and many other diseases, medication side effects, sleep problems, old age, and parenting young children (nursing and hormonal changes for women, and loss of sleep for both women and men)

- **Life Stresses:** grief, overwork, broken relationships, difficult circumstances, and a traumatic event
- **Spiritual Struggles:** fear, guilt, worry, hopelessness, and bitterness

Learning to Live with Fatigue

This list of reasons is long, but it's not comprehensive. The reason for your fatigue might not be listed here. You may never find out exactly why you're so tired. Many people don't. In my situation, I faced five years of mystery, with no explanations. Finally, we found both an explanation and a cure. Perhaps you also will find a cause and a cure, but for now you have to learn to live well within fatigue's limitations. You will have to learn how to think, feel, choose, believe, love—and not sin—while you feel like a “dimly burning wick.” You need to know God and live fruitfully despite your constant

weariness. Is this possible? Yes it is. I know that God used my fatigue, difficult as it was, for good in my life. He plans to do the same for you.

How Our World Sees Fatigue

Start by swimming upstream against our world's perspective on fatigue. How does our world view fatigue?

- *Our world despises fatigue.* It hates weakness, dependency, aging, inability, and weariness. Our culture's ideal is to be strong, independent, youthful, vigorous, capable, radiant, healthy, and energetic. That is a half-truth. To enjoy health and strength *is* a wonderful gift from God. To lose these things is hard. But our culture takes those good gifts and says, "You gotta have them!" And if you don't have them, you are defective. You are less than a human being. The world takes the gifts of God without God. It lives for the gifts, not for the Giver. But God says that weakness is the door to knowing him.
- *Our world treats fatigue only as a medical problem.* We love to give problems a name and try to fix them with a pill or program. Sometimes a