



Orca Whales and Overcoming Fatigue

My husband and I had just completed a busy season of ministry overseas. Our bodies yearned for rest and our spirits longed for renewal, but one more commitment beckoned before we could take a break.

A lifelong friend and former ministry coworker had passed away, and we considered attending his funeral a non-negotiable. Doing so was no small ordeal. It meant making a day-long trip that involved two ferry rides with the likelihood of high-volume summer traffic and subsequent lengthy waits between sailings. The prospect held zero appeal for us in our weary state. But there was one option: do the trip in our sailboat-home. Allowing a week for the round-trip could transform our journey into a vacation.

We left the marina with sunshine overhead and gentle breezes at our back. On the second morning, I was sitting in the cockpit when unusual movement in the water caught my eye. It was a fin about five feet high, heading straight toward our starboard side. Suddenly another fin appeared. And then a third.

Moments later, a pod of approximately thirty orca whales surrounded us. Some disappeared under our boat. Others swam across the bow. One leaped from the air off the stern and landed with a tremendous ker-splash. Their movements mesmerized me. I gazed in awe at these sea creatures diving and dancing, and I felt enveloped by the presence of their Creator and mine.

The whales' path crossing ours in that massive expanse of water was no coincidence. Only God could have orchestrated such a nature show and given us the once-in-lifetime opportunity to sit in its audience. I embraced it as a gift, a unique and not-so-little expression of His love for us and His presence in our lives. The experience rejuvenated our spirits and filled our emotional, mental, and spiritual sails with fresh wind.

We all experience seasons—some long, some short—when fatigue settles in and feels impossible to shake off. Reasons for exhaustion vary.

I have several friends who are providing care for aging parents suffering from dementia. Others are helping to raise their grandchildren. Some are investing significant energy trying to understand and resolve relationship issues within their family. Others are dealing with workplace conflict, financial loss, or health concerns.

On a global scale, we're coming through a season that knocked the wind out of our sails for so many reasons—loss and disappointment being one of them.

Fatigue makes us vulnerable to negative thinking. When I returned from overseas that summer, I caught myself entertaining thoughts like, "I feel overworked and underappreciated" and "Our ministry doesn't make a difference."

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I realized that allowing such thoughts to dwell in my mind would put me into a downward spiral of discouragement. I turned things around by meditating on and praying truths such as Psalm 23:1-2. "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength" (NLT).

God invites us to cast our cares on Him, so go ahead—tell Him your need for renewal and expect Him to answer (1 Peter 5:7). He might send restoration through a timely Scripture or email, through a friend who comes alongside to help shoulder your burden, or through an unexpected opportunity to get away for a physical rest.

He knows your need and how to best meet it. If He can send a pod of orca whales to renew me, He can do whatever's necessary to restore you, too, my friend.

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