



Energize Your Life

Overcoming Fatigue and Stress





Dr Carlson's writings contain invaluable instruction and direction concerning some of the most pressing problems of contemporary life – especially chronic overload and exhaustion. He not only conveys vital medical knowledge, but also a clear and practical wisdom, along with spiritual insight. I believe this book will be very helpful for everyone who is prepared to find their way into a life of practical interaction with the One whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

Dallas Willard, Professor of Philosophy, USC, Speaker and Author.

Energize Your Life is a book which makes good on its premise and promise. Written in a readable and practical manner, professionals and laymen alike will benefit and be amazed at the amount of information this book contains. This resource speaks to the heart of the concerns of many who struggle in their daily lives.

H. Norman Wright, Christian Counselor



In this book, Dwight Carlson has combined his psychiatric insights, pastoral care and astute observation of the stress-related challenges of the twenty-first century. Not only has he made an accurate diagnosis of the problem, he has prescribed some approaches to healing that square with the complex realities of contemporary living. What I appreciate most is his holistic wrestling with the multitude of contemporary stressors in a way that acknowledges the importance of integrating biblical truth with his psychiatric observations. This is a most helpful book for those of us dealing with stress and ministering to those who are stressed. I whole-heartedly recommend it!

Rev. John Huffman, Senior Pastor, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, California.



Dr Carlson's unique credentials provide a credibility and authenticity unlike most authors in the areas of understanding and experiencing healing of personal stress and fatigue. Drawing on his years as a medical professional, extended time as a psychiatrist, and his extensive personal spiritual insights, you will be enlightened through





his clear explanations of stress and fatigue. You will be enriched through his full disclosure of the ‘drainers’ that contribute to fatigue and ‘energizers’ that provide strength so you will be able to experience God’s full potential for your life. As you read this book, you will be encouraged by Dr. Carlson’s very practical counsel for areas in your life in which fatigue can be turned to strength.

Dr. Gordon E. Kirk, Senior Pastor, Lake Avenue Church, Pasadena, California.

Dr. Dwight Carlson’s book on energizing your life contains many helpful and practical guidelines as well as much biblical wisdom for overcoming fatigue and stress. I highly recommend it.”

Rev. Siang-Yang Tan, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor, First Evangelical Church, Glendale, California.



This book is a fountain of sanity and compassionate skill. Let any tired saint drink deeply from its waters and be refreshed, restored and perhaps cured. So if you’re tired, read this. If you’re under pressure, read this. If you’re bewildered by your failures and untouched by your successes, read this. If you want off the Christian treadmill read this. If you’ve ever wondered how on earth Jesus could have promised rest to those who labour and are heavy laden, but you feel that he must have been meaning you, read this. If you’ve ever suspected that the promise of abundant life has passed you by, read this. In fact, if you’re a human being, read this!



Rarely do we find in one author profound pastoral sensitivity, expert medical opinion, astute biblical awareness and the wisdom of the years. But we certainly find them in Dwight L. Carlson.

Rev. Dominic Smart, Gilcomston South Church of Scotland, Aberdeen, Scotland.







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Dwight L. Carlson, M.D.

Christian Focus





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I dedicate this book to
Bob Boardman,
who was a significant early
influence in my walk with God.





PREFACE

IN 1972 I was a practicing internist with a busy practice in Southern California. One of the most common complaints that I heard from my patients was that “I am tired” or “exhausted” or “I just don’t have the energy that I think I should have.” I was taught virtually nothing about the symptom of fatigue in medical school and during seven years of postgraduate training. The medical literature at that time did not shed much more light on the subject. Short sections could be found in medical books or journals on this subject, but where does the layperson turn? So I went to the main branch of our local library and found one book on the subject, one that was published in 1905.

Therefore, as a physician I studied the problem and wrote my initial book on fatigue that was published in 1974 with the title *Run and Not Be Weary*, later it was published in a soft cover with the title *How to Win Over Fatigue*. With the book’s publication I changed directions in my medical practice and completed three years of residency training in psychiatry. I have now practiced this specialty for about 25 years, continuing to see patients with stress and fatigue. Since the 1980s much research has been done on the subject of the cause and consequences of stress and fatigue. In addition, I have learned more on the subject through my patients and by an extensive review of the latest literature on the subject. So this is an appropriate time to update and greatly expand the material originally appearing in my first book on fatigue.

Sometimes I feel like an expert on the subject. I have experienced burn out in my late teens, a major depression in midlife, a brother who was martyred as a medical missionary, and a daughter told she was going to die of leukemia. In addition to a busy medical practice with all the daily hassles and stresses inherent in it, I have also





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experienced as much fatigue — severe, prolonged, and from many different sources — as is possible. In more recent years I have discovered things that I can do to energize my life. At any rate, I do speak from professional and personal experience. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I have learned many lessons along the way. This book is the result of a desire to help the person suffering from stress and fatigue first to understand the problem and its causes, then to present specific solutions available to him or to her. The material in this book will help you gain better control of your life and give you added vitality and serenity. Since I encourage the reader to be open and honest, I have endeavored to practice this openness so that I may relate better to you despite the risks involved.

The topic of fatigue and stress cuts across numerous disciplines: medical, social, psychiatric, nutritional, and spiritual. As an internist and psychiatrist as well as a lifelong student of the Scriptures, I feel uniquely equipped to address this topic.

Some of the examples in this book are taken from my practice of internal medicine and others from my practice of psychiatry. Incidental aspects have been altered enough to preserve the anonymity of the individuals. Where this has been difficult to achieve, permission has been obtained from the persons involved.

I want to thank Dr. Bill Shell for his helpful editing. Last but certainly not least, I want to express my deep gratitude to God for the encouragement, understanding, and patience of my dear wife, Betty.





SECTION ONE
THE PROBLEM





PROLOGUE 1953

THE DOCTOR SAID I was suffering from fatigue and the diagnosis couldn't have been more correct. At the ripe old age of 19 I was utterly exhausted. He encouraged me to develop better eating habits and gave me some iron, vitamins and a B12 shot. But the cause of my fatigue was much deeper than simply not eating properly. Sheer exhaustion had forced me to quit my job altogether and rest.

During the latter part of high school I recommitted my life to God and started to take the Christian life seriously. I was thoroughly convinced that a follower of Christ had to be disciplined. I worked hard to know all that God would teach me about prayer and Bible study; I even tried other disciplines like fasting. Some dynamic Christians that I had met encouraged me to memorize three Bible verses a week. I thought that is three were good, then six must be better, so I began committing to memory six verses per week, month after month. I was convinced that a daily quiet time was crucial so determined to spend 30 minutes each morning with God. Later I discovered a passage in the Bible which says "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" so I wouldn't have breakfast if I missed my time with God (Job 23:12, KJV). And I love to eat. In fact I had a check chart and checked off some 23 items each day to see if I was living up to my commitments.

I wanted my life to count, so after I graduated from high school I left my job and home and moved near a servicemen's center 100 miles away. I supported myself by working as a mason's tender. After a hard day's work I'd head for the servicemen's center. I spent six nights a week, a half-day Saturday, and all day Sunday at the center talking to Marines heading for the battlefields of Korea about their relationship with God. Someone advised me to take one night off a week, which I did, but instead of relaxing I went to the nearby Marine base where I led a Bible study.





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As the months passed it was becoming harder and harder for me to get up in the morning for a quiet time, and putting the alarm clock in a pan across the room was no longer effective. I knew just enough about electricity to be dangerous. So I hooked up a Model T spark coil to a clock and ran two wires under my legs in an effort to jolt myself out of bed at an early hour. The 40,000 volts were effective in getting me out of bed in the morning. However, it is no surprise that I ended up burned-out and utterly exhausted. I literally had to stop all work and let my body recuperate. I was unable to do virtually anything for weeks on end. The year was 1953.

