

Do What You Can

I admire Jean Fleming. She's been both a home and overseas missionary. She boldly and winsomely shares her faith, makes a priority of discipling other Christian women, and leads Bible studies. She actively supports her husband's full-time ministry, frequently opens her home for Christian hospitality, and serves in her local church. In her home and halfway across the country she's cared for both physically and mentally impaired relatives for long periods. The Flemings have raised three children and now enjoy their role as grandparents. Through it all Jean has written several books and articles.

She was converted in her late teens. Disciplined well from the start, Jean thrived on a spiritual diet strong on disciplines like the reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word, prayer, fellowship, service, evangelism, worship, silence and solitude, journal-keeping, and Scripture memory. She felt herself making spiritual progress almost daily. All this continued after she married her equally-dedicated husband, Roger.

Then she had three children in diapers. Caring for their most basic needs eliminated almost every moment of the time she used to devote to caring for her soul. Her longings for the things of God reached as high as ever, but her time and energy had new and severe limits.

On at least three occasions I've eavesdropped as Jean addressed young moms in similar situations. In effect she's told them, "At this time in your life, you can't do what you're used to doing. You don't have time for all your heart desires to experience in your spiritual life. Nevertheless, do what you can do, even though it's precious little. Just don't deceive yourself by thinking that you can put off a devotional life until you have more time. Because when the years roll around and you finally do have more time, your spiritual habits will be so ingrained that you won't give more attention to your devotional life at all."

Then I heard Jean tell her own story. She would keep Bibles open in several rooms—in the kitchen, nursery, bathroom—and look at them when she could. While warming a bottle or changing a diaper, she'd glance over and perhaps read only one verse. But this discipline helped her keep the Word in her heart and the presence of God in her awareness. And as the children's needs grew less demanding, her disciplines were already in place to receive any additional time she could give them. Even though Jean felt almost spiritually dormant during those years in comparison to her early growth as a Christian, she kept alive the spiritual disciplines through which her soul would blossom in years to come.

Like Jean with three in diapers, you may be in a situation that curtails many of your spiritual activities. You may be looking at many months or even years of such limitations. Do what you can. God does not love us more when we do more, nor less when we do less. He accepts us, not because of what we do for Him, but because of what He's done for us in Christ.

The Bible says, "He made us accepted in the Beloved [that is, Jesus]" (Ephesians 1:6). And nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). Love God, and within the limitations He has sovereignly placed in your life at this time, do what you can.

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