

# The Difficulty of Doing

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**H**ORSESHOE Bend is a twisted canyon artfully carved by the Colorado River. When we passed the sign on the highway, my husband, David, wanted to turn in. I protested. I knew it was probably beautiful, maybe even breathtaking, but I was exhausted from our time at the Grand Canyon and our two daughters were getting cranky from missing naptime.

David eventually won us over and turned the car around to head back to the park entrance. With sand in our shoes and the sun scorching our backs, we came to realize what we thought was our destination was just the beginning of a trail stretching nearly a mile down to the observation deck. (Every parent knows a mile is more than a mile when you're with your kids.) We considered turning back, but the droves of smiling returning hikers assured us over and over the journey was worth it. Despite my inner dialogue telling me I'd rather be kicking my feet up in my air-conditioned car, we pressed on.

Dripping with sweat and red-faced from the hike, our family eventually made it to the observation deck. It was one of the most incredible views we'd ever seen. The kind where neither words nor photos could possibly come close to describing it. In that moment, taking in those sights, my fatigue evaporated. Any part of me that previously longed for comfort and ease was now replaced with gratitude and awe. I thought about my initial protest and realized I almost missed something extraordinary, simply because *doing* it felt like an inconvenience.

I wonder if we do the same thing for the big decisions in our lives, opting for easier paths that prevent us from experiencing something extraordinary. I

have learned doing your work is always going to feel like an inconvenience at first. On top of that, we may experience fear, resistance, overwhelm, or inadequacy. It's all part of the difficulty of *doing*. Throw leadership into the mix, and it becomes even more daunting because leadership means going first.

Here are few ideas that can help us continue on even when the doing seems overwhelming ...

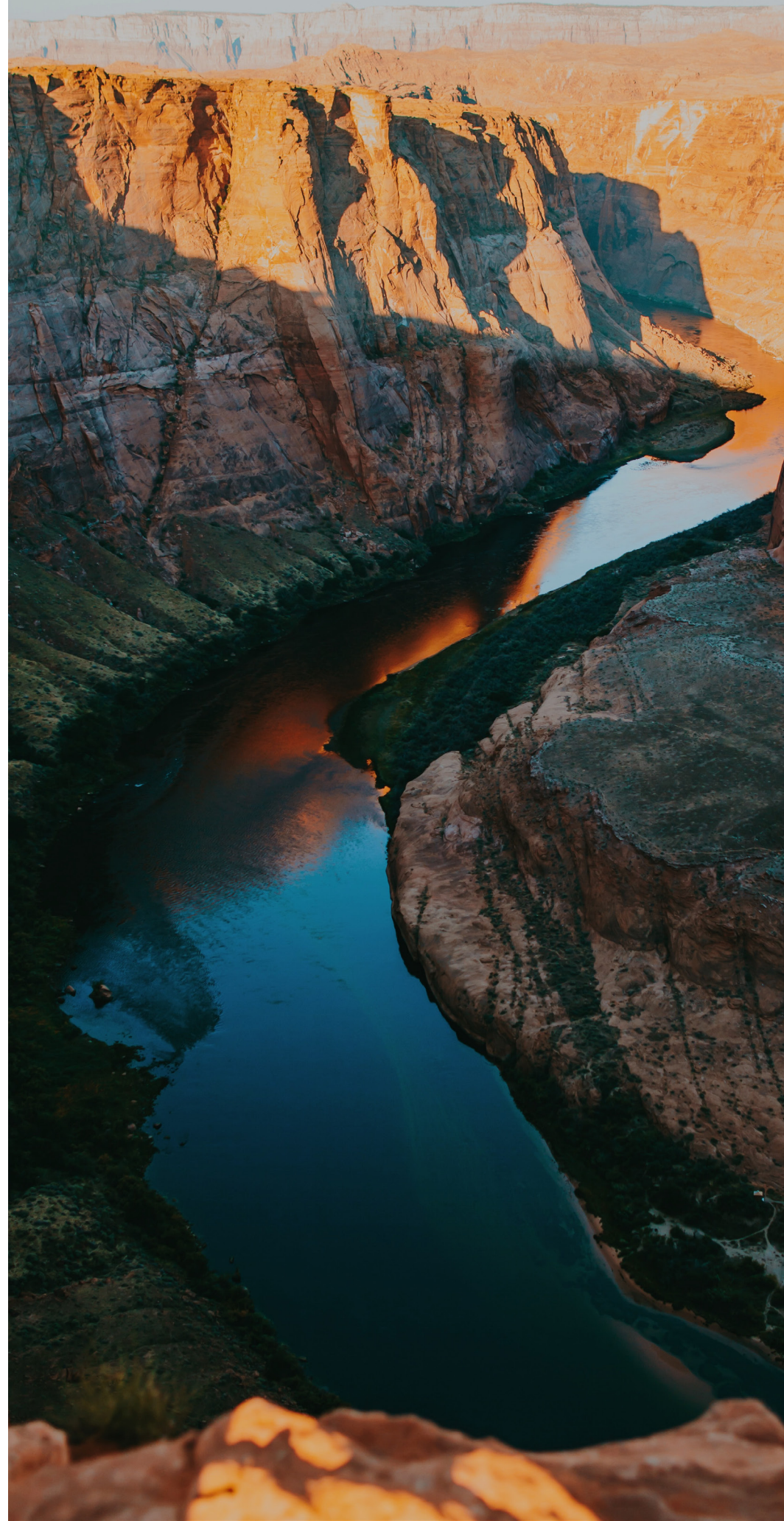
***When you don't have much to give, give what you have.***

Did I happen to mention we didn't bring any of our water bottles with us when we started trudging toward the observation deck at Horseshoe Bend? Grave error.

As we started the climb back up toward our car, it took all of ten minutes for me to realize we had a significant problem on our hands. The slope down now felt like an impossible climb back up.

We set our eyes on the gazebo up ahead – the only resting place on the trail – and forced our feet to move, one after the other. As we practically collapsed onto a bench under the gazebo's shade, our desperation must have been obvious to the more experienced hikers around us because two fellow hikers stopped and offered us their half-full water bottles, even though it meant they would go without.

At that moment, through the generosity of strangers, God taught me something profound about giving what we have even if it isn't a lot. The two women didn't have a lot of water, but they offered what they had, and it was exactly what we needed.



As leaders, when facing struggle or hardship, we really have two choices: rise up or shrink back; keep going or quit. There have been plenty of times I've wanted to quit, usually because I'm convinced I just don't have enough to give. I'm finally learning coming up short doesn't mean we shouldn't offer what we have.

When a hungry crowd of thousands pressed in, the disciples stared hopelessly into their empty pockets, comparing their lack of resources, food, and money to the sea of need; fully aware they were coming up short. At the same time, a young boy looked at his small lunch of five loaves and two fish and offered to share. Did the math add up? Nope, but Jesus does impossible math. He accepted what the little boy offered, blessed it, and fed the multitude with leftovers to spare (John 6:5-13). When I read this story, the lesson isn't so much about hungry people being fed. It's about fearful, doubting disciples being reminded of God's infinite power. It's about little boys who give all of their lunch, even if it isn't a lot.

Leading takes us to the very edge of our ability, and, at times, even to the edge of our faith. It's tempting to disqualify ourselves because we feel we don't have enough to offer. As a leader, sometimes doing your work means trusting that the "little" you have to give is enough, because Jesus is more than enough.

***You cannot give your "all" to everything.***

I need you to understand something important. Giving your "all" to Jesus doesn't mean giving your "all" to everything else. In the midst of our breakneck paced world, it's easy to take on the unnecessary burden of more – doing more, being more, saying yes to more. As I've asked hundreds of leaders what their priorities are this year, it's common for the list they supply to be lengthy. Or, in other cases, they tell me

they only have a few priorities, but their overflowing calendars tell a different story.

Doing your work as a leader requires aligning your priorities with your attention. Many women in leadership assume every facet of life is worthy of equal attention, but this is a recipe for disaster because our lives are dynamic and changing.

Unchecked, overcommitment leads to quitting, usually when we are drowning in burnout, fatigue, irritability and shame. So, can we stop overcommitting? As leaders (and mothers), there are many things we *could* do, but there are only a few things we *should* do, and wisdom calls us to know the difference.

***You can do hard things.***

Our family eventually made it up the trail, over the sandhill, all the way back to our air conditioned car and full water bottles. Right in the middle of fastening her seatbelt, my daughter Abigail suddenly realized what just happened. With exuberant confidence, she joyfully proclaimed: "I DID IT! See! We can do hard things!" The second breathtaking reward of the afternoon. As a leader, the best thing about doing your work is that it enables the people around you to do the same thing.

Maybe this season of leadership is full of energy and inspiration for you. Maybe you feel on top of your game and ready to go further and do more. If so, great! Keep going! Or maybe you feel burdened and overwhelmed. Maybe it's a season where the work – mothering, leading, serving, healing, growing – is just too hard. It may be tempting to sit this one out and call it quits. But, sister, this just might be your time to rise up and put one foot in front of the other.

The journey might be difficult, but the view just might take your breath away.