

'Packing Light' — a guide to hitting the road

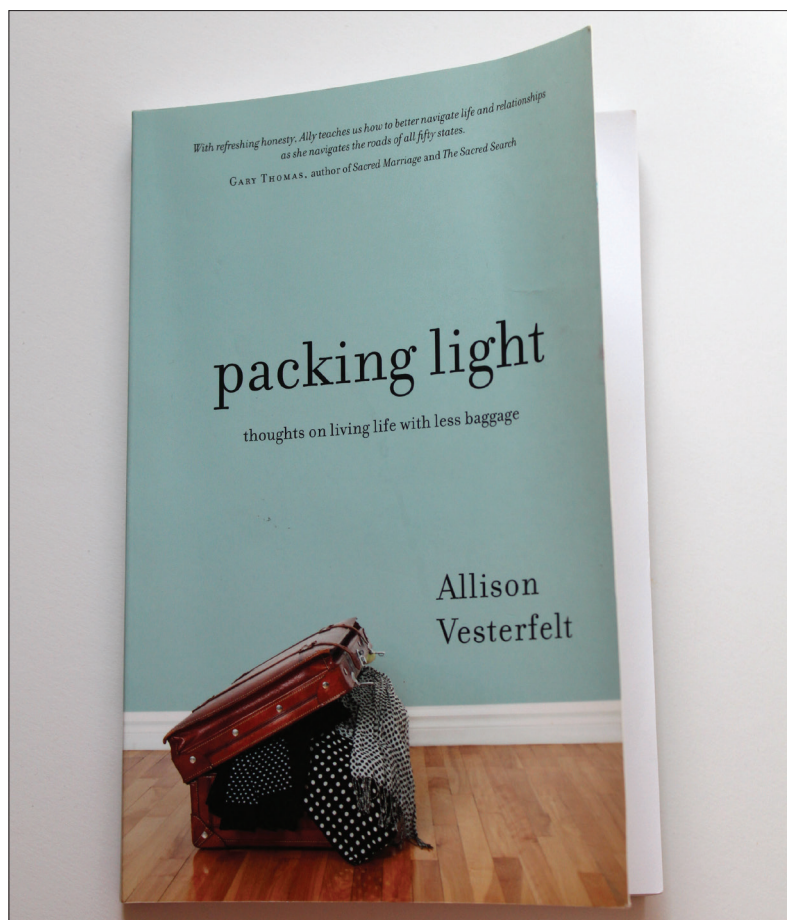
By Cheryl Hoefler
GO! Magazine

Timing is everything.

My daughter gave me this book several years ago, thinking it would suit my minimalist nature and "someday" dreams of a vagabond retirement lifestyle. It did, but I think it was too hard reading about something I desired but couldn't yet have. At any rate, I didn't get past the first few pages.

About a month ago, I found the book buried in a box and, well, with retirement just months away now, I literally could not put this book down.

"Packing Light" is exactly what its subtitle states: "thoughts on living life with less baggage." Maybe, like author Allison Vesterfelt (now Fallon) and her friend Sharaya, you dream of hitting the road for some period of time — or forever (which is my intent). Maybe you'd just like to simplify your current existence. Or maybe you just generally feel burdened and aren't sure what



you want. This book is for you.

Allison is a writer/middle-school English teacher, and Sharaya is an aspiring singer-songwriter. The pair of young, single, working Portland

women decide to abandon the comfort and safety of their jobs, homes, daily routines — not to mention, most of their possessions — for a year-long road trip, but not without much

reservation and hesitation. Vesterfelt's memoir includes the encounters and occurrences along the way — the good, bad and ugly — but is more about the inner experience from such an undertaking — lessons learned, wisdom gained, faith, fear, friendship. And of course, the pressing question of "baggage," too much of which might keep us from living truly passionate lives.

Vesterfelt poses so many questions for the reader throughout their journey: What is all this stuff we carry around? Why are we so afraid to lose it? What are we willing to leave behind and what do we really need in our lives? And as she and Sharaya first laid plans to basically quit their lives to hit the road for a year: "You can't just do that, can you? If so, why don't more people do it?" Indeed.

As the saying goes, if it were easy, anyone could do it. But just what does it take to make that first step into the

unknown? As Vesterfelt says midway through the book, "If we pondered all the mistakes that we could possibly make, maybe it would prevent us from moving forward in our journey. And perhaps that would be the worst mistake of all."

"Packing Light" has Christian themes sprinkled throughout, but I believe most readers won't mind. Personally, I welcomed the references, pondering whether or not God is a dictator barking down orders or an enemy on whom we can lay blame when things don't go right. And then there's the whole "leap of faith" dilemma.

At the end of "Packing Light" there's a "Pass It On" page, requesting that the reader sign the page and share the book with others — in keeping of course with the theme of living life with less baggage. Usually, I redistribute books at Little Free Libraries, but this one I'm holding on to. I might need it for reference "down the road."

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