

### Proverbs 3 (21-24) – What Keeps You Up at Night?

Have you ever gone to bed, but you couldn't fall asleep? Maybe you watched a scary movie, or read a scary book. Maybe you fixated on some bad news, or bad social media. Maybe you had caffeine too late in the day. Maybe you kept scrolling on your phone, and you stayed up late and woke up tired.

Maybe you can't sleep because you're so depressed that you can't stop thinking about it. I can't pay my bills. I don't know how I'll get through this. I don't see any hope. I don't know what to do. You trust what Psalm 30:5 says – *Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning*. But even when you're sure that God will help, you still can't sleep. I've been there.

Maybe your regular routine includes insomnia. But I'm not talking about a medical condition. I'm talking about laying your head down to sleep, and your mind starts racing. Is that you? What is it that is keeping you up at night? Is it the pain of the past? Is it the pressure and the problems of the present? Is it the fear of the future?

You know, people talk about sleeping like a baby. Because people think that babies have no worries, so they sleep well. But babies have all sorts of cares, and they let you know, don't they? I don't want to sleep like a baby. I don't want to wake up every two hours, crying like a banshee, until someone else holds me, feeds me, and cleans up the mess I made in my diaper!

Maybe you think you just need to simplify your life, and be less busy, and have less responsibilities, or use something to "try and take the edge off," or whatever. You may think that when you're done with all the pressure, then you'll finally get some decent sleep. But sometimes, the pressure never stops. And yet, when you can still sleep well when you still have pressure and problems, that is real rest. Of course, there are people who sleep like a log, as they say, but they are careless, or just avoiding responsibility. And others may sleep well because they are bad people, who do bad things, but they have no conscience about it, and don't care what happens to others.

So, sleeping well isn't a one size fits all sort of proposition. But we all know that we need to sleep well if we want to live well. And God has some things to say about sleeping well, and sleeping to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. Now you might wonder how you can glorify God by sleeping. Well, it's about how you view and do sleep. And even if you are sleeping well, this can help.

You can learn to sleep to the glory of God. You can use sleep in service to God, not by denying sleep, but by yielding to sleep, in faithful trust of his providential plans and purposes. You can face more challenges in your life than ever, and face more temptations to lose sleep than ever, and yet face them with a renewed strength, peace, and trust. You can lose less sleep over what might happen, and what others may be thinking or doing.

Yes, there are times when you aren't supposed to sleep, or when you just can't sleep. But sleep is a gift from God that he wants you to embrace and enjoy as a regular pattern of life. You can sleep better when you understand who you are because of who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he will do. You can sleep in peace when you've made peace with God through Jesus Christ. When you trust in Jesus, and you learn to place your faith in him in your most vulnerable state, you can sleep in a way that gives glory and honor to God. Jesus is your example. Sometimes Jesus slept to the glory of God, and sometimes he sacrificed sleep to the glory of God. To know how and why he did this is to learn to use sleep to the glory of God.

Turn to Mark 4:35-41. Here you see that as a human, Jesus needed sleep. And yet, as the Son of God, he had power over the sea. The disciples were starting to realize just who Jesus was. Perhaps they thought of Psalm 89:8-9 – *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them*. Jesus was more than a mere man. He did what only God could do.

They had some idea of who Jesus was. Even though he was asleep, they felt like he must have known what was going on. They just wondered if he really

cared about them. The storms of life try to blur your vision of Jesus. But they can help you see better. You can learn to see your circumstances through the lens of Jesus instead of seeing Jesus through the lens of your circumstances.

Some people take this passage and twist it into a lesson in super power. They think that the disciples were wrong to wake Jesus. Because if they just had enough faith, they could have calmed the storm themselves. That you have the authority to still the storm in his name. Don't have fear, have faith. But this is obviously not the point that Jesus was making about faith. The Scriptures do not teach that Christians have authority over the weather. You won't find that in any biblical list of spiritual gifts.

Others take this passage and twist it into a lesson in super spirituality. They reason that since God is sovereign, and he is, that this means they shouldn't have woken Jesus. Because if he wants them to die, then they should be willing to die without saying anything. Don't have fear, have faith. As if walking by faith means that you don't bother God with your problems, just accept what happens. No, this would make a mockery out of what the Bible teaches you about being earnest and persevering in prayer.

God is not trying to bring you to the point of super power, as if you can just faith your way out of all the storms of life. And God is not trying to bring you to the point of super spirituality, where you act as if the sovereignty of God means that your prayers are just going through the motions, or that you can just sleepwalk your way through life.

Now the text is clear that they lacked faith. But it wasn't wrong to awaken Jesus. It was right to be concerned. But it was wrong to act as if he didn't care. At times, you might wonder if Jesus cares. That's the fear you have to face. The disciples weren't realizing that Jesus wasn't going to die until his work was done. And you need to realize that if you're living in the will of God, you're not going to die until your work is done. And part of that work of faith is to sleep to the glory of God. Just like Jesus did. Just like you and me, Jesus ate and drank and got tired, and slept. Think about it; God in

human flesh closed his eyes and went to sleep every day, for more than 30 years. God himself spent about one-third of his life sleeping. And it was no sin for Jesus to get tired or to sleep. It was human.

But Jesus didn't just sleep when everything was ok. Jesus was sleeping through a "great storm." You can see how tired he must have been, but also how trusting. What kind of peace in his soul to be able to sleep through a storm. You might even say, "No one ever slept like this man!"

You were designed to spend a third of your life sleeping. God wants you to sleep well by depending on him. The need for sleep is an ever-present reminder of your weakness and limitations. Godly sleep is an exercise of faith. When you lie down, close your eyes, and give yourself over to sleep, you make yourself vulnerable. Jesus fulfilled the words of King David in Psalm 4:8 when he wrote "*In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*" What does it say about the blessedness of your own sleep, that Jesus himself slept?

In Psalm 127:2 Solomon said, "*It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.*" God gives sleep as an expression of his love. Instead of seeing sleep as a waste of time and losing sleep to get ahead, see sleep it as it really is, a divine gift.

Yes, there are seasons of life where you need to rise early and go to bed late. But God doesn't want you to be superhuman, he wants you to recognize the limits of your humanity. It humbles you to lay down, close your eyes, and leave the world to him. You need to learn to quiet your mind, and use the means that God ordains, and leave the outcome to him. Do you go to bed in your worries as if God doesn't exist?

Sometimes Jesus slept to the glory of God, and sometimes he sacrificed sleep to the glory of God. Jesus was willing to embrace and enjoy sleep most of the time, and he was also willing to deny himself sleep, at the right time.

You see this when Jesus chose his apostles. Luke 6:12-13 says – *He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.* This was a big decision, and so he spent all night in prayer to his Father.

And you see that Jesus lost sleep again before his crucifixion in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus and his disciples were exhausted. They feel asleep, but he continued to pray, as he saw the horrors of what he would have to do for me and you. He struggled so hard he sweat drops of blood. And in that moment, Jesus was giving his life as the ultimate expression of the prayer that the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When the time came, Jesus was willing to deny himself God's good gift of sleep for something greater. Sleep wasn't his God. Jesus glorified his Father by his normal pattern of sleeping, as an act of faith, but when necessary, denying himself sleep, as an act of faith. There are times to receive God's gift and enjoy your sleep, and times to deny yourself sleep in dependence on God and in the service of love. Walking by faith instead of fear leads Christians to embrace sleep as normal and to deny sleep when needed.

You are not called to sacrifice your sleep to earn something, thinking that you are sanctifying its loss because it helps you meet some personal goal. It isn't a badge of honor that you don't sleep enough. In fact, it could be a badge of pride. Yes, sometimes you need to stay up and study, or work all night before the big event. But those events should be rare, not common. Sometimes love might call you to forgo sleep for the sake of others. Like your crying baby. This can be right. Sometimes you might have to go through seasons of less sleep. This can be necessary. Sometimes you're just in too much physical pain to get comfortable. This is the time to pray. Sometimes you might be praying all night about something important.

Sometimes God will wake you up in the middle of the night with a gripping thought. Not a constant worry, but to have you pray about something or someone else, or to meditate on some truth, or to write out something for

you to have or to share with others. But you don't just stay up every night worrying and waiting to hear from God. It's not your duty to deny yourself sleep. And in general, to deny yourself sleep is to deny God's design.

How much better would your life be if you would lay down your troubles to God and lay down your head to sleep? You can. It is a matter of faith. Sleeping to the glory of God means you are normally resting in God's care, and occasionally rising in care of others. Most times you will be out like a light. But sometimes, you'll be up all night. But that is so much better than being kept up every night by things that shouldn't.

Sleep is a gift from God, and an opportunity to glorify God, by embracing and enjoying it, or by sacrificing it for the sake of loving others. That's not a license to be a workaholic or a worrywart. That's a lesson to be more like Jesus. Jesus slept well, and he wants you to sleep well, too.

You're not called to solve the world's problems. And you need sleep even in your own problems. Sleeping is an act of trust and an acceptance of your limits. Sometimes it may seem like Jesus is sleeping on the job. But he never is. As Psalm 121:3 says, *"He who keeps you will not slumber."*

Maybe you used to say that old prayer as a child when you went to bed, "Now I lay me down to sleep..." Well, it is time to grow up in God, and start trusting him once again at the end of your day. The best way to end your day is with an act of faith. Learn to pray like this: "Heavenly Father, as my Lord Jesus did, I lay down, and I give myself to you. You are sovereign. I am not. I rest in your care and ask for your gift of sleep."

As we close, listen again to the words we read at the beginning, from Proverbs 3:21-24. *My son, do not lose sight of these – keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Amen.*