

The Theology of Sleep

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Date: 03 April 2022

[0 : 00] Proverbs chapter number 24. If you have a Fitbit tonight, you know you've stood up and sit down a lot. Steve and I are figuring out Sunday nights with the electives. But all of you will sleep better the night having stood up and sit down so many times.

And that is the goal of today's lesson, to look at a theology of sleep. I have a picture here from a coffee company. Maybe some of you would know what the coffee company is. But their saying is, life is short, stay awake for it.

Anybody know who this is? Caribou Coffee, okay? Life is short, stay awake for it. And so that's good marketing, right? They're saying, hey, if you drink our coffee, you'll get more out of life.

We're told to number our days. Life is a vapor. And so that's a pretty good thought. If I have coffee, I get more hours out of my day. More hours out of my day gives me more life. But even though it's a good marketing method, the question we've got to ask is, is it a good message?

Life is short, stay awake for it. And so Proverbs 24, 33, and 34. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth.

[1 : 06] And they want as an armed man. This is the third time as we've been going through Proverbs where sleep is addressed. As we've been going through Proverbs, we look at different topics.

And so sleep isn't one that we've addressed head on. We all want that type of sleep that Proverbs 3, 24 says, When thou layest down, thou shalt not be afraid. Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

When I think about that kind of sleep, I think of my friend Henry Penrod, who's doing so good. He's on the front row right now, okay? Many of you would know Henry. He was infamous for getting a good nap in church, okay?

He didn't pretend. Some of you pretend, not Henry. He came in, and he's like, nap time, see you later, all right? And that's why he grew so much, all right? He was well-rested during that time.

So we know there's that kind of sleep that we desire so much. But like I just read about, we know there's a danger to it. The verses I read repeated again in Proverbs 6, 10, and 11, almost verbatim.

[2 : 05] Then the Bible speaks of this laziness, brings on a deep sleep. And that's not speaking of the one that's just like a really good type of sleep that you need to get so much of. But it talks about the kind of sleep that will take you towards death.

Proverbs 19, 15, Many verses in Proverbs, even outside of it, Jesus wakes up the disciples on an occasion and said, Why could you not watch and pray with me?

You've fallen asleep. In Job, in Job 7, 4, When I lie down, I say, When shall I rise and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day.

The complete opposite of the kind of sleep that Henry got, the kind of sleep that maybe many of you get, where it said, I know that I was in bed for six or seven hours, but it doesn't feel like I have slept at all.

A tossing and turning. We give a good 25% of our life the sleep. We should probably get it right. Don't you think? If 25% of our life is given the sleep, we should try to know what we can know that the Bible informs about sleeping.

[3 : 11] I'm not going to tell you to sleep on your side. I'm not going to sleep on the back. I'm not going to tell you, I'm not going to sell you on the amazing pillow that that one guy sells. That's not where we're going here. But we're going to look at some of the things that the Bible says about sleep.

You get a couple things kind of addressed, because when you think about it, if you go through the passages looking at sleep, you're going to see that sleep often is used to speak about death. And it speaks in letting us know the reality of the resurrection.

Death referred to as sleep in 1 Kings 2.10. So David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. My life first for many years, Acts 13.36, for David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption.

But speaking of painting a picture of death as a believer, it was merely a temporal rest for the body until the resurrection. So when you're reading and you see the word sleep, you need to make sure, is this speaking of that literal sleep?

Am I using that word literal good enough for you, Stephen? Okay, Stephen doesn't like when people use literal too much, because they just literally use it all the time, all right? And that bothers him. So when you're reading about sleep, you want to know, is it talking about sleep at night, or are we talking about death?

[4 : 21] And so we see that in the Bible. And then it speaks about it in two ways. There's the sluggard sleep, the kind of sleep that is simply avoiding the good work that God has called us to do. When I was in Columbia, we found the sloth, and I got my picture made with the sloth.

And so I asked, one, could you send me a picture of the sloth? And he sent the picture of me asleep in the hammock. And I said, that's not right, man. Come on, where's the sloth? And he just kept sending me more pictures of me sleeping in the hammock.

And so I was in a slothful sleep. It's when there is a work to be done. Nahum 318, Thy shepherds slumber, O King Assyrian. Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust. Thy people scatter upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.

But the shepherds are sleeping because they're not gathering up the people. It's speaking about avoiding the work that you've been given to do. Or when you should be praying. When Jesus asks you to pray, Matthew 26, and you sleep, that is the sleep of a sluggard.

Sleep may be in the place of responsibilities. Jonah, when everybody else is afraid and running around, where is Jonah at? But he is in the ship, and he lay fast asleep. When we suffer significant trauma in our life, like losing a loved one, losing a job, we can retreat to sleep.

[5 : 32] But this is the kind of sleep that's simply shutting the door on the reality of life difficulties. Many of us in here have a strong hatred for drugs and for alcohol from having seen it hurt our families.

And while many of us would never, what we'd never do with alcohol, we might do with sleep. We seek to ignore the hurt and pain of our life instead of seeking God's comfort, healing, and redemption by faith through it.

Maybe many of you would be honest in here with me and say, I know when there was a time that my sleep was not for rest, but my sleep was to try to hide from something that I did not want to face.

And that is taking something that God had made and turning it into something that he didn't intend it to be. And so there's a danger when it's misused. That's the sleep of the sluggard. But then there's the sleep of peace, the one that demonstrates a complete trust in God and understanding that we are not him.

Jesus exhibits it. He sleeps on a ship, unlike Jonah, who was running from what he had. Jesus gets on there, finds the place that he is going to sleep, and he sleeps during the middle of the storm.

[6 : 37] The Bible tells us we can enjoy that. Ezekiel 34, 25, And I will make with them a covenant of peace and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Brother Chuck, if we ever have a camping ministry, that could be the verse for it right there, right? That they could sleep there in the woods. Last time we all went camping together, there's some crazy rednecks on the mountains down from us making noises.

But some of us slept in the woods, right? Even with crazy beasts down there. We just had a trust. We had a covenant of peace. And the Lord alone will bring this comfort to his people so that they can rest without anxiety or fear.

I laid me down and slept. I wake for the Lord sustained me. Psalm 3, 5. I laid me down and slept. Did you ever say you're now me, now, now me, now I lay me down to sleep?

All right. Did you ever say those as a kid? My cousin Keith, that was so cool. He was a few years older than me. Every time I'd stay at his house, we would say that prayer, and then we'd just go back and forth, naming everybody in our family and everything we knew until we fell asleep.

[7 : 43] We trust in the Lord to give us rest. Psalm 4, 8. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety. The Lord is the only one that could do that.

David many times had to rest when there was just so much going on, so many open cases, so many things that weren't settled. And he just said, Lord, I did what I could today.

I've honored you. And now I'm going to need you to give me rest. God uses restless nights to call us to him. Sometimes God shows his love for us, not just by giving us sleep, but sometimes he shows us that love by holding back that sleep.

Esther 6, we learn about this. Daniel 2 and 4. God used restless dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's own dreams of Daniel 7. David was led to call out to the Lord in repentance through his sleepless night.

In Psalm 6, my father made a profession of faith. After a restless night, he imagined, he was thinking about his children being in heaven and him being in hell, and he called the preacher in town, and so when you come over here, I need to talk to you.

[8 : 48] And he made a profession of faith. And so when you have these restless nights, here's a prescription for it. I'm not a doctor. I don't write prescriptions. I can give you some Bible verses. Here's my prescription for a restless night.

Psalm 119, 147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and I cried. Meaning that it was just so long, and I was just crying. It was like the morning was never going to come. You know, they say you shouldn't look at water boil.

It'll never boil. If you're staying up at night, and you're looking for the sun to come up, it's as if you're preventing it, because it's never going to come up. The night will just seem forever. But I prevented the dawn of the morning, and I cried.

I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. Hoping in the word, and meditating on the word. When God gives you a restless night, give it back to him, and say, God, I'm going to meditate on your word.

Charles Spurgeon, the funny story his wife wrote about, was he stayed up late one night, and he wasn't prepared for Sunday, and he did something that I would never do. He would not prepare a Sunday morning message until Saturday night.

[9 : 51] And one night, he was just really tired, and he told his wife, he says, I think her name was Susan, or Suzanne, and Suzanne Spurgeon, that sounds right. I'm going with it. He told Suzanne, he said, if I fall asleep, I won't be ready for the morning.

I need you to help me stay awake. But he was so sleepy, so I'm just going to take a little nap, and you wake me up in a little bit. Well, he goes to sleep, and in the middle of the night, he is just talking, and he's just going through the Bible passages, and he's explaining it, okay?

And she hears it, and she doesn't want to move and wake him up, so she just kind of remembers what he is saying. And the next morning, he wakes up, and he says, oh, no, you didn't wake me up. What am I going to do?

You know, there's a few thousand people over here that I got to go preach to. And she said, last night, you talked about the passage, and this was some of the things that you said, because you've been wrestling with it all day.

And I wanted to share that story with you, because as I answer here in a second, should we interpret dreams? And I most certainly believe that God would use in the night knowledge that you previously had that you might meditate and to consider.

[10 : 55] God is not giving you new revelation. He had already studied himself full that day, reading that passage, and he was wrestling with it. But he didn't get any new revelation in the night outside of God's Word, but as he thought about it.

So should we interpret dreams like they did of Joseph? And they said, the Bible is complete, having revealed everything we need to know from now until eternity. And we should compare any thought that we have awake or asleep to the Word of God.

My dad did not learn of the gospel through a dream, but my dad learned of the gospel by people sharing it with him throughout the years. But in the night, as he was going to bed, between sleep and being awake, a deep conviction had come upon his life, and he thought about it.

And so no, we're not giving a new revelation. We should be mindful of what we think about throughout the day. Galatians 6, 8, For he that soweth in the flesh shall reap of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth in the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

A faithful theology of sin alerts us that our dreams may be disclosing dark desires that abide in our unseen heart. If our dreams are continually bad, then we should consider Proverbs 4, 23, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

[12 : 12] Here would be a good bedtime routine. Brush your teeth. All right, I didn't have that one, but every mom in here wanted to make sure I said that. Okay, brush your teeth. And then, before you go to sleep, set your mind upon his word and prayer and fill your heart with truth.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

Next, cast your anxious cares, 1 Peter 5, 7, upon him, for he cares for you. And then pray to him and plead with him to give you the sleep that he promised in Psalm 127, 2.

It is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late to take eat of the bread of sorrow, for it so he giveth his beloved sleep. It is to ask him for it. God, I thank you for the day you've given me in the morning, but when you go to bed, say, God, I need the sleep, and I'm asking that you would give that to me.

We have sleep is not the goal. Trust in God is. Paul had some sleepless nights. That's what he says about he was in prison, he was in labors and watching, and he had many sleepless nights.

[13 : 16] And then Paul was obviously losing sleep for a purpose, but there is also a staying up that doesn't profit anything, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh, but in vain.

Jesus wakes up early in the morning, rising up great a while before the day, which just means before everybody else was getting up. So he chose to forego some sleep, but then later in the day he took a nap during the storm.

And so how much sleep is too much sleep? When should a person be sleeping, and how much do they need? And the answer to that question is not a number, but you need to recognize that it is a spiritual question.

The way that you handle sleep is a spiritual question. God has made us different, and we're in different seasons of life, but even our sleep patterns should be constantly submitted to him for review.

God, am I stewarding the gift of life that you've given me by being obedient to you with my sleep? Am I hiding from responsibility by sleep? That would be wrong. But am I trying to pretend that I'm not a mortal who was made for sleep?

[14 : 23] Then that would also be wrong as well. Here's some other reasons for a lack of sleep. Ignorance. We do not understand its value in our lives, all right? We've had kids that don't understand that, right?

Kids don't understand many times you need to go to bed because you've got to get up early tomorrow, and if you don't get enough sleep, then you won't be your best tomorrow. That same lesson we give to our kids is the same lesson us adults need to have as well when we think about sleep.

The Exxon Valdez, the Challenger Space Shuttle, the Metro North train tragedies in New York, they were all linked to sleep deprivation, some \$65 billion a year, they say, that go towards people performing their jobs and not being well rested when they do it.

A God who does not sleep creates us in a way in which we do. To reject its place in our lives is a rebel against his design for us. God gave us rest.

He made us in a way. He could have done it in any form or fashion. I'm glad that I'm not a hummingbird, right? I guess they sleep. Do the hummingbirds ever stop or are they always flying around? Anybody know in here for 5,000 points?

[15 : 30] Anybody know? Brother Frick will answer that next Sunday night. Do hummingbirds in the millennial kingdom, do they ever sleep? But I'm glad we're not in this perpetual motion, right?

That that isn't how we chose to do it but that we get a reset. Many times it is something we're seeking in the day that we do not feel like we have accomplished. Well, I got ahead of myself here.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is to go to sleep. That's one of my mom's favorite sayings. One of the most spiritual things you can do is to simply go to sleep. What did God tell Elijah to do? Go take a nap and get a snack, all right?

That's what he told a man dealing with great depression. It's a gift from God. He even commands it to his disciples after finding them. He told them in Mark 6, 31, he said, come apart into a desert place and rest a while.

And so one is an ignorance and not appreciating what it is, realizing it's part of God's design for you and then rebelling against that. The second one is just a lack of discipline. Even when we know the value of sleep, we often ignore it and it may come down to, as I was saying earlier, it's feeling like in the day that you haven't got enough in that day of what you need.

[16 : 40] Some of you, it may be, I haven't got enough productivity today and so because I haven't got it, I have to stay up later than I should because I need this feeling that I knocked something out so I have worth and value and I can sleep and that's a real shame because you're not going to find your value in that type of performance.

It will be short-lived. You can't do that and so you trust in him. God, you made the sun rise and you made the sun go down and you wanted every day to have a beginning and the end and I'm going to trust you with the limitations that you put in my life and then some of you in here may say you haven't had enough fun or enough pleasure, right?

I already know but when we go home tonight, there's no school tomorrow so the kids are going to say, how about 10 o'clock? How about 11 o'clock? How about midnight? Selah told me one of her favorite things about going to her grandmother's house.

She's like, I'll be sitting in Mimi's lap on the iPad and she'll say, oh Selah, I can't believe it. It's already midnight, all right? And Selah loves that, all right? She loves to know that she can get Mimi distracted and stay up later than she should or maybe it isn't midnight when Mimi says that and puts Selah to bed at 10 o'clock because Selah can't tell time, all right?

And so, but that just not enough time that we want to give. We want to soak up a little bit more and we need to make sure that what we're trying to get is not trying to defy the limitations God has given us.

[17 : 56] We need to trust God for a new day. Limitations 3, 22 and 23, it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassion fails not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.

That's what you need to say at the end of the day when you know you need to go to bed. You just need to say, God, your mercies are new tomorrow. The day is ended. I've done with it all that I can and God, I'm going to trust you and to say, God, I trust you for tomorrow.

I don't have to squeeze everything into this day. And then anxiety. We're not ready to cast our cares off so we hold on to them as we're told to do. You probably have heard the story of the troubled dream, the man that was a builder and a man, he ran late into the night and the man said, hey, I'll take you to my house.

I'll get you the check that you need. He rides with the builder to the house before the man comes in. He goes and he hangs a ribbon upon the tree and when he walks in, he sits down, he's lighthearted. He spends time with his kids and after the meal, he gets back in his truck with the guy and he says, what is that ribbon that you tied on the tree?

And he says, that's my trouble dream that every time before I go in to my wife and kids, I tie up my trouble from work out here on the tree and I'll say that will be waiting for me tomorrow. We need that in life.

[19 : 04] Before we go to bed, we say, God, I'm casting these cares upon you. I know that I have responsibilities tomorrow but I can't handle those and sleep. God, I want to hand this to you. When you wake up the next day, you're going to know that many of the things he handed to you, he's not handing back to you or that the things that you handed to him in the night, when he hands it back to you in the morning, it looks different.

It feels different. Another one, this is just me meddling, caffeine, screens, and exercise, all right? Everything, there's a season, a time, to every purpose under the heaven.

A lack of exercise in my life causes me not to sleep the way that I should. Too much caffeine or too much screen time and all of those things keep you from doing that. You'd say, I want to give my day to the Lord.

Well, you can't give your day to the Lord if you didn't give your night to the Lord and if these things are keeping you from getting a good rest, you're not ready. Our hope isn't in a perfect eight hours of sleep but in a faithful God whom we can trust to sustain us the next day.

And so, maybe you don't get those eight hours of sleep but you say, God, I'm going to trust you in the night that I'm going to get the sleep that you'd have for me and I'm going to trust that what you give for me will sustain me. And so, what we can learn from our need to sleep that God created you to require sleep.

[20 : 15] Life is too short to sleep all the time but life is also too short to not sleep more than the amount that you're supposed to. Life is too short for you to be running the candle on both ends and to not be your best.

Sleep should keep us humble. Every time we go to bed we humbly admit again that the world will be fine without us for a while. You know this world still spins while you're sleeping? You know that the trees still grow, the birds still sing and do all the things that they're going to do and so going to sleep at night reminds you that I'm not the one keeping this thing going.

Psalm 121.4 Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither sleep neither slumber nor sleep. He's the one that keeps Israel and that's what he told them they could rest. Sleep is a gift from God as we have read and so God's saturated view of life we should have.

If a house is going to be built God builds it. If the city is going to be watched God is watching it. If you're going to sleep then it is a gift from God. But in the same verses in Psalm 127 it says that we also work and that we also build.

So God builds and we build. He watches and we watch. God gives and we receive. God explains we are to work and to watch. And then he says it is vain for you to rise up early to sleep to sit up late to eat the bread of sorrow for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

[21 : 34] As we close here tonight I want to those that were with us here this morning that understanding that it's the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom he is the shepherd he is the king and he is our father but the trust that we have that cast out fear comes in the fact that he loves us.

Did you see who he gives the sleep to? He could have chose any words that he wanted to but he said beloved we may get up early we stay up late but we will not do it with anxious or toil or sorrow.

If we have to get up early it's not because we believe that everything relies on us and if we stay up late it isn't because we believe everything relies upon us but we know that we are his beloved.

Why? We acknowledge that God is the decisive worker and why? We embrace that we are loved that we are the beloved. One of the missionaries this week was telling me about how difficult that it is at times to sleep at a guest they'll go to a church and they may stay with the missionary I mean they may stay with the pastor and it's kind of hard I can imagine you'd stay there you just never feel like you can just rest the way that you need to because you just don't know that person well enough but if you're staying with a family member you can rest right?

Because that relationship has been established you can go to sleep tonight knowing that the creator and the one that watches over you that you are his beloved that he loves you and that he wants to give you rest that he wants to give that to you as a gift fear not little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom and in doing that he wants to give you the gift of rest so sleep in peace tonight God is bigger than anything you will face tomorrow and he loves you and you are his beloved and so you should sleep like it throughout the day the anxieties that you have not knowing that you are his beloved and that he loves you that worry that takes the place of worship in your life is going to affect your day your sleep could be affected if you are not reminded of the fact that he is the decisive worker in this world and that I am his beloved and so I encourage you sleep in peace tonight knowing that God is bigger than anything that you will face tomorrow that he loves you you are his beloved and you should sleep like it

[23 : 50] I am willing to pray now don't go to sleep at this time alright it is going to be awkward if you do we can carry Henry out of here but some of you would just have to stay until you wake up alright can't carry out of here but when you talk to your kids tonight and when you go to bed do it as unto the Lord because it is a gift he has given us and let's not rebel against his design of the way he has made us I am going to pray and then we will be dismissed but the men will have a men's meeting in here the men from the elective will come over here the first Sunday night of the month we always have a men's meeting Heavenly Father thank you for the gift of sleep thank you for making it clear in scripture that we should not be anxious that we should not have regret that we should not be trying to go past our limitations but you have built our bodies with a limitation so we will go to bed tonight Lord trusting that the sleep is a gift from you and that we will be good stewards of the body in which you have given us and we want you to be honored Lord not in just the way we live our days but in the way that we would even spend our nights and sleep and rest in Jesus name I pray

Amen