

I am going to share with you an embarrassing moment with you. Actually, this has happened to me a handful of times. At bedtime, while reading to my kids, drowsiness simply overpowered my consciousness and I fell asleep. Literally, **in mid-sentence, my eyes closed, and my mouth stopped talking** and I drifted into a sleep state. I can remember when I was a child, my family and me poking fun at my grandmother for her ability to fall asleep sitting up straight while watching TV. And now, long before I am a grandparent, I find myself being the object of a similar joke. I also remember, while I was driving late at night when I was about 17, falling asleep for enough time to drift off the road, waking up in time to violently swerve back onto the road. This is not narcolepsy, which is a disorder that causes one to suddenly fall asleep at seemingly random times; this is simply pure fatigue. When we don't get enough sleep, **our mind takes control of the situation and shuts down**, attempting to get the rest it needs.

And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40-41)

I think of this account often and tend to easily find sympathy for the disciples. Often, I will read a story in the scripture of some admonishment or a bad example, and I'll say to myself, "wow, how could they be so stupid? I would never do that!" But, in this case, I can totally empathize, and I dread the possibility that Messiah might ask me to stay awake for Him. To some extent, **our conscious effort can over-ride the brain's need for sleep** and we can stay awake and continue to function. But, both short-term and long-term sleep deprivation is a dangerous thing and is harmful to our health. Our bodies were designed to sleep about a third of our time alive. Science has studied this biological need for decades but we are still asking many questions about it. As is the case with most of creation, **every time we learn one thing, we also learn that there are two more things we don't know!**

Scientists have known for a long time that during sleep, the brain is very active. But they have fairly recently discovered that during sleep, the space between the neurons in the brain increases and allows the fluid in the brain to flow through. This flow is how the brain flushes out the waste produced by the cells, which is toxic. If this process is shortened repeatedly (by not getting enough sleep,) then the **toxins build up in our brain**. The theory is, that this build-up could be the cause of dementia and other similar diseases. And I wasn't surprised to also learn that due to our culture of productivity, profit, and busyness, ideas are being explored to work around this natural mechanism and "hack the system." Rather than teaching that we need more sleep, (much like how we were taught that smoking is bad) there seems to be a lot of effort spent toward figuring out a way to flush those toxins faster, with less sleep, so that we can be more productive. There is one more example of mankind deviating from God's intent.

I am so impressed with God's innovative creation... When we sleep, we find a safe and comfortable place to do it. Have you ever seen fish sleep in an aquarium? The only movement you can see in a sleeping fish is in their gills, to provide them with oxygen. But whales, dolphins, and other marine mammals need to breathe air. They are not able to find a safe and comfortable place to sleep. So, they take turns sleeping! Actually, **their brain takes turns sleeping**. They use something called "unihemispheric slow-wave sleep." Their brains are split into halves, just like ours, but their halves are near copies of one another. They use one half of their brain to swim around and breathe while the other half sleeps! Fun fact.

I mentioned that our conscious effort can somewhat override the need for sleep. And sometimes an override can come from external forces. If someone was in a dangerous situation, like a war zone, I think it is safe to

imagine that their brain would stay awake. But with our God, our faith in His Way, and His love for us, **we can literally rest in any situation**. Wait, surely God would not allow us to sleep peacefully when our life is in danger. That's preposterous. Or is it?

Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:36-40)

When we sleep, we are most vulnerable. Look at what happened to Samson (Judges16,) or what could have happened to Saul, were David not so righteous concerning God's ordination (1Samuel26.) This is why we humans station a night watch, so others can sleep safely. Well, Messiah, the man, was no different. He was most vulnerable on that cushion, **subject to perilous drowning**. He was able to sleep through such danger because he had a "night watchman" looking out for Him. His father (same as mine and yours, by the way...) is a sleepless watchman.

*I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, **He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep**. The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever. (Psalms 121)*

I have to wonder about the origin of our need for sleep. Adam slept when God took his rib out to make Eve (talk about being vulnerable!) Sleep is not really mentioned again until after the flood. Around that time, God seems to have changed a lot of things – He shortened man's life to 120 yrs. (Gen 6) and in Gen9:12, He added the rainbow (changing physics?) **Noah gets drunk and sleeps**. (Gen9:21) Could it be that in Eden, or before the flood, humans did not need to sleep? Here is why I ask this:

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; (Revelation 21:23-25)

When God returns, He will restore things from this broken world to the way He intended them to be, and this description of the new Jerusalem is a picture of that. If the new Kingdom has no night, will we have no sleep? Surely, the physical need for sleep, (flushing our brains, etc.) will go away. But I also think that **our need for cycles will go away** as well. The cycle of light and dark sometimes resembles my cycle of committing sin and repenting, of seeking the praise of men and the praise of God, of following my own heart and the heart of God... etc. I sincerely hope that the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21) is the elimination of these cycles and that we can enter into His rest permanently!

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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