

6 Reasons to Honor Thy Slumber

Guess what. Sleep is important. We've heard those words over and over again, but other than giving us a little more pep in our step, what's the big deal about sleep, anyway?

Are seven to nine hours of sleep really necessary? After all, there's so much to do every day and so little time! Isn't sleep deprivation why we have coffee in the morning and iced tea at lunch? We can sleep when we're dead, right? (Wrong. Read Revelation 21:3 and Revelation 22:5 if you think we'll just be kicking back on TempurPedic cloud mattresses in heaven.)

In case you've put "sufficient sleep" at the end of your priority list, here are six reasons given by the Harvard Women's Health Watch explaining why you should honor thy slumber:

1. Learning and memory. Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory through a process called *memory consolidation*. In studies, people who'd slept after learning a task did better on tests later.

2. Metabolism and weight. Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain by affecting the way our bodies process and store carbohydrates and by altering levels of hormones that affect our appetite.

3. Safety. Sleep debt contributes to a greater tendency to fall asleep during the daytime. These lapses may cause falls and mistakes such as medical errors, air traffic mishaps and road accidents.

4. Mood. Sleep loss may result in irritability, impatience, inability to concentrate and moodiness. Too little sleep can

also leave you too tired to do the things you like to do.

5. Cardiovascular health. Serious sleep disorders have been linked to hypertension, increased stress hormone levels and irregular heartbeat.

6. Disease. Sleep deprivation alters immune function, including the activity of the body's killer cells. Keeping up with sleep may also help fight cancer.

Perhaps you can relate to one or more of these statistics: A 2012 Centers for Disease Control study found that 40 million workers (30 percent of American adults) sleep fewer than six hours a day. In a separate study, 49.2 million people cited "concentrating on things" as the foremost reason why they experienced so much difficulty sleeping.

Worry, studies show, is one of the primary distractions keeping Americans up at night. Fears about tomorrow, anxiety about 10 years from now, regrets about yesterday or what we just ate for dinner—worrisome thoughts will crawl onto our pillowcases and try whispering into our ears throughout our lives. But thankfully, the Bible reveals how we can rid ourselves of these wretched bed bugs and welcome back our dreams.

Not long ago I was lying in bed, unable to sleep because I was, well, "concentrating on things." I was thinking of my family and how much I loved them, when out of the shadows, the notorious sleep-stealers, Dread and Fear, crept into my mind and commenced their assault on my peace.

I began to worry about everything, from my family's health to how I could overhaul each of our diets to be as organic and toxin-free as possible. I began to imagine what would happen if I suddenly lost one of them, as I did my father a few years ago. Selfishly, I wanted to do everything I could to help them remain well so I wouldn't have to endure the grief and pain of an untimely death ever again. And selfishly, I thought I could

extend their lives by singlehandedly changing the way they ate and exercised.

Then I thought about this verse describing Peter in prison:

“The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate” (Acts 12:6, NLT).

James, the brother of John, had just been slain with the sword, and his execution so pleased the people that King Herod Agrippa promptly had Peter arrested as well and placed under the watch of 16 armed guards. (Sixteen guards seems a bit excessive to me!)

One profound word describes Peter the night before the trial that could result in his violent death: *asleep*—a word that, in Greek, could also be translated as “be dead.” Here, Peter is at the mercy of four squads of Roman soldiers, knowing that the dawn will likely usher in his final hours on earth, and he’s sleeping like a rock—he’s so calm that he appears dead!

But he isn’t dead. He’s slumbering soundly in a cradle of supernatural peace because he knows that His Father is sovereign, that He has a God-glorifying plan for Peter and that He’s taking care of him until the end, whenever He ordains that end to be.

When the angel arrived to free Peter from prison, he had to strike Peter on the side to wake him. That is the kind of shatterproof peace I pine for. That is the kind of unbreakable confidence I desire. That is the kind of incomprehensible faith God yearns for us to end our days with as we soak up His goodness and doze off into our dreams.

Yes, there are family feuds, work worries, predators, pathogens and a thousand other dangers that can upset our peace and disrupt our joy in a minute. But there is only *one* almighty God who is infinitely more powerful than any

diagnosis, addiction, weapon or prison cell. And He loved you enough to send His only Son to shed His sinless blood for you.

Let Him take full control of your situation and put your fears to rest. Sleep soundly, and listen for the footsteps of angels as the Lord displays His faithfulness.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness and her latest book, Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness. Her popular website can be found at [www.dianataylor.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.