

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had trouble sleeping at night? If you have, you aren't alone, according to the *Merck Medical Manual*, 50 percent of Americans struggle with occasional insomnia. And about 40 million Americans suffer from chronic insomnia.

Our bodies need sleep to recharge, and when we don't sleep we accumulate a dangerous burden of sleep deficit. Having a good night's sleep is critical for our mental and emotional well-being as well. In 1961 the #1 selling record in America was the song "Tossin' and Turnin'" by Bobby Lewis. (#2 was "Big Bad John" by Jimmy Dean) Bobby Lewis described an experience many of us have shared when we can't sleep at night:

I couldn't sleep at all last night
Got to thinkin' of you
Baby things weren't right
Well I was tossin' and turnin'
Turnin' and tossin'
a-tossin' and turnin' all night

I kicked the blankets on the floor
Turned my pillow upside down
I never never did before
'cause I was tossin' and turnin'
Turnin' and tossin'
a-tossin' and turnin' all night

Jumped out of bed
Turned on the light
I pulled down the shade
Went to the kitchen for a bite
Rolled up the shade
Turned off the light
I jumped back into bed
It was the middle of the night.

Most of us can relate to a sleepless night like that. Did you hear about the dyslexic agnostic who was suffering from insomnia? He stayed awake all night wondering if there really was a dog...

Job was a man who lived about 4,000 years ago in a place called Uz. He wasn't the wizard of Uz, because he didn't have any magical powers to prevent the trouble that came into his life. Satan told God that if Job suffered, he would curse God. To prove his allegation, Satan attacked Job with more suffering than most of us will ever see in a lifetime. Job lost his fortune, he lost his family, he lost his fitness, he lost face before his friends, but he didn't lose his faith. But during his time of testing, he did suffer from the insomnia of despair. If you've ever lost a night's sleep worrying about something, maybe there's something you can learn from this message. We're going to consider the reasons for insomnia and then we're going to talk about

the remedy for insomnia.

I. THE REASONS FOR INSOMNIA (Job 7:1-6)

Job 7:1-6: "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope."

Can you relate to that? Have you ever spent such a restless night that you look at the clock and it says 3:15, then you roll over and think about twenty minutes have passed, only to glance again and see that it's STILL 3:15? Job lay awake at night tossing and turning. When you understand the depth of his loss and suffering, you can understand WHY sleep wouldn't come. In his comments, he reveals four REASONS for his insomnia. Four thousand years later, people are still losing sleep for these same reasons:

(1) Life is hard: I can't turn off my mind!

In verse 1 Job complains, "Does not man have hard service on earth?" That observation is still around. It's like the bumper sticker I saw recently that said: LIFE IS HARD; THEN YOU DIE.

One hundred years ago, Americans got an average of 10 hours sleep a night. Today the average is closer to 7 hours a night. We are suffering from all kinds of health issues because we aren't getting enough sleep. Sometimes when you try to sleep, your mind just won't turn off. Women are 10 percent more likely to suffer from insomnia than men. According to the *Merck Medical Manual* there are several types of insomnia. Difficulty falling asleep, called sleep-onset insomnia, often occurs when people cannot let their minds relax and they continue to think and worry. Difficulty staying asleep, called sleep maintenance insomnia, is more common among older people than among younger people. People with this type of insomnia fall asleep normally but wake up several hours later and cannot fall asleep again easily. Sometimes they drift in and out of a restless, unsatisfactory sleep. Early morning awakening, another type of insomnia, may be a sign of depression in people of any age.

Someone said that the human brain is an amazing instrument. It starts working the moment you are born and doesn't stop working until you stand up in front of a crowd to speak. But truthfully, your mind doesn't stop—even when you're asleep, your mind is working—that's why we have dreams. Wouldn't it be great if you could find an "ON/OFF switch" in your brain? Then when you got ready to sleep you could just flip the switch?

(2) Life is boring: I can't get out of a rut!

In verse 2 Job said, "Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility..."

Job compares his life to that of a slave who goes to work and does the same thing day after day. He longs for the day to be over. His life has degenerated into a boring rut.

In our Men's Fraternity meetings, I've been leading our men to try to understand what it means to be masculine. A few weeks ago I quoted Psychologist Rollo May who wrote: "The clearest picture of an empty life is the man who gets up at the same hour every weekday morning, goes to work, performs the same tasks at the office, lunches at the same places, leaves the same tip for the waitress, comes home and watches the same TV shows each night; He spends a two week vacation at the same place every summer which he does not enjoy. He goes to church but does not really know why he goes, and moves through a routine, mechanical existence year after year until he finally retires at age 65 and very soon thereafter dies of heart failure, possibly brought on by repressed anger. Though I always suspect he died from boredom."

You may be in a vocational rut, or a financial rut—digging yourself a deeper rut. You may be in a spiritual rut. You just show up at church and expect to get some kind of spiritual booster shot to carry you through the week. Remember, a rut is nothing but a grave with both ends kicked out.

(3) Life is fragile: I can't ignore my pain!

In verse 5 Job said, "My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering." Satan attacked Job's health. He covered his skin with boils and open, oozing sores. Job couldn't sleep because he simply couldn't get comfortable at night. As you get older, you realize how fragile your health is. Someone said, "Life is fragile, handle with prayer."

Some of you may be suffering from some kind of physical ailment that makes it difficult for you to sleep at night. Those of us who struggle with chronic back pain know what it is to try to find a sleep position that seems to cause the least amount of back pain. That's another cause of sleeplessness.

(4) Life is frustrating: I can't stop worrying!

In verse 6 Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope." He had already spoken about months of futility, and now he compares his days to a weaver's shuttle. In Bible times, cloth was made by stretching threads on a lengthwise on a wooden loom. The lengthwise threads were called the warp. Then a weaver loaded a long wooden pole with threads (called the weft). This piece of wood was called a shuttle and accomplished weavers could interlace the threads with great speed. The shuttle went back and forth making a "clack, clack, clack" noise.

Job was speaking of the frustration of life. He was saying, "That's all my life is—noise and motion." He was referring to the brevity of life. I remember visiting a man in his nineties who was living in a nursing home. He was in poor health physically, but his mind was sharp. He made a statement about life that I've never forgotten. He said, "The years rush by but the days drag by."

Worry and anxiety will keep you awake at night. Anxiety is the gnawing dread in your gut that something bad may happen. In Job 30:27, Job said, "The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me."

So what can you do when you suffer from the insomnia of anxiety? Let's talk about:

II. THE REMEDY FOR INSOMNIA (JOB 7:17-20)

We've all heard the expression "sleep like a baby." And it is wonderful to watch a baby snoozing so peacefully. But it has been said whoever who uses the expression "sleeps like a baby" doesn't have one. Last January, OU Coach Bob Stoops was asked how he slept on the night after USC pounded OU in the Orange Bowl. He said, "I slept like a baby. I'd sleep a few minutes, wake up and cry; sleep a few more minutes; wake up and cry..."

Job wasn't sleeping, but like a baby, he was crying out to God. He said his eyes were constantly red from weeping. Job said to God in Job 7:17-20: "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?"

What do you do when you can't sleep? There are all kinds of sleep aids out there. Some people try pills. Some people try alcohol. Some people try sleep machines that make white noise, or the sounds of surf breaking on the sea. Cindy and I bought one of those sound machines a few years ago. It was supposed to reproduce the sound of rain falling, but instead, it sounded exactly like bacon frying in a frying pan, which made both of us want to get up and eat—so we never use it! If some of you have trouble sleeping, you might want to get some videos of me preaching, because it seems to work on Sunday mornings for quite a few people!

Actually, I've found that the older I get, the less sleep I get. Most nights I'm in bed before 11:00, and I wake up around 5:00 a.m. But there are some nights when I wake up and look over at the digital clock and see that it's around 3:00—too early to get up. There are two things I do to help me go back to sleep. These are the same things Job did when he was fighting insomnia. I use that time to pray, and to mentally recite Bible verses. Those are the two remedies for insomnia that I want to discuss.

(1) Speak to God honestly

If you think Job endured his suffering silently and patiently, think again. We speak of the "patience of Job." But truthfully, he didn't demonstrate much patience at the beginning. At this stage, he complained bitterly to God. In verse 11 he said, "I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." Job later *became* a patient man because tribulation produces patience. In the middle of the night when he couldn't sleep, Job uttered some strong complaints to the Lord. You need to know that you can speak honestly to God. You aren't going to surprise Him or even offend Him. So when you're struggling to sleep at night, express your true feelings in prayer to the Lord.

But as you express your deepest feelings to God, don't forget to thank Him and praise Him as well. There's a one-sentence prayer David prayed in Psalm 4 that you could call the "sleep soundly prayer." It says, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8) You ought to write that prayer down and memorize it. When you find yourself afraid or worrying, just keep repeating that prayer to God.

When most of us were kids we learned a little bedside prayer that said, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake. I pray the Lord my soul to take." I've always been a little troubled by that prayer. It plants the scary idea into the mind of a child that they could die while they're sleeping—that's not a very comforting thought!

I recently read a revised expanded version of the prayer that focuses more on God's care throughout the night and on waking up the next morning. It says: "Now I lay me down to sleep. My faith in God, it runs so deep. That if I should die, before I wake, I trust my Lord my soul to take. Until that time, till death does come, He'll wake me with the morning sun. The birds will sing, and I will cheer, That God is good, and I'm still here!" Amen!

So, if you find yourself unable to sleep, try praying. Talk to God honestly. Pray that verse from Psalm 4. Pray for your family members and friends. Pray for your nation and your President. When I pray in bed, I usually fall asleep before I can pray for everyone I can mention.

(2) Listen to God intently

In the last chapters of Job, God is going to speak clearly to Job, and Job paid close attention to what God was saying. Instead of tossing and turning in your bed at night, when you can't sleep, listen to God's voice. He may speak into your spirit with a still small voice, like He did to Elijah in the cave. But God speaks most often and most clearly through His Word, the Bible.

When I have trouble sleeping at night, I will often lie there and begin to silently quote as many scriptures as I can recall. I usually start by quoting Isaiah 26:3 that says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you." Then I go with a slow recollection of the 23rd Psalm emphasizing the personal pronouns, and trying to envision the settings. "The Lord is MY shepherd, I shall not want. He makes ME lie down in green pastures, He leads ME beside the still waters." Sometimes I don't even make it to the last verse before I'm asleep! The Word of God has a calming effect on God's children.

You may be thinking, "I wish God would speak to me!" He already has. He has made precious and certain promises to you in His Word. God is speaking, are you listening? Are you reading and claiming the promises of His Word? For instance, consider the four reasons for insomnia Job gave. If you have some of the same things keeping you awake, consider what God is saying to you.

When life is hard, Jesus says: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30) Because life is hard, we often become weary and heavy laden. A yoke was a harness two oxen could share together to pull a load. When you

accept the yoke of Jesus, His strength is so great, the yoke becomes easy and the burden of life becomes light. You can't deal with all the demands life throws your way without having the strength of Christ in your life.

When you're in a rut, Jesus says: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!" (John 8:36) Jesus can set you free from the penalty of sin, but He also sets you free from the boredom of life. For someone who doesn't know Christ, this life is all there is. But for those of us who follow Jesus, we're part of a great adventure that starts here and will continue for all eternity. When you know Jesus, and you have been set free, you can wake up every morning with a sense of excitement and purpose for your life. Jesus sets you free from living in a rut.

When you're in pain, God says: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 12:9) The Apostle Paul had some kind of physical problem he called "a thorn in my flesh." He identified it as "a messenger of Satan to torment him." He asked the Lord to remove this thorn in the flesh, but God didn't take away the pain. Instead God promised that His grace would sustain him through the pain. Of course, when you're hurting, you want God to take away the pain. He may heal you, or He may assure you that His love, mercy, and grace will be powerful enough to carry you through your suffering.

When you worry, the Bible says: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (I Peter 5:7) One of my favorite stories is about the chronic worrier. He made everybody at work miserable because he was always frowning, moaning and groaning about the worst that could happen. But one day, he came to work with a smile on his face and a spring in his step. He started talking positively as if he didn't have a care in the world. One of his coworkers noticed the change. He said, "Man, what's different about you? You used to worry about everything, and now you act as if you don't have a care in the world." The former worry-wart said, "I discovered the best way to get rid of worry. I have hired a man who does all my worrying for me. That's all he does." The coworker said, "That sounds great. How much do you have to pay him to worry for you?" The man said, "I pay him \$10,000 a month." His coworker said, "But you don't make that much money. How are you going to pay for him?" The worrywart said, "That's not my worry, it's his!"

Wouldn't it be great if you could find someone who would take all your worries away? You do. The Bible says we can cast all our cares on the Lord. The Bible says in Psalm 121:4 that "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." If you find yourself unable to sleep because you're worrying about something, the Lord says to you, "There's no sense in both of us staying awake about this. I'm not going to be sleeping tonight, why don't you just give me your cares, and you go on to sleep."

CONCLUSION

One of my favorite episodes from the life of Jesus is when He and His disciples were in a boat at night, crossing the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 8:24 describes the scene: "A furious storm came up on the lake so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping." Did you catch that? While the winds howled and lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled, Jesus slept. The disciples were terrified by the storm so they woke Jesus up and said, "Lord, save us! We're

going to drown!" Jesus got up and said, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid." Then he rebuked the storm and said, "Peace, be still." And the Bible says that immediately it was completely calm.

Since I'm serving spiritual food to you, let me give you the takeout order now. It's what you can take out with you when you leave. First, Jesus because Jesus is in your boat, in your life, it doesn't mean you won't encounter storms. Second, if Jesus is in your boat, you shouldn't fear or worry about the storms of life—if He can sleep through them, you can survive them, too.

Finally, in the midst of the darkest nights and fiercest storms, Jesus can speak peace into your stormy soul. Sometimes He calms the storms, but most often He calms the hearts of those in the storm.

So if your life is full of the kind of anxiety and pain that is causing you to lose sleep at night, surrender your heart to the One who can give you the kind of inner tranquility to sleep through the worst storms of life!

OUTLINE

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- (1) Life is hard: I can't turn off my mind!
- (2) Life is boring: I can't get out of a rut!
- (3) Life is fragile: I can't ignore my pain!
- (4) Life is frustrating: I can't stop worrying!

II. THE REMEDY FOR INSOMNIA (JOB 7:17-20)

- (1) Speak to God honestly
"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." *Psalm 4:8*
- (2) Listen to God intently

When life is hard: Jesus is your strength
When you're in a rut: Jesus sets you free
When you're in pain: God's grace will sustain you
When you worry: Cast all your cares on God



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes