

Psalm 4:8

I hope this sermon helps you sleep. Tonight.

Sleep is one of God's great gifts to you and me.

Here are some of the things God does for us in sleep.

God gives us the gift of rest.

We wake up after a really good sleep and somehow, even though we have not eaten, we have more energy than we did when we went to bed.

God heals our wounds as we sleep. Somehow, the healing process for cuts and scrapes and bruises picks up speed and works better when we are sleeping.

God uses sleep to boost our immune systems. Our bodies recover from flus and colds best when we go to bed and stay there. We know this from our experience. Scientists have done white blood cell counts on people before and after sleep, and on those who get good sleep and those who don't. Our immune systems are stronger when we get enough sleep.

God uses sleep to help us remember and learn new things. If we do not get enough sleep we will have a harder time at school and at work.

Did you know that sleep is something nearly every creature needs? Even fruit flies sleep. How long animals sleep has a lot to do with how big they are and how fast they process food. Rats sleep for up to 14 hours a day. Elephants and

giraffes will sleep only 3–4 hours per day. Some birds are able to sleep with half of their brain, while the other half is still awake.

Baby dolphins and whales do not sleep at all during the first month of life because it is not safe to do so.

The amount of sleep **we** need varies depending on our age.

Newborn up to 18 hours a day.

1–12 months 14–18 hours

1–3 years 12–15 hours

3–5 years 11–13 hours

5–12 years 9–11 hours

Adolescents 9–10 hours

Adults, including elderly 7–8 (+) hours

Pregnant women 8 (+) hours

(I didn't know a lot of this before, but I learned it on the internet)

Scientists love to study sleep. They don't know why it is necessary though. Why can't everything happen just as well by lying down somewhere quietly? They don't know. God made us that way. I wonder if God's restoring of us while we sleep is a dress rehearsal. The apostle Paul promises that even when we close our eyes in the sleep of death, we will not sleep forever, but we will be changed. We will be restored, resurrected, our bodies will be new and strong and wonderful like Jesus' body after his resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15) So maybe all of our sleeping is a dress rehearsal for the day when God wakes his whole creation to new life.

When we don't get enough sleep, our waking life is harder.

We are more likely to be or become depressed and to have trouble in relationships. We are dangerous when driving or operating heavy equipment if we have not had enough sleep.

Going without sleep because baby has day and night mixed up can be one of the toughest things about being new parents. Again, scientists have done experiments on rats with sleep deprivation. Ultimately, without sleep the rat dies. Not allowing someone to sleep is a form of torture.

There are some things we can do to co-operate with the way God has created us and let him give us what he wants to give.

1. Establish a regular bed and wake time – (pretty much impossible for shift workers)
2. Avoid nicotine altogether and avoid caffeine close to bedtime
3. Avoid alcohol
4. Exercise regularly (but complete the workout at least 3 hours before bedtime) (after a late hockey game, it is really hard to get to sleep)
5. Establish a consistent relaxing “wind-down” bedtime routine – take the time to bring the stuff of your day, especially the unfinished business to God in prayer
6. Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet and comfortable – (the ‘bat cave’ at our house)
7. Discuss the appropriate way to take any sleep aid with a healthcare professional

Sometimes we cannot sleep because of what is going on in our hearts. Which brings us to Psalm 4. Psalm 4 ends with this amazing, warm and comforting verse. "I will lie down and sleep in peace, because you O Lord, make me dwell in safety".

But it takes David a bit to get there. David's thoughts are swirling, his head is racing. He can't sleep.

Did you notice that he starts with a pre-prayer. Sort of a prayer before his prayer. "Lord, hear me when I call to you". He is not in a confident place as he begins.

Then in verse 3 he says, "the Lord will hear when I call to him". It sounds like he is talking to himself, like he needs to psych himself up and convince himself that God really cares, that God really is interested in him, that God really will bring him relief in his distress.

Have you ever been in a place like that?

It sounds like people have been making fun of David for trusting God and now he's even starting to question. They've turned his glory, his confidence into shame.

So how does David get to verse 8? He remembers some words. He has heard them at the end of just about every church service he ever went to. "The

Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and give you peace”.

You know how good that blessing feels.

Well David does something that we can do too on those nights when we are too restless or upset to sleep. He takes that blessing and turns it into his prayer.

“Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord”.

It is the turning point in the psalm. David remembers that no matter what is going on around him, no matter what unfinished business there is at work or in his family, the Lord is watching over him, the light of the Lord’s face is the night light that comforts David.

Whatever is bothering David is still out there. And in the morning he will have to get up and face the people who laugh at him for trusting. Nothing really is different. But everything is. He has remembered again that the Lord is watching over him. The Lord who never slumbers nor sleeps.

The tension drains from his body, his breathing slows down and as he drifts off he says, “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone O Lord make me dwell in safety”.

May the Lord be gracious to you. May the Lord be gracious to me. And all God’s people said, Amen.