



# CREATOR

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## WHEN CREATION SLEEPS...

*I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone,  
O LORD, make me dwell in safety. Psalm 4:8*

My dearest friend,

When I was very, very young, my parents  
taught me this bedtime prayer:

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.

As a tot, my life rested in the palm of God's hand. Forty-five years later, nothing has changed! Like everyone else in this troubled world, I surrender myself to sleep each night. I am totally dependent upon Jesus, my Creator. Christ Jesus—He protects me when I dream—He protects us all. From the greatest, richest, and most powerful person on earth to the helpless infant, we are each



sustained by the Lord's gentle touch.

I lie down and sleep; I wake again,  
because the LORD sustains me (Psalm 3:5).

All creatures sleep, some more than others. Did you know, for instance, that a cat spends twice as much time asleep than it does awake? Or that a horse sleeps only three to four hours each day? Sleep, whether brief or lengthy, places us at some risk, though. We are vulnerable to attack from others, yet God protects us (Psalm 4:8). *Jesus designed every living thing to depend on Him in this way.* Sleep is a natural expression of praise toward its Creator. When the eyes of a child or a hummingbird or a tiny frog close to rest, they **bow in worship** before God their Maker.

But what is sleep, and do all creatures rest in exactly the same way? Let's consider my dog, Annika. She lies down in a familiar spot at night. Her muscles relax, her breathing slows, and her eyes stay closed while she is resting. During this time, Annika is much less aware of the activity around her than when she's awake. This is the typical pattern of sleep for most animals, and people too.

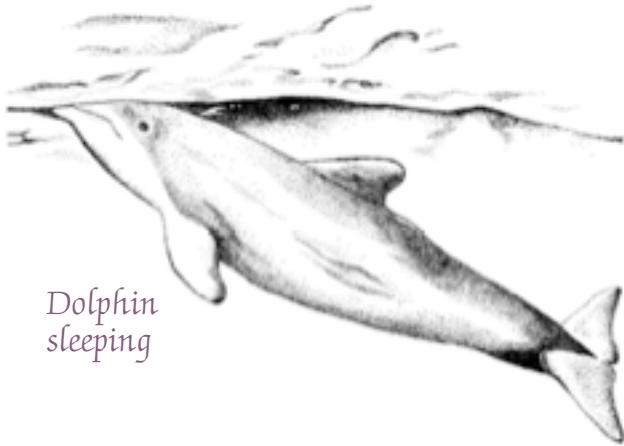
Not all animals are alike though. Cows, horses, and snakes can sleep with their eyes open. And, of course, a fish naps eyes-wide-open because, well, it has no eyelids! Most quadrupeds\* lie down to rest, but horses are able to sleep standing up, locking their legs in place. Like many animals, however, a giraffe must get off its feet at night.

Sometimes God's creatures are forced to sleep "on the fly." Migrating birds traveling over open ocean cannot land to rest. They may spend several days in flight and must literally sleep on

\* A quadruped is an animal with four feet.

the wing. During spring and autumn migrations, birds tend to sleep in 30-second intervals, gliding as they dream. Of course, a snooze any longer than this could be disastrous!

The same is true, in principle, with sea mammals. Research has shown that dolphins and seals have a very unique way of dozing without drowning. Christ Jesus fitted a dolphin with lungs, not gills, and it must breathe air to survive. Unlike a fish,\* it cannot stop swimming lest it sink and drown. It was once believed that killer whales and other marine mammals simply did not sleep. Careful study of these creatures has proven this idea wrong. The Lord Jesus, in a flare of brilliant engineering, designed the dolphin nervous system so that one half of its brain can sleep at a time.



Dolphin sleeping

The brain of all mammals\*\* is composed of two halves, called *hemispheres*. When a dolphin, killer whale, or seal gets tired, one half of its brain goes to sleep. The other hemisphere remains fully awake, allowing the animal to gently paddle close to the surface where it can breathe. After an hour or so, the portion of the dolphin's brain that is asleep wakes up, and the other half dozes. Using this alternating method, dolphins can sleep seven hours a day. (I wish I could have mastered this technique in my college classes!)

Of the thousands of species of animals God created, the sleep habits of only 200 have been studied in detail by scientists. It is believed that all animals sleep, *even insects!* You might find the following chart interesting. It compares the amount of sleep for a few different creatures:

<u>ANIMAL</u>	<u>HOURS ASLEEP EACH DAY</u>
giraffe	3
elephant	4
dolphin	7
rabbit	8
dog	9
baboon	10
beaver	11
gorilla	12
mouse	13
cat	15
opossum	19
bat	20

Obviously, we shouldn't judge a bat as lazy just because it sleeps all but four hours every day. The amount of time each animal rests is God-ordained, and it shows His sovereignty in such matters.

If we examine the amounts people sleep, we note a wide range depending on age:

<u>HUMAN</u>	<u>HOURS ASLEEP EACH DAY</u>
fetus	practically all the time
newborn	16 to 20
young child	12
young adult	8
elderly	6 to 7

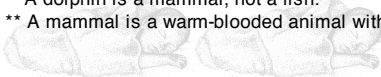
It's clear that we sleep less and less as we get older, but this doesn't mean we always get as much sleep as we need. (I'll share more on this with you a little later.)

Using special equipment, it's possible to determine how much a person dreams. An unborn child dreams virtually all the time while inside Mom, and a newborn infant spends about half its crib-time dreaming. Adults, on the other hand, dream approximately 30 percent of the night away. Yet, our dreams don't come all at once.

When we first drift off in bed our sleep is rather light. It's during this initial stage of sleep that we are easily stirred and woken up, say by a barking dog. After several minutes of light sleep we go into a period of deep sleep from which it is very hard to awaken. Next, we proceed again to light sleep, followed by dreams. A person cycles between light sleep→deep sleep→light

\* A dolphin is a mammal, not a fish.

\*\* A mammal is a warm-blooded animal with fur that nurses its young.



sleep→dreams throughout the night. A complete sleep cycle of an adult occurs every 90 minutes. Thus, a person who sleeps eight consecutive hours will experience, on average, five or six separate dreams! (An average person’s dreams last about 25 to 30 minutes at a time, but ornithologists\* have discovered that the dreams of a bird are *only five seconds* in duration.)

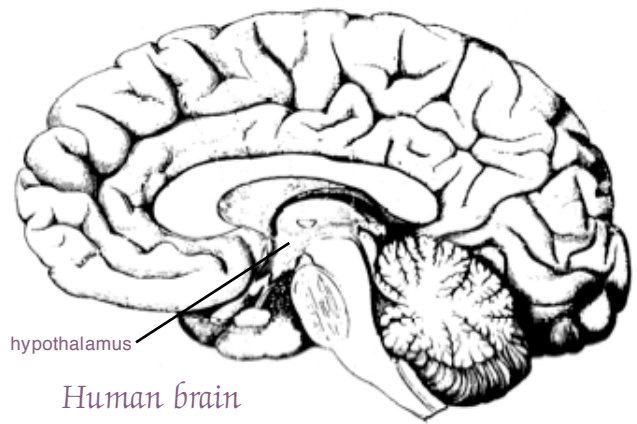
A child’s sleep cycle lasts around 50 minutes, so he or she dreams more frequently than an adult like myself. By contrast, an elephant dreams once every two hours; a cat, every 15 minutes. The grand prize goes to the mouse, however, who dreams every nine minutes. (What a mouse dreams about, I don’t know—maybe the cat?!)

The cadence of our dreams (every 90 minutes in adults; every 50 minutes in children) is only one way the Lord Jesus set our bodies to a precise time-schedule. We also follow a 24-hour cycle called the *circadian* (sir - KAY - dee - en) *rhythm*. Our bodies shut down for sleep, and wake up again, automatically every 24 hours. This circadian rhythm is present in animals and plants as well. It is not uncommon to see flowers opening in the morning at precisely the same time each day. (For instance, some

flowers open at 4 A.M., some at 7 A.M., while other species unveil at 11 A.M. each and every morning.)

With the daily setting of the sun, songs birds faithfully flock to the safety of their nocturnal homes, often a tree or bush. And spring-time frogs and summer crickets usually begin their nighttime serenades at some predictable hour in the evening. All these activities are controlled by the circadian rhythm.

The 24-hour “clock” that determines the circadian rhythm in humans is located in the *hypothalamus* (high - po - THAL - ah - miss) at the base of the brain. Our body temperature, hunger, thirst, and the time we go to bed at night



Human brain

are all controlled by the hypothalamus. Now that I’ve explained this to you, I need to correct something I’ve just said. The hypothalamus clock is actually set to a *25-hour day*, not 24 hours, as we might expect. People have voluntarily gone into deep, dark caves, where there is no natural light, and lived there several days. They took with them no clocks or watches or any other means of knowing what time it was outside the cave. What researchers found is very interesting. If the cave-dweller falls asleep at 10 P.M. the first night, he or she will fall asleep at 11 P.M. the next night, 12 midnight on the third night, and so on. In other words, the modern troglodyte is living by a 25-hour day.

If our hypothalamus is urging us to fall asleep one hour later, how come we go to bed and wake up at the same time each day? Our incredibly caring Creator provides us with a way to daily “reset” our internal clock. The thing that “tells” our hypothalamus that we live in a 24-hour, not 25-hour, world is the *Zeitgeber* (zite - gay - bur). *Zeitgeber* is a German word that means “time giver.” There are several *Zeitgebers* our Lord Jesus uses to keep us on schedule, but by far the most potent is *the sun*.

The sun rises and sets at approximately the same time each day, and this solar regularity keeps our hypothalamus tuned to a 24-hour schedule. You may be asking yourself why God placed a 25-hour clock within us—why not a 24-hour clock? Well, if our bodies were strictly controlled by a 24-hour internal clock it would be virtually impossible for us to travel to a foreign land. If I flew to Great Britain from Colorado, but I had no



\* Scientists who study birds



way to reset my circadian rhythm, I would be permanently seven hours out of sync with the English people. In other words, I would always be going to bed about the time they were waking up. The daily synchronization of our 25-hour clock to the sun permits a person to travel! The Lord allows us to reset our sleep schedule by simply using daylight. If Christ Jesus had not given us a way to adjust to foreign time zones, the Christian would never be able to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Our Creator has thought of everything!

Our ability to perceive the passing of time is also affected by body temperature. This makes sense if we remember that the temperature of our bodies is controlled by the hypothalamus.\* Have you ever noticed that when you run a high fever, you're more likely to become impatient waiting for something (for instance, you ask someone to run to the store to get some juice or over-the-counter flu medicine)? That's because the clock inside your hypothalamus is ticking away more briskly than normal, making 30 minutes seem like an hour.

I hope you're not too confused by all this, because the timing mechanisms within our bodies are really a little more complicated than I've outlined above. *The Lord Jesus has also created within us a 12-hour clock.* This means that every 12 hours



Siesta

we get sleepy. The time of the day when most people are the sleepest is between one and four in the morning. Twelve hours later, around one to four in the afternoon, most people will again feel tired. This afternoon slump in energy has nothing to do with lunch—even if you skip lunch you will likely experience fatigue at this time of day.

The afternoon dip is not as strong as the early morning lull, so we don't necessarily fall asleep

then. However, in many countries—particularly those in Central and South America—people customarily take an afternoon nap called a “siesta.” The popularity of the siesta has nothing to do with the outside temperature. People in Siberia experience the same urge to sleep on a wintery afternoon as someone living in Mexico! (It may be of interest to you that God also designed the lion and the tiger to rest twice a day. So the siesta is certainly not a sign of weakness!) Most Western nations frown on people taking an afternoon nap, but one wonders if we shouldn't do this more often?!

My friend, this brings me to my final point. It is possible in the rush of our modern society to become chronically fatigued due to lack of sleep. Many people spend their days being sleep-deprived because they go to bed late every night. (I have been guilty of this.) Sleep debt may not seem like a serious problem, but it is the cause of many accidents in the workplace. And physicians have discovered that sleep-deprived people are more prone to infections. Conversely, when we're sick, we sleep more—proper rest is vital to recovery from illness. Research has shown that our immune system works better when we sleep.

In addition, persons who forego sleep tend to experience moodiness and difficulty with concentration. They become irritable and depressed. Severe sleep debt can lead to slurred speech, heart murmurs, and weight loss. An otherwise normal person can even experience paranoia and hallucinations!

Our Heavenly Father is an awesome Protector. He gives us a time to rest and a time to wake. We all must forego sleep at critical times in our lives (please read “REST ASSURED”), but to perpetually ignore our need for God-given rest is foolhardy. There is a proper balance between too much and too little sleep. The Lord Jesus created us for His own glory—let's honor Him with our work AND our sleep!

WHEN CREATION SLEEPS...GOD IS HONORED!

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven... (Ecclesiastes 3:1).*

Much of the information found in this article was obtained from Stanley Coren's book *Sleep Thieves* (The Free Press: New York, 1996).





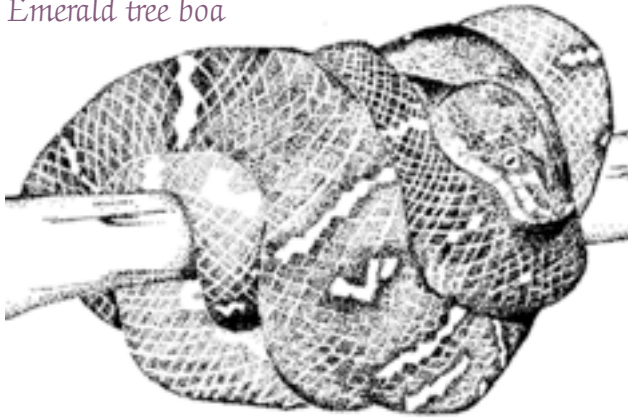
# REST ASSURED

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28

At the end of time, all creatures in heaven and on earth will kneel before the Lord Jesus Christ—all those who have loved Him AND all who have not (Philippians 2:10). This drama is foretold in every bedroom and every secluded spot around the globe. For when a little child, fearsome lion, or some loathsome, scaly reptile crawls into his bed,

*Emerald tree boa*



den, or nest, he proclaims that God is great and he is small. When we *willingly* fall asleep at night, we “bow in worship” before our Creator!

Arrogant men throughout history have boldly proclaimed that sleep was unnecessary, and strove to live self-serving lives peppered with only the briefest fits of rest. In the end, even the most iron-willed among them became subject to the normal seven or eight hours of sleep required each day.

The Lord Jesus did not create sleep to be a curse, but a blessing:

In vain you rise early and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—for He grants  
sleep to those He loves (Psalm 127:2).

Sleep, as much as anything, distinguishes the creature from the Creator! It illustrates our dependence upon God, and proves *His trustworthiness*. Day after day, billions upon

billions of His creations fall asleep, and most wake up unharmed. There is no limit to His vigilance on our behalf. The Lord God does not become tired or forgetful, and He does not sleep:

He will not let your foot slip—He who  
watches over you will not slumber.

Psalm 121:3

There are times when sleep **MUST BE** foregone because a need is at hand: the parents of a deathly-ill child choose to remain at her bedside throughout the night; a traveler to a foreign land finds himself in unfamiliar and uncomfortable surroundings; a student studies into the wee hours of the morning for an exam; a husband and a wife talk well past midnight to reconcile their marriage. An urgent matter precludes sleep.

“Go and humble yourself; press your plea  
with your neighbor! Allow no sleep to your  
eyes, no slumber to your eyelids.”

Proverbs 6:3b-4

Because of His great love for us, and obedience to His Father’s will, Jesus frequently ministered with little or no sleep. The apostle Paul also went without rest at times because he labored for the Church he loved so much (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Paul was *not* superhuman, but he had supernatural help.

We must remember, however, that sleep was designed by God to rest our minds and our bodies from the stresses of life.

The sleep of a laborer is sweet....

Eccles. 5:12a

This is an encouragement to us to work hard, and then accept from Jesus the gift of nightly rest He provides.

Sleep is a *requirement* set in place by its *Creator*. It is a proclamation of our dependence upon God as our *Provider* and *Protector*. This truth is illustrated in the following Biblical account of Jesus and His disciples caught in a terrible gale:

Without warning, a furious storm came up

1 Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, (Bethesda MD: Adler & Adler, 1986), 147.

2 *Pupae*, pronounced PEW - pea, is plural for *pupa* (PEW - pah).

3 Peter Farb, *Insects*, (New York: Time Inc., 1962), 58.



on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm (Matthew 8:24-26).

Jesus had no trouble sleeping in the midst of a storm, because He *fully* trusted Himself to His Heavenly Father! Just as sleep may be the creature's unconscious worship of the Creator, it may also be a subtle, but very real act of faith. The one who sleeps depends on God, whether he knows it or not. And many a sleep problem has its root in our *mistrust* of God!

The Scriptures take the idea of sleep one step further than we have discussed thus far. When a Christian dies, the Bible says that he or she is *asleep* (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). When a nonbeliever perishes, it plainly states that he is *dead*. This is because the person who rejects Christ is dead to God. The one who lives for Jesus, and then dies, remains secure in the loving arms of their Savior. Though they have died, they are *alive in Christ*. By God's awesome power, they will awaken in paradise to see their indescribably beautiful and loving Creator (Luke 23:43).

What kind of person are you? Are you confident in your abilities to succeed in this world? Are you self-sufficient and do you have no need for Christ? Do you hate the idea of depending on God? If so, my friend, you are headed for disaster! You are like the person who kids himself into believing that he doesn't need much sleep, only to be plagued with health problems and suspicions.

Like sleep, WE ALL NEED CHRIST JESUS. He is our eternal *Rest* and *Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). He sacrificed Himself on a cross so that our hatred for God might be broken. He died that we might be forgiven. Whether we realize it or not, we are being destroyed by our own sins!

God is no mere "crutch." He is not someone we use to "prop ourselves up" in hard times. Rather, He is our *Father*—He loves us dearly and desires for us to be totally dependent upon Him always. If we acknowledge this dependence now, and receive His Son into our lives, He can and will sustain us for all eternity. If we reject Jesus Christ, however, we forfeit eternal life and the peace that comes through the cross. We then willingly subject

ourselves to torment and turmoil and suffering forever. It's our choice. IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

Please realize your need for *Him Who is greater than all*. Recognize your own rebellion before God—you have sinned against Him. Please understand that Christ's sacrifice on a cross is the *only way* for your sins to be forgiven and for you to become right with your Creator. Embrace Jesus as the *Prince of Peace*. He will sustain you in this troubled world, and will lead you to a wonderful and restful place where you will never again experience pain or suffering. Surrender yourself now to Christ as the *Owner* and *Savior* of your life!

Dear Father, I recognize that I have lived my life as if I owned it, which is sin. Please forgive me through Your Son, Jesus Christ—through His death on the cross. Jesus, I acknowledge that my life belongs to You, not me. I embrace You as my God and my Savior. I accept Your gift of eternal life and I want to turn away from my old life of sin. Show me how to live the way You want me to live. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.

"I will never leave you  
nor forsake you."  
Joshua 1:5b



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