

CREATOR

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WHEN CREATION SLEEPS . . .

In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to 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.¹



As a tot, my life rested in the palm of God's hand. Sixty years later, nothing has changed. Like everyone else in this deeply troubled world, I submit myself to God for 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 influential person on Earth to the helpless infant, we are all sustained by the Lord's gentle, all-powerful touch (Colossians 1:17).

I lay down and slept; I awoke, for 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 as 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. We are vulnerable to attack from others, yet God faithfully protects us (Psalm 4:8). Our Lord Jesus designed every living thing to depend on Him in this way. Because of this dependence, sleep is a natural expression of praise toward our Creator, whether we know it or not. 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 dogs. Most dogs lie down in a familiar spot each night. Their muscles relax, breathing

¹ This is an 18th Century children's prayer that appeared in *The New England Primer*.

slows, and their eyes remain shut while sleeping. During this time, they are much less aware of activity around them. This is the *typical pattern of rest* for most animals, and people too.

Not all animals are exactly alike though. Horses can sleep with their eyes open. And, of course, fish and snakes nap eyes wide-open because, well, they have no eyelids. Most quadrupeds² lie down to rest,



but horses can sleep standing up, locking their legs in place. They do lie down, however, to dream. A giraffe has difficulty going from a standing to a lying position, yet like most animals, it must get off its feet at night.

Sometimes God's creatures are forced to sleep "on the fly." Migrating birds traveling over the open ocean cannot land to rest. They may spend several days in flight and must sleep "on the wing." During spring and autumn migrations, birds take hundreds of "power naps," lasting just a few seconds each, gliding as they dream. Of course, a snooze any longer than this could prove disastrous!

The same is true, in principle, with many sea mammals. Research has shown that whales, dolphins, and seals have a very unique way of dozing without drowning. Christ Jesus fitted dolphins with lungs, not gills, so they must breathe air to survive. Unlike a fish,³ they cannot stop swimming lest they sink and drown. It was once believed that dolphins, killer whales, and other marine mammals simply did not sleep. Careful study of these creatures has proven this idea wrong. Using His infinite genius, our Lord Jesus engineered the dolphin nervous system to allow one half of its brain to sleep at a time.

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 get seven hours of sleep each day. (I wish I could have mastered this technique in my college classes.)

Our Lord Jesus gave this remarkable ability to some birds as well. A duck, for instance, rests with one eye open allowing it to watch for danger (predators).



A sleeping duck

3 A dolphin is a mammal, not a fish.

2 A quadruped is a mammal with four feet.

Of the thousands of species of animals God created, the sleep habits of only 200 or so have been studied in detail by scientists. It's believed, however, that all animals sleep. You might find the following chart interesting. It compares the amount of sleep for a few different creatures:⁴

ANIMAL	HOURS ASLEEP EACH DAY ⁵
Giraffe	2
Cow	4
Dolphin	7
Rabbit	8
Dog	9
Baboon	10
Beaver	11
Gorilla	12
Mouse	13
Cat	15
Oppossum	19
Koala	20
Bat	20

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

It's clear from common experience that we sleep less and less as we go from childhood to adulthood, but this doesn't mean we always get as much sleep as we need. (I'll share more on this later.)

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

HUMAN	SLEEP NEEDED EACH DAY ⁶
Fetus	practically all the time
Newborn	16 to 20
Young Child	12
Teenagers	9 to 10
Adult	8
Elderly	8

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 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 sleep ⇒ dreams throughout the night. A complete sleep cycle of an adult occurs every 90 minutes. Thus someone who sleeps eight consecutive hours will experience, on average, five or six separate dreams. The dreams of an average person last about 25 to 30 minutes at a time.

A child's sleep cycle is around 50 minutes in length, which is similar to that of the family dog, so a child dreams more frequently than an adult. By contrast, an elephant dreams once every two hours; a cat, every 15 minutes. The grand prize

⁴ Insects, crayfish, worms, and jellyfish are also known to sleep.
5 Data taken from Campbell, S.S. and Tbler, I., Animal Sleep.
Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Rev., 8:269-300, 1984.

⁶ Most teenagers and adults get less than 6.5 hours of sleep each night. It's long been thought that older people require less sleep. Research has shown this to be false.

goes to the mouse, however, who dreams every nine minutes. (What a mouse dreams about, I don't know . . . maybe cats?!)

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 timetable. We also follow a 24-hour cycle known as the *circadian* (sir - KAY - dee - en) *rhythm*. Our bodies shut down for sleep automatically every 24 hours. This circadian rhythm is present in all animals and plants as well. Even bacteria live by a 24-hour clock! It is not uncommon to see flowers opening in the morning at precisely the same time each day. Some flowers, for instance, open at 4 A.M., some at 7 A.M., while other species unveil at 11 A.M. each and every morning.



Even when the setting Sun is obscured by clouds, birds faithfully flock back to the safety of their nocturnal homes, often a tree or bush. There is possibly no more spectacular display of this behavior than the evening murmuration of starlings in various parts of the world—with one form of worship leading to another! And spring-time frogs and summer crickets usually begin their nighttime worship of our Creator at a 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* (hi - po - THAL - ah - miss) at the base of the brain. ¹⁰ It is here that our body temperature, hunger, thirst, and the time we go to bed at night are controlled. This central clock is not hard-wired like most man-made timepieces but is fashioned by Christ to function with *incredible flexibility*. People have voluntarily gone into deep, dark caves—where there is no natural light—and lived there several weeks. 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. Instead of keeping to a precise 24-hour day, spelunkers (cave explorers) find their "day" getting longer and longer. If these modern troglodytes stay long enough underground, their days eventually increase to 48 hours or more in length.

You may now be thinking, "If our hypothalamus is flexible, how come we go to bed and wake up at the same time each day?" It's because our incredibly loving Creator provides us with a way to daily reset our internal clock. The thing that "tells" our hypothalamus we live in a 24-hour—not 48-hour—world is the *zeitgeber*

⁷ The word circadian comes from two Latin roots—circa meaning "about" and dies meaning "day."

⁸ See kids' kreation # 102.

⁹ See CREATOR Journal Volume 18 Number 1.

¹⁰ See CREATOR Journal Volume 23 Number 1.

(zite - gay - bur). Zeitgeber is a German word that means "time giver." There are several zeitgebers our Lord Jesus uses to keep us on track, 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 helps our hypothalamus remain tuned to a 24-hour schedule. (This is why people who spend a long time in a cave find themselves living in a different temporal frame of reference.) You may be asking yourself why God didn't simply provide us with a rigid clock so it didn't need to be regularly reset. 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 way to reset my circadian rhythm, I would be permanently seven hours out of sync with the English people. In other words, I would be going to bed about the time they were waking up. This God-given flexibility of our hypothalamic clock permits a person to travel across time zones. The Lord thus designed 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's sovereign control over everything is *quite beautiful*, don't you think?!

What is more, each of the cells in our body has its own adjustable clock. If you recall, in the last issue of the *CREATOR Journal* we looked at the remarkable inner workings of the cell. What we didn't have an opportunity to mention is that *every cell* keeps to a 24-hour timetable. Our Lord Jesus mysteriously uses a complex interaction between the cell's genes and certain proteins to create an extremely accurate molecular timepiece.

I hope you're not too overwhelmed by all this information because the timing mechanisms within our bodies are actually more complicated than I've outlined above. Our Creator Jesus has also placed within us a 12-hour clock. This means that every 12 hours we get sleepy. The time of the day when most people are the sleepiest is between two and four in the morning. Twelve hours later, around two to four in the afternoon, most people will again feel tired. This afternoon slump in energy often has nothing to do with lunch—even if you skip lunch you will likely experience fatigue at this time of day. Why does this happen?

If you again remember back to our discussion of cells in the prior issue, all the cells in our body run on ATP (adenosine triphosphate)—tiny "batteries" that provide us energy. As we use ATP during the day, the molecule *adenosine* builds up in our brain and this is what makes us sleepy. (Caffeine blocks the adenosine effect in the brain, allowing us to perk up temporarily.)

The afternoon dip is not as strong as the early morning lull, so we don't necessarily fall asleep then. In many countries though—particularly those in Southern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Philippines, and China—people customarily

take an afternoon nap called a "siesta" (Spanish for "nap"). 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 designed the lion and the tiger to rest twice a day as well. So the siesta is certainly not a sign of



physical weakness!) For the longest time, Western nations frowned on people taking an afternoon nap, but recently attitudes have changed. In North America and Northern Europe, we now have something called "the power nap," which is just another name for a siesta.

Entomologist and author, E.W. Teale, has discovered that humans are not alone: "Many insects are given to taking short cat-naps during daylight hours." He also observed ants waking up from a deep sleep: "If you watch an ant which has been asleep for some time awaken, you will frequently see it stretch and open its jaws in a very human kind of yawn before it takes up the tasks of the day." These fascinating and keen observations point to the one and same Creator who made both people and ants. And they can be a humble reminder

to us all that—like ants—we are extremely dependent upon God!

It has been discovered that sleep in bees helps them remember the timing and directions to flowers. Each flower species produces nectar at a different time of the day and bees learn when best to visit them. Remarkably, these insects can remember a daily schedule of up to nine distinct visitations to various flower patches.

Our brains do not shut down at night. Doctors have discovered that—like bees—our memory is reinforced and new ideas are established during sleep. Some of humanity's greatest "eureka moments" have occurred in the middle of the night with a sudden awakening and solution to a perplexing problem at hand. This is why it is good advice, when faced with a difficult decision, to "sleep on it" first.

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 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. A lack of sleep can have a negative impact on the health of our individual cells. DNA repair, toxin removal, and other cellular processes are all hampered by sleep deprivation.

Conversely, this is the reason why we should sleep when we're sick. Proper rest is vital to recovery from illness. Research has shown that our immune system works better when we sleep. (Doctors have found that people who regularly take siestas or

¹¹ Edwin Way Teale, The Strange Lives of Familiar Insects, (Dodd, Mead & Company: New York, 1962), p. 47.

¹² In 1920, Dr. Otto Loewi woke suddenly in the middle of the night with an idea that led him to design an experiment proving that nerve cells communicate by way of neurotransmitters. This discovery eventually won him the 1936 Nobel Prize in medicine.

"power naps" tend to be healthier and *suffer less heart disease*.) "Death from all causes is lowest among adults who get seven to eight hours of sleep nightly." ¹³

Persons who forego sleep experience moodiness and difficulty with concentration. They tend to 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. There is reason to believe that if we went three weeks without sleep, we would die. All this should lead us to fear our Creator more (Psalm 139:14) and see His goodness, for He alone provides us rest and sleep!

Our Lord is an awesome Creator. He gives us a time to rest and a time to be awake. 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. And there is a proper balance between too much and too little sleep. The Lord Jesus created us for His Father's glory—let's exalt Him with our work and our sleep. When Creation Sleeps... God Is Honored!

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event 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 who are weary and heavy-laden, 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

13 Quote is from an article titled, "Deep into Sleep," by Carig Lambert.

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, den, or nest, he proclaims that God (who never sleeps) is great and he is small. When we willingly fall asleep at night, we *bow in worship* before our Creator! In this, we become most like little children, because it proves our utter dependence on God our Father. And it points us to God's command that we receive from Him a childlike heart to enter His Kingdom (Matthew 11:25-26, 18:1-4, 19:14).

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. . . . For the LORD will be your confidence. Proverbs 3:24, 26a

Sadly, 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. This too is a form of worship.¹⁴

It is our sincere belief that when all people, animals, and plants sleep they worship Christ our Creator. "But doesn't worship need to be willful and conscious to be true worship?" Ideally, yes. But there is coming a day very soon when "every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). By "every knee," does the Holy Spirit mean "Christians?" "All people?" "People and angels?" Or is something more inclusive in view? Most

14 We see this as "reflective worship" because it is a state of creation that "reflects" the honor due our Creator. "Radiative worship" comes from (or rather through) those beings capable of truly praising God—unfallen angels and the Redeemed—by and through the Holy Spirit.

Bible commentators agree—"every knee" means "all creation," as in Revelation 5:13:

And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

(See Psalm 65:13, 96:1-13, 145:21, and 148:1-14.) To this end, it is significant that the final verse of the final Psalm proclaims: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 150:6).¹⁵



We believe, therefore, that sleep is a foretaste of Philippians 2:10-11. My dear wife, Colleen, has told me that when she was a child, she rarely fought sleep. Like worship, sleep is sweet to those who eagerly desire it because it is needful.

Our Lord Jesus did not create sleep as a curse, but a blessing:

It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. Psalm 127:2

And sleep—as much as anything—distinguishes the creature from the Creator. It illustrates our utter dependence

15 Even plants have "breath." Oxygen and carbon dioxide gases are drawn in and out through tiny openings in leaves called stomata.

upon God and proves *His trustworthiness*. Day after day, trillions upon trillions of His creatures 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:

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.
Psalm 121:2-4

There are times when sleep must be foregone because a pressing need is at hand (please read Psalm 132:3-5): 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 college student studies into the wee hours of the morning for an exam, a husband and wife talk well past midnight to reconcile their marriage. An urgent matter precludes sleep (2 Corinthians 11:27).

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

Proverbs 6:36-4 16

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 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.

16 NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. We must remember, however, that sleep was designed by God to restore our minds and bodies from the stresses of life.

The sleep of the working man is pleasant . . . Ecclesiastes 5:12a

This is an encouragement to us to work hard, and then accept from Christ Jesus the gift of nightly rest He provides. And in submitting to Him in this way, we worship God!

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

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly 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 upon God (trusts Him), 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. When a Christian dies, the Bible says that he or she is asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). When the unrepentant perishes, Scripture plainly states that he is dead (Ecclesiastes 9:5) 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 the Savior. Though they have died, they are alive in Christ. By God's awesome power, they will immediately "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 have no need for Christ? Do you hate the idea of depending on God? If so, my friend, you are headed for disaster. Whether you realize it or not, you are being daily destroyed by your own sins. 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 insecurities.

As with sleep, we all need Jesus Christ. He is our Peace (Isaiah 9:6), our eternal Sabbath Rest.¹⁷

"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You." Augustine of Hippo

Our Lord sacrificed Himself on a cross so that our hatred for God might be utterly broken. He died that we would be forgiven.

God is no "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 His Cross (Isaiah 57:20-21). We then willingly subject ourselves to torment and turmoil and suffering forever. *In this life*, the wicked experience God's mercy of sleep, at

¹⁷ It is the author's opinion that Christ is the complete and eternal fulfillment of the Fourth Commandment (Matthew 11:28-30).

least to some degree. In Hell, no quarter for sleep will ever be found because "there is no peace . . . for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21).

Please realize your need for Him who is greater than all (Ephesians 4:10). Recognize your rebellion before God—you have sinned against Him by living life your way. Please understand that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the only way for your sins to be forgiven and for you to become right with your Creator.

"In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." Isaiah 30:15

Embrace Jesus as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He will sustain you in this troubled world and will lead you to a wonderful place of rest where you will never again experience sadness, pain, or suffering. Surrender yourself now to Christ as the only Redeemer and Owner of your soul.

Is it possible for a true Christian to struggle with sleep? Yes! Although a godly person greatly trusts Jesus, evil in this world can cause anxiety (see 2 Peter 2:7-9). Those hearts most sensitive to the things of Christ are likely to be most troubled by things that oppose Him.

If you are God's child and struggle with sleep, *you are not alone*. Please allow us to humbly encourage you to practice the following:

- Embrace Christ daily as your Rest (Matthew 11:28-30).
- Grow in trusting God (Isaiah 26:3).
- Set aside worldly distractions (Colossians 3:2).
- Ponder what is true (Philippians 4:8).
- Confess your sins daily (1 John 1:9).
- Give God your anxieties (1 Peter 5:7).
- Fear God (Proverbs 19:23).
- Work hard during the day (Ecclesiastes 5:12).
- Obey Christ in all things (Psalm 119:165).



 Dwell upon Christ's glory in His Word and in His Creation (Pslam 19)!

"The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace."
Numbers 6:24-26



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