

Get Some Sleep

Hello, my name is Mary Amesbury and welcome to the fourth lesson in this series on Easing Anxiety Through Faith. Today we will be looking at how a lack of sleep can be contributing to your anxiety. But first, a few sleep jokes.

What do you get when you eat cookies in bed? Crummy sleep.

What do you call it when a college student pulls an all-nighter? Resisting a rest!

*"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His **beloved** sleep" (Psalm 127:2).*

He gives His **beloved** sleep. Because your Creator loves you, He built you to need quality sleep. Sleep is not a luxury or a blessed indulgence. It is a necessity. When you sleep, your body and brain repair themselves and heal the damage caused during the day. Sleep consolidates memory which improves learning, retaining information and problem solving. Studying and then sleeping soundly may be far more beneficial in preparing for a tough exam than an all-nighter. Sleep literally makes you smarter, more creative, healthier and happier. Sleep is a gift from God.

"Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest" (Exodus 34:21).

Your Creator designed His creation to need to sleep and established the principle of setting aside one day a week for rest. The Sabbath forced God's people to trust Him to care for them as they rested.

We can trust ourselves to our Creator because **He** doesn't sleep. *"My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:2-4).*

We can turn over our worries to God. He is more than able to care for us.

Of the Ten Commandments, keeping the Sabbath is the only one that was not brought forward into the New Testament. By the time of Jesus, the religious leaders had attached so many rules to the Sabbath that it had become a burden rather than a blessing. Perhaps that is why the Sabbath commandment of one day of rest per week was not continued.

Instead of a mandated Sabbath, Jesus instructed: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).*

The need for rest hasn't changed – and perhaps it is even more necessary because technology has blurred the lines of work and non-work times.

I don't have to tell you that most college students are sleep deprived. A couple of different studies put the rate of sleep deprivation among college students at over 70%. I also don't have to tell you that being sleep-deprived makes you stressed, cranky and anxious. You've been there. You know.

But you may not be aware of how chronic sleep deprivation – routinely getting less than 8 hours of sleep a night – affects you emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Often the chronically sleep-deprived don't know how impaired they are. Researchers suggest that being sleep-deprived can make you as dangerous on the road as someone who is legally drunk.

Sleep-deprivation fuels anxiety. The amygdala – the part of the brain associated with emotional states – showed in one study a 60% amplification in **emotional reactivity** in sleep deprived individuals. In other words, when you are sleep-deprived normal occurrences stress you out more. You are **more** anxious, fearful, stressed, angry, and sad.

Although you might not think it is possible to get 8 hours of sleep a night, you can begin by getting better quality sleep each night.

Here's some tips to get a better quantity and quality of sleep:

1. View sleep as something vital rather than a luxury that can be cut out.
2. Establish regular sleep and wake times in line with your circadian rhythm. Your body and brain need from 7 to 8 hours of restorative sleep **every night** to prevent diminished performance the next day.
3. Respect your body's normal circadian rhythm – if you are a night owl, don't take an early morning class. If you are a morning person, don't take a late evening class if you can help it. No amount of coffee will make you smart when your brain is wired to be asleep.
4. Develop an optimal sleep environment – your sleep space should be cool, dark, and quiet. Invest in light blocking curtains if there is too much ambient light from streetlights. Cover anything emitting light like an alarm clock, cell phone, etc.
5. If you are affected by caffeine, eliminate it 6 to 8 hours before your scheduled bedtime.
6. Develop a bedtime routine to help you relax and to cue your brain that it is time to sleep. If your muscles are sore, do some stretches. Your brain needs a transition between work time and sleep time. Avoid anything stressful right before bed.
7. If you find yourself fretting about something that happened during your day, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guard your thoughts as you try to fall asleep. You might also

benefit from listening to the Bible on your phone with an app like Bible.is which has a timer that will shut it off. Try journaling about your worries rather than letting them run in an endless loop in your mind.

Thanks for watching and sleep well. Goodnight!