

According to the WSJ, this is the most boring video ever made: THE MOST BORING VIDEO EVER MADE (Microsoft Word tutorial, 1989) (youtube.com)

- It was made in 1989 by Randy Smith, and it has over 3.3 million views. Why? It has been repurposed as a sleep aide for insomniacs.
- Other contenders for the best sleep aide are Bob Ross' videos and a 5-hour shipping forecast from the BBC.¹
- Hopefully, I can keep everyone awake today. However, one Sunday, when I was shaking hands with people, someone said, 'great message pastor. I haven't slept like that in years.'

The first thing God created was day and night (Ge 1:3). That means that even before he created man & woman, there was a cycle of rest.

- Even before the fall, our bodies were made to have regular periods of sleep and rest. But for many people falling asleep / staying asleep is difficult.
- Stress, fear, and troubles cause sleeplessness for many here today.

In Psalm 77, the author has a sleepless night, and he gives us his remedy for insomnia.

Psalm 77

For Sleepless Nights (A Song in the Night)

When I was a child, it was difficult for me to drift off into sleep. Often, I would see frightening things when I was in between awake and fully asleep.



- Medical and psychological professionals have labeled a condition called 'sleep paralysis.'² It is that state 'during waking up or falling asleep, in which a person is conscious' but cannot move. There might be sounds, visions, difficulty breathing, the inability to move, and the emotion of dread / threat / hyper-vigilance. Sleep paralysis is being researched, and it could well be a physiological condition.
- However, we believers know there is an unseen world, and that God speaks to us through dreams and visions. When we sleep, this world and the unseen world

¹ Spencer Jakob 'Is This the Most Boring Man in the World', WSJ, May 4, 2024 ([Is This the Most Boring Man in the World? - WSJ](#))

² [Sleep paralysis - Wikipedia](#)

seem to overlap. For example, I doubt I had sleep paralysis when I saw frightening things and sensed evil, because I could move.

- There is a lot we do not know about the unseen world, and letting go of control is difficult.

Our sleepless Psalmist is going through a crisis.

1. A Cry for Help, vv. 1-3.

'I cry out to God; yes, I shout. Oh, that God would listen to me! ²When I was in deep trouble, I searched for the Lord. All night long I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven, but my soul was not comforted. ³I think of God, and I moan, overwhelmed with longing for his help (Ps 77 1-3 NLT).'

We don't know what his trouble was, but it was 'deep trouble.' It was such a severe trial that his inner being could not be comforted; he was overwhelmed; he could not see a way out.

We went through a similar situation for about 3 or 4 years. During that season, my sleep was light. I'd wake up at the slightest noise. It was difficult to fall asleep and when I did it was only for 4 or 5 hours. I could not see a human solution and was tired all the time for lack of sleep.

These verses are a lament, a cry for help and justice.

He cries out loudly. This is not a quiet, whispered prayer; he shouts and demands that God listens. He longs for God to intervene in his situation. We get frightened when feel a distance between God and us, or when we doubt God is in control of this situation.

- I envision our Psalmist lying in bed tossing this way and that way, looking for a position to drift off into sleep, but his mind is restless. Perhaps he slips out of bed to kneel when he cries out and lifts his arms in prayer. He laments.
- When I was 10 years old, I had a lot of trouble sleeping. I saw frightening things. I cried out to God for help sleeping. It was the first prayer I know God answered for me. That night I fell asleep right away. Ever since that prayer, unless there are unusual circumstances, I can fall asleep anytime anyplace. Connie has learned that if she needs to talk, she must do it before I get horizontal. If I am horizontal, she has about 30 seconds before I am gone. God hears the cry of his people.
- When we yield control to God; He refreshes our soul.

There is a great story of Peter (Acts 12:1-18). King Herod wanted to persecute these early Christians. He has just killed James and John.

- Peter was arrested and chained to two soldiers. 'The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance (Acts 12:6 NIV).' There were always four of sixteen soldiers always watching him. Peter could die the next day, but he is soundly asleep. How? God is in control.
- He is in such a deep sleep that when an angel comes to rescue him, he had to smack Peter in the head and say, 'get up (v. 7).' The chains fall off and all the soldiers fall asleep. Prison doors opened by themselves.
- Peter goes to where people are praying for his release, and they don't answer the door even though he tells them who it is. Eventually, he is let in, and Peter tells the story of how God answered their prayer.
- Luke adds that king Herod had all the guards executed.

Today, I am going to give you five of my favorite verses on sleep so that you can memorize them. Here is the first: 1. 'When I awake, I am still with you (Ps 139:18 NIV).'

- It promises that God is always with us, even during those seasons of apparent absence.
- God can help us sleep even in the middle of our trials.
- God is constantly watching over us.

Continuing.

2. Songs in the Night, vv. 4-6.

'You don't let me sleep. I am too distressed even to pray! ⁵I think of the good old days, long since ended, ⁶when my nights were filled with joyful songs. I search my soul and ponder the difference now (Ps 77:4-6 NLT).'

The stress on our Psalmist clouds his thoughts. He tries to think it through, but logical and clear thinking is impossible.

Here are two marks of lament here:

- He blames God for his situation 'you don't let me sleep.'
- 'I am too distressed even to pray.'

Laments are appeals to God. God can handle our deep emotions. He created us and is not shocked by us expressing our true emotions to him. He is big enough to handle our complaint. Our singer cannot even pray.

Sometimes we are so broken that we cannot utter words. That is a great time to pray in tongues: 'In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Ro 8:26 NASB).'

- Just as dreams overlap with the unseen world, speaking in tongues overlaps with the unseen world.
- When we pray in tongues, our mind and spirit are quiet. We connect with God in a way that bypasses our shortsighted human perspective, our limited vocabulary, and linguistic structures and connects our spirit with His Spirit.

This idea of songs in the night is what attracted me to this Psalm.

It is a phrase used in the Old Testament. Most scholars gloss lightly over this phrase and say it is just singing or birdsong. However,

Songs in the night ...

- God is the source. 'God my Maker ... who gives songs in the night (Job 35:10 NIV).'
 - Is like a musical earworm. 'By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life (Ps 42:8 NIV).'
- A song in the night is one of those sticky melodies that just keeps going round and round in our head.

I have been given 'songs in the night' for several months now. I wake with a melody going over and over in my head.

- Today, it was 'I give you the glory, all of the glory, again and again.' Usually, it is a song from Sunday' worship set, but at times it is a song of worship that I know.
- What a delight I have had waking up to praise songs.

Songs in the night are a reminder of God's care even when he appears to be absent.

Friends, let's give up control and trust God.

- God is more than we can imagine (Ep 3:20).
- He is the 'King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God (1Ti 1:17 NIV).'
- Physicists can prove 11 dimensions, while our human limitations can perceive only 4 dimensions.³ God is not limited to any dimension that he created, and yet despite his otherness, he cares for us.

³ Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos: The Transdimensionality of God*, 3rd edn. (Covina, CA: RTB Press, 2017), p. 41.

A second verse to memorize: 2. 'The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing (Zep 3:17 NIV).' We worship the one who is beyond our categories of language and imagination, yet we know He exists and cares for us.

Our sleepy, agitated Psalmist asks a few questions.

3. Questions, vv. 7-9.

'Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will he never again be kind to me? ⁸Is his unfailing love gone forever? Have his promises permanently failed? ⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he slammed the door on his compassion? Interlude (Ps 77:7-9 NLT).'

These are great questions. They revolve around God's apparent absence.

The insomniac feels abandoned, on the outside, unloved.

We cannot think straight when we are tired or jet-lagging. When we travel internationally, we walk around fuzzyheaded because our body and sleep cycle are all messed up. One Sunday, Dennis, a member had just returned from Hong Kong the night before. He fell asleep as soon as I said, 'turn in your Bibles to.' He bolted upright when I said, 'let's pray.' He slept from my first sentence to my last, remarkable.

Here is another of my favorite verses: 3. 'At this I awoke and looked around. My sleep had been pleasant to me (Jer 31:26 NIV).'

- Jeremiah woke up refreshed because he knew that 'it is the Lord's purposes that prevails (Pro 19:21 NIV).'
- We can rest contentedly because 'We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them (Ro 8:28 NLT).'

Let's look at the turning point.

4. Turning Point, vv. 10-12.

'And I said, "This is my fate; the Most High has turned his hand against me." ¹¹But then I recall all you have done, O LORD; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. ¹²They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works (Ps 77:10-12 NLT).'

Though he feels like God's favor has changed, he decides to remember all the times God has intervened in his life. Our insomniac says, 'but then I recall.' He changed his perspective.

I am going to give you five hints for a restful sleep.

Hints for a restful night's sleep.

1. Control your final thoughts.

The second thing he did was to remember God's work, God's activity in his life.

Hints for a restful night's sleep.

1. Control your final thoughts.
2. Remember God's interventions in the past.

There are nights when I must remind God that he answered my prayer. 'Dear God, don't forget that you have granted me sleep. It was the first prayer you answered.' I remember God's work in my life.

Recalling God's intervention in the past is the turning point, 'from the "preoccupation with self to a submission to and reliance upon God."⁴

- The language changes from 'I,' the first person, to the second person 'You,' meaning 'God,' and His mighty acts.
- Changing the point of view from 'me and my worries' to that of 'God who is in control of all things' brings peace and comfort.
- When we yield control to God; He refreshes our soul.

The third thing is that the Psalmist thinks about God's love, protection, and goodness.

Hints for a restful night's sleep.

1. Control your final thoughts.
2. Remember God's interventions in the past.
3. Think about God's love, protection, and goodness.

Often, we don't feel safe during sleep because we know we are helpless. I think of poor George in another church. We had wooden pews, and a crack ran down the middle of several of them. You had to sit on them just right or they would bite. One Sunday night I was preaching and ole George fell asleep. His head hit the pew in front of him. It was loud. The sudden noise and pain startled him, and he got bitten by the pew.

The fourth verse to memorize is: 4. 'I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. ⁶I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side (Ps 3:5 NIV).'

⁴ Beth Tanner, *NICOT The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), pp. 615-16. Original cite is Walter Brueggemann.

From here on the word 'I' is not used; it is all about God's character and His mighty acts.

5. God's Character, vv. 13-15.

'O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you? ¹⁴You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations. ¹⁵By your strong arm, you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph (Ps 77: 13-15 NLT).'

Our sleepless Psalmist recognizes God is strong and we are his people – 'your people.' We are loved and belong to Him.

Another hint for a restful night's sleep is to know that you are his child, that you are loved.

Hints for a restful night's sleep.

1. Control your final thoughts.
2. Remember God's interventions in the past.
3. Think about God's love, protection, and goodness.
4. Remember that you are God's child.

Verse 14 in the NIV reads, 'You are the God who performs miracles,' meaning that God intervenes and takes care of his children. He will suspend the rules of nature itself to assure that his plans are accomplished.

I've told this story before, but it's a good one: My cousin's husband, Bruce, was going through a rough time in the church he pastored. Their situation seemed hopeless. Linda couldn't sleep one night and all she could do was cry out to God for help. While she was praying, she sensed a presence in the room and opened her eyes to see a huge angel in the room. It was so large that its wings barely fit in the room, and they were opened just enough to cover them in the bed. The angel was kneeling beside her in prayer. Finally, she saw that the angel had a huge sword, going from ceiling to floor. She just knew it was Bruce's guardian angel and she crawled back in bed, knowing that God had everything under control.

- Did things work out the way they had hoped? No.
- Did they know God was in control? Yes.

The final verse I'd like you to consider memorizing is: 5. 'He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep (Ps 121:3-4 NIV).'

Just knowing that God never sleeps should help us drift off to sleep.

Hints for a restful night's sleep.

1. Control your final thoughts.
2. Remember God's interventions in the past.
3. Think about God's love, protection, and goodness.
4. Remember that you are God's child.
5. Know that God is always watching over you.

At first glance, the final five verses of this Psalm don't fit with the sleepless theme, but it does.

6. A Song of Protection, vv. 16-20.

'When the Red Sea saw you, O God, its waters looked and trembled! The sea quaked to its very depths. ¹⁷The clouds poured down rain; the thunder rumbled in the sky. Your arrows of lightning flashed. ¹⁸Your thunder roared from the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world! The earth trembled and shook. ¹⁹Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters— a pathway no one knew was there! ²⁰You led your people along that road like a flock of sheep, with Moses and Aaron as their shepherds (Ps 77:16-20 NLT).'

There is a thunderstorm and the dead end of the Red Sea – but God made a way, God protected his people.

The psalmist is saying that, no matter the storm, even if there is no escape, God will make a way. He is in control protecting and guiding his people.

Conclusion.

- When we yield control to God; He refreshes our soul.
- Prayer.