

Notes of Rest for Sleep: A Lenten Devotional

Creation (Week 1)

Welcome to the Notes of Rest Lenten Devotional on Sleep. It is a delight to have you here. Over the next several weeks we'll be examining the gift of sleep through the four movements of the Gospel: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation. I pray these reflections and accompanying musical meditations help you receive the notes of rest God plays in our lives.

Sleep played a critical role in the beginning of all things. In Genesis 2, after God creates Adam, God creates the rest of Earth's creatures to provide Adam companionship. When no suitable match is found, God sends Adam into a deep sleep and performs a life-altering surgery that leads to human community in the creation of Eve. Ironically, God takes from the lonely one – a rib – so that community could emerge. In the beginning of all things, sleep is a means of loss and of gain.

In the US today, we have a distorted view of loss and gain, which is partly to blame for our sleep epidemic. The prevailing grind culture insists that to sleep is to lose productivity, respectability, and pleasure. Adherence to this vision of the good life keeps many Americans from sleeping the recommended 7 – 9 hours a night needed for good health. We think staying up staves off loss.

Genesis 2 begs to differ. Whereas grind culture prizes productivity, respectability, and pleasure, Genesis prizes God's deeper end, community. The sleeplessness of grind culture keeps us from this greater good. When we do not sleep sufficiently, we weaken our ability to meaningfully connect. We are more irritable, more likely to hurt (or kill) someone while driving, more depressed, more distractible, and more at risk for health problems. We stay up to make, impress, and experience more, but the irony is we stand to lose far more than we could gain.

The Holy Spirit invites us to prefer a different logic to grind culture's. The inherent loss and vulnerability that comes with sleep may be a nuisance to capitalism, but for God it is a vehicle for the grace that is community. When we sleep well and create conditions for others to do the same, we are better able to participate in life together. We have better capacity to regulate ourselves emotionally and are more physically fit to enjoy and serve one another. Genesis 2 shows us that sleep is an invitation to recognize God's grace in our lives, the grace that leads to community everlasting with God, self, and neighbor. Amen.

Which most threatens your sleep currently: productivity, reputation, or pleasure?

How does lack of sleep hurt the bonds of your community?

How is God using your sleep to help others live?

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for the gift of community for which you've created us. Protect my sleep from the clutches of grind culture so that I may embrace you, my neighbor, and myself. In Jesus' name, Amen.