Why Not Try This? - 7 tips for Introverted Pastors

by Thom Rainer

I have made no secret of my introversion. In fact, being open and honest about it has been a great relief to me. I think a number of people understand me better. One gift I wish I had been given when I served as a pastor in four different churches was a mentor who would share with me how to function as an introverted pastor. I made a ton of mistakes! I hope my experiences, both bad and good, will prove to be meaningful to pastors today. I have written them in the form of seven tips.
1. **You just have to mingle sometimes.** I really don't like small talk. When you mingle before or after a worship service or some other church event, you hear a lot of small talk. My temptation was always to avoid mingling so I could avoid such conversations. Unfortunately, pastors are perceived to be unfriendly and uncaring if they don't mingle. Force yourself to get out among the members frequently for short periods of time.

2. **You just have to counsel people sometimes.** I avoided counseling for more than one reason. First, I never felt like I was equipped or trained to counsel. Second, I am task oriented with the temptation to advise someone on three easy steps to get their lives in orders. Third, my introversion pushes me away from conversations with people I don't know well. But pastors can't avoid all counseling. My counseling load tended to diminish over time because people left our sessions feeling worse than when they arrived.

3. **You just have to attend a few social events.** I'm probably wearing out the introverted pastor with these first three tips. But pastors who avoid all mingling, all counseling, and all social events tend to be viewed as impersonal and uncaring. While an introvert should never plan too much interaction, that pastor must be involved to some level.

4. **Be transparent about your introversion.** Church members will Continue Reading...

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**Momentum - The Anonymous Letter**

The anonymous letter writer said he “would not be attending” the Islam and Christianity seminar at the Spokane Valley Church. Pastor Mark Weir couldn't correct the writer's mistaken impressions. But when he read the letter one evening to the seminar audience, an interesting thing happened. Read Pastor Weir's story online from the Upper Columbia Conference.

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**Media & Adventist Benefits - World Church Shelves The Record Keeper**

General Conference leadership recently decided to suspend the release of an upcoming 11-episode web series, *The Record Keeper*. The series promised to reach an untapped segment of the world's population with themes of the ultimate struggle between good and evil. The decision took into account a list of theological concerns about the production drafted by the church's Biblical Research Institute (BRI). Approximately $1 million was earmarked for this project, with half of the funds coming from a private donor, and the rest from non-tithe money. The vote to shelve the series has understandably been met with a variety of passionate responses, including this post by Adventist young people, as members around the globe seek to find appropriate ways to creatively express the Adventist mission and message.
Lifelong Learning - Generation Change

by Samuel E. Reyes
Source: Best Practices for Adventist Ministry

The church needs to wake up to the realization that the emerging generation is not just the so-called church of the future, it is the church right now. This generation of young, courageous, and bold Seventh-day Adventist Christians are redefining the very fabric of how we “do church” in our cities, communities, and country.

Like no generation before, our young people have access to limitless information. They live in a world where social media is redesigning the way people interact. They live in a world filled with innumerable ideas, belief systems, and ways of life. And while that world certainly does not answer their deep soul questions, all too often they fail to find relevant answers from their churches. Continue Reading...

Resources - Let’s Talk, Podcasting for Pastors Webinar

Under-thirty-five-year-olds make up more than 50 percent of the church membership. They represent an almost endless supply of ideas, talents, and energy. Tragically, too many are walking away. Let's Talk is a starting point for cross-generational dialogue within our own family, school, and church.

Chip Dizzard is offering a free Podcasting for Pastors webinar on Thursday, April 24. The webinar can be viewed at 4:00, 7:00, or 10:00 pm Eastern Time.

Health & Temperence - 3 Reasons to Get Some Sleep

Ever find yourself burning the midnight oil? After all, we live in a busy society. There's never enough time to do everything we need to do. Between juggling family, church, work......you just don't have the time to sleep, right? There's just too much to do!!! However, I've noticed over the years that if I don't get a good 8 hours of sleep every night, I just can't do anything well. I can't think clearly at work, I snap at my kids. There's a reason why God designed us to sleep. Here is a great article on the subject entitled Three Reasons to Get Some Sleep by Jonathan Parnell from Desiring God. Now read it and GO TO BED!

Parenting Corner - Ideas for Consistent Family Prayer

As a parent, I've struggled with how to teach my children to enjoy prayer. They have learned to pray during worship or for their food or when they hear sirens from a fire truck, ambulance, or police car. But lately they haven't been wanting to pray during our evening worships. What am I doing wrong? How do I teach them to pray in all things and to enjoy it? If you are wondering the same thing, this article by Erika Dawson from For the Family is full of ideas for you.

Marriage Corner - But I'm Too Tired to Be Nice!
Our earlier Health & Temperance article talked about the importance of getting sleep. This is also extremely relevant in our marriage. Many of us feel obligated to be busy, overcommitted, multitasking, and ever-achieving. We don't like being so busy, but we don't know how to make a change in our lives to slow things down. If you are feeling this way, you need to read this article by Arlene Pellicane from Start Marriage Right.
Seven Tips for Introverted Pastors

I have made no secret of my introversion. In fact, being open and honest about it has been a great relief to me. I think a number of people understand me better.

One gift I wish I had been given when I served as a pastor in four different churches was a mentor who would share with me how to function as an introverted pastor. I made a ton of mistakes! I hope my experiences, both bad and good, will prove to be meaningful to pastors today. I have written them in the form of seven tips.

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3. **You just have to attend a few social events.** I'm probably wearing out the introverted pastor with these first three tips. But pastors who avoid all mingling, all counseling, and all social events tend to be viewed as impersonal and uncaring. While an introvert should never plan too much interaction, that pastor must be involved to some level.

4. **Be transparent about your introversion.** Church members will understand you better. Many will be more forgiving about some of the introvert's more annoying traits. Some will identify with you and be glad you were willing to address your introversion publicly.

5. **Use the power of social media to be your voice.** Introverts don't like small talk conversation, but they typically don't mind writing. The more people can “see” you on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, or a blog, the more they will feel like they know you, even though you don’t have one-on-one interaction with them.

6. **Be accountable to an extrovert.** I still am today, even though I no longer serve as a pastor. He reminds me of when I am sinking into extreme introversion. He sees me when I don’t see myself. He tells me how my actions or lack of actions may be perceived.

7. **Book time on your calendar to recover.** If you have been expending lots of energy mingling, counseling, or socializing, you need some down time to recover. Put it on your calendar so you can be intentional about it. And for an hour or so, go to a place by yourself. Read, relax, or do nothing. No one is there to talk to you for those minutes. Enjoy your blessed aloneness for a brief season.

Are you an introverted pastor? How do you handle your introversion in an extroverted world? How have other introverted pastors dealt with their situations?
by Mark Weir

"I will not be attending your Islam and Christianity meetings," said the anonymous letter to the Spokane Valley Church.

Spokane Valley, Wash., March 12, 2014 - "I will not be attending your Islam and Christianity meetings," the opening line of an anonymous letter read. I received this letter several days after the beginning of our recent seminar with Tim Roosenberg. As I read on, I began to smile. This anonymous letter was filled with so many assumptions.

We were accused of "stirring the pot" by only focusing on the fringe elements of Islam. We were accused of making demands on society and trying to control people's behavior. We were told that we offended with our advertising and that we were kooks, especially since our speaker was from Idaho. We were told that our literature was offensive and that we don't care about the poor.

I decided to read the letter one evening to all the guests who were present. If there had been a name or a phone number, I would have contacted that person privately. But since I couldn't do that, I shared the letter with the audience because many coming to the seminar had probably heard similar things from their friends.

As I read through the letter, I stopped several times and asked if what was being done in our meetings fit the descriptions found in the letter? Other than our speaker being from Idaho, everyone agreed the accusations did not match reality. Especially since the only literature we used was the Bible.

Over the course of the next couple of days, the letter became a source of good-natured humor. The next night, a guest brought me a cartoon about the origin of religion (based on the Easter Island statues), and with a smile on his face, wanted me to be sure to know that he had signed his letter. Another man gave a sheet of paper with some questions on it just before the meetings began. I had the letter in my hand as I walked to the platform to begin our meeting and upon seeing this, again with good-natured humor, a different man asked if I had gotten another anonymous letter. We all got a good laugh, but it gave me the chance to share a very key truth. The people coming to our seminar are people who are willing to interact, to listen and learn, to dialogue and disagree. I find this to be a very healthy and helpful aspect of life, especially our spiritual life.

On the final night, Tim Roosenberg issued a challenge. People were asked to either a) bring changes within their current church that it would more closely follow the teachings of the Bible; b) join a church that more closely followed
the teachings of the Bible; or c) start a church that would more closely follow the teachings of the Bible. Many people indicated their plan to do one of the three, with several saying that this is the church home they want to check out.

On Thursday night, there was a chance for people to ask questions, and did they do that! So many people had something they wanted clarified. A few had certain perspectives they wanted to voice. One individual was wrestling with why Sabbath matters so much to us. He said that everyday is a day of worship to the Lord. He brought up several passages of scripture that he believed challenged the need to worship on Sabbath. Tim Roosenberg read the passages and answered the questions. No anger or hostility. Instead, simply sharing and stating that each person must study for themselves and be convinced in their own minds.

A little later, this same gentleman asked why we say all non-Sabbath keepers are going to hell. I carefully shared that we do not believe all non-Sabbath keepers are going to hell. However, I went on to urge that when it comes to our beliefs and behaviors, we need to make sure we are never in rebellion against God. God is the One to convict hearts. The wonderful thing about the entire interaction was just that. It was Interaction.

When I compare an anonymous letter about what someone thinks is happening to a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives and implications, I know which I prefer. Ideas, if they have value, can stand scrutiny. And if they don’t have value, they need the scrutiny.

In our society, we are moving away from interaction and towards sound bites and witty, pithy put-downs. How sad. But I am convinced that it doesn’t have to be that way. The visitors who attended our meetings came to interact and gain understanding. From my experience with our church family, I can say with certainty, our church desires the same thing. May we continue to be a people who value interaction over anonymity.

P.S. This story was written by Pastor Mark Weir of Spokane Valley Adventist Church, was published in The Valley Venture, March 2014 Spokane Valley Church Newsletter and reprinted by permission.
Theological Problems with “The Record Keeper”

Biblical Research Institute, April 9, 2014

In contemplating the message conveyed through “The Record Keeper” film, those assigned in the Biblical Research Institute who watched the film noted the following theological problems:

**View of God and His Perfect Creation**

1. The power of evil and the violence that goes with it is predominant throughout the series, while the crucially important message that “God is love” hardly appears.

2. The beauty and love permeating God’s perfect universe is never really represented. The original creation of the earth is never described, nor is its eventual re-creation, and there is almost as much conflict in heaven as on earth.

3. Satan’s influence permeates heaven long after the evil angels are cast out so that heaven seems to be characterized in terms of the evil and violence on sinful earth.

4. Angels are depicted manipulating events on earth in order for the prophecy to come true of Jesus’ being born in Bethlehem, denying God’s foreknowledge.

5. Satan seems to be in charge of “hell,” where good angels can visit and evil angels can be tortured, but, in Scripture, the words translated “hell” refer either to the grave or to the final destruction of the wicked.

**View of Christ and the Atonement**

1. Having characters in the film say of Jesus “He’s not human” and “He cannot die” denies the foundational doctrine of Jesus as fully human. He is both God and Man.

2. The central role of God’s law in the controversy and the nature of sin (as distinct from evil) are never explained. As a result, there is the danger that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross could be construed in pagan terms.

3. A character incorrectly asserts that Christ’s death “was the pardon.” His death made provision for the pardon and salvation of human beings through faith. This so-called “universal justification,” that everyone was pardoned at the cross misconstrues the atonement and undermines Christ’s ministry as our High Priest.

4. Also wrong is the statement that “the plan required the death of God.” To the contrary, “Deity did not die” (5BC 1113.4). Christ’s death upholds both God’s justice and mercy, but this central truth is hardly visible.
5. Satan and his angels are told that God “sent you to earth to witness the death of His Son,” but the whole universe witnessed Christ’s death so this is not the reason for their banishment. Strongly, but wrongly, implied here and elsewhere is that Jesus died to save evil angels too. However, their destiny was sealed already by their war against God and being cast out of heaven. The reason they were not immediately destroyed was not this but so that Satan’s way of sin and evil could be seen in contrast to God’s way of love and righteousness.

6. The ending of the series is completely unbiblical: Lars, an evil angel, is given a second chance but ultimately commits eternal suicide (as if that were possible and even more desirable), suggesting the possibility of escaping the final judgment and obviating the need of confronting one’s choices in the great controversy.

**View of the Holy Spirit**

1. The Holy Spirit is the one member of the Godhead who has no visible form. Not only is it blasphemous to depict the Holy Spirit as an angel, but to depict the Holy Spirit as a woman suggests the pagan notion that the Father has a consort and that the Son is the product of that union.

2. The feminization of God is unbiblical and lends support to the modernist agenda that seeks to remove male depictions of God.
The Seventh-day Adventist world church leadership suspended the release of its highly anticipated dramatic web series, "The Record Keeper."

The announcement came Friday afternoon via the world church's news service, Adventist News Network.

Here are a few questions you may be asking yourself and our attempt to answer them:

**What was "The Record Keeper"?**

"The Record Keeper" was an upcoming 11-part dramatic series based on the "The Great Controversy" by Ellen G. White.

The series followed the struggle of two angels caught in heaven's civil war. The series also followed the story of another angel tasked with keeping a record of events, while not trying to get involved.

The show's look was steampunk-based. Steampunk is a bit of an aesthetic style —a futuristic science fiction version of the Victorian Era.

The series won some awards and has been screened at a few places in the United States, but hasn't been officially released. The release date had been pushed back several times.

**Who was making "The Record Keeper"?**

"The Record Keeper" was a project by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It was both commissioned and sponsored by the General Conference, according to Spectrum Magazine.
The series was written by Jason Satterlund, Garrett Caldwell, and Rajeev Sigamoney. They also served as producers for the show, with Satterlund directing.

Jason Satterlund is an Adventist filmmaker with Big Puddle Films. Garrett Caldwell is the public relations director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Rajeev Sigamoney is an Assistant Professor of Film and Television Production at Pacific Union College.

**Wait, wasn't the show saved by an online petition?**

A few months ago, "The Record Keeper" was believed to be at risk of being shut down. However, Adventist college students began an online campaign to "Save The Record Keeper."

Williams Costa, Jr., the communications director for the General Conference, subsequently assured fans on "The Record Keeper" Facebook page.

"The General Conference is not considering stepping away from The Record Keeper project," Costa wrote. "The challenges that we currently face have less to do with production than with marketing – what should be the release strategy for a product designed with a specific demographic in mind."

**Why was it cancelled?**

Initially, it would seem the project had been at risk because leaders couldn't figure out how to market the series, as Williams Costa, Jr. said.

However, the current reason given for it's suspension is more along the lines of leaders' expectations and Biblical truth.

The Adventist Church says that the Biblical Research Institute did an analysis of the series and found some "problematic and theologically inaccurate matters."

The Biblical Research Institute says "The Record Keeper" misrepresented Biblical truths, according to Adventist News Network.
The Church hasn't released the Biblical Research Institute's analysis of the series.

**Update (4/18/14):** Adventist News Network has updated its article to include a link to the Biblical Research Institute’s list of objections. [You can read it here.](http://www.printfriendly.com/print?url=http://www.asabbathblog.com/20...)

"Church leaders were looking for a much stronger portrayal of the love of God, the creation of a perfect world, the Plan of Salvation and the final renewal of heaven and earth as recorded in the Bible," ANN reported.

However, the series had been "vetted through many committees and [had been] approved for production," according to Dave Gemmell, Associate Director of the NAD Ministerial Department.

How did the General Conference —with such heavy involvement— not notice any of these "problematic and theologically inaccurate matters" sooner?

Questions remain about why these issues weren't resolved at the writing stage rather than just before being released.

**Why does this matter?**

Here's why the suspension of "The Record Keeper" is so important.

For a while now, many young, creative Adventists —particularly in the North American Division— have felt that their Church didn't care too much about creative visual mediums such film and television.

Media ministries based in North America such as Amazing Facts (independent), 3ABN (independent), and Hope Channel (church-owned) are largely perceived to be targeted to an older generation. Additionally, the Adventist Church's media center in California was recently closed down.

Many young, creative professionals are often disappointed by the quality of work put out by the Adventist Church in North America.

When Adventist students in North America graduate from college with degrees in film, animation, graphic design, or other visual fields, the last place many of these students dream of working is in the church.
This is because many of them —whether right or wrong— perceive their church to be outdated or unsupportive in these areas. Not very encouraging for someone wanting to make great work.

"The Record Keeper" changed many of these students' minds. This series provided a tiny glimpse of hope that their Church was willing to invest in a medium and format that is relevant to our generation.

For a moment, "The Record Keeper" cast doubt on the idea that nothing "cool" comes from the Church. For a moment, "The Record Keeper" showed students that the Adventist Church was willing to try new things.

Here's the main problem:

For many, the trust is gone.

Suspending the series, rather than fixing and releasing it, further cements the idea in many young Adventists that working for the Church isn't worth it. That if they work for the Church, there's a good chance all their hard work will be for nothing or that their ideas won't encouraged.

This is sad.

The Church needs young people not just for their skills or intuition, but because a Church without young people leading out is a dead Church.

Sorry, the article looked too long, so I skipped to the bottom. What's the short version?

The Adventist Church made a highly anticipated series based on The Great Controversy. However, the series won't be released anymore.

Many people are bummed out about it. The General Conference's reputation among young creative Adventists took a hit.
Wow, bummer. This is really negative.

Hmmm, you're right. Let's try thinking positively... let's see... um...

- The General Conference could sponsor another cool project and try all over again
- There's always the chance that the show could have been received poorly or "cheesy" among non-Adventists and its a good thing it wasn't released (even though it was really popular among Adventists).
- At least the South American Division is consistently coming out with cool stuff. We could learn from them — scratch that — we NEED to learn from them.
- I believe God is ultimately in control. I KNOW He will guide you and me and the world church leadership — even if we can't see it from our current point of view.

More articles about The Record Keeper:

- The 13 theological problems with "The Record Keeper" by the Biblical Research Institute
- Exclusive: "The Record Keeper" director talks about why the series was cancelled
- The Record Keeper's release suspended by Adventist Church leadership
- "The Record Keeper" will continue, announces General Conference
- Coming Soon: Adventist Church's steampunk miniseries to begin production this Monday

The Record Keeper Teaser
The church needs to wake up to the realization that the emerging generation is not just the so-called church of the future, it is the church right now. This generation of young, courageous, and bold Seventh-day Adventist Christians are redefining the very fabric of how we “do church” in our cities, communities, and country.

Like no generation before, our young people have access to limitless information. They live in a world where social media is redesigning the way people interact. They live in a world filled with innumerable ideas, belief systems, and ways of life. And while that world certainly does not answer their deep soul questions, all too often they fail to find relevant answers from their churches. In *We Can Keep Them in the Church*, Gary Hopkins and Myrna Tetz note the youth flight in Adventism and the graying of Adventism when they tell us that the average age in the local church back in 1965 was 35, and in 1995 an alarming 65.[1]

According to Thom and Sam Rainer’s research, the youth who leave the church “don’t completely depart from their faith. Rather, they part ways with the church.”[2] Their study of 18-30 year old adults in America who attended church regularly for at least one year during high school identified seven reasons why young people leave their churches:

1. They want to take a break from church.
2. They are turned off by judgmental attitudes and hypocrisy seen in the church.
3. They have moved to another community.
4. Their work responsibilities conflict with their church attendance.
5. They have a busy social life.
6. They are weary of church politics.
7. Their attendance was based only on the desire to please others.

In a five-year research project headed by Barna Group president David Kinnaman, issues that challenge faith development among teens and young adults were identified. The resulting book, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Church*, Kinnaman lists six reasons why “nearly three out of every five young Christians (59%) disconnect permanently or for an extended period of time from church life after age 15:”[3]

1. Churches often seem overprotective, making it difficult for them to connect with the world.
2. Teens’ and 20-somethings’ experience of Christianity is shallow. They say church is irrelevant to their daily lives, that there isn’t enough in-depth study of the Bible and a real/in-depth relationship/experience with God.
3. Churches come across as antagonistic to science. “Research shows that many science-minded young Christians are struggling to find ways of staying faithful to their beliefs and to their professional calling in science-related industries.”
4. Young Christians’ church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic or judgmental. The modes of teaching that the church uses are not relevant to the sexual exposure and education young people have outside the church.
5. Young Christians wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity. “Younger Americans have been shaped by a culture that esteems open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance.”
6. The church feels unfriendly to those who struggle with doubts.

These are just a few of the reasons why this generation is slipping out the back door, and the research suggests that these young people are not likely to return later in life. Something, therefore, has to change in the way we do youth ministry.
Something that will keep our young people connected with God and the church. Something more than a set of rules to feed their faith. Something that will anchor solid conviction and purpose in their beliefs.

More than anything else, our youth need Jesus at the core of their lives. Since the Great Commission commands us to teach and make disciples, we have to ask the question: What are we doing to make true and passionate disciples among our young people?

In next week’s Best Practices for Adventist Ministry, I will share with you some suggested ministry designs for winning and discipling youth and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Samuel E. Reyes is the youth and young adult pastor for the Forest City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Altamonte Springs, Florida

Three Reasons to Get Some Sleep

desiringgod.org/blog/posts/three-reasons-to-get-some-sleep

Life is short. Stay awake for it.

So goes the tagline for the second largest coffee franchise in America. It’s catchy and practical. *Drink our coffee*, it suggests, *not merely for its taste, but for its benefits, that is, to be awake to life.* And the reason being — here comes the resonating connection — life is short. The clock is ticking. Our days are numbered. And we Christians agree (Psalm 90:10; 103:15–16; James 4:14).

Life is too short to sleep all the time.

But life is also too short not to sleep a large part of the time.

The fact is humans need sleep, between 7–8 hours a day. But most of us aren’t getting it. According to studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *sleep deprivation is epidemic.* In the last week articles and infographs have been circulating the web with convincing evidence that this is the real deal.

In addition to that content, here are three reasons why you should get some sleep.

1. *God created you to require sleep for a healthy life.*

In a sense, this highlights the most intuitive reason why we need sleep: *to survive.* Most of us (not all of us) know from experience that going without ample sleep has drastic effects on us physically and emotionally. The latest study claims that going just one night with less than six hours of sleep may alter our genes and cause several side effects — from a higher chance of catching a cold to the loss of brain tissue.

But perhaps the most shared result is that without enough sleep we’re “more likely to get emotional.” Now we know how to fill in that generic term. Without enough sleep, we are more easily stressed and frustrated. Our capacity for patience dissipates. Lack of sleep is a sucker-punch to our ability to listen and think creatively, and therefore be productive.

Personally, one of the toughest things during my time in seminary was sleeplessness (and I think I got more than most guys). David Mathis and I don’t mention sleep in our little book *How to Stay Christian in Seminary,* but it could easily merit its own chapter. Days that followed only a few hours of shut-eye often meant the Hebrew was harder and our home was unhappy. But a good night of sleep was like its own mini-vacation, and it still is.

God created us this way. Just like oxygen and food, we need sleep to work right. It won’t look the same for everyone, and some are in situations where their care for others inhibits a solid snooze, but know for sure that we need sleep. It was God’s idea.

2. *Sleep is the midwife of humility.*

Humility is a heart-virtue that gestates. It matures over time, born by truth and practice. We believe facts about reality (we’re needy creatures, not autonomous beings), and we act in step with those facts.

Next to prayer, sleep may be the most central practice that lines up with the truth of who we are. Sleep is that necessary moment that comes every single day when our bodies go slow and our minds start dragging. They witness to our fragility. And eventually, we will surrender. Our problem, as the studies suggest, is that we don’t surrender soon enough. Oftentimes we push back. The invitation gets handed to us with generous terms, but we resist until we’re wrestled down.
To be sure, some people have trouble falling asleep. One report says 40 million Americans suffer from 70 different sleep disorders. It’s serious, and deserves treatment, which could be simply adopting new habits. But the concern here is the heart of the matter. Whether we fall asleep quickly or not, we can welcome sleep for what it is. We can choose to bow out of the action, to know that the world will be fine without us for a while. We can welcome that segment of the day when we make ourselves most vulnerable, when we exit consciousness and are forced to, in the right sense, “let go, and let God.” Whether we actually say it or not, going to bed prays, at least in practice: “Now I lay me down to sleep. Lord, I pray my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, Lord, I pray my soul to take.”

Sleep is intrinsically a humble thing to do.

3. Sleep is distinctively Christian.

Really, there is something remarkably Christian about sleep. We see this first in the Psalms and then fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

We read in Psalm 3:5–6, “I lay down and slept and woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.” Then we read in Psalm 4:8, “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

It’s Saying Something

Two things are happening here. First, David is making sleep an act of faith in the Lord’s protection. Enemies surround him, and they want to destroy him. But he sleeps. He knows the Lord sustains him and guards him. But why? How does he know this? Here’s the second thing to see: David trusts in God’s protection because of what God says in Psalm 2.

In Psalm 2 we see that the Lord’s King — who is also a Son — will reign. He will have the nations as his heritage and the ends of the earth his possession (Psalm 2:7–8). The Lord exalts him and issues the warning of his supremacy: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” (Psalm 2:12). This is an endorsement that carries throughout the entire Psalter. The Lord is committed to his King, his Son, his Anointed — and David knows it.

David is God’s anointed king, but he mirrors the true and better Anointed King that will descend from his lineage (2 Samuel 7:16). David’s faith in God’s protection, displayed by his sleep, points us to the Son of David who also knew how to sleep — which we see in Mark 4.

Why Jesus Slept

This scene of Mark 4 shows us Jesus and his disciples out at sea when a windstorm arises. The waves are so intense that they’re breaking into the boat, filling it with water (Mark 4:37). The disciples are terrified. This is a shipwreck in the works. But where is Jesus? He is in the stern of the boat asleep on a cushion (verse 38). He wakes up to stop the storm by his word and the disciples are awed. But we as readers — disciples with a canonical conscience — see him sleeping and we’re awed.

Jesus slept for the same reason David did. He knew that his Father would protect him. Based upon what God had promised to his King, to David, to Moses, to Abraham, to Adam — Jesus knew God would keep his Anointed. Sleep was the symbol of faith in that promise. It was for Jesus and for David and for us.

The Same Spirit of Faith

When we sleep we are saying — in that same spirit of faith — that God will protect his Anointed and all those anointed in him (2 Corinthians 1:21). We are saying that no matter how many thousand enemies surround our soul, because of the Father’s commitment to his Son, we will not be destroyed. We will not be condemned. Nothing will ever be able to snatch us out of his hand (John 10:28). Nothing will ever separate us from his love (Romans
When we go to bed, we are saying *that*.

Christian, life is short. You should get some sleep.

Recent posts from Jonathan Parnell:

*Jonathan Parnell* (@jonathanpamell) is a writer and content strategist at Desiring God. He lives in the Twin Cities with his wife, Melissa, and their four children, and is the co-author of *How to Stay Christian in Seminary*. 
Last year we stopped praying together as a family before meals — an impetuous decision born out of my rebellious heart. Prayer at meals had become so perfunctory and rote, just going through the motions and seemingly dead.

That was the problem. **Our mealtime prayers felt dead.**

My kids said the same words every prayer, and I was so tired and longed for the quiet that comes from full mouths and hungry bellies, I just stopped insisting on praying together before meals.

Not long after that, I realized I was wrong to let the habit lapse. Of course we don’t have to pray at mealtimes to be a Christian or even to maintain communion with God. But in busy days and an overly distracted culture, I’ve found that one of the best ways to maintain intimacy with God (and to remember all of His blessings) is to have hard stops built into our days.

In a home of littles and chaos, flexible schedules, mealtimes are regular, consistent occurrences in our days and the perfect time to slow and remember — to praise, to confess, to give thanks, and to present our requests.

But my dilemma remained. **How do we avoid the habitual and find the hunger in prayer?** Of course, it starts with me, but I’ve also found that creating a daily focus for our prayer time helps keep our prayers fresh and our hearts responsive.

**Ideas for Consistent Family Prayer**

What follows are three practices we use in our home to focus our prayers and to be faithful in praying for others.

Praying for ourselves and our own needs comes so naturally, doesn’t it? If I’m not intentional about praying for others, I won’t — at least not consistently. These three ideas, introduced slowly over time, have helped us tremendously as a
family to remember to pray for others and to remember that we serve a God who wants us to present our requests to Him!

**Prayer sticks in the morning**

Using prayer sticks during our morning prayer time helps us to faithfully pray for family and friends on a continual basis. In the past, I've been overwhelmed by how to “organize” our prayer time and prayer list. With so many people for whom to pray and so many needs to cover in prayer, I have sometimes given up and have either neglected to pray for others or have glossed over specific prayers in an effort to ‘get through the list’ (sounds horrible I know)!

We use large popsicle sticks. We took a day to paint and decorate our stash, and on each stick is written a specific family or name. We limit the number of prayer sticks we create (sometimes combining families or groups of friends) in an effort to pray for each one weekly.

In the morning, each of the kids randomly picks a prayer stick and we talk about the person and how we can best pray that day (specific requests, answers, needs, etc.). The kids pray for the person on their stick, and my husband or I will close our time of prayer filling in the gaps we are aware of and leaving the rest to the Lord.

The “used” prayer stick goes into a separate container until we have gone through all the prayer sticks and each person is prayed over. Then we start all over!

**Prayer map at lunch**

At lunchtime, we use our world map for our prayer focus. We've added pictures and pins and printables to our map, and it has now become a reminder to pray for our missionaries, causes, current events, other believers around the world, and the persecuted Church. We work our way around the world, focusing on different countries or continents. The book *Operation World* was a great help when we first started our map and even now as a quick reference and prayer guide.

**Prayer board at dinner**

I first learned of the prayer board after seeing a picture like this on Pinterest. I loved the concept. Here’s the idea behind it – in my mind anyway!

**Having a prayer board is really helpful way to keep track of the many prayer requests that come our way.**

When I tell someone that I am praying for them, I want to actually be praying for them! When a prayer request is shared with us or when we hear of a need, we put it on the board. At dinnertime, we each choose a request to present to God and we lift up the needs of those around us or even within our own family!

As you can imagine, the prayer board is frequently changing as prayers are answered and new requests are added.

We are still implementing our dinnertime prayer board at home because I have yet to buy or make the board! (I love the idea of using a metal board so that we can use magnets. I’ve seen cute options that would fit our decor at Hobby Lobby. I’m just waiting for a great sale and a chance to run out!) Right now we are just using a notebook, but I love the idea of the board because of how easy it is to add and remove requests, update praises, and it is a great visual reminder all throughout the day.

I have loved adding these family prayer ideas into our days. There are some days when we engage in these prayers after eating, but usually, we take the time before we eat and the kids do just fine waiting (we are learning patience, too!).
Question for you:
In what ways does your family engage in prayer together?

Resources for you:

Praying for Our Kids {Resource List}
Praying for Kids around the world (each day of the month)

Blessings,

Erika
It’s a scene that has happened more than once around my house. Feeling tired, I get snippy with my husband James. I give short answers and huff and puff about the smallest inconveniences. If this general irritability persists for more than ten minutes, James will say these magic words:

You need to take a nap. Please go and take a nap.”

Early in our marriage, this used to offend me. What do you mean I need to take a nap? Then my irritability would ratchet up. I’ll show him I don’t need a nap!

But now, when I hear those magic words, I feel a wave of relief wash over my tired body. I walk into my bedroom, close the door, and get under the covers. After an hour, I emerge from my cocoon a new, and much nicer, wife.

It’s must easier to be civil, kind, warm, and loving towards your spouse when you feel rested. If you’re refreshed, you can take a jab in stride or overlook a mishap in your day. But when your physical reserves are depleted, the smallest comment or inconvenience can have you reeling and overreacting.

Many of us feel obligated to be busy, overcommitted, multitasking, and ever-achieving. That’s how people roll these days. We complain about not having enough time in the day, but we’re not sure how to make any changes to our crazy lives. Rest seems unobtainable. Yet Zig Ziglar said it well, “Lack of direction, not lack of time, is the problem. We all have twenty-four hour days.” No matter what you do, you will still have 24 hours a day, just like everyone else. But what can you do to guard your time—and your rest—so you can enjoy your life more and have more to give to the one you love?
You can begin by asking yourself a few questions about your current schedule:

- What activities in your weekly schedule reinforce your values (quality time with your spouse, exercising for your health, prayer, etc.)?
- What extras are taking up your time each week?
- What could you cut out or simplify to make more time for rest?
- Are you getting seven to eight hours of sleep every night? If not, what is preventing you from having that?

If every single hour on your calendar is accounted for, you’re over-scheduled. You need down time. Don’t feel guilty if you have to say no to some extracurricular activities simply because you don’t have the physical energy to pull them off. Taking care of you is not a selfish goal. On the contrary, a rested and non-frazzled version of yourself is a wonderful gift to give your spouse.

There will be seasons when your hours at work will be all-consuming or you have young children who constantly need attending. Rest will be hard to come by. But plan for those times to be exceptions. Design your life so that it’s possible to get the daily rest you need. Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” As you follow Jesus and order your life according to His teachings, you will find rest for your soul and your body too.

Think of the last time you and your spouse had a disagreement. An argument. A heated exchange. A yelling match. Most likely, you were feeling a little moody, fatigued, stressed or hungry when it all started. Being rested and refreshed won’t stop you from disagreeing, but it will certainly steady you and keep you calmer when those disagreements arise.

So the next time you want to take a nap because you’re exhausted, please do yourself and your spouse a favor, and crawl under the covers for a few minutes. No guilt. No worries. Because when you emerge from your rest, you’ll be a much nicer spouse.