

**Romans 13:8-end**  
**Matthew 18:15-20**

**“You snooze, you lose.”**

*“now the moment for you to wake from sleep.” Romans 13:11*

Imagine: it's time for you to wake up one morning, but you just keep sleeping. Sunlight streams into the room, but you're not outside to enjoy a morning walk. Your electronic device plays beautiful music, yet you can't hear it. Your spouse reaches out to hug you, but you can't feel it. Your children and pet try to play with you, but you are unresponsive. One of your friends calls you to talk and you're not available to connect. A project you've been excited about remains undone. Since you're asleep, you miss out.

As we said on our family holiday to those who didn't get up in the morning for the fresh bread and pastries... “you snooze, you lose.”

And it's that phrase, “you snooze, you lose” that came to mind when reflecting on the Romans reading today.

It's easy to see how much you'll miss if you sleep through your days, physically. But many people may not be aware that they are missing out on even more if one is spiritually asleep. It's possible to go through our days, our lives, with our body awake but our inner being asleep... our souls asleep to the movement of God's life giving Spirit and the coming Kingdom.

I'm not saying you can't rest or sleep... but highlighting the danger of our own souls falling asleep to God, to others, to reality and to our own needs.

St Paul is addressing the Christians in Rome, baptised Christians who have known the saving love and mercy of God in Christ, who have come to know life in the Spirit, yet it seems they have encountered spiritual sleepiness.

### **What does spiritual sleeping look like?**

This sleep is a lack of feeling. Dulled senses. Loss of alertness and attentiveness to God.

Losing a sense of who we are and our connection to God. Sleep walking through life!

This sleep is characterized by a loss of reality.

A false “all will be well”

“It's okay to live like this” ignoring problems in self (sin -m complacency, compromise), in the church, in the country, in the world “those problems are nothing to do with me”... a dereliction of personal and corporate responsibility.

Ostrich syndrome. For years the church ignored the fact that people were leaving the church, that people found church boring, that children and young people and families were absent, that the buildings were cold and inadequate for 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This sleep has a false sense of security

This sleep leads to inactivity

This sleep leads to missing out on all God wants for us... missing out on the action and activity and possibilities of God.

### **What might cause us to be spiritually asleep?**

Selfishness and individualism.

Tiredness, exhaustion and a lack of sleep

The addiction and vice like grip of sin: Drunkenness, Gluttony and greed can lead us to be asleep to the Spirit of God. Parable of the Sower – thorns (Matt 13:22)... worries of life and deceitfulness of wealth.

Apathy, Complacency

Half heartedness

Ignorance

Disappointment

Hurt, unforgiveness

Hardness of heart

Self preservation

A Christian is most likely to slumber when his outward circumstances are most pleasant.

And if we snooze, we may lose out big time.

Brothers and sisters... it's time to wake up as Christ's little ones. It's time to wake up as his people, the church. It's time to stir... to get our eyes open, to get out of bed and get moving into the day and times that God has prepared for it. It's time to live and move and have one's being united to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Put off... the bedclothes. Put off the old

Get washed and dressed ... put on... the Lord Jesus... put on the new clothes for the day(s) God has prepared for us to walk in.

To wake up, we must be intentionally cultivating our life in Christ. Nurture a vibrant prayer life, dive into the depths of God's Word, and surround yourself with fellow believers who spur you on towards spiritual growth. Guard against things that hinder intimacy with God and his reign in us, amongst us and around us. If that sounds pretty uninteresting for me/you/us then maybe there is a spiritual sleepiness.

SO practically, what can we do?

### **1. Pursue Wonder**

Wonder and awe... reaching out beyond ourselves... enlarges perspective and helps us see beyond our circumstances to God, who offers us hope that's greater than our circumstances. Life is often busy and stressful and tough. However, if we allow life's demands to prevent us from paying attention to wonder, we'll be spiritually asleep – unaware of God's purposes and God at work in our lives. Intentionally pursue wonder – and expectation of God working in our lives and in our world.

### **2. Use your senses to the fullest.**

Our physical senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching – can be powerful tools to connect with God. Our Creator's qualities are displayed in creation. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse," Romans 1:20.

**Watch** a sunset and ponder the light of hope that Jesus offers the world.

**Listen** to music and let it evoke deep appreciation in you for the harmonious order of creation.

**Smell** the fragrance of a rose or the amazing bread and feel awe for the sweetness of God's love.

**Taste** one of your favourite foods and savour gratitude for God's gift of it to you.

**Touch** a rock and let it remind you of God's rock-solid trustworthiness.

The more we use your senses (physicality of faith is important), the more you can wake up spiritually

### **3. Notice...**

Using eyes and ears and observation and self awareness to notice people, notice how you're feeling, notice how others are feeling and reacting, notice the birdsong, notice the pollution, notice the beauty and the

brokenness, notice what is good and lovely and kind, notice what is incongruent, notice God's presence and God's absence. Notice your unforgiveness, your Achilles heal; notice your resentment and need for healing and need for God. Notice what makes you joyful and gives you peace. Notice love and kindness. Notice body (and Body) language. Noticing awakens our inner being and puts us in touch with reality in the physical and spiritual realm.

#### **4. Approach prayer and meditation as opportunities rather than obligations.**

Prayer... talking and listening to God... can become just empty rituals when we're spiritually asleep. However, prayer is meant to be an awe-inspiring experience. God in Christ has made it easy to communicate with him, and it's an awesome privilege to be able to do so. Yet it can seem like a chore when we're busy or distracted. We feel guilty when we don't do it... and try to catch up so much so that it feels like fulfilling a duty.

It's time to rekindle the love. There is this great story about an old man that John Vianney found in the Church just staring at the tabernacle. The priest asked him what he was doing and the man explained, "I look at him and he looks at me." Sometimes this is all we have to do during prayer. We simply need to gaze at Jesus and let Jesus gaze back at us.

#### **5. Be teachable. Be willing to learn every day.**

If we're not learning we can end up spiritually asleep. I've written about being teachable in the Parish Mag. Every day God gives you is full of opportunities to learn something new and it keeps us growing and changing. Reading, conversation, debate, travel, music, art, gardening... can all connect us with God and help wake us up to him. A open mind and an open heart leave us open to learning and leaves room for the Spirit to flow.

#### **6. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind.**

It's vital to ask the Holy Spirit to renew our minds and hearts. "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will,"

Brothers and sister wake up! If we snooze, we'll lose out on what God has prepared for those who love him.