

Insomnia

By Connie Larson

Insomnia is having periods of not enough sleep. It can last for a day or for weeks. It can leave you feeling exhausted, depleted and defeated. Sleep deprivation and the resulting excessive fatigue can affect you both physically and mentally.

I. Recognize that insomnia may be the result of several factors.

- A. Insomnia may be caused by physical issues such as sickness, the side effects of medications including antibiotics, taking diet pills, and hormonal changes. Get a doctor's check up.
- B. Circumstances may also result in insomnia, such as loud noises while trying to sleep, work schedule changes – working nights and sleeping during days, and interrupted sleep.
- C. Bad Habits – bringing work home at night, watching late night TV, sleeping too much during the day, laziness, caffeine intake late in the day, eating before bedtime, no exercise.
- D. Insomnia may be a result of not solving problems biblically, such as worry, fear, anxiety and guilt.

II. Apply Biblical Principles for getting sleep

- A. Solve problems biblically everyday – Eph 4:26, 1 Jn 1:9, Phil 4:6-7
- B. Meditate on God's Word: Joshua 1:8, Ps. 63:6, 42:8 Rather than trying to go to sleep, concentrate on seeing how long you can stay awake meditating on God's Word. This turns the focus off the things that keep one awake and onto God's Word.
 - 1. Focus your thoughts on the Lord's protection: Psalm 4:8
 - 2. Focus on the fear of the Lord: Prov 19:23
 - 3. Focus on trusting in the Lord: Job 11:18-19, Prov. 3:24, Is. 26:3
- C. Pray – the best prayer at this time is one that meditates on God's Word and focuses on Him and His goodness:
- D. Praise and be grateful for God's blessings in your day:

When you lay down to sleep, it is best not to focus on going to sleep, but use the time awake in a way that glorifies the Lord. Change your focus from sleep to the Word of God. (Psalm 119:147-148).

Insomnia can become progressively worse if not dealt with biblically. One can become anxious about not getting enough sleep to handle his daily responsibilities.

III. Aids to a good night's sleep

- A. Keep a regular sleep schedule. Getting up at the same time helps anchor your schedule
- B. Pay attention to what and when you eat. Avoid Caffeine and big meals late in the day. Protein foods foster alertness, carbohydrates foster sleepiness.
- C. Exercise seems to have a more beneficial effect on sleep if performed in the late afternoon, rather than just before bedtime.
- D. Work that pleases God during the day is a great help to sleep: "The sleep of the working man is sweet and thus pleasant" (Eccl. 5:12). Avoid doing work late into the night – Ps. 127:1-2

Most of the time failure to fall asleep is due to thinking about problems of life, worrying about them, or even worrying about not going to sleep. Apply the biblical principles listed above to help get sleep.



Insomnia - Study Guide

Lesson 1

1. Memorize Matthew 11:28-30. Commit your sleep problem to the Lord.
2. Pray and ask God for His help as you work through your problem – Heb. 4:14-16.
3. Get a journal to write down the things you learn about your sleep patterns, the problems that may be causing fear, anxiety and worry, and the things you learn from God and the Bible. Keep a daily log of your daytime and nighttime activities: when you go to bed, when and for how long you sleep, what you do during the day, what you do right before you go to bed.
4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and write in your journal at least 5 points you learn from this verse and how they help you with your problem.
5. Make a list of matters that are troubling you at the moment.
6. Read through the Principles for Sleep listed above.
7. Get a physical, if you haven't had one in the past 6-12 months, especially if you have had major recent changes in your sleep patterns.

Lesson 2

The Bible says a lot about sleep and what affects our sleep. This week we will begin to look at some of these Scriptures and start examining what factors may be keeping us from getting good sleep.

1. Read through the following verses and write down what they say about sleep: Psalm 127:1-2, Ecclesiastes 5:12, Proverbs 3:13-26, Psalm 4:8.
2. Read Psalm 127:1-2 again. These verses are about relying on yourself rather than God. In what ways is the person in this psalm relying on himself? In what areas of your life have you been relying on yourself? List all the areas where you tend to be self-reliant. What changes need to be made in your life?
3. Memorize Psalm 4:8.
4. Read the booklet by Jerry Bridges, *You Can Trust God*, and write down your key insights. You can order it from Amazon.com.
5. Continue to keep a log of your sleep patterns, activities and problems during the day, eating and exercise, and anything else that may influence your sleep.

Lesson 3

This week's lesson is on what we should be thinking about when we are awake in the night hours. If you are lying awake for more than 20 minutes, get up, grab your Bible and journal and spend time reading in the Word.

1. Read the following verses and write down what you should be thinking about during the sleepless hours: Psalm 1:2, Joshua 1:8-9, Psalm 63:6, Philippians 4:8.
2. What other things can you do in the night according to the following verses: Psalm 16:7, Psalm 42:8, Job 35:10, Psalm 77: 6, Psalm 149:5, Psalm 119:55.
3. Make a plan for what you will meditate on when you are awake in the night. List things to think about and do – for example: I will thank the Lord for all His blessings; I will think of as many characteristics of God that I can and praise His name, I will write a song about the Lord in the night, etc.
4. Make good use of your sleepless hours. When you lay down to sleep, it is best not to focus on going to sleep, but use the time awake in a way that glorifies the Lord. Change your focus from sleep to the Word of God. (Psalm 119:147-148).

Lesson 4

Fearful thoughts can be a contributing factor to insomnia. This is an important area to examine.

1. Read Proverbs 3:13-26. According to these verses, what can keep you from having sweet sleep?
2. Write down all the fearful thoughts you have been having – when you are awake in the night, before you go to sleep, etc. Keep a pad and pencil by your bed to write down your thoughts.
3. What does the Proverbs passage tell you to do to get sleep?
4. List all the benefits of finding wisdom found in these verses.
5. Memorize Isaiah 26:3
6. Read in your Bible daily. Begin reading through Proverbs and write down any insights you gain about your life, how you have not been living wisely, what things need to change in your life, what you learn about God and His ways. Have a section in your notebook called "Wisdom for Living." Write down the date, the verses that give you insight and what you learn.

Lesson 5

Guilt over unconfessed sin can be a contributing factor to troubled sleep. Insomnia does not mean that sin is your problem, but it is important to examine this area and gain a clear conscience through confessed sin and repentance.

1. Confess your sins to God on a daily basis. Ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal to you any sins that you need to deal with. Read Psalm 139:23-24 and Jeremiah 17:9-10.
2. Study Psalm 32:1-7, Proverbs 28:13, and 1 John 1:8-9. What are the blessings of confessing your sin? What are some of the results of not confessing sin?
3. Write down each sin the Lord reveals to you. Confess each sin. To confess means to agree with God, so agree with God that you have sinned and ask for forgiveness.
4. What does James 5:16 add to the equation and why is it important?
5. Thank God for His forgiveness

Lesson 6

Anxiety is a common contributing factor to insomnia. Worrying about life issues can keep you awake in the night. Even worrying about not getting enough sleep can keep you from falling asleep or falling back to sleep.

1. Read Philippians 4:6-9. Write down the specific commands found in these verses. These are the things you are to do instead of worrying.
2. What should your prayer include according to these verses?
3. Make a "Think List" of things to think about when you get anxious. This list should include truths about God, what He has done and the promises He has made to you. Find specific Scripture that speaks truth to your anxious thoughts.
4. Practice. During the daytime, practice the process in this passage: pray, think and do (practice). Take one of your anxious thoughts and decide not to be anxious about it. Recognize that to be anxious is sin. Confess to God and ask Him to help you. Pray about the situation. Be sure to be thankful.
5. Memorize the passage-Philippians 4:6-9.

Lesson 7

In a time of lack of sleep and weariness, you lose sight of the fact that God is sovereign. He is ultimately in charge of your life, and He has His plans and purposes for using this difficult situation in your life.

1. Consider what God's purposes may be during this time of difficulty. Read Romans 8:28-29, James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Isaiah 43:1-7. For each passage write out the purposes of God found in each passage and how you see God working these out in your life.
2. How do you see God using this difficult time to conform you to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29)? Give thanks to God.
3. Be sure that you are faithful to spend time in God's Word every day and write down one thing that He teaches you.
4. Memorize Romans 8:28-29.

Lesson 8

Meditating on God's promises is a valuable use of time while you are lying awake at night. Meditating is thinking about what you read, what it means and how it applies to the different areas of your life.

1. Read and memorize 2 Peter 1:3-4.
2. According to the above passage, what has God promised believers? What is God's purpose for giving us promises?
3. Read Romans 8:16-39, Psalm 23, Psalm 27:1-4 and list as many promises as you can find in these passages.
4. Begin a file or section of your notebook to write down God's promises. This is a great tool to have and to refer to during times of hopelessness, despair, frustration, and anxiety.
5. Before you go to bed each night review your memory verse. When you wake up in the night meditate on that verse.

Lesson 9

Those who have had a sleepless night often dread the morning. They dread what the day will bring, because they are concerned that they will not have the reserves to handle what is required of them.

1. Look at the following Scriptures and write down what they say about the morning: Lamentations 3:22-23, Isaiah 33:2, Psalm 5:3,
2. Read and memorize Psalm 118:24. What does it mean to rejoice? Do a study on the word, rejoice. Here are a few Scripture verses to get you started: Psalm 31:7, Philippians. 3:1, 4:4. Write down everything you learn about rejoicing. Use a Bible concordance (you may have one in the back of your Bible) to look up other verses on rejoicing. If you have a study Bible there may be a little number or letter next to the word *rejoice* in the verse-that is the cross reference number. If you look in the margin or at the bottom of your Bible, it will give you other verses where that word is used. Look them all up.
3. Each day, begin by rejoicing in the Lord, because according to Philippians 3:1, it is a safeguard for you. Rejoicing will keep you from despair; it will keep you from cycling down into the untrue, unbiblical thinking of fear, worry and despair. You will also find that it changes your attitude about the day.

Lesson 10

1. Through the previous lessons you have worked through a lot of God's great truths. You have learned how to change your unbiblical way of thinking and doing to a more biblical way. You have learned how to pray, how to think, how to memorize, how to meditate and how to study God's Word. You now have some great tools in your toolbox that will help you during your sleepless nights. These tools will be useful for combating unbiblical thinking in all areas of your life. Go over your tools; look at your lists – the Think List, Wisdom for Living lessons, the list of promises, your thankfulness list, etc.
2. Write down a list of some of the key lessons you learned.
3. What has been most helpful in overcoming the distress of insomnia?
4. What changes have you seen take place in your life over the past 10 weeks?
5. Write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Insomnia - Application of Bible Verses to Sleep

1. **Matthew 11:28-30**

Jesus calls those who are weary and heavy-laden to come to Him. He is calling those who are tired and exhausted from the heavy burdens they have been carrying. This is a call to those who are weary from not getting enough sleep. Sometimes it takes physical exhaustion before one realizes that he cannot carry life's burdens in his own strength. The heavy burden can refer to trying to live up to the standard of the Law on your own. This is a welcome call from the loving Savior to recognize that you need Him. Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon us (v29). This is an invitation to discipleship – to yoking ourselves with the Lord so that we can learn from Him. It is when you commit to learning from Jesus that you find rest for your souls. It is a choice. Choose to trade your heavy, tiring burdens for His yoke and burden, which by contrast are easy and light. Committing to learning God's ways is the beginning step in finding rest for your soul, and with a restful soul you can begin to have a restful night of sleep (Pr 3:21-24).

2. **1 Corinthians 10:13**

When a person is lacking sleep, or when he is lying on his bed awake when he should be asleep, he can become hopeless and feel that he is alone in the night. If sleeplessness continues for many nights, he can think that God has left him and that there is no way out. There are several wonderful truths in this verse that can give hope. First of all, the counselee needs to hear that this is not an uncommon situation. Human beings have problems with sleep. In fact, sleep is mentioned many times in the Bible, and we will be looking at what God has to say about it. Second, God is faithful. He will not leave you, He will keep His promises, and He will give you whatever you need to get through this difficult time, so that you can endure it. Third, it gives hope to know that there is a way through the trial. There is light at the end of the tunnel and this verse says that God is going to make sure you make it through.

3. **Psalms 127:1-2**

Insomnia can be the result of dependence on self. A man or woman can work hard to try to be a success and have his family protected and well cared for, but unless he entrusts himself and his family into the Lord's hands, "unless the Lord builds the house," all his work is in vain. It is important to make sure the Lord is the foundation of your life, and that you are building your life on the foundation of God's Word. You can do whatever it takes to protect your family – security systems, dogs, hard work, worry about your children, but "unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain." You need to rely on the Lord completely or all your efforts are of no use. If you are staying up at nights working hard, you are wasting your time and energy, because it is vain for you to stay up late to get more work done (v. 2). The Lord promises that He "gives to His beloved even in his sleep."

4. **Ecclesiastes 5:12**

A good hard day of work is the best thing for a good night sleep. This verse is in the context of a discussion on satisfaction and contentment. "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money." He always wants more. Work hard and be content with what you have and you will know pleasant sleep.

5. **Proverbs 3:21-26**

Fear can cause you to have trouble sleeping in the night. You may be afraid of doing the wrong thing, or failing at something, or maybe you have fearful thoughts that something disastrous will happen, and these thoughts intrude upon your sleep. You may struggle with the "what ifs" of life. What if this happens, or what if that happens. Solomon tells us that the way to get a good night sleep is to learn God's ways and do them. He says: "keep sound wisdom and discretion." You don't need to be afraid of

sudden disaster, because the “Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught” (v26). God tells us that sweet sleep is for the man who finds wisdom and understanding. When you live your life according to God’s ways you will be able to go to bed without fear. For example: if you follow God’s principle of being honest then you don’t need to fear being caught in your lie.

6. Joshua 1:8-9

Both Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2 give us the instruction to meditate on God’s Word day and night. Meditation is not just a daytime activity. Meditation is the process of thinking over what God’s Word says and applying the principles of what you read to your real life situations. It is helpful to read, study, and memorize Scripture during the day, and then while you lie on your bed at night you can recall to your mind what you have been learning. Think back over your day and consider how the principles applied, or could have applied to what happened during the day. What changes need to be made? What could you do tomorrow to specifically apply the truths you have learned. Meditating on God’s Word at night gives your mind the true, right and noble things to think on (Phil. 4:8), rather than getting caught up in the sinful thought patterns of worry, fear, and guilt.

7. Psalm 4:8

When you trust in the Lord (v.5) you can both lie down and sleep in peace. A person who trusts the Lord recognizes that He is God is completely sovereign, that He is all wise, and that He is perfect in love. Peace is the natural by-product of trusting God, because you know that God alone is able to take care of you completely. He is the One who can make you dwell in safety.

8. Philippians 4:6-9

Anxiety can be one of the biggest hindrances to sleep. You can be lying in bed worrying about your children, the finances, your marriage, your job, you name it, and you find that it is impossible to fall asleep with all these worries on your mind. This passage gives us a way to overcome anxiety in a three part plan. First of all it is important to see that worry is a sin. We are commanded in verse 6 to not be anxious. We all know how difficult it is to just stop worrying about something. These verses give us the specific ways to replace worrying. First, we are to pray about *everything*. God wants us to talk to Him about the things that are troubling us and the things that we are worried about. This is what prayer is – it is coming to God with our needs. We are to ask Him for what we desire Him to do. In other words we are to let our supplications and petitions be made known to Him. Take note that we are to pray with thanksgiving. God desires that we be thankful. The great thing about being thankful is that it is a great focus. When you begin to thank God for Who He is, what He has done, and what He is able to do, you begin to experience the peace that passes understanding. For example if you find yourself lying in bed worrying about your daughter who is out with friends, first, confess to the Lord that you are sinning by worrying, and then ask the Lord to protect your daughter, to help her drive safely and make wise decisions. Then you can thank Him for loving your daughter more than you do, and for His promise to never leave her nor forsake her. You will find that God’s peace will fill your heart.

Verse 8 tells us what we are to think about, so we aren’t anxious. This is a discipline of the mind. It takes practice and hard work to replace anxious thoughts with the truths of God.

Verse 9 instructs us that it takes practice to learn to be obedient to these instructions for overcoming anxiety, but it can be done. We need to do it again and again so that it becomes more natural. The more we handle our anxiety according to God’s plan, the more we will have the peace of God.

9. Psalm 63:6

This verse tells the sleepless person that on his bed at night, he is to meditate on God. The first eight verses of this psalm give you specific things about God to meditate on. “You are my God” (v1), “Your power and Your glory” (v2), “Your lovingkindness is better than life” (v3), “You have been my help” (v7), and “Your right hand upholds me” (v8).

10. Lamentation 3:21-24

This is a passage both of instruction and hope for the one who has had a night of agony. Jeremiah shows us by example how to face each new day when he said, “This I recall to my mind.” To recall is to bring to your remembrance what has happened in the past. It means to go over those things that are true. It is when you remember these things that you will have hope. Jeremiah reminds us that “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses (His mercies) never cease, and His compassions never fail, they are new every morning.” A great exercise is list all the ways God has shown compassion and mercy to you. God is faithful. To be faithful means you will be true to your word. God is faithful – He will keep His Word.

