

“Staying Awake”  
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“After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.” (Acts 20:1-16)

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Pastor Wally said that Paul’s ministry model was that of strengthening and encouraging the church. 1 Peter 4:10-11 tells me that “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” John Piper was said that “God wants us to know that our gifts are not an accident of genetics and experience. He knew what he was doing when he made each of us and he has intentionally given us the gifts we have in the measure we have them. Therefore, we are stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us. And he has entrusted them to us primarily for the benefit of others...So, live your assignment. Steward your gifts to the utmost for the sake of others. Aspire to be the very best and most fruitful you that you can be for God’s glory. Don’t dishonor God by devaluing the gifts he’s given you.” God expects me to use the gift that He has given me and to be a “good steward” of that gift, so what is my ministry model or am I just “winging it”? Explain.

“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.” (Acts 20:7) Two quick points: 1) the first day of the week (Sunday) is the Lord’s Day (see Revelation 1:10) because of Jesus’ resurrection (see Luke 24:1), (the Sabbath is observed on Saturday) and, 2) in

the early days, it was the custom that on each Lord's Day, disciples of Jesus came together to receive the Lord's supper. The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out that "[p]robably the church met at night because most people had to work during the day" and it should also be noted that most people went to bed shortly after sunset. That being said, people came to hear Paul speak, and speak, and speak...until midnight. For the people present, it had already been a very long day and yet, they came. After putting in a long day of work and it being passed my normal bedtime, would I have shown up to hear Paul speak? If so, why so? If not, why not?

I believe the people in attendance came with great expectations that Paul was going to tell them things they needed and wanted to hear. The ad would have been something like "FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY! Hear the Apostle Paul talk about Jesus! There is limited seating, so come early!" How about me on Sunday mornings? What is my level of expectation (or excitement) when I attend church? Explain.

Eutychus did not just "doze off" while he was sitting on the window ledge. He fell into "a deep sleep". This points to the idea that he wasn't just tired...he was completely exhausted. If Paul started preaching at 7 p.m., by this time, he would have been preaching for 5 hours without the use of any videos or PowerPoint presentations. It should be remembered that the Pilgrims of the 1600's sat on backless log benches for the hour-long opening prayer which was followed by a two-hour sermon each Sunday. In our world, we are clock watchers wondering how long a church service will last. John MacArthur once noted: "The problem in the Early Church wasn't how do you get the people to come. It was how do you get them to go home? And let me tell you something, friends. This has been the characteristic of every period of reformation and revival in the history of the Church. You know that John Calvin preached every day for hours, day after day after day, year after year after year, and so did Martin Luther? And it was out of that the great days of the Reformation revival was spawned. That's been the history of the Church. Great men of God preach day after day after day after day in certain cities, and great revivals broke out. And people came, and they learned." Why do we tend to struggle if a church service goes longer than 90 minutes?

So, maybe I've not fallen asleep during a church service, but have I ever mentally "taken a walk on the beach" (day dreaming)? If so, why? If not, why not?

What are some things that I can do to help me maintain focus during church services?

What are some things in my life that causes me to become physically, mentally, and/or spiritually exhausted and why?

What I value most can be determined by what it is that I am willing to throw away or stop doing. In what way(s) have I allowed my daily schedule/activities to dictate my priorities?

In what way(s), if any, have I discarded spiritual disciplines such as prayer, studying the Scriptures, attending church with like-minded believers, and ministry for other things that I believe to be important in my life? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that I should not “grow weary of doing good” and cited Galatians 6:7-10 (“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”) Proverbs 3:27-28 tells me: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.” What are some of the warning signs that I am growing weary of doing good?

Charles Spurgeon, preaching on Galatians 6:9 regarding Sunday School teachers and growing weary on November 8, 1877 said: “Teachers may the more readily tire because the work lasts on year after year. If you are all Sunday-school teachers I am very happy to perceive so many grey and bald heads among you. It looks well. I admire the veterans of your army. There ought to be an “Old Guard” as well as new regiments. Why leave this work to young beginners? Did not David say, “Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord,” when he was in the prime of life? Why, then, do so many cease to teach when they are best qualified to do so?... I find the Greek word contains the idea of being “disheartened:” “Let us not lose heart.” This is a soul-weariness against which we must resolutely fight. It comes to many good workers and shows itself in different ways. Some think the work less important than they did at the first; others fear that their part of it will prove an utter failure. This is heart-weariness...Come, my persevering comrades, let us not be discouraged: “In due season we shall reap,” even we. You shall have your share with others. Though you feel as though you must give it up, you shall yet reap. After sowing all this while, do not cease from labor when reaping time is so near.” When I grow “weary” in the ministry that God has gifted me, how do I respond to weariness? Explain.

In order for me to grow weary of God’s Word, the idea implies an extensive and regular study of Scripture on my part. Is my study of Scripture a “must-do” activity for me or not and why?