

James Bryan Smith

THE GOOD
and
BEAUTIFUL
GOD



FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE GOD JESUS KNOWS

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What Are You Seeking?



Would you like to have abiding peace? Would you like to have a heart that is filled with love? Would you like to have the kind of faith that sees everything—even your failures and losses—in light of God’s governance for good? Would you like to have the kind of hope that endures even in discouraging circumstances?

If this is the life you most deeply desire, then this book is meant for you.

A lot of people want to change and would answer yes to these questions, but many of them do not believe it is possible. After years of trying and failing, they lead a Christian life of quiet desperation, longing for change and yet certain it will never happen. So they sit in their pews each week, sighing silently, resigned to their fate.

I used to think that way. I tried and tried and tried to change. I prayed and prayed, pleading with God, begging God to change me. All to no avail. I wanted to become the kind of person Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount—a person who loved his enemies and never worried about anything. But when I looked into my own heart, I discovered that I not only did not love my enemies, I didn’t even love some of my friends, and I worried about everything.

Change came when, through two gifted mentors, I learned that transformation happens through training my soul. Richard Foster's understanding of how the spiritual disciplines work and Dallas Wil-

Describe your own experience with trying (and perhaps failing) to change. Could it be that the problem was not a lack of effort, but a lack of proper training? Explain.

lard's understanding of how we interact with the kingdom of God are unsurpassed. The passion of my life has been to find the answer to this question: How do we become like Christ?

I have come to believe that the problem is not that we do not want to change, nor is the problem that we are not trying to change. The problem is that

we are not training. We have never been taught a reliable pattern of transformation.

PEACE AND JOY IN AN AIRPORT

Craig is one of the people who took part in the experiment in developing a curriculum for Christlikeness. After being involved in an apprentice group, Craig began to notice some real changes in his life in the way he behaved toward his family, friends and coworkers. He is a zoo architect, which requires him to travel a lot. One day he and his business colleague were flying back to the United States from Germany when they got stuck in the Atlanta airport and were told their flight home would be delayed several hours. Those several hours passed, and a few hours more, and then finally they were told the flight had been cancelled. The delay meant that there were no options to get home that night, and they would have to spend the night in Atlanta.

The anger level in the concourse was reaching a fever pitch. All of the passengers were forced into a long line to rebook their flights. Craig and his business partner stood in line and watched as each person spoke harshly to the young woman who was trying to help

them. When it was Craig's turn, he looked at the young woman, smiled and said, "I promise I am not going to be mean to you." Her countenance softened, and she said softly, "Thank you." Their exchange was pleasant, and he got their flights booked for the next day. As they walked down the concourse, Craig was smiling despite the disappointment. His business partner had been watching him. He said, "Craig, I have known you for a long time. A year ago you would have been enraged by what we went through today, and you would have lit into that woman at the counter."

Craig said, "You know what, you're right. But I have changed. I know who I am, and I know where I am. I am a person in whom Christ dwells, and I live in the kingdom of a God who loves me and is caring for me. I'm frustrated, but I'm still at peace. We'll get home tomorrow. There's nothing for us to do. Anger doesn't help anything. I figure we might as well enjoy this unexpected turn of events."

His friend just shook his head in amazement. "I'm not sure what you've been eating or drinking, but you have really changed."

It was what Craig had been *doing* and *thinking* for the last year that brought about the change. Craig had followed his desire to become a different kind of person by signing up for the apprentice group and training for transformation. Craig was not alone. His desire to do the work, and the changes he experienced as a result, occurred only because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Not by his own willpower.

FALSE NARRATIVE: WE CHANGE BY OUR WILLPOWER

When people decide to change something, they muster their "willpower" and set about trying to change some behavior. This nearly always fails. Approximately 95 percent of New Year's resolutions are broken by the end of January. Most people assume, when they fail to keep their resolution, that they did not have enough willpower. They think of themselves as weak and feel badly about their failure.

That is unfortunate. The reason they failed was not a lack of

willpower. In fact, the will actually has no power. The will is the human capacity to choose. *Should I wear a red shirt or a blue one?* we ask ourselves. Ultimately we choose the blue one, and our will is the hinge on which the decision is made. But the will does not actually do anything. If I could look inside you to find your will, I would never find it. It is not next to your gallbladder! It is not an organ or a muscle that can grow or atrophy.

The will is more like a beast of burden that simply responds to the impulses of others. A horse does not choose where to go, but goes in whatever direction the rider tells it to go. The will works like that. Instead of one rider, it has several. The three primary influencers on the will are the mind, the body and the social context. First, what we think in our minds will in turn create emotions, which leads to decisions or actions. Second, the body is a complex inner working of impulses that influence the will. Most of our bodily system runs without our help, but when the body has a need (food, water) it expresses itself to the mind through feelings (hunger, thirst) and alerts the mind to send a message to the will: *Get food now*. Finally, the will is also influenced by our social context. We are highly influenced by the people around us. We call this “peer pressure.”

The will is neither strong nor weak. Like a horse, it has only one task: to do what the rider (the mind, influenced by the body and the social realm) tells it to do. Therefore, change—or lack thereof—is not an issue of the will at all. Change happens when these other influencers are modified. The good news is that we have control over those other influencers. When new ideas, new practices and new social settings are adopted, change happens.

JESUS' NARRATIVE: WE CHANGE BY INDIRECTION

Jesus understood how people change. That is why he taught in stories. He used narrative to explain his understanding of God and the world: “The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed.” “A man had two sons . . .” If we adopt Jesus’ narratives about God, we will know God

properly and right actions will follow. And the opposite is true. We change not by mustering up willpower but by changing the way we think, which will also involve changing our actions and our social environment. We change indirectly. *We do what we can in order to enable us to do what we can't do directly.* We change by the process of indirection.

Peyton Manning practiced indirection. He was the winning quarterback of Super Bowl XLI. It was a rainy night, and the ball was slippery. But Manning only fumbled once and threw one interception. Rex Grossman, the quarterback for the losing team, fumbled twice and was picked off twice—perhaps twice as bothered by the rain as Manning. A few weeks after the Super Bowl a reporter discovered that every few weeks during the year Manning has his center (the one who snaps him the ball), Jeff Saturday, snap him water-soaked footballs. He practices handling wet footballs so he will be ready in case it rains—even though his team plays half of their games in a dome. Manning did what he could do (practice handling wet footballs over and over) to enable him to do what he could not without this preparation (play great in the rain).

We cannot change simply by saying, “I want to change.” We have to examine what we think (our narratives) and how we practice (the spiritual disciplines) and who we are interacting with (our social context). If we change those things—and we can—then change will come naturally to us. This is why Jesus said his “yoke” was easy. If we think the things he thought, do the things he did and spend time with likeminded people, we will become like him, and it will not be difficult. If someone had asked Peyton Manning after the Super Bowl, “So, was it hard handling that wet football?” he would have likely said, “No. I practice that all the time when no one is watching.” That is the perfect illustration of indirection.

I believe there is a reliable method of changing our hearts. It is not complicated, nor is it difficult. It does not rely on willpower. We begin with the triangle of transformation. It involves four basic elements: (1) changing the stories in our minds, (2) engaging in new

practices (3) in reflection and dialogue with others who are on the same path, (4) all under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

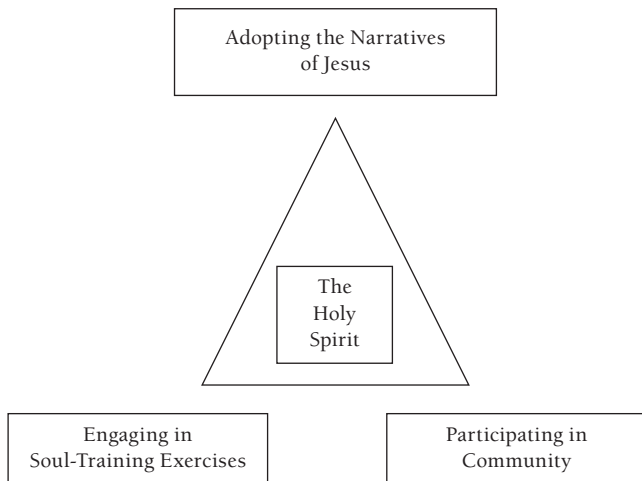


Figure 1. The four components of transformation

STEP ONE: CHANGING OUR NARRATIVES

We are creatures who live by our stories. From early on we are told stories by our parents, which help us interpret how life is or how life ought to be. We are naturally drawn to stories and must follow them to their conclusion because stories are exciting. Jesus taught primarily in story form. One reason might be that stories are memorable. We may not be able to remember many (or any) of the Beatitudes, but we all can remember the story of the prodigal son.

When we have a significant experience—one that shapes us—we turn it into a story. For example, a powerful experience from childhood may have been a special birthday party where you got the gift you had been hoping for. You do not remember the event in exact detail. You remember it as a narrative—who was there, what was said, how you felt, what the cake looked like.

Narrative is “the central function . . . of the human mind.” We turn

everything into a story in order to make sense of life. We “dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.” In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures. Our stories help us navigate our world, to understand right and wrong, and to provide meaning (“So the moral of the story is . . .”).

There are all kinds of narratives. *Family* narratives are the stories we learn from our immediate families. Our parents impart to us their worldview and their ethical system through stories. Key questions such as Who am I? Why am I here? Am I valuable? are answered early on in the form of narrative. There are *cultural* narratives that we learn from growing up in a particular region of the world. From our culture we learn values (what is important, who is successful) in the form of stories and images. Americans, for example, are taught the value of “rugged individualism” through the stories of our past (the Revolution, the pioneers). There are *religious* narratives—stories we hear from the pulpit, the classroom and religious books that help us understand who God is, what God wants of us and how we ought to live. Finally, there are *Jesus’* narratives, the stories and images Jesus tells to reveal the character of God.

We are shaped by our stories. In fact, our stories, once in place, determine much of our behavior without regard to their accuracy or helpfulness. Once these stories are stored in our minds, they stay there largely unchallenged until we die. And here is the main point: these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives.

Once we “find” the narratives inside our minds, we can measure them against Jesus’ narratives. Because Jesus is the preexistent and eternal Son of God, no one knows God or the nature and meaning of

What comes to mind as you read about narratives that have formed your way of thinking about the world?

life more than Jesus. Jesus' narratives are the truth. He himself is the truth. So the key is adopting Jesus' narratives.

Jesus revealed his Father to us. The New Testament reveals a God who is pulsing with goodness and power and love and beauty. To know the God of Jesus is to know the truth about who God really is.

In order to change we first have to change our minds. Jesus' opening line to his first sermon was, "Repent [*metanoia*], for the kingdom of God is at hand." *Metanoia* refers to the changing of one's mind. Jesus understood that transformation begins in the mind. The apostle Paul said the same thing when he proclaimed, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your *minds*, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2, italics added).

Our family, cultural and even religious narratives might have their roots in the kingdom of this world. As Christ-followers we are called to "set [our] minds on things that are above" (Colossians 3:2). Most of all, we are called to have the very mind of Jesus: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Adopting Jesus' narratives is a way we come to have the mind of Christ. Once we get the right narratives in place, change will begin. But getting the ideas and information right is only the beginning.

STEP TWO: PRACTICING SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES

Once we have the right narratives in place, we need to deepen them in the rest of our lives through specific activities that are aimed at making the narratives real not only to our minds but to our bodies and souls. You can call these activities "spiritual disciplines," but I prefer to call them "soul-training exercises." The reason for this is because the spiritual disciplines are actually not spiritual at all. Thinking they are "spiritual" leads people to practice them as isolated activities that are done in an attempt at making a person more "spiritual," whatever that means. They are done with no specific aim, and are often done legalistically to gain the favor of God or others.

The spiritual disciplines are *wisdom*, not *righteousness*. But they are wise practices that train and transform our hearts.

Athletes understand the necessity of training. They run and lift weights and practice over and over so that they can perform naturally, easily and with strength in competition. Paul compared our Christian life to the training of an athlete in several passages (1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:5). In the same way, when we engage in the spiritual disciplines as *soul-training* exercises, we are doing so to change how we live.

Have you practiced spiritual exercises (such as prayer, Bible reading or solitude) in your life, and if so, with what intention and what result?

The spiritual disciplines are meant to have a therapeutic effect. People who undergo *physical therapy* engage in exercises such as stretches and limb lifts to improve their ability. The way we practice these soul-training exercises should be the same. We do these things (even if they hurt a bit) because we want to improve how we function. They are an essential part of our soul transformation.

STEP THREE: PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY

Human beings are community-dwellers. Just as the eternal Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit) live in community, so also we who are made in God’s image are meant to live and love in community. Unfortunately, however, spiritual formation is often approached as a very individualistic endeavor. We may tend to think of our spiritual growth as a personal pursuit, and not a communal activity.

Spiritual formation happens most profoundly in the context of a group. Participating in a group allows the influence of others to spur us on and en-

What has been your experience of Christian fellowship or community?

courage us (Hebrews 10:24). The best way to use this book to make a complete and lasting change is to go through it with others. Of course, you can read it on your own and do the exercises as you please, but my field-testing of this material reveals that the solo approach has less of an impact.

STEP FOUR: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is often the member of the Trinity that gets the least attention. We pray to God the Father, and when we read about Jesus in the Gospels we can picture him in human form. But the Holy Spirit is not often the focus of our lives.

I have come to believe that the Holy Spirit is not upset about this.

The constant aim of the Spirit is to point us to the Father and the Son, and not to himself. Everything that happens to us in our Christian lives, however, is the work of the Holy Spirit. We become discontented with our lives, and it is the Spirit who gently nudges us toward Jesus. The Holy Spirit orchestrates the events of our lives with the single aim of making us disciples of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives in subtle ways, ways we cannot often discern. But the Spirit is at work nonetheless. The components of change happen when the Holy Spirit is at work in the midst of them.

The Holy Spirit and narratives. Jesus told his disciples that upon his departure and ascension God the Father would send the Spirit to be their guide: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is our unseen teacher who points us to Jesus and reminds us of his words. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is the one who is helping us change our narratives to Jesus’ narrative. He leads us away from false narratives and replaces them with true narratives: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).

Even our conversion is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit”

(1 Corinthians 12:3). Our decision to follow Jesus and accept him as Lord and Savior is only possible because the Holy Spirit has guided us into this truth. When we replace a wrong narrative, such as “God is an angry judge who is poised to punish us,” with Jesus’ narrative that God is a loving “Abba,” that too is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul notes, “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:15-16). I love that phrase—the Spirit *bears witness* with our spirit. The Spirit changes our false narratives by bearing witness to the truth. The two most important relationships we have are our relationship with Jesus as Lord (Greek *kyrios*), and our relationship with God as our Father (*Abba* in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke). We come to know Jesus as our Lord and God as our Abba only by the work of the Spirit who offers us these narratives of truth.

The Spirit and soul training. The Spirit comes alongside us, within us and around us as we engage in spiritual exercises. Every soul-training exercise we engage in would be of no value if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit. When we open the Bible and begin to read slowly and listen for God, the Spirit illumines our mind and gives us a direct word from God. Even prayer, which we often think we initiate, is really the work of the Holy Spirit: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). When we pray, we do not pray alone. The Spirit has subtly prompted us to pray, preceding us in prayer, and then prays with and for us.

When we practice solitude or silence, when we engage in service or simplicity, it is the Spirit who is aiding us and encouraging us. When we come to a new discovery or awareness during our time of prayer or reflection in our journals, once again it is the Spirit who is whispering truths that transform us. This is not easy to detect, and often we only hear the echoes of the Spirit, but as we give ourselves more and more to God through these soul-training exercises, our

ability to hear increases. Still, all of these exercises and activities would be worthless were it not for the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and community. The Holy Spirit is like a symphony conductor, orchestrating our communal life of prayer and worship and praise. But unlike a human conductor, the Holy Spirit endows each of us with gifts and graces that are meant to be used for the benefit of others (see 1 Corinthians 12). When we hear a sermon that touches our hearts, the Spirit is at work not only in inspiring the preacher but in softening our hearts and opening our ears.

In the book of Acts we see the Holy Spirit in every story as the early Christian community learns how to live together and participate in the ministry of Jesus. One of my favorite stories is about how the Spirit prompted the community to commission Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to go on a mission: “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:2-3). Notice the context: they were together (community) worshiping and fasting (engaging in spiritual disciplines) when the Spirit spoke to them. The Spirit could have spoken directly to any one of them, but instead chose to speak to the community. Then they laid hands on Barnabas and Paul and sent them off.

How do you see the Holy Spirit interacting with the three other components of change?

When we gather together in Christian fellowship, the Holy Spirit is once again at work, often imperceptibly, with the single intention of leading us to a deeper love of Jesus and the Father. When

I was leading one group through this material, I felt prompted to stop and use the last fifteen minutes of our hour together simply to pray with one another in small groups of three. I encouraged the people to share a bit about what they would

like prayer for and then spend a few minutes praying for those specific needs. Within only a few minutes I looked around and heard people sobbing. We had been together for about fifteen weeks, but it was only when we opened ourselves up to one another and let the Spirit lead us that real community began to occur.

TRANSFORMATION: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

What Craig demonstrated in the Atlanta airport was none other than the fruit of the Spirit. Paul offers us a list of virtues that come into our lives as a result of the work of the Spirit: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). We cannot grit our teeth and become patient. We cannot muster our willpower and become kind. We cannot stress and strain our way to generosity. This “fruit” is the work of the Holy Spirit. Like the fruit on a tree, it is developed naturally from the inside to the outside.

When the Spirit has changed our narratives sufficiently, we begin to think differently. As a result we begin to believe in and trust a good and loving God who is strong and powerful. We begin to see how Jesus lived a perfect life that we cannot live and offered that life to the Father on our behalf, setting us free from having to earn God’s love and favor. And as we engage in soul-training exercises—especially in the context of community—our confidence that God is at work in and among us increases. This creates an inward change that manifests itself in outward behavior.

Now, when faced with an airport delay, we can take a deep breath and remember who we are. Like Craig, we can endure these trials with love, joy, peace, patience and kindness.

COME AND SEE

I love the story of how Jesus meets two of his first disciples. They had been disciples of John the Baptist, but John encouraged them to follow Jesus. When Jesus discovers they are shadowing him, he stops

and asks a telling question. “‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day” (John 1:38-39).

Jesus simply asks what they are seeking. This is such an important question, one we should ask ourselves over and over. What is it that you really want? What we truly desire, what we are most passionate about, will determine how we organize our lives.

Notice the strange and illogical answer—“Rabbi, where are you staying?”—the disciples give to Jesus’ simple question, “What are you looking for?” Jesus, however, knows their hearts. They are following him because they are passionate about living a good and beautiful life, and they are hoping Jesus will lead them to it. Jesus answers with a simple yet profound answer: “Come and see.” He answers both questions—the one about where he is residing, and the one about what they are most seeking. He knows that if they follow him they will find what they truly want in life.

Jesus has called you to be one of his disciples. I know this because you are reading this book. The Holy Spirit has led you thus far through your desire for a deeper life, a more authentic faith and a more certain hope in the God Jesus knows. Jesus has invited you to become one of his apprentices. This is not because of your strength or skills, but because he knows that if you learn how to think as he thinks and to do the kinds of things that he did, you can live an amazing life. You may not move mountains or walk on water, but I have confidence that you can begin to learn how to be patient and kind, how to forgive those who have hurt you, and how to bless and pray for your enemies. That is just as miraculous as walking on water.

May you fall in love with the God Jesus knows.

SOUL TRAINING

Sleep



The number one enemy of Christian spiritual formation today is exhaustion. We are living beyond our means, both financially and physically. As a result, one of the primary activities (or anti-activities) of human life is being neglected: sleep. According to numerous studies, the average person needs approximately eight hours of sleep in order to maintain health. This tells me that God has designed humanity to spend nearly one-third of our lives sleeping. This is a stunning thought. We were made to spend a large portion of our existence essentially doing nothing. The failure to do so results in damage to physical health, loss of energy and decreased productivity. And our sleep deprivation often hurts others. More people are killed each year by *drowsy* drivers than by drunk drivers.

In Dr. Siang-Yang Tan's excellent book *Rest*, he quotes Arch Hart, who says simply, "we need rest more today than ever before in history." Dr. Tan goes on to show how in the 1850s the average American slept 9.5 hours a night. By 1950 that number dropped to eight hours a night. Today the average American sleeps under seven hours a night. We have dropped under the needed amount of sleep, and we are suffering for it on several levels. A poll done by the National Sleep Foundation showed that 49 percent of American adults have sleep-related problems, and that one in six suffers from chronic insomnia. A physician friend told me that the most frequent prescriptions she

writes for her patients are for sleeping problems.

In contrast, a study was done by the National Institute of Mental Health in which participants were allowed to “sleep as much as they could” each night, and on average people slept 8.5 hours. Those who participated in the study said they felt happier, less fatigued, more creative, energetic and productive. God designed us to be stewards of our lives—body, mind and soul. We must begin with caring for our bodies, which apparently require seven to eight hours of sleep each night. To fail to do so obviously results in fatigue and, consequently, failure in other areas of our lives.

What does this have to do with Christian spiritual formation? The human person is not merely a soul housed in a body. Our bodies and souls are unified. If our bodies suffer, so do our souls. We cannot neglect the body in pursuit of spiritual growth. In fact, neglecting our bodies necessarily impedes our spiritual growth. Everything we do in our lives, including the practices of spiritual formation, we do in and with our bodies. If our bodies are not sufficiently rested, our energies will be diminished and our ability to pray, read the Bible, enter solitude or memorize Scripture will be minimized.

The focus of this chapter has been to show how spiritual formation is a combination of our action and God’s action. We must *do* something, but we rely on God to provide what is needed in order to change. Sleep is a perfect example of the combination of discipline and grace. You cannot make yourself sleep. You cannot force your body to sleep. Sleep is an act of surrender. It is a declaration of trust. It is admitting that we are not God (who never sleeps), and that is good news. We cannot make ourselves sleep, but we can create the conditions necessary for sleep.

I have stressed that the disciplines are not ways to earn anything from God, but wise practices that allow God to teach, train and heal us. Sleep, therefore, is a kind of “anti-discipline” discipline. Begin with this exercise and continue practicing it throughout the time you work through this material (and, I hope, for the rest of

your life). You will never come to a point where you are above the need for adequate sleep.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SLEEP

At least one day this week sleep until you cannot sleep any more. If you need to, find a day when you can sleep in. Your aim is to sleep, or to stay in bed, until you can finally say, I am completely rested. I do not need to sleep or stay in bed a minute longer. You may need to solicit the help of others if you have family members who need your care.

If you are unable to do this exercise, try another: aim to get at least seven hours of sleep at least three times this week. This may require going to bed earlier than usual. The following are some tips to help you fall asleep:

1. Go to sleep at a consistent time each night.
2. Try not to engage in activities that increase stress (such as, perhaps, watching TV or spending time on the computer) right before bedtime.
3. If you are affected by stimulants (caffeine, spicy foods) avoid them in the evening.
4. Do not force yourself to fall asleep. If you do not feel drowsy, read a book, meditate on a psalm, listen to soft music, or sit up and gaze out your window until you do feel drowsy, and then go back to bed. Until your body is ready for sleep, tossing and turning in bed will not work.
5. If you awaken in the middle of the night, but do not have to get up, stay in bed. Give your body a chance to fall back asleep.

Even with these tips you might still have trouble getting sufficient sleep. If so, it might be helpful to consult your doctor to see if there is a medical explanation. You could also see a sleep expert for more advice, or perhaps visit a counselor or therapist to see if there is an

underlying emotional problem that might be hindering you from sleeping.

FOR REFLECTION

Whether you are going through this material alone or with others, the following questions might be helpful as you reflect on your experience. Either way, it might be a good idea to answer these questions in your journal. If you are meeting with a group, bring your journal with you to help you remember your insights as you share your experiences.

1. Were you able to practice the discipline of sleep this week? If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.
2. What, if anything, did you learn about God or yourself through the exercise?

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