

found sleeping

Victoria Hutchinson shares tips on how to watch and pray

I love Jesus' disciples and their raw humanity. With their flaws and failings. I love that they are chosen by Jesus; hand-picked by him, in spite of their wonderfully relatable lack of vision and focus. I can hear Jesus' exasperation as he finds them sleeping for the third time and I know, hand on heart, that my eyes too would have been heavy. Willing spirit. Weak flesh. 'Couldn't you keep watch with me for one hour, Victoria? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation'

As healthcare professionals we are often exhausted. Shifts are always long and demanding. And that's physically, emotionally, and mentally. I'm sure you will relate to the heavy eyelids as you try to pray at night. Sometimes your body is falling asleep even before your head hits the pillow.

And our student nurses and midwives are filling every spare moment on top of all this, with research, assignments, and portfolios. And then we feel guilty and sorry, and we beat

ourselves up because we know (we really know) that communication with God is our very bread of life.

This time of communication is the time of communion. Precious for our souls. Essential life-giving source. It is in prayer we say to God with every fibre of our being and every breath that we have:

I surrender.

I adore.

I worship.

I depend.

I trust.

I need.

So, what can I offer as a solution and in answer to this? Here are some thoughts for us all, with our disciple-like, weak flesh:

Have a special cushion that you throw on the floor to sit on or kneel on when you pray. This simple act provides a focus and special prayer space.

Find a book of prayers that you cherish, and use one of these when your mind is too busy, tired, or fraught to find your own words. Or read a psalm.

Buy a notebook and write to your Heavenly Father. Prayer is communication. Prayer can be spoken aloud, inner silent thoughts, or written words. Plus, the very act of writing will keep you awake.

Find a favourite worship song/hymn. Google the lyrics and read them aloud and then listen to the song. Many worship songs are prayers in themselves.

Arrow prayers (short quick prayers) throughout the day have their own place. Any time we communicate with God, in whatever way, we are acknowledging his sovereign power.

And remember: Jesus' love for you is not dependent on whether you fall asleep mid prayer – he wants to hear your voice. He delights in the heart that desires to speak to him. A vicar once said to me, as I struggled with this, *'surely this must be the best way to fall asleep; mid conversation, with Jesus' name on your lips'*. 🌸

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