

Now I Pray Me Down To Sleep

Psalm 4 May 3, 2026

How often do you get a good night's rest? The answer might depend on what state you live in. The states with the highest percentage of bad sleep are Kentucky, West Virginia, and Hawaii. Finally a list California isn't in the worst spot! The best states for sleep? Colorado, Vermont, and Minnesota.¹

We all have nighttime rituals before heading off to bed. Usually that includes a sweep through the house to make sure the doors are locked. Why? Because we live in a frightening world with some very real dangers. And the dark of night tends to turn our molehills into mountains and amplify those anxious situations, those confusing decisions, those difficult circumstances of life.

Even the smallest bump in the night can set our hearts racing as we wonder what sort of creature could've made it and how many *more* bumps till they're inside the house! Some of you are very early risers. You're up and at 'em well before sunrise. Have you noticed that a bump in the early morning is not nearly as scary as a thud in the night?

We're between book studies right now. It's always nice to take a pitstop in the Psalms because not only are they full of theological treasure, they're also very relatable and encouraging. In Psalms, we find the full range of human experience and emotion. Prayers when things are good and when they are very bad. Songs written by people who had absolute assurance of God's ability and others who wondered when God was going to come through. People rejoicing and people despairing.

Psalm 4 is a nighttime song. David hopes to get a good night's rest. But as was so often the case, he was facing some very scary enemies. We don't know the specific setting, but he was dealing with some sort of rejection or revolution. The Absalom rebellion is a good candidate, because Psalm 3 and 4 are thematically and linguistically a pair.² How could David get a good night's rest?

As David lays himself down to sleep, part of his evening ritual is not only to call out to God, but to sing about what is *true* about God's love for His people. We don't know whether he composed this in the comfort of his palace, or while laying on the dirt, exhausted, after crossing the Jordan before Absalom could kill him. We'll find that he could've written these same words from either position.

The point of Psalm 4 is that our circumstances are *not* what determines whether life is good or not. Rather, David declares to us that rest and joy - the good life - is found in the love of God.

Psalm 4:1 - For the choir director: with stringed instruments. A psalm of David. ¹ Answer me when I call, God, who vindicates me. You freed me from affliction; be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

¹ <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/why-cant-hawaii-sleep-best-worst-for-insufficient-sleepers#references-119594>

² Christopher Ash *The Psalms: A Christ-Centered Commentary, Volume 2*

We learn in verse 2 that David is in trouble. He boldly asks God to hear and answer by His grace. In the middle is that all-important testimony: God vindicates and God frees from affliction. The term refers to distress or being in a tight corner.³

Undoubtedly everyone here faces some sort of pressure. Maybe not as lethal as David had to face, but some difficulty. Some cloud on the horizon. Some tight corner.

David *knew* the Lord would not leave him hanging. But he *still* spoke to God about what was going on. Strong faith doesn't mean we talk to God *less* about our lives. The Lord wants us to commune with Him day by day. Not to just mechanically or ritualistically pray, but pray without ceasing.

"You freed me from my distress." David had been in a tight corner, but *Who* was *in* his corner with him? A Christian has God's presence and power in every circumstance. God in your corner. Not to be subservient to *your* will, but to be with you to accomplish *His* good purposes for you.

Now here's what's amazing: It would be enough if God *only* freed us. Here we are, guilty sinners on death row. But God gives us a pardon and then does *more*. He is also willing to hear when we call and answer us back and continually pour out His grace on our behalf. He takes the guilty, gives them a pardon, then makes them sons and daughters. Presidents and governors don't do that!

David knew he could *count on* the grace of God. And we should, too. God is a Savior *and* a Shepherd. Charles Spurgeon writes, "God does nothing by halves and He will never cease to help us until we cease to need."⁴ He does not grow weary of helping us or hearing from us.

Psalm 4:2 - 2 How long, exalted ones, will my honor be insulted? How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie?

The "exalted ones" refer to the prominent, wealthy, powerful leaders of Israel.⁵ They were in opposition to David at the time. This group had it all. And this was their chance to gain power even over the king himself. David speaks in verse 2 to warn them about the *folly* of their choices.

Worldly success is not always an indicator of truth or God's favor. We need to clear our minds of this idea that, if God is happy with me, I'll always *get* more in this life. Or that God's best goal for my life is always upward mobility and greater accumulation of material things. Just because someone is successful doesn't mean they're on the right path. In fact, David says that these particular fellows loved what is *worthless* and pursued a lie. The term he uses can refer to an empty sack.⁶

Jesus gave a similar warning in the parable of the sower. He said that the deceitfulness of wealth can choke out the word of God and the growth of spiritual fruit in our lives.⁷

³ Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

⁴ Charles Spurgeon *The Treasury Of David, Volume 1*

⁵ Willem VanGemern *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*

⁶ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

⁷ Mark 4:19

As Christians, we want to be sure we understand what *God* considers success - what greatness looks like to Him. God's view of success is in loving service, in humility, in obedience, in sacrificial living, and *that's* what we should pursue, not the things the unbelieving world around us calls great.

Psalm 4:3 - ³ Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him.

What a great and tender promise that God will always hear us when we call. This is not the only place where we are reminded that God will hear. This is God's heart for us when we cry out to Him:

Isaiah 65:24 - ²⁴ Even before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear.

A God Who loves and listens. A God who hears and answers. He answers His people. Those David calls "the faithful."

What does it mean to be one of "the faithful?" The word comes from that wonderful Old Testament term for God's love, *hesed*. The faithful are those who are recipients of God's *hesed*.⁸

In human society, promotion and status are often given to those who *perform* at a certain level for an extended period of time. What *merits* you to be recognized or awarded or commissioned?

But God doesn't give grace based on our merit. And good thing, too, because none of us could ever earn or deserve God's favor or His grace or His attention. Instead, God pours out His grace on those who will receive it because He *loves* us. "The faithful" are those who abide in His love. And not *only* do we receive it, but "the faithful" also become characterized by *hesed* themselves.

What have you been set apart for? We call out to God in prayer, but remember: God has called *you*. He's called you to be saved. He's called you to walk in a path that He has carved out for you.

2 Timothy 1:9 - ⁹ He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

If you're a Christian here today, what has God called you to do? Ephesians 4 says you've received a calling you're meant to walk in. Something you've been *marvelously* chosen for.⁹ That's another way you can translate "set apart."

So what has God set your life apart for? If you aren't sure, start by asking what spiritual gifts the Lord has given you. What opportunities are available to you? Where has God placed you and who do you interact with? All of us need to answer His call. We need to hear *Him* the way He hears us.

⁸ TWOT

⁹ J.J. Stewart Perowne *Psalms*

Psalm 4:4 - ⁴ Be angry and do not sin; reflect in your heart while on your bed and be silent.

Originally, this verse is directed at the exalted ones of verse 2. But then, in Ephesians, Paul quotes this verse and applies it directly to Christians, as well.

When we find ourselves angry or agitated or excited or disturbed,¹⁰ we should pause and reflect on the word of God, on the leading of God, the heart of God, to put our lives in perspective.

The Christian life should be a thoughtful life. Not letting our fears or emotions have the helm, but calmly considering what is true. What is God's opinion and direction and intention? Having the spiritual fruit of self-control so that our reactions don't lead us into sin or unfaithfulness.

Psalm 4:5 - ⁵ Offer sacrifices in righteousness, and trust in the LORD.

David was in trouble - maybe life-threatening trouble - and here's his advice: Offer sacrifices *before* the resolution. It wasn't, "Once the Lord comes through, be sure to pay Him back." It was, "Be in fellowship with the Lord, worship the Lord and *trust* Him, because, after all, He's good for it."

Our relationship with God is always the priority *over* the resolution of problems. Rather than worry about the specific resolution or depressurization, the questions are: Can we trust the God Who loves us? The God Who has set us apart for something marvelous? Is *God* faithful? We find the answer in the Psalms. Where we see people struggling with intense difficulty asking those same questions and coming to the conclusion again and again that, *yes*, God is faithful, He is able, He really does love us, He will not allow us to slip through the cracks.

So I can trust and worship and bring my life as a sacrifice *before* I see the resolution of problems in my life. But listen - it's not enough to give God lip service. It's not that He wants you to go through the motions of spirituality. Remember: The Psalms also tell us that for sacrifices to be acceptable to the Lord we must have clean hands and a pure heart, meaning we *truly* repent and believe.

Psalm 4:6 - ⁶ Many are asking, "Who can show us anything good?" Let the light of your face shine on us, LORD.

People were asking, "How can we get the *good* life?" David's reminder is simple, but counter-cultural. The good life is not found in circumstances, but in covenant with Yahweh. If God's face is shining on us, then we can be sure He is working all things together for the good of those who love God and are *called* according to His purpose.¹¹

¹⁰ Ash

¹¹ Romans 8:28

It seems though that some of David's friends were struggling with trusting God. They "wanted to see rather than believe."¹² Faith means we actively choose to believe even though we don't see. That we trust what God has revealed. That we trust His character. That we pursue closeness with Him, knowing *that's* the good life. That *He* will show us what is *truly* good.

Psalm 4:7 - 7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound.

In this song, David describes the life of a believer as faithful, as thoughtful, *and* as experiential. I don't mean we go through life chasing religious experiences. But David can look back on what the Lord has done *in his life*. "You *have* put joy in my heart." David had a living testimony of the faithfulness of God. He walked with God and, as a result, he *knew* God to be true and faithful.

This is what God promises: As we walk with Him, He will provide things the world *cannot* supply. Peace and joy and contentment and perspective and endurance and eternal purpose.

There's nothing so far in this song to indicate that David's negative circumstances had changed. But we see the calm and the rest running through his mind as he lays down to sleep.

If your happiness is dependent on circumstances, what are you going to do when you're *in* the valley of the shadow of death? When the pressure is greater than you can bear? There are times when grain abounds, but what happens if the crop doesn't come in? Will your life crumble apart? Is the weight of your life hanging on circumstances or on covenant?

Jesus' wants to make your joy complete.¹³ Joy in every circumstance. In the palace or on the run. And David *had* it, so he was able to *rest* even when his own son was trying to assassinate him.

Psalm 4:8 - 8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety.

Today people talk about "safe spaces." Christians, you are *safe* in the Lord. That doesn't mean we won't suffer or face tight corners. But no matter what happens, God will never leave or abandon us.

Hopefully Psalm 4 gives us not only things to think about, but truths to *rest* in. God *loves* you! He has set you apart for a marvelous purpose. He has called you to be a meaningful portion of His *good* work. His *hesed* will not only shield us, but transform us, and give us the supply we need for the pressure we face. And along the way, He will hear us, He will free us, He will put joy in our hearts. Our part is to abide in His love, live by *His* perspective, and trust Him. Trust Him with our futures, our choices, our goals, our reactions, our whole lives. And to *rest* in His grace, no matter what state we find ourselves in.

¹² Spurgeon

¹³ John 16:24