

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

77. The Distraction of Fatigue Says, "You Are Tired"

You are listening to episode 77 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "The Distraction of Fatigue Says, "You Are Tired." Hello and welcome to the podcast today! No matter if this is your first time here or if you are returning, I'm glad you are joining me today, and I pray this episode encourages your heart and adds a lift to your step in your real life right now. I help women live encouraged and less distracted, and here on the podcast we continue to dive into the various distractions that plague us in our everyday lives. Today we're looking at the distraction of fatigue, and this can be a big distraction for many of us. As we journey through this episode, I think we'll find some help and hope for our real lives today. This is a distraction we can do something about, so are you ready to dive in? Let's get to it.

When we think of distractions in our everyday lives, we tend to think of our devices, or social media, or other people. We don't normally think about fatigue or tiredness, am I right? Because we typically don't consider these as distractions. But let me tell you, these can be big for many of us. And the thing is, we may not even realize it.

What is fatigue?

You know me, I like to define words. So, let's define fatigue. Dictionary.com defines it as: weariness from bodily or mental exertion, and Thesaurus.com adds some synonyms of: tiredness, exhaustion, weakness. It's also been described as being extremely tired, sleepy, exhausted or having a general lack of energy. Interestingly, both fatigue and tired have each other in their lists of synonyms. They are closely related.

But Amanda Robinson, ARNP for Unity Point Health, has this to say about fatigue and tiredness.

Sometimes the differences between fatigue and being tired can be difficult for people to differentiate. Many say they always feel tired. Fatigue is usually found to be more than the everyday tired, which occurs after a long day of work, school or taking care of family.

Fatigue is more persistent, constant and lingering compared to feeling tired. Feeling fatigue usually interrupts your day-to-day activities and isn't always relieved by sleeping more.

Amanda Robinson, ARNP, Unity Point Health

I'm no medical professional, but it seems as if fatigue can be more severe than just being tired. But for today, we are going to consider them to be one and the same. If I was more medically sound, I would likely have an easier time compartmentalizing the two. But since I'm not, we'll just discuss them as being similar today, if that's okay with you.

So, how can fatigue be a distraction?

Well, let's think about this for a moment. We all know how we feel after a restless night's sleep, right? Or how worn out we feel after we've been up all night with a sick child. Or how foggy our brains can be

when sleep has escaped us for a few nights, for whatever reason. Because we each know tired. We each are familiar with fatigue. And some of us might be feeling fatigued right now, this very moment.

And the thing is, when we're fatigued, we aren't our best. We often can't think straight. Our reaction time is delayed, our movements are slower, and we often have difficulty functioning like we normally do. We struggle when we're fatigued. Right?

Our bodies need rest. Our brains need rest. And our souls need rest.

And rest isn't always just sleep, but as you already know, sleep is a big part of rest. One study shows 1 out of 3 people in the U.S. say they don't get enough sleep.

This distraction of fatigue hinders us from being our best.

The distraction of fatigue prevents us from living in the moment. And it stops us from being fully engaged in what's going on around us.

I did some searching to prove how the distraction of fatigue affects us, and I found a few alarming statistics. Research shows fatigue and lack of sleep lowers our brain performance, even with just one sleepless night. It negatively affects our attention, our problem-solving skills, and our judgment, and it impairs our ability to switch to other tasks quickly and to recall what's in our memories.

And did you know, multiple well-known catastrophes in history were linked to fatigue? The 2005 explosion and fire at the BP Texas City Refinery (killed 15 and injured over 180 people), the nuclear releases at Three Mile Island in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986, and the grounding of the Exxon Valdez oil tanker in 1989.

The distraction of fatigue is not our friend.

(Nor is any other distraction, I guess, for that matter.)

Aren't those statistics alarming, though? And those disasters are absolutely awful, and I remember them all happening and just how devastating they were. I just wasn't aware they were linked to fatigue. Think about this: what if your surgeon was fatigued, or your airplane pilot, or your children's bus driver? We trust professionals in our lives to be their best so they can perform their best. Right?

Don't we want the same for us? I don't believe any of us want to be fatigued, and we certainly don't want the distraction of fatigue to rule our lives. You and I don't want to sleepwalk through this life, nor through this day. Both are just too important.

The distraction of fatigue says, "You are tired." But God says, "Rest in me."

And that right there is our answer to fatigue.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."" Matthew 11:28-30 NLT

And what stands out to me the most in this passage are the words, "you will find rest for your souls." Friend, that's a deep rest, not just a physical rest, but a deep, fulfilling rest. That's the solution to fatigue. Finding this rest for our souls that can only come from Jesus.

Could your soul use some rest today?

I know mine could.

Now, I realize there are real issues that can cause us to be fatigued, such as mental and metabolic issues, physical conditions, the chemicals, substances, and medications we ingest, our weight, chronic pain, and a whole lot more. And if you are someone who feels fatigued all the time, I suggest going to see a professional who has your best interest in mind. Not one who will prescribe you a bunch of pills. Yes, medication can be helpful, but it's not always necessary. There may be something going on within you that's causing the fatigue and medications will sometimes mask what's truly going on.

The truth is, God created us, friend. He knows us better than anyone, even ourselves. But you already know that. If we give him our tired, fatigued selves, and ask Him to refresh us, to give us His rest, He absolutely will. And He will direct us if we're supposed to get help from a professional. He will guide us in what to do if we ask.

When we allow God to refresh us, to fill us, to replenish our weary souls, we will truly be filled to overflowing. Because we can't continue to pour from an empty pitcher. We must pause and allow ourselves to be filled back up again, filled by our Creator.

Jesus is the answer to overcoming the distraction of fatigue.

Returning to that verse in Matthew again, Jesus said to, "come to me... and I will give you rest." Our part is to come to Him. His part is to give us rest. So, how exactly do we "come to Him"? Well, we can pray. We can sit quietly and invite His presence and spend time with Him there. We can open up our Bibles and read His powerful Words. Or pull out a devotional book or open a devotional reading on our devices. There are many ways we can "come to Him," and you'll find the way you need.

And if it's been a while since you've talked with God or spent any time with Him, that's okay. Do not feel any shame in that. He's waiting for you, and if you're not sure what to do, just ask Him. He'll show you. I promise. He's not going to make you guess or jump through hoops to get to Him. He won't make it complicated. He loves you too much for that.

You'll soon find yourself feeling refreshed and replenished from spending time with Him.

We talked about our overall health in last week's episode, but some other things to consider if the distraction of fatigue is getting the best of you are your daily routines and habits.

- How much rest are you getting a night?
- Do you go to bed each night and rise each morning at the same times (or close)?
- What are you feeding your body? Healthy food that benefits you or sugary, highly processed foods that deplete you?
- Who do you hang around? People who lift you up or tear you down?

- What are you reading or listening to?
- What are you telling yourself? Truthful, kind words or damaging and degrading words?
- Do you keep a similar routine each day or do you have a routine at all?
- When was the last time you did something fun or something to fill yourself back up?

These areas aren't always the answer and following them perfectly might not always be the solution, but if we're taking care of ourselves, we will less likely to suffer from the distraction of fatigue. What we do and how we live plays a big part in how fatigued we feel.

I'm learning this in my own life, because some nights I haven't slept well. My mind has been known to keep racing while my body is resting, and that doesn't work so well. So, I've had to learn how to care for me through being intentional about rest. By going to bed and rising at similar times each day. By giving myself time to wind down at night and to put my screens away an hour before bed. And of course, to pray each night for God to give me His rest (because isn't His rest the best??). All those ways have helped get my sleep back on track, especially praying before I fall asleep.

Could God be showing you an area today in which He wants to help you so you're less fatigued? What is it? What can you do to partner with Him in it?

We're continuing this conversation over in our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook this week. I invite you to check it out and join in the conversation. You'll find this space an encouraging and uplifting place on the internet. The link to this private group is in the show notes.

Also, if you've found encouragement or hope (or both!) in this episode, would you please leave a rating and/or review from where you're listening today? This will help others find this encouragement too. And be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an episode.

In closing, the distraction of fatigue does not have to run our lives. It does not have to dictate how we feel or how we live. No matter how tired we've been in the past or how fatigued we may feel now, Jesus is waiting for us to come find rest in Him. I pray we go to Him today and not wait another moment to do so. He loves you so very much friend, and He wants to give you His rest. Thank you for joining me today. I thank God for you. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre