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Instead of thinking about the small hassle of changing around your schedule, focus on the relationship you will be able to build with God.

4) *Talk with someone.* You may think that no one cares about your bad sleep schedule, but everyone's gone through one; everyone knows the pain. Talk to someone about why you are struggling. Talking out feelings is proven to help overcome hardships. An accountability partner will help you stick to honoring your body and your time, even when it's difficult. You'll be surprised how the support of even just one person can help you overcome your struggles.

Time is valuable, but it is worth nothing to our bodies and minds if we don't first give them the respect they deserve by getting enough sleep. Remember the words of Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11: 28-29).



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routines can be beautiful things. Yes, they are difficult at first, but once you schedule time to sleep, time to talk with God, and time for homework, your body begins to cooperate with your mind. Being a steward of your body isn't an easy task; it requires skipping naps and going to bed early. Instead of thinking about the small hassle of changing around your schedule, focus on the relationship you will be able to build with God.

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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SLEEPLESS IN HIGH SCHOOL

BY JUDY LORENZ

Breaking the rules is a part of every teenager's life. When it came time for my rebellion, I wanted to break rules, but only in a way that would keep me out of trouble. Little did I know the trouble I would cause for myself.

For as long as I can remember, I've always admired those who were able to thrive with very little sleep. Naturally, as soon as my parents started relaxing their supervision of my schedule when I was in high school, I was determined to be one of those people.

The strength I felt when I told my friends, "I only got four hours of sleep last night," was beyond comparison. When they asked me if I was tired, I would respond "Not at all," and I felt powerful.

At first, I looked as strong as I felt. During my first year of high school, I had no problem staying up late and then jumping out of bed at 6:30 the next morning. However, as I continued to hold onto my sleep charade, I found getting out of bed to be increasingly harder each morning.

The Daily Grind

Every day, I followed the same schedule. After school,



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STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

I had extracurriculars such as basketball practice, work, or Student Association duties, and these activities usually took up the entire afternoon. When I arrived home, I would be exhausted, so I rested. The rest time would morph into dinner, which morphed into watching TV. Eventually, well into the evening, I would get around to doing my homework. I would usually be able to get about half of my homework done before I faced a decision: do I get a good night's sleep, or do I finish my homework? In my effort to be a good student, I always chose

the latter, despite my parents' attempts to encourage me to get more sleep.

My repeated decision to stay up late would cause me to be too tired to wake up to my alarm in the morning. One alarm was no longer enough to wake me up. I would set alarms in three-minute intervals until I would finally wake up 20 minutes after the first one went off. I would be tired the entire day, especially too tired to do anything productive when I got home. This tortuous cycle consumed my entire high school career.

About halfway through my junior year, my sleep schedule started to improve. I wasn't completely exhausted each day, and I stopped drinking coffee. However, all my efforts to get a better schedule were forgotten when school moved online due

to the COVID-19 pandemic. Online school was stressful, and there is no better catalyst for poor sleep habits than stress. My two quarters of online school were spent staying up as late as possible, not finishing my homework until the last possible second, sleeping through classes, and not listening to the ones I attended. By the time in-person school resumed during the second quarter of my senior year, my sleep schedule seemed beyond repair.

Forget rebellion or looking cool, forget the power I once felt—I was just trying to stay awake enough to graduate. I drank three cups of coffee a day my senior year. My sleep schedule affected my entire life. Although I was getting A's in my classes, not being able to wake up led to poor attendance grades, missing questions in class, not listening to the teachers' lectures, even getting a couple bad scores on tests. Afternoon naps became a necessity, which pushed back my homework time. Life became miserable, and my parents' suggestions to change my habits didn't help. I had stopped respecting my body's need for sleep, and it took its revenge.

In high school, I never understood the meaning of 1 Corinthians

6:19, which states: "your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit." I figured the Bible was just saying to stay away from drugs and alcohol, and as long as I did, my body would be a good enough temple.

A Wake-up Call

Whenever my teachers would challenge the class to wake up and have a devotional time with God each morning, I would ignore them. I knew this time was important, but I also knew that I would never have the energy or time in the morning for a devotion. I didn't respect my body's need for sleep; my body didn't respect my time; time didn't respect my busy schedule; and my busy schedule didn't respect my devotional time with God.

Man's chief end is to know God and glorify him. How are we supposed to know God if we can't find enough energy to spend time with him? If our bodies are temples to God, why do we waste the little energy they possess? Why is being a good steward of our sleep so difficult?

A Prescription for Good Sleep

Before I entered college, I was determined to right the wrongs I had caused. Correcting a bad sleep schedule takes time and effort. But with patience, good sleep isn't hard to achieve. Here are a few ideas that helped me.

1) *Put the phone away.* Phones have a facade of being relaxing;

however, they keep our minds busy. This busyness creates unrest, which often keeps you awake. Set your alarm, put your phone down, and leave it alone until morning. Whatever notifications you receive in the night can wait.

2) *Take a break from social media.* Social media causes a large amount of stress. This anxiety of feeling "less than" someone else's Instagram pictures can truly keep you awake, and social media's addictiveness keeps you from looking away, prolonging your bedtime. Are the posts and videos really worth hours of your life? Take a break; the same posts will likely still be there when you return.

3) *Create a routine.* If you put in the effort to maintain them,

I didn't respect my body's need for sleep; my body didn't respect my time; time didn't respect my busy schedule; and my busy schedule didn't respect my devotional time with God.

My repeated decision to stay up late would cause me to be too tired to wake up to my alarm in the morning.

