

# The Spirit of Slumber

Certain things predictably pop up as churches move into deeper experiences in the walk in the Spirit. One is the understanding of the role of the demonic in everyday life. It is easy to move from denial of such activity, to imbalance on the other side.

A common example is that we begin to blame the devil for all our troubles, including our drowsiness in church or our devotional time. We use our new-found spiritual authority to rebuke "a spirit of slumber" and supposedly it "flees."

Listen, I'm not poking fun at Satan here. He is too real for that. He is not a donut hole. He has looked me in the eye and told me he hated me, through the mouth of another. He is the source of all the sorrow, pain and suffering in the world – and the church. But *I am* challenging us to take a deeper look at this spirit of slumber thing!

Over the years I've done a lot of night driving. *Of course* I have a problem with drowsiness. But I also have solutions. One is to get an issue going in my mind. And sometimes I listen to the radio, but something controversial is best. No "easy listening" stuff.

I'll never forget the time Elaine and I were Sunday lunch guests in the home of parishioners. We'd had a nice meal of lima beans, corn, potatoes and more. Then we retired to the living room to look at family slides from years gone by. After while Elaine and I were both roused by the hostess saying to the host, "I think we put our guests to sleep." Oops!

Yes, sometimes I have trouble staying awake in church, too.

Years ago I did forest spraying for Gypsy Moth. We used big airplanes that sprayed 120-acres a minute. It was a blast, flying over the mountains at 50-feet above the trees! It was hard work and often long hours, but I was hyped. My adrenalin ran like a river. Then one spring I realized that I was bored, and I knew it had to be my last year. If I wasn't "into it," I was going to be into the trees or high-tension wires! I had to have something going on inside of me in order to be alert, and I had to be alert in order to survive.

Please consider this. Drowsiness is natural. It is our physical default setting when blood rushes to the stomach to process food. Or when we've been up late the night before or didn't sleep well. Or we have a cold. Or it gets hot and stuffy in church. Or we get bored and nothing is going on in our head. It is part of how God created us.

Our drowsiness in church may be the result of disinterest. And that is often because we are still finding so much of the satisfaction of life in things outside of the topic of the moment! We have been born again and have a new nature, but we're still dealing with the affections, attitudes and habits of the old nature! We are *being* transformed! Our disinterest might be a signal to us!

Maybe we need to deliberately engage our minds. Get our heads into the message. Don't just sit there. Shout "Amen," or whisper "Oh baloney" to ourselves. We've got to

have something going on inside of us, in order to be alert, and we have to be alert in order to stay awake.

Do we need to get up, go out into the foyer and do a few jumping jacks? Do the ushers need to get some fresh air in the church? Or maybe we just flat out need sleep!

Possibly we need to understand that a "teacher" is not as entertaining and stimulating as an inspirational preacher. We can fade out with their line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept style if we have not learned how to receive it. It takes focus and, of all things, interest.

So far, I don't see anything that hints of a spirit of slumber. I see the effect of our God-given need for sleep; the predictable results of several environmental factors; and the need for spiritual renewal which increases our interest in spiritual things. Except in rare instances, I don't believe that drowsiness comes from a demonic influence which envelopes innocent and "spiritual" Christians in times of pious pursuit of God!

I say respectfully that when we get all pumped up and rebuke the spirit of slumber, it is largely the adrenalin rush of being mad at the devil and taking him on, and the mental focus and alertness from that activity, which wakens us!

I propose that it is more likely that Satan tempts us to think that he is making us sleepy, than his actually doing it. If he can accomplish that, he will have distracted us from our need to deal with the real culprits, i.e. the affections and disciplines of our hearts and/or the proper care of our bodies. We are easily misled here because we would rather blame the devil for our drowsiness than to accept personal responsibility for it!

Born in 1940, Ken Stoltzfus has worked as a pilot, ordained Christian minister, businessman, missionary to Africa and writer. This is #16 in his series "The View from up Life's Path," and is one of many short articles that can be found at [www.John2031.com](http://www.John2031.com).

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