



The Eutyclus Syndrome

I sleep in church. Especially during sermons.

My sleep has nothing to do with the quality of the sermon or the personality of the preacher. The sermon can be on hell's fires or heaven's fruit, it makes no difference. I sleep, unable to maintain consciousness despite scowls and pokings from those who love me. Put me in a pew, and my body goes on vacation.

It used to embarrass me. Now I am humiliated by my heavy eyes and flat-lined mind.

It's the Devil's fault, of course. He slips me a sleep potion whenever he hears a sermon coming. Anything to keep me from hearing something that might wake up my soul!

I've tried all the conventional "stay-awake" solutions. I've made lists of the preacher's favorite words (72 "grace," 14 "Jordan," 32 "Jesus," ...). I've written down all the illustrations, memorized all five verses of the morning hymn, played with the neighbor kid's Sabbath quiet books, and chewed on everything you can imagine. But Altiods quickly taste like napalm.

So I went to my doctor and asked why I sleep so well in church. He laughed, and then put me through more tests than an astronaut on launch week.

"You have a disease," the

exit interview began. "It's called hypersomnulence, and it means that you go to sleep easily whenever your body slows down."

Now there's a scientific discovery! I'm normal!

"No," Doctor Wake-Up said, "not just normal. Challenged!"

He gave me four options:

1. Begin a regimen of drugs that would keep me awake, but might also have horrendous side effects that could make me a regular in his office.

Seated in a window was a young man named Eutyclus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Acts 20:7-12 NIV

2. Pop a caffeine tablet whenever I felt sleepy, and become an addict whose mind and body slows down as it constantly demands more and more caffeine overdoses so it can be momentarily awake.
3. Sleep when sleepy, even though I may miss most of life.
4. Get up and walk around more.

I chose #4, (You already knew that.) and added a few prescription requirements of my own.

Here's my scrip for finding life in a padded pew ...

1. Drink lots of water before church.

2. Decide that God has planted something unique for me in this sermon. Look for it as if I'm panning the Sacramento River for gold.
3. Sit where I can move around a bit without disturbing the congregation.
4. Take my Bible with me, and underline each text that is mentioned during the service. Pray (open-eyed) that God will speak to me through this text.
5. Get two others to join me and take notes. (This works best when we schedule an hour to de-brief the sermon together. This is not "roast the preacher," but "Grow the worshiper!") Don't just take mindless notes that count how many times the preacher says "Jordan," but life-changing notes that fall into four categories ...
 - a. Ideas I can use this week as I grow closer to God.
 - b. Ideas I may want to discuss with a friend.
 - c. Ideas that could change how I make decisions about lifestyle.
 - d. Thoughts I've never thought before.
6. Choose to stay alert. This means I occasionally get up and lean on the back wall of the sanctuary, stand by the sound booth, do a brief set of jumping jacks in the restroom, *anything* to get my blood flowing freely and my mind operating in "learn" mode.
7. Say "Amen!" "Yes," and otherwise encourage the preacher at least three times during the service.
8. Don't sit in the window.

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