

Sleepwalking

1. Warm-up: Have you ever walked in your sleep? If so, what happened?
2. There are a lot of people sleepwalking through life. Life is hard. Constant problems, constant demands. It's easy to shut off and shut down, emotionally numbing ourselves, grimly going through the motions, as our Adversary whispers in our ear, "This is as good as it gets."
 - a. Read together Ecclesiastes 1:2-8, as printed on p. 3, then discuss: Why do you think God included these verses in the Bible? What purpose do they serve?
 - b. In the animated movie *Antz*, Z wrestles with the drudgery of his life as he toils in the bowels of an anthill. As the middle child in a family of five million, he feels utterly insignificant, like a cog in the wheel, nothing special about his life. Often we can relate. Life has a way of beating us down and draining us out. What's been happening in your life this week that has threatened to beat you down and drain you out?
3. In her book *Get Out of Your Head; Stopping the Spiral of Toxic Thoughts*, Jennie Allen lays out two diametrically opposed ways of seeing life and challenges us to choose which we want to embrace. The Cynical Worldview says everything is terrible, life is a drudgery, we're on our own down here, and we live in a closed system (no God, no angels). By contrast, the Mystical Worldview says that we "live and move and have our being in God." Acts 18:28. In this view, God is all around us, beauty is all around us, and life is an ongoing, amazing miracle.
 - a. Have you ever known someone who embodied a Cynical Worldview? How did that work for them?
 - b. Have you ever known someone who embodied a Mystical Worldview? How did that work for them?
 - c. Confirmation bias refers to our tendency to notice things that reinforce our existing way of seeing things and to ignore things that don't. So it's really important to be aware of our way of seeing life. Look again at the above definitions of the Cynical and Mystical Worldviews, then tell us where you place yourself on the following scale on a typical day in your life. Explain your rating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Cynical Worldview			Complicate Mixture of Both				Mystical Worldview		
 - d. Tell us something (large or small) that's happened over the past week that reinforces your current way of seeing the world.

4. Jennie Allen reminds us that we have the power to *choose* how we see life. We can choose to be a cynic or a mystic. She urges us to choose the perspective of a mystic and suggest two practical steps we can take to make that happen. The first thing she suggest is to: **Cultivate an awareness of the wonder of God in creation.** As an example of this way of seeing the world, read Psalm 104, as print on p. 3.
 - a. In verse 33, the psalmist says, “I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have being.” Do you have a singing spirit? If so, where does that come from? If not, why not?
 - b. Some would say, “With all the terrible things that happen in our individual lives, in our nation, and across the globe, why should we sing?” The answer, according to the psalmist, is because of God’s “manifold work” in creation. The earth is full of the glory of God. Keying off of George Strait’s song *I Saw God Today*, Jeff said, “We swim in a sea of miracles – if we just lift up our downcast eyes long enough to notice.” What’s something really beautiful about God’s creation and the gift of life that you’ve noticed lately? Something that makes you want to sing.
 - c. Elizabeth Barrett Browning once said, “Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush [is] afire with God. But only [those] who see take off [their] shoes – the rest sit round and pluck blackberries.” What do you think she meant?
 - d. The Wall Street Journal recently reviewed scientific studies of the impact that awe has on us. They concluded, "The feeling of awe, and experiences that inspire it, benefit us in all sorts of ways, from stronger health to improved relationships. These ‘awe experiences’ make us more generous, humble, empathetic, trusting, and even help us battle depression.” Why do you think that is?
 - e. What do you do to keep yourself in touch with the wonder of God in creation?
5. The second thing Jennie Allen suggests to help us embrace a Mystical Worldview is: **Cultivate an awareness of the signs of God at work in the circumstances of your life.**
 - a. What’s the most amazing example you’ve ever experienced of God being at work in the circumstances of your life?
 - b. Not all “signs” from God are grandiose. We often experience small tokens of God’s presence as we move through a day or a week of life – little reminders that God is with us and we’re not alone. In the past couple weeks, have you experienced something like that? If so, tell us about it.

Wake up! Keep your eyes open! You are not alone. You are surrounded by the glory of God!

Ecclesiastes 1:1-8

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

²Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

³What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?

⁴A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises. ⁶The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.

⁷All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. ⁸All things are wearisome; more than one can express.

Psalms 104:1-33, selected verses

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great.

² You stretch out the heavens like a tent. ⁵ You set the earth on its foundations. ¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, ¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal. ¹² By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. ¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, ¹⁵ and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

¹⁹ You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. ²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night. ²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

³³ Therefore, I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.