

**Sleepless Nights**  
LCDR R. C. Richards  
Command Chaplain

Do you ever have nights that you just can't sleep? You lie in the bed and toss and turn, but sleep just does not come. No matter how still you remain, you just are not able to fall asleep. So, what do you do when you can't sleep at night?

My wife frequently wakes up in the early hours of the morning. It will be 3:00 a.m. and she will balance the checkbook online, email friends and family and do other work on the computer. Sometimes, she will turn on the television until she feels sleepy. Other times, she will crawl back into bed with me and ask me to talk with her. Unfortunately, I am usually not very good company at that time of night.

Recently, I had trouble falling asleep. No matter how hard I tried, I simply could not sleep. Finally, I went in the other room and started playing solitaire on the computer. After a few minutes, I began taking mental stock to determine what was on my mind preventing me from sleeping. I have a friend who had recently learned that he has a serious illness. I suppose it was weighing heavily on my mind, so I decided to do the only thing I knew to do about it. I began to pray.

I am not one who normally has my prayer time in the middle of the night, but I thought that since I am up anyway, I might as well spend my time wisely. As I prayed for my friend and his family, I soon thought of others who were in need of prayer. I prayed for each of them by name as I thought of them. I wasn't trying to look for people to pray for, but as each person slipped into my mind, I slipped them into my prayer. Before I realized it, I had spent nearly an hour in prayer and was beginning to feel sleep approaching me like a welcome friend. I slipped back into bed and was quickly asleep. When I awoke the next morning, I was refreshed, not feeling any of the ill effects of a short night of rest.

I have often heard that prayer changes things, but I believe more importantly that it changes people. I don't go to God asking him to change someone else. I figure God already has a pretty good plan for other people without needing my counsel or advice. Instead, I simply enter into His presence and share the cares that are on my heart and mind. In the process, I find myself being changed by being in God's presence. He doesn't remove the area of concern, but He gives me a sense of peace, knowing that God will carry the burden so that I don't need to. He is far more able to do that than I am.

I have also learned that as I spend this time in prayer, it helps me focus on others more, making me sensitive to their needs and concerns. It helps me focus more on others and less on myself. When I live my life more oriented to others, I find I am more at peace with myself and with God. I have a greater sense of peace and joy.

The next time you find yourself having difficulty sleeping at night, spend that time in prayer. I think that very shortly you will find yourself relaxing and ready for the complete rest that only comes when we truly turn our concerns over to God. Let Him give you peace and rest that we can never find without Him.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.