



What Keeps You Up at Night?

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Full disclosure: I don't typically have many problems sleeping at night. I credit this to my Scotch-Irish heritage: We Finleys are great sleepers (some have suggested that we've won awards for eating and sleeping). That being said, there have been rare occasions where I've struggled to sleep because of some burden or issue that I was dealing with at that time. I know that people do lose sleep over the issues that they face from time to time. Some wrestle with survival and how to make the money last the entire month. Others wrestle with the painful experience of a wayward son or daughter and the desire to see reconciliation. Others lose sleep as they come to grips with a less than optimistic diagnosis and all the implications of that kind of news. Others may lose sleep over other worries: will I have enough to retire, will I ever find "the one," will I still have my job six months from now, and the list goes on and on.

This week I watched a video of a pastor who, by most church scorecards, was wildly successful. He had a church where attendance numbered in the thousands, he led a church staff that most likely numbered in the hundreds, he had tremendous influence and you would have expected that perhaps he enjoyed a sense of satisfaction from the impressive accomplishments of his work. I don't know if he actually used this word to describe his feelings or if it was just the general sense that permeated his every word, but the word angst was clearly communicated. If you look up the definition of angst you'll find words like fear, apprehension, anxiety, unease or dread.

Angst was not what I expected from the man who's experiencing "success" to that degree. So why was he filled with angst? He explained that he simply could not shake the fact that despite his church reaching thousands and seeing people come to Christ on a near daily basis, there were still countless thousands, the overwhelming masses in his city who remained unreached. If his congregation doubled to 20,000 there would still be a million people in their metro area who did not know or follow Jesus. If they tripled to 30,000, there would be 990,000 that were still living without the hope of Jesus. Whatever "success" they experienced would only be a drop in the bucket when compared to the enormous need.

This pastor was filled with angst, he was kept up at night with the overwhelming burden that far too many people in his community were living without Jesus. Watching this brother's angst brought me to a humbling moment of reflection: when was the last time I lost sleep over lost people? When was the last time I was overwhelmed by the fact that I have friends and neighbors and countless thousands in my community who are living without the hope that is only found in Jesus Christ? I've experienced angst often: Angst over the pressures of life, angst over my children, angst over aging parents, and a long list of other items; some worthy, others not so much. I've experience angst, but when was the last time I

was so uncomfortable with the idea of people living or dying without Christ that I just couldn't stand it? Maybe a better question might be have I ever experience true angst over the reality of the lost people in my community?

My work is primarily with church leaders and local congregations. I've seen a fair share of angst in my work. Are we going to survive as a congregation? Will my congregation be able to support a full-time pastor? How are we going to make budget? What's going to happen to us? This angst often results in statements like, "We'd better get some new/younger people in here or we're not going to survive as a church."

Do you notice the difference in motivation?

You have a church leader who's been a part of reaching thousands, yet can't shake the uneasy feeling that exceedingly more remain unreached with the Gospel. Contrast that to the average, struggling congregation (nearly 1/3 of CGGC congregations haven't reported a new disciple or conversion in the past three years and nearly 80% are in stagnation or decline) that experiences a lot of unease about their own survival. The former is concerned about seeing others come to know and follow Jesus, the latter concerned with self-survival.

In Matthew 9:36 we get this image of Jesus: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus got worked up over the hopeless state of lost people. It moved his emotions and he acted out of his concern for people. Do we get worked up over those who are hopeless without Jesus? Does the state of lost people in our community, workplaces, neighborhoods and schools bother us enough to act with compassion? Does it bother us enough to produce angst or cause some sleepless nights?

May God keep us up at night, may He make us lose a lot of sleep until we lose sleep over the right things. It's not about us, our survival or our success, it's about the people that God so desperately loves.

I hope we all have some sleepless nights soon.

Christ's Peace,

Lance

A Special Opportunity from Winebrenner Theological Seminary

The Barna Group is releasing a new report on the challenges facing pastors and other leaders in ministry. George Barna, the founder of The Barna Group, which is a market research firm specializing in studying the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans, and the intersection of faith and culture is offering a free live-stream event, "The State of Pastors Leading in Complexity." Winebrenner Theological Seminary will be



broadcasting this live-stream on January 26, 2017 from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. (EST) in the TLB at our Findlay campus as well as at our Scotland location. This is a bring your own “Brown Bag” lunch event at both sites.

Please DO NOT individually register for this event, we have a group registration for the live-stream. However, RSVP to academicdept@winebrenner.edu if you are going to attend in Findlay or to sdunn@winebrenner.edu if you are going to attend at Scotland, no later than January 25, 2017, 5:00 p.m. Feel free to invite your spouse, a colleague, lay leader, and/or a friend. Just include the total number that will be attending.

The promotional brochure states, “In the broader culture today, Christian ministers are as likely to be ignored as they are to be admired. But despite the challenges they face, called and committed pastors are essential to lead and shepherd the Christian community through the wilderness ahead. But how are these leaders doing? Join Barna and Pepperdine University for this FREE event! Hear from Barna president David Kinnaman, Barna experts, and special guest speakers as they explore the mental, physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual well-being of today’s pastors. Based on Barna’s groundbreaking research and the words of pastors themselves, learn how pastors handle challenges in their personal lives, their churches, and their communities. Listen in and come away with best practices for staying resilient in the face of a complex and changing culture. If you are interested in the role and well-being of faith leaders today, this event is for you! From pastors to spouses, elders and deacons to the leaders of ministries that support pastors and the church, the information and strategies are valuable for everyone.”

The following is the link for more information. Remember, do not individually register, simply RSVP to academicdept@winebrenner.edu

[https://www.barna.com/pastors2017/?utm_source=Barna+Update+List&utm_campaign=d5b1c80142-Religious Beliefs Greatest Influence on Voting&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8560a0e52e-d5b1c80142-172078169&mc_cid=d5b1c80142&mc_eid=20ba3cc67c](https://www.barna.com/pastors2017/?utm_source=Barna+Update+List&utm_campaign=d5b1c80142-Religious+Beliefs+Greatest+Influence+on+Voting&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8560a0e52e-d5b1c80142-172078169&mc_cid=d5b1c80142&mc_eid=20ba3cc67c)

This is a great opportunity offered by a reputable and respected research team and a host of noted presenters. Hope to see you at this event.

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