



“I DON’T WANT TO LIE DOWN!”

September 2013

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.*

Psalm 23:1-3

“I don’t *want* to lie down. I don’t *want* to rest!” I protested when my small group was studying this psalm. The leader of the group had looked a bit startled. This was not what she had expected to hear. I continued, “I have things I want to do. I don’t *want* to lie down beside quiet waters.”

For those of us living with bipolar disorder, this sentiment might be a familiar one. We have periods when we are super-active, when we seem to need less sleep, and we accomplish a lot—at least, as long as this mood hasn't gone out of control. We are on a "high"—manic for some, hypomanic (or somewhat high) for others.

One of the problems we have then is over-stimulation. A few weeks ago I read something by Charles Spurgeon that I got very excited about. I found it so beautiful that I read it out loud to several friends, eagerly telling them how wonderful I thought it was. Their response was flat. No one got it and I was disappointed. I thought to myself, am I crazy?

The truth was I *had* been having some manic symptoms. My sleeping pattern was abnormal with few periods of uninterrupted sleep. I was waking up and staying up as early as two in the morning, and not feeling there was anything wrong with it. The good thing was that I did start recognizing what was happening to me. I listened when people who understood pointed out the symptoms: the high frustration when I wasn't understood by others; excitability in my speech; a constant flow of ideas leading to more creativity than usual.

When we experience these moods we don't want to do anything to stop the good feeling. Our friends and family can see something is wrong though. They find us too talkative and can't keep up with the many ideas we come up with. We become uncharacteristically impatient, even belligerent, with those closest to us. Some of us start buying things we will never need, or we plan irrational schemes. Our family urges us to get medical help. But we think we're fine and resist . . . And we go higher and higher . . . sometimes even out of control.

But God doesn't want this for us. He wants us to stay in step with the rest of the world. As a good shepherd knows the needs of his sheep, so our Heavenly Shepherd knows our needs. In his love for us, our Shepherd wants to "make us lie down" calmly and in safety. We very much need to listen to Him, surrender to Him, and trust that He knows best.

Listen; surrender; trust.

When we listen to our Shepherd, when we let Him lead us beside quiet waters, He *will* restore us. Slowly but surely we will have the comfort and calm that a good night's sleep can bring.

Having gone through this many times, I've learned that there's nothing as fantastic as being solidly grounded. Today—at this moment—lying down in green pastures for a rest is fine with me. May I return to rest often.

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