



Christians, Wake Up!



J. J. Turner, PhD

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Publishing Designs, Inc.
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To
James Andrews,
my friend, publisher, and fellow-worker
in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Thanks, my brother,
for your encouragement and help.

—1 Corinthians 15:58







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Preface

A number of readers of my other church leadership “wake up” books have asked, “When are you going to write one on wake up, Christians?” Well, here it is. This fourth volume in the wake-up series is *Christians, Wake Up!*

This fourth book is for every Christian. It is a wake-up call for God’s army to stay awake and alert because of the challenges facing the church, both locally and universally. It has never been this late.

For some I imagine this book will be a wake-up call, a fresh breeze in the face of concern about the direction of the church, for others it will not be so refreshing; it will be tough and stuffy. In some circles it is not popular to talk about our issues; it is easier to keep one’s head buried in the sand, hoping the challenges will go away. “Error circles the earth while truth puts its boots on.”

It is never popular to summon people from a slumber or snooze; it is never popular to advocate an escape from the comfort zone of status quo. Yet this is what many Christians need—a *wake-up call!* A casting off of indifference and reengagement in our mission to preach the gospel to the entire world (Mark 16:15–16).

The world can see the love and righteousness of God only through the church, as it is reflected in the lives of members. The world is still requesting, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” We have been called to be light, cities on a hill, salt, and leaven. Why? So we can be noticed, heard, and tasted. Christians must wake up to their mission in a lost and dying world.

If you are reading this, you are probably holding this book in your hands. A casual reading, which is commendable, will be of little benefit. Its message must be studied, prayed about, discussed, wrestled with, and applied. It is a personal wake-up call for the family of God, my family. Hopefully, it is a clarion voice crying in the spirit of the prophets to wake up and turn



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to the Lord with all our minds, hearts, souls, and strength. We need fresh fire (Jeremiah 20:9).

My prayer is that God will use this imperfect effort not only to wake me up but also to wake up my brothers and sisters—*you!*

J. J. Turner, PhD
September 9, 2011





Introduction

Wake-Up Calls for Some Christians

The apostle Paul challenged the Christians in Rome to wake up:

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light (Romans 13:11–12).

Paul challenged the Christians at Corinth to wake up: “Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:34).

Quoting from Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1, Paul wrote an application to the Christians at Ephesus:

Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the day are evil (Ephesians 5:14–16).

From these and other verses we can conclude that identifying the need for a wake-up call is biblical. In my years of ministry I have noted numerous reasons that some Christians need wake-up calls. While it is true that not every Christian needs a wake-up call, sadly, many do.

What follows is a brief listening of areas in which some Christians need a wake-up call. As you read this list take a few minutes to do a self-awareness application. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being sound asleep and 5 being fully awake, write where you feel you are on the scale:





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- 1—Sound asleep
- 2—Dozing off
- 3—Catnapping
- 4—Drowsy
- 5—Wide awake

Some Christians need a wake-up call

- ___ from being lukewarm (Revelation 3:14–17)
- ___ from being carnally minded (1 Corinthians 3:1–4)
- ___ from being close-minded (Acts 17:11)
- ___ from walking by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- ___ from neglecting prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- ___ from neglecting studying the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15)
- ___ from a failure to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21)
- ___ from not having the attitude (mind) of Christ (Philippians 2:4–9)
- ___ from not caring for others (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10)
- ___ from failing to share the gospel (Mark 16:15–16)
- ___ from having a hardened heart (1 Timothy 4:1–7)
- ___ from associating with the evilness of the world (1 John 5:19)
- ___ from neglecting the assembly (Hebrews 10:24–25)
- ___ from not being on guard (1 Peter 5:8; Luke 8:12)
- ___ from not practicing love (1 Corinthians 13; 1 John)
- ___ from being afraid or being a coward (Acts 4:11–13)
- ___ from failing to bear fruit (Galatians 5:22–25)



Introduction

Yes, it is clear from this short list that there are some Christians who need a wake-up call. How about you? What is your score?

What are some other areas in which Christians need a wake-up call? Let's all wake up and go forward pursuing the goals God has given us as His children. Remember, it has never been this late before as we move toward the midnight hour of judgment (Acts 17:30–31).







CHAPTER

1

It Is Time to Wake Up

In her frustration, she entered the room with a third effort to get her husband to wake up and get out of bed.

“Harold, wake up! You are already late for work.” Harold groaned and pulled the covers up over his head.

She continued, “They are waiting on you; they are depending on you to show up.”

Harold pulled the covers from off his head and replied, “No! They don’t like me. Nobody cares. It is just a waste of time.”

“Harold, you’ve got to get up! You are the boss.”

Many of us have had mornings like Harold had when we didn’t want to wake up. Success in life depends on waking up, getting out of bed, and tackling the challenges of life.

We’ve all heard clichés like:

“Wake up and smell the coffee.”

“Wake up and smell the roses.”

“The early bird gets the worm.”

Physical sleep is essential for good health, so nothing is wrong with getting an appropriate amount of sleep. When it is time to wake up, however, and we don’t or haven’t, our laziness can be disastrous.

It was the sixth of March 1987. The *Herald of Free Enterprise*, a ferry, was transporting cars between Dover, England, and Zeebrugge, Belgium. Cars were loaded through a front opening in the ship so they could be loaded onto the lower deck.



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On that March winter night, with 563 passengers aboard, along with vehicles, Captain David Lewry put to sea. It was dark, 7:00 P.M. All went well in the safe harbor. But one mile out, ninety seconds after reaching the high seas, the ship capsized and sank within five minutes.

On that fatal night the ship had sailed with its front loading doors wide open. There was no indicator light on the bridge to alert the captain, so he had assumed the sailor responsible for closing the doors had done so. Instead, he was asleep in his cabin. Because assistant boatswain Mark Stanley was asleep on the job, 193 people died.

While sleep is essential, there are serious consequences from sleeping too much or at the wrong time. The wise man wrote these words to warn us:

*He who gathers in summer is a wise son;
He who sleeps in harvest
is a son who causes shame.*

—Proverbs 10:5

*Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty;
Open your eyes, and you
will be satisfied with bread.*

—Proverbs 20:13

*How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
When will you rise from your sleep?
A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep—
So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,
And your need like an armed man.*

—Proverbs 6:9–11

*Laziness casts one into a deep sleep,
And an idle person will suffer hunger.*

—Proverbs 19:15

While these truths are dynamic in a physical sense, they are far more so in a spiritual sense. Too much sleep may be dangerous in a physical sense, but it can have eternal consequences in a spiritual sense. That is why the apostle Paul warned,



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“Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Ephesians 5:14).

As Christians we are told to wake up. If we are asleep spiritually, we will suffer the consequences. The Bible is God’s spiritual alarm clock for us. He has set it without a snooze button. We are called to be watchmen, to warn ourselves and others about the coming judgment of the Lord (Hebrews 9:27). But if we are lazy, sleeping watchmen, we are of little value. Here is how Isaiah described such watchmen:

His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber (Isaiah 56:10).

A reading of Ezekiel 3:17–21 will educate us to the duties of a watchman.

When Jesus was in the garden praying to His Father about His death on the cross, He asked Peter, James, and John to watch with Him (Mark 14:34).

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch an hour? Watch and pray . . .” (Mark 14:37–41).

When Jesus needs us the most, are we asleep? Are we sleeping when we should be praying? Have we turned off the spiritual alarm clock? Do we keep pushing the snooze button? Are we waiting for a tomorrow when we will arise and be about our Master’s business?

The ad said for \$9.99 per month you would receive one daily wake-up call and three snooze calls. Other ads offered more expensive and cheaper wake-up calls. Our wake-up call as Christians is the most expensive of all: the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28). There is no snooze button because, if we love Him we will keep His commandments (John 14:15).

Jesus came to Israel to give them a wake-up call. But they didn’t accept it. In Matthew 16:1–6 He rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees by reminding them that they knew how to read the signs of the weather, but they didn’t know how to tell what time it was for them. Spiritually and receptively speaking, it was the time of the Messiah. It was the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). They failed to heed His wake-up calls and suf-



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ferred the consequences in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Christians, wake up!

Open your eyes to the condition of the world and churches. It has been said that only 17 percent of Americans attend church on any given Sunday. Atheism is the fastest growing religion in America. More church doors are closing than new ones are opening in America. Launched by the Master's marching orders to go into the whole world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15–16), we have taken sanctuary in our buildings and complained about how dark it is outside. We have been arguing about deck chairs while the old ship of Zion is sinking. We have failed to realize that it has never been this late before.

Christians, wake up!

The battle is raging; crew members are abandoning the battleship or booking passage on cruise ships where the food buffet is open so passengers can pick and choose the theological diets they prefer. A paid crew takes care of all the duties, while we enjoy the fun and games created and led by cruise counselors. No one is manning the battle stations.

Christians, wake up!

Today!

Yesterday is gone and
only lives as a memory:
good or bad.

Tomorrow is not here yet;
it is only a vague promise
that may or may not
come true.

Today! Today is here,
it is ours to use
and enjoy in the
now moments of life.



It Is Time to Wake Up

So today I will wake up,
stay awake and pursue
God's best for my life.

I say with the psalmist:
'This is the day the Lord has made,
I will rejoice and be glad in it.'

Today I am awake and fully alive!

—J. J. Turner

We all need wake-up calls. Stephen Covey wrote, "In the absence of wake-up calls, many of us never really confront the critical issues of life." Life is lived in the present, in the here and now; we must free ourselves of all the foolish and useless trivia and make room for living and loving as God has commanded. We must develop the habit of living each day as if it is our last. Why? Because one of these days our names will be called and we will exit from death row into eternity. This should be a major reason to wake up. We need to get on with living for the Lord; we don't have forever.

Christians, wake up!

We may know many things, from the *Theory of Relativity* to the formulas of DNA. We may create new and exciting inventions and master languages and other skills, yet not know who we are at the soul level. The need of the hour is for us Christians to dig deeply into our souls and acknowledge that we need a fresh wake-up call from God. We need to say with the psalmist, "Lord, will You not revive me again?" And He answers, "Yes, but only if you want to be revived."

Why It Is Time to Wake Up

There are numerous reasons for us to consider seriously the need to wake up. Here are a few:

1. Because God has commanded it in His word.
2. Because of the many needs in a lost world.
3. Because of the consequences of not waking up.



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4. Because many congregations are asleep and need to wake up.
5. Because of the challenges of our changing times.
6. Because our enemy, Satan, never sleeps (1 Peter 5:8).
7. Because the church in many quarters is being led into apostasy.
8. Because the number of workers is getting smaller.
9. Because we have a covenant agreement to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).
10. Because it has never been this late before.
11. Because we have an eternal responsibility.
12. Because we want to be like our Father: He never sleeps.



For Thought and Discussion



1. How do you handle physical wake-up calls?
2. What is the most annoying wake-up call you've received?
3. What is a spiritual wake-up call?
4. In what sense does the church need a wake-up call?
5. What will you do if you discover you need a wake-up call?
6. How has Satan lulled us to sleep?
7. What is spiritual snoozing?
8. What are some additional reasons for waking up spiritually?
9. Why do some Christians refuse to wake up?
10. What additional observations do you have?





It Is Time to Wake Up

Lord, Wake Me Up!

Lord, if I slumber,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I snooze,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I am neglecting
My responsibilities,
Wake me up.
Lord, if there is a need
I don't see, wake me up.
Lord, if I have blind spots,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I have been neglecting
My prayer life,
Wake me up.
Lord, if my zeal is cooling,
Wake me up.
Lord, if my faith is in a comfort zone,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I stray from Your word,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I fail to do good unto all men,
Wake me up.
Lord, if I have failed to see the hurts
Around me, wake me up.
Lord, if I wane in my love for You
And for my neighbor, wake me up.
Lord, if I fail to put Your
Kingdom first, wake me up.
Lord, just keep me awake all the time,
Be my constant alarm—*please*.
—J. J. Turner





CHAPTER

2

It Has Never Been This Late

What Time Is It?

Have you ever noticed how frequently we ask and answer this question related to time?

I'll date myself. When I was a boy my favorite after-school TV program was always introduced by a character named Buffalo Bob. He would ask in a loud voice, "Boys and girls, what time is it!" The kids in the peanut gallery would shout back, "It's Howdy Doody time!"

Time! It's the stuff life is made of. Time is a continual state of flow—moving forward. We erroneously use the phrase "manage time" as though we can collect it and hold it until needed in the future. Not so. We use the present moment of time either wisely or foolishly; we manage our behavior relative to the usage of time.

What Time Is It?

What time is it?
Time to do well,
Time to live better,
Give up that grudge,
Answer that letter,
Speak the kind word to
Sweeten a sorrow,
Do that good deed you
Would leave till tomorrow.
—Author unknown