

FILLED WITH  
LIFE & ENERGY



By Randal A. Wright

Imagine for a moment that a friend comes to you seeking advice on ways to receive personal revelation. If you could offer only one idea, what would it be?

As a new General Authority, Elder Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) felt inadequate in fulfilling his important calling, so he sought advice from his friend Elder Harold B.

Lee (1899–1973) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The counsel offered that day both surprised and motivated Elder Romney.

Elder Lee said: “If you are to be successful as a General Authority, you will need to be inspired. You will need to receive revelation. I will give you one piece of advice: *Go to bed early and get up early.* If you do, your body and mind will become rested and then in the quiet of those early morning hours, you will receive more flashes of inspiration and insight than at any other time of the day.”

Years later, reflecting back on that experience, then-President Romney said: “From that day on, I put that counsel into practice, and I know it works. Whenever I have a serious problem, or some assignment of a creative nature with which I hope to receive the influence of the Spirit, I always receive more assistance in the early morning hours than at any other time of the day.”<sup>1</sup>

When I first read this account, I too was surprised by the advice Elder Lee gave. I would never have connected an early daily schedule with revelation. However, I now know that there is a direct correlation. I have also learned that actions traditionally associated with receiving revelation like prayer, scripture study, fasting, temple attendance, and service are greatly enhanced when I go to bed early and get up early.

## What one practice, if followed consistently and with discipline, would help you have better health, energy, and inspiration?

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### Scriptural Examples

Inspired men and women of all ages have followed this divine counsel concerning sleep. “Abraham *got up early in the morning* to the place where he stood before the Lord” (Genesis 19:27; emphasis added). “Moses *rose up early in the morning*, and went up unto mount Sinai, *as the Lord had commanded him*, and took in his hand the two tables of stone” (Exodus 34:4; emphasis added). “And Joshua *rose early in the morning*, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord” (Joshua 6:12; emphasis added).

How did the Lord begin His day during His mortal ministry? Mark records, “In the morning, *rising up a great while before day*, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). Mary, a devoted



disciple, followed His example and in doing so taught us a powerful lesson: “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene *early, when it was yet dark*, unto the sepulchre” (John 20:1). In the early morning she became the first mortal to see the resurrected Lord.

### **Blessings of Arising Early**

Great leaders in our day also use the early-morning hours to receive revelation. Some time ago I heard a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy mention in a stake conference talk that he was an early riser. After the meeting, I spoke to him briefly about his early-morning ritual, then asked how many of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve kept a similar schedule. He replied, “They all do!” It was a powerful moment, and the Spirit testified to me that going to bed early and getting up early can be indeed connected to receiving revelation.

Additional blessings are pledged to those who follow the Lord’s counsel on sleep. Consider these incredible promises: “Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may *not be weary*; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be *invigorated*” (D&C 88:124; emphasis added). *Invigorate* means “to fill with life and energy.”

The ancient philosopher Aristotle suggested other benefits to those who keep an early schedule: “It is well to be up before day-break, for such a habit contributes to health, wealth and wisdom.”<sup>2</sup> Early U.S. statesman Benjamin Franklin later put that thought into his well-known maxim: “Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”<sup>3</sup> Most people put health, wealth, and wisdom toward the top of things most desired in life.

### **Health**

The average age of a chief executive officer in America is 55 years old.<sup>4</sup> Would it surprise you to discover that the

CEO of an international organization was a 97-year-old man? What if you also learned that he still traveled the world giving speeches, training leaders, meeting with government officials, and being interviewed by major media organizations at this advanced age? What if his two top VPs were very active 79- and 87-year-olds? And yet that was exactly the situation toward the end of the administration of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) as President of the Church. It seems likely that an early schedule, while not the only contributor, is among the factors leading to the longevity of our Church leaders.

Former Brigham Young University president Ernest L. Wilkinson suggested that keeping an early schedule is associated with health benefits. Referring to President David O. McKay (1873–1970), President of the Church at the time, he said: “One of the great reasons, I am sure, why President McKay has lived to such a good, ripe, and vigorous old age has been the fact that as a young man he developed habits of retiring to bed early, arising early, generally before sun up, when his mind was clear and his body vigorous, to do the day’s work.”<sup>5</sup>

Connections have also been made between keeping an early schedule and mental and emotional health. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “To those who feel defeated and downtrodden, look to the early hours of the day for your rescue.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Wisdom**

The connection between sleep patterns and wisdom is not just a theory. A study conducted by researchers at Brigham Young University states: “Students who habitually go to bed late and sleep late the next day have lower grade point averages (GPAs) than students with early-to-bed and early-to-rise sleeping habits. The later students slept in the morning, the lower their grades tended to



be. Out of all the factors studied, weekday and weekend wakeup times had the strongest association with students' GPAs. Each hour over the average that students slept in on weekdays was associated with a 0.13-point drop on the GPA (0.0–4.0 scale).<sup>7</sup>

Not long ago I surveyed 203 Latter-day Saint college students about their sleep patterns. On average these students awoke at 7:30 a.m. on school days and 9:15 a.m. on weekends. Their average bedtime was midnight on school nights and 1:00 a.m. on weekends. These students are going directly against the research connecting an early schedule with knowledge acquisition. Perhaps the finding that a higher GPA is the result of an early schedule is too simple to believe. Have we become like the children of Israel, who refused to follow the Lord's antidote for snakebites "because of the simpleness of the way"? (1 Nephi 17:41; see also Helaman 8:14–15).

Consider the counsel President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave related to gaining wisdom: "I counsel our children to do their critical studying in the early hours of the morning when they're fresh and alert, rather than to fight physical weariness and mental exhaustion at night. I've learned the power of the dictum, 'Early to bed, early to rise.'<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this is one reason full-time missionaries follow an early-to-bed and early-to-rise schedule.

### Other Blessings

Writing with his wife, Barbara, Elder Joe J. Christensen, emeritus member of the Seventy, suggested even more blessings to those who follow the Lord's counsel on sleep: "There must be an excellent reason for the injunction to retire and arise early [see D&C 88:124]. . . . The world is a more beautiful place early in the morning. Life is so much more calm. Much more can be accomplished in a shorter

amount of time."<sup>9</sup> During a fireside address at Brigham Young University, Elder Christensen further stated: "Some of you are not getting the rest that you need. Some are habituated to going to bed late and sleeping much longer than your system really needs, thus missing out on some of the personal inspiration you could be receiving."<sup>10</sup>

President Hinckley added another promise to the obedient: "If you go to bed at 10:00 and get up by 6:00 a.m., things will work out for you."<sup>11</sup>

Following the Lord's counsel on sleep may seem like a small thing, yet "by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Nephi 16:29). I have a testimony that following an early schedule brings many blessings into our lives, including revelation. It's amazing how much more I get accomplished in a day when I retire early and arise early. The benefits of this self-discipline far exceed the effort required. When we win the first battle of the day against the mattress, we are far more likely to win more battles during the day. We are also more likely to be filled with life and energy. ■

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### NOTES

1. See Joe J. Christensen, *To Grow in Spirit: A Ten-Point Plan for Becoming More Spiritual* (1989), 27–28.
2. Aristotle, in *Wisdom of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle*, ed. N. B. Sen (1967), 100.
3. *Selections from the Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. U. Waldo Cutler (1905), 16.
4. See *Forbes* magazine, "Emerging Culture, Worldwide Success," Oct. 25, 2012.
5. Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Lifting One's Sights*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (Oct. 1, 1963), 4.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy Cometh in the Morning," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 70.
7. *Journal of American College Health* 49 (2000): 125–30.
8. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975), 205.
9. Joe J. and Barbara K. Christensen, *Making Your Home a Missionary Training Center* (1985), 33.
10. Joe J. Christensen, "Resolutions" (Brigham Young University fireside, Jan. 9, 1994), 5, speeches.byu.edu.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 166–67.