

## 2CH Sunday at 7.30

Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

### Awakening

Presented by Karl Faase

Are you falling asleep? Now you're probably thinking; it's 7:30 in the morning, I've only just woken up, I am feeling a little sleepy. But I don't mean physically falling asleep, I don't mean slothfulness or consciousness, I'm actually asking are you asleep in life? And I want to say that being asleep in life is unconscious and uncontested acceptance. Unconscious and uncontested acceptance of all that goes on around you.

Norman Cousins, an author from America wrote this; "Death is not the greatest loss in life, the greatest loss is what dies within us while we live". And there is plenty that can die within in us while we live in unconscious and uncontested acceptance of all that happens around us.

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we're looking at the question of waking up and being awake in life, and I've suggested and I think it's very true, that many people are asleep in life, and as Norman Cousins says, there's something dying within us, as we live our lives, but why does this happen? Why do we allow that to happen within us? Because we see it in ourselves and we see it in the people around us.

I think there's three reasons that occurs;

1/ because of ease; it's just easier to keep living the way you are, it's easier to stay the way you are because are happy with it. Sometimes, even in pain it's easier to stay the way you are. There's a quote that; "we will choose the certainty of misery over the misery of uncertainty". In other words; I would choose what I know over what I don't know because it's 'easier'.

The second is alignment, we're asleep in life because we align with everybody else around us; everybody else is living this way, everybody else is doing this, I will do the same?

I have spoken to several people about the global financial crisis unfolded, some of whom had lost a lot of money. There are those who lost money because they borrowed to buy shares, and then when the share market collapsed, they still owed the same amount of money but now the shares was only worth half the amount and they lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. In listening to their story you would ask yourself; why would you do that? Why would you function in that way? And the answer is ... everybody else was. It's the same as everybody else was doing and we feel that as long as we continue the way everybody else is going then surely it's ok?

And the third is the whole area of perceived success. We feel like we're winning in life. We feel like we're getting ahead in life. There are people who have jobs that pay them well, they pay their mortgage, they own big houses and wonderful cars, and their success seems obvious but underneath they're actually miserable,

they don't like life, they don't like what they're doing but they can't give it up as it is important to them to be perceived as successful.

It is positive to reach your goals – but at what cost? There's a condition referred to as Summit Fever where people lose their lives in situations like climbing Mount Everest. The fever of reaching the summit, the fixation of reaching the top overwhelms them and overwhelms their judgement. They make poor choices because they're just completely focused on getting to the summit. Perceived success is like that, and it's just the same as 'ease' and it's just like 'alignment', what it's doing is it's putting us to sleep. There are things dying within us as we go after the summit.

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This morning we're asking the question about whether we're awake in life and what might be dying within us and a passage I want to look at this morning is John Chapter 11, the story of Jesus rising Lazarus to life again; now that's the ultimate sleep – completely dead. In this story, Jesus is told that Lazarus was sick and may die and what we read in first couple of verses is that Jesus says that this sickness will not end in death, no, it's for God's glory, so that God's son may be glorified. Jesus decides to stay where he is, two more days before he then goes to see Lazarus.

I believe that a key to this story is that Jesus wants more for us than just our comfort – the whole story actually creates quite a bit of *discomfort*. It creates discomfort for others and it creates discomfort for Jesus, but why does Jesus do this? Because he had something else in mind. He waits two days and then he goes to see his good friends, Martha and Mary, who are the sisters of Lazarus, who's just died. When Martha comes to Jesus in John Chapter 11, Verse 21, she says; Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Then later on, Mary, who does not come out to greet Jesus until asked uses the same statement; Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

So why did Jesus wait? It wasn't Jesus being callous; if you read the story when Jesus comes to the tomb Lazarus had been dead four days. It would have taken a day to get to Jesus, Jesus waited two days and a day for Jesus to go and see Martha and Mary and to raise Lazarus. In fact, by the time Jesus heard the news that Lazarus was sick, he had already died, and that's a key part of this story. What you see all the way through is that there is a greater purpose in what Jesus is trying to do here. He basically says; this is so that people would believe. This is so they would understand who Jesus is. In fact, when he prays to his Heavenly Father, he says this; I know that you always hear me, but I've said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe that you sent me. And then he says; Lazarus, come out.

Jesus did not die on a cross or come to earth just to make us happy. There is something greater at work here and what is greater at work is that we would understand who Jesus is and come awake in our life and come awake in our faith. Stay with us as we explore that a little further in a moment.

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We're looking at the question about coming awake in our life and we've just seen in the story of Lazarus, in John Chapter 11, that Jesus had something more in mind than just raising Lazarus to life again; he actually wanted people to change and come awake in their faith. And there's great discomfort from Martha and Mary and those around them that Lazarus had died. Key to this story is that we hate discomfort but what discomfort does is it actually awakens our attitudes.

I do some teaching on change management and helping organisation and churches to change, and one of the issues I refer to is that to bring change the first thing people need is discomfort; if you have no discomfort,

you will not awaken new attitudes in your life. You know when you haven't looked at the scales and you get on and you see your weight and there's a level of discomfort of where you're up to? Or you have that terrible fight with your husband or your wife or a good friend? What about that awful exam result? You think you're ready for the exam, you get the results back and you've done badly. And what about the report from the doctor that says terrible things about your health, and you're now worried about the future. What about if you're in a job and you think the promotion is yours and it doesn't happen and there's discomfort. And what about conflict in your workplace? Each of those scenarios creates discomfort and while we do all we can to avoid discomfort, it will move us forward in life.

Remember that his story shows us God is not aloof in the person of Jesus from our pain and our struggle. It's not that Jesus glories or enjoys the struggle of those he sees around him. It says in John Chapter 11, Verse 33; when Jesus saw her, that's Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved. Then it goes on to say – the shortest verse in the bible, Verse 35 – Jesus wept, and then once more, Verse 38; Jesus once more, deeply moved, came to the tomb. It's not that Jesus is callous, it's not that God is unconcerned, it's not that they don't recognise or are unaware of our pain and our struggle; God stands with us in our pain and our struggle but as we see in John Chapter 11, God has more in mind, as Jesus did for these people, and what he has in mind is our growth; what he has in mind is our awakening and what he has in mind is our moving on in life.

We choose how we respond to pain and difficulty and discomfort and we can choose to respond with belief, or with anger and what God wants is to build belief in us and awaken faith.

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We've looked at the idea of waking up and I want to ask you this question where are you? Perhaps you need to awaken in your life. Do you need to take some time to think about life and what God may be doing in and through you?

You have a deep sense of discomfort in your life and you may even actually be angry that God hasn't taken away your discomfort, God might be wanting to waken you to faith and belief in following Him.

Don't allow what's important to die within you in the midst of the busyness of life and why don't you start this morning by reading over that story in John 11 again and consider how you might be awakened in faith.

If you would like to be encouraged each day to be awakened in your faith go to the website [www.thedailynudge.org](http://www.thedailynudge.org) and sign up for a daily email.