

KNOWING THE SEVERITY - KNOWING THE GREATNESS

Last Wednesday I finally got the results from my sleep apnea assessment that I did back at the end of March. I will be honest, I was expecting ahead of time to be diagnosed with severe sleep apnea. The reason why I was thinking this is because usually when I am diagnosed with something they tell me it is one of the worst cases they have ever seen. For instance, when a nurse did an assessment on me when I was 5 years old to see if I was colour blind, she informed me I was the worst case of it she had ever seen. Then in 2007 when I had my gall bladder removed the surgeon said it was the most diseased one she had ever extracted.

I do not have health issues very often, but when I do they tend to be of a severe nature. Now you know why I was expecting to be told I had severe sleep apnea. Sure enough, my results revealed I have severe obstructive sleep apnea. There are benchmarks for what is considered to be normal, mild, or severe. In my six hours of sleep at the clinic that night I blew by all the criteria for normal and mild. When I slept on my side, the number of sleep apnea occurrences I had every hour were six times over what would be considered normal. When I was sleeping on my back these occurrences rose to eight times above normal on an hourly basis.

Yes, I would consider these statistics to be severe. I did not disappoint on my oxygen levels either during the study. These levels dropped to just seventy per cent of what would be considered as normal. Being an accountant prior to becoming a minister, I did take note that I had 209 occurrences in my six hours of sleep. I am just glad I did not make that many trips to the bathroom during the night.

I share this with you as a reminder how we all have to deal with various issues that may arise at times in our lives. These issues do not always involve our health. Other issues that may arise in our lives include:

- care giving situations for others
- death and loss
- finances
- work
- family matters
- relationships

When we deal with these kinds of issues, just like the medical community, we categorize them as being normal, minor, major, or extremely severe. Whichever one of these categories we assign to our issue has an impact on our outlook and emotions as we deal with them. If we categorize an issue as being normal or minor, naturally it does not have the same impact on our outlook and feelings as severe problems do. It is when we perceive our issues as being quite severe that we can begin to feel overwhelmed, worried, and frightened. These are all natural feelings on our part when we are facing serious issues.

It is important when we begin to experience these feelings to switch our focus instead to what we know about God. We are so blessed that God allows us to get to know Him. Worship, prayer, reading His Word, and personal experiences we have with Him are all opportunities for us to get to know God. One thing we come to know about God is how great He is. This is something the psalmist came to know about Him:

I know the greatness of the Lord (Psalm 135:5)

When we categorize the issues we are dealing with as severe, if we begin to focus on God's greatness it will help us to control our emotions and view our reality in these ways:

- Yes, the issue being dealt with is severe, but it is not too great for God to overcome.
- Yes, there may be some tough days ahead, but God in all of His greatness will lead me through this.
- Yes, the issue seems hard for me to deal with, but God in all of His greatness finds this easy to solve.
- Yes, it may seem that I alone am dealing with this severe issue, but I am not alone because God in all of His greatness is there with me.

Reading David's words in Psalm 23, one would have to think that David focused on God's greatness as he faced serious issues in his life. How else can we explain why David wrote,

**Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.
(Psalm 23:4)**

When we read these words penned by David, we do not see expressions of worry, doubt, or hopelessness on his part. By focusing on how great God is, it helped David not to be afraid because he understood his Lord's presence would be there to comfort and protect him. As we learn from these two psalms, when we do categorize some of the issues we are dealing with as being quite severe, the best thing for us to do is focus on our knowledge of how great God is. This will make a difference in our feelings and also in our perspective as we face the issue head on with all of God's great qualities there to help us.

Yes, it came as no surprise to me that I have severe obstructive sleep apnea. Thankfully a CPAP machine will help me overcome this severe issue. It will be great to know again what a good and restful sleep is like. It will be great not to fall asleep in my own sermons like so many other people do. My family thinks it will be great not to have to hear the "snoring bear" at nights anymore. I wonder if God will think it is great too, not to have to hear me snoring as He watches over me at night?

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean