

I sometimes get sleep paralysis. For anyone who doesn't know this means that sometimes I wake up, and I can't move. Like, I'm definitely awake, and I definitely can't move. It started happening when I was 13, and 13 year old me didn't handle it very well, and developed a massive fear of the dark. I refused to go to sleep in a dark room, and would send a sibling into any dark spaces ahead of me whenever possible to turn the lights on. Being in the dark would fill me with a deep sense of dread, which often felt like a weight in my belly and a hole in my chest. And the older I got the earlier the sense of dread would hit me, until I was scared of going to bed all the day. I would just have this terror, acutely aware of my vulnerabilities, of the risk of unknown horrors, of being jumped up on, of not being able to move.

It was so bad that i got a whole bunch of prayer ministry for it and eventually I got to a place where I was ok to be in the dark. I learnt that the dark didn't have to be scary, and even sleep paralysis didn't have to be scary.

Now in the church calendar I am drawn to the points of darkness. My outgoing and sometimes manic nature finds peace in the in the quiet of advent and lent. I revel in the opportunity to examine my own darkness, and wrestle with the darkness in the rest of the world. But we're no longer in advent- we're at epiphany, and I have found myself in a kind of spiritual sleep paralysis. It's time to go but I can't move on.

I think that some of it is to do with my idea of revelation, of epiphany. A sudden realisation of who God is, seems to me to be this big huge thing that changes the direction of your entire existence.

Honestly that thought fills me with the same kind of terror that I used to get when I was scared of the dark. Being exposed, being vulnerable, being at risk of all these unknown horrors. It's all as scary and I hate it.

It's time to move, but what's going to happen if I do....where will I end up? Who will I meet on the way, will I be able to make it, be able to do it?????????

And then, in the middle of my freak out I get asked to speak on guidance, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.'

And the truth is that epiphany *is* time to move- that encounters with God that leave us the same aren't what we've signed up for . Engaging with God means that you can't stay paralysed in the darkness.

How freaked out I was about the dark never stopped the night from coming when I was a kid, and thankfully how worried I am about the next step won't stop God from leading me now.

I am comforted that God's promise for guidance isn't an overhead light or a spot light in the distance, but a light in your hands, and a light at your feet. It's a light that shows you just your next movement. It's a light that is close and personal, a light that warms, and is gentle.

For someone who get's paralysed sometimes like me, Guidance from God isn't always a leap forward, sometimes it's a flexing of the fingers, sometimes it's a wriggling of the toes.

I don't get messages or vision about 6 months in the future. That would be a disaster for someone like me. God guidance in my life is receiving peace about a situation or understanding someone else better. It's the small things that change the direction of your life.

This morning with the young people we talked about proverbs. How they were full of little bits of practical stuff that helped us make sense of ourselves and of God. Each one of them chose a proverb and we explored how it might help us in our day today life. We talked about the importance of choosing words carefully, of trusting God, of listening to the wisdom of others, of not obsessing over money.

These are small things, small bits of light that help us, not jump forward but shift us the right direction, a lamp in my hand, a light on my feet.

It's these little lights that move me forward, out of my focus on darkness, move me beyond my worries about what the future might bring. Help me to trust God, help me not to be afraid.

The reason I can enjoy the darkness now is because I know that the light always comes, and that when it comes I will be led forwards, my steps lit by a God who lights my hands .