

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **GREAT BIBLE LESSONS** **“Daily Christian Living”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

To many people, Christianity is like a garment that can be taken off or put on at will. For example, when it's Sunday the “Christian garment” can be taken out, spruced up, and put on so that a person can “really live like a Christian.” But when people want to live like **they** want to live—when they want to “have fun” and “do things like those in the world”—they are suddenly willing to take off their “Christian garment.” In reality, however, such actions illustrate the hypocrisy of those who claim to be followers of Christ. Christianity is not like a garment or a coat that can be put on or taken off. Christianity represents something that a person must do each and every day of his or her life. Think about the words of Jesus in Luke 9:23, where Jesus illustrated what being one of His followers actually entailed. “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” This passage beautifully illustrates the fact that Christianity is a daily lifestyle. It is not a momentary fad. Nor is it something we do whenever we are “in the right crowd.” Rather, being a Christian is a way of life each and every day.

Today, then, I would like to discuss with you the topic of daily Christian living. Let us ponder what it means to live for Jesus each and every day. To really live for Christ, there are some prerequisites contained in Luke 9:23 that must be present in our lives before we can really begin to live for Jesus. In this passage, we find three such prerequisites. First, we must have a **desire** to live daily for Jesus. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me...” We must have a desire, or a will, to live daily for Jesus. This represents a deep-rooted passion to love God and live for Him each and every day. There are some questions that we can ask ourselves to see if we truly have that desire. Do we really **want** to do God's will? Does your entire life (that is, your essence or being) revolve around the fact that you want to do the will of God? In John 7:17 Jesus said, “If anyone **wants** to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” Do we really do want to do God's will? Is that what life is all about for you? Look at Acts 9:6. Saul had been confronted with the great light on the road to Damascus. In Acts 9:5 he asks, “Who are You, Lord?” The Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Then, in Acts 9:6 Saul asked, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Jesus told Saul, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” Saul had the attitude of someone who really wanted to do the will of God. In honest sincerity and humility, Saul cried out, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” There is an example of a man who wanted to live for Jesus each and every day.

But here is another question. Do you really love the Lord? You cannot follow Christ unless you really love Him. What does it mean to love God? In Mark 12 a lawyer came to Jesus to test Him by asking, “Which is the first commandment of all?” (vs. 28). Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment” (vs. 30). Do we really

have the mindset that says, "I love God more than anyone or anything else, and I therefore have a desire to live daily for Jesus"? In 1 John 4:8 the Bible says that "God is love." If we really love Him, then we must keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15).

Then there is a second prerequisite found in Luke 9:23. Not only must we have a desire to live daily for Jesus, but we also must **deny ourselves** and "take up our crosses daily." We must exhibit a denial of self in order to really give ourselves over to the Lord and to be able to commit to living daily for Him. We need to say to ourselves, "This life is no longer about us. We must not live just for ourselves. We must not be in it just for what **we** can get out of it." Rather we must be living sacrifices for Christ. In Romans 12:1 Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." If we are really going to live for Jesus, we have to remember each day that we are a living sacrifice. We are not an Old Testament sacrifice like a goat or a lamb that was slain. Instead, we serve as **living sacrifices every day** for Christ. Paul illustrated this point quite beautifully in Galatians 2:20 where he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul's point was that just as Christ had been crucified, so he, too, as a follower of Christ, had likewise been crucified. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 we read, "The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." If we really consider the love of God, it will challenge us to die daily. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily." **That** is what denial of self is all about. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Little wonder, then, that Paul was able to say of the Macedonian Christians that before they gave their money to the Lord, "they first gave themselves" (2 Cor. 8:5). A denial of self means that we will be willing to change the way we do things, and that we will change our lifestyles. For example, perhaps you used to be involved in immoral things. Perhaps you used to drink. Once you become a child of God, you no longer can do such things. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." You are not to give in to such worldly lusts any longer. Perhaps you used to speak in a manner that was not becoming of a Christian. Ephesians 4:29 and Colossians 3:8 tell us, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth." Likely, before a person became a Christian he had no desire to serve God. But Revelation 2:10 tells us that as a Christian, that person must "be faithful unto death."

A third prerequisite from Luke 9:23 is that we must "take up our cross daily." We have to have a deep dedication to follow Jesus. Revelation 14:4 says of the redeemed, "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Paul was not teaching that we should imitate other people. His point was this: "To the point that I imitate Christ, you imitate me." This principle was evident in the lives of Jesus' followers. Acts 4 provides a remarkable commentary on how Jesus has impacted those who followed Him. Peter and John were being questioned by the Jewish authorities about why they were teaching the things they were. Peter and John responded by saying of Christ, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (vs. 12). When the Jews realized the boldness with which Peter and John spoke, and when they realized that they were uneducated men, then "they realized that they had been with Jesus" (vs. 13). These men had a sincere dedication to follow the Savior.

The Bible teaches us what we ought to do in this regard. Notice the words of 1 Peter 2:21, where we are clearly taught to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow

His steps." We were called to "follow in the footsteps of Jesus." The sheep hear their shepherd, and they follow Him willingly (Jn. 10:27). We therefore need to have these prerequisites in our lives. We must have a desire to follow Christ. We must deny ourselves. And we must take up our cross daily.

Now, let's say that we have incorporated those prerequisites into our lives, that we have a good heart, and that we truly want to live for Christ every day. What things would we do on a daily basis if we really were living for Jesus? What attributes would fill our lives? What steps would we take? What type of Christian character would be seen in our lives each day?

I want to suggest that one of the first attributes we ought to have in our lives is daily Bible study, which surely would be one of the "defining marks" of the person who wants to live for Jesus every day. Too many people let the Bible lie unused on the coffee table. Or their Bibles sit unused on the pews of the church building. But a Christian who wants to live every day for Christ will not deny himself or herself daily Bible study. Look at Acts 17:11, where Paul said of the Christians in Berea, "These were more fair minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." What made these people "more fair minded" than those in Thessalonica? It had to do with the fact that when Paul came to them to preach the Gospel, they invited him in so they could hear what he had to say. And they were open minded to hearing his message. But what did they do next? They "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." We cannot claim to be a faithful child of God if we are not involved in regular Bible study. There will be days, of course, where a person might be sick, or might have work-related duties, that would prevent him from studying his Bible. But for the most part, each and every day of our lives ought to be permeated with thoughts that meditate upon Scripture. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Bible study is something that Paul encouraged Timothy to do (and through him, all of us!). Paul wrote, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). How can we rightly divide the Word of God? How can we be approved by God? It is by studying His Word. Proverbs 15:28 says, "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer." Hebrews 2:1-3 discusses how that, under the Old Testament, God's punishment was severe for those who did not heed His Word. Then the question is asked, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" We have the Gospel today. It has been given into our hands. We therefore need to be good students of the Scriptures. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are told, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." We need to be good students of the Bible. Think of it this way. What if you had to stand before the Lord today to give an account of how much you have studied His Word? What if Jesus were to ask you, "In My Word I told you to study. How much did you do that?" If you had to give an honest accounting to God, how much could you say that you studied the Bible? Hebrews 4:13 teaches us that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." The Lord knows whether or not we are studying. We are not fooling Him. He knows if we are committed to studying His Word. Our survival as children of God is dependent upon our studying the Word. We cannot survive spiritually if we are not willing to give ourselves to daily Bible study. For the child of God, Bible study is like food, or like the oxygen we breathe. It is a necessity for us. Can we deny ourselves food, or stop breathing, and still live? No. And neither can the faithful child of God stop studying the Scriptures and survive. Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." How can we overcome the devil? We can follow the pattern

of first-century Christians. Revelation 12:11 tells us, “They overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [which for us today is the Scriptures], and they did not love their lives to the death.” The sacrifice of Jesus, self-sacrifice, and the Scriptures were the things they used to overcome Satan. That should be true of us today, too. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 10:23, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” We cannot get to Heaven **our** way. Thus, we need to be committed every day to studying the Scriptures. The text of 2 Peter 1:3 is such an encouraging passage in regard to studying the Scriptures because it teaches us that God “has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” Where do we find that knowledge? We find it in the Bible. In the Word of God we have everything we need to live the best life possible and to be a godly person. That is why Paul said in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel is God’s “power unto salvation.” However, if we are not willing to commit to daily Bible study, then we may fall from the righteous state that we want to obtain. We will perish if we do not give ourselves over to studying the Scriptures. How do we know that? Hosea said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Do you see the connection between being saved and studying the Scriptures?

Another attribute of daily Christian living is daily evangelism. If we really want to be faithful to Jesus every day, then we need to be telling people about Christ. Look at Acts 5. Some of the apostles had just been put on trial before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council). They had been questioned, and told that they should not preach in the name of Jesus. They were beaten, and then were sent on their way (vs. 41). Yet in verse 42 we read, “Daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” In the midst of persecution—when their backs hurt, when their lives were in danger, and when it was not easy to tell people about Jesus—these men daily were in the temple and in houses, teaching people about Christ. Daily evangelism ought to be a part of every Christian’s life. If we really love the Lord, then we need to tell others about Him. The Lord should not have any “silent partners” today. In Matthew 28:18-19 Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” What are we supposed to be doing today? We are supposed to be going into all the world to preach the Gospel to preach the Gospel to “every creature” (Mk. 16:15). Notice the emphasis that Scripture places on **every person** needing to hear the Gospel. Paul said in Colossians 1:28, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Every person needs to hear the Gospel! In 1 Peter 2:9 we read that we have been taken out of darkness to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” What separates first-century Christians from some Christians today? The Bible says in Acts 8:4, “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:13, “We believe and therefore speak.” If we really believe that Jesus is only way to be saved, if we really believe that people are going to be lost in a sinner’s Hell for eternity, and if we really believe that the Bible is God’s Word and His plan of salvation, then we need to be telling others about these things.

Another attribute of daily Christian living is prayer. Look at Psalm 86:3, which teaches that we ought to pray to God daily. “Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long.” The idea is that the psalmist realized the importance of prayer. In times of trouble and difficulty, he cried unto the Lord daily. The Bible teaches the importance of daily prayer in the life of a Christian. I do not know how that a Christian could make it through this sinful world even for one day without God’s help. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we are to “pray without ceasing.” That does not mean that our entire life ought to be one long prayer. But there never should be a time in our lives when we cannot pray. Luke 18:1 says, “Men al-

ways ought to pray and not lose heart.” In 1 John 5:16 and James 5:16 we are reminded that the fervent prayer of a righteous man overcomes much. Think about the powerful example of Jesus in prayer. Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Jesus arose early, got away from the world, went where He could talk privately with God, and took time to pray. How we today need to be a people of prayer! Prayer moves the Hand that moves the world. If we want to change the world, and if we want to have an impact on the lives of others, then we must have God’s help.

Another aspect of daily Christian living that is described in the Scriptures is daily exhortation. The writer of the Book of Hebrews gets to the main theme in Hebrews 3:12-13 when he says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” We must realize that we live in a sinful world, and that we should not get caught up in that sin, but instead should be aware of such sin. The writer of Hebrews then says, in essence, “Here is something you can do. Exhort one another daily.” Hebrews 10:24-29 tells us that we are to encourage one another daily, “and so much more as we see the Day approaching.” How long has it been since **you** tried to lift up someone else? In the Old Testament, Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses so that the Israelites could win a battle. That is the image we’re looking for here. We are to encourage (“lift up the hands”) of one another. So, as part of your daily walk, do not think just about yourself. Rather, look to see how you can help others. Perhaps you can call them, send them a card, or offer a kind word. And, at certain times you may even have to lovingly and kindly point out things that need correcting. But daily exhortation is part of being a Christian.

Another aspect of daily Christianity that we find in the Bible is that of benevolence. The ability of Christians to do good is something that ought to define them each and every day. If we read Luke 10, we cannot help but be impressed with the idea of a Christian neighbor. Jesus was asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He told a story of a man who had fallen among thieves. A priest and a Levite walked by on the other side. But a Samaritan came by and helped the man. Jesus taught us from this example that whoever is in need is our neighbor. Acts 6:1 illustrates the important principle of Christians doing good on a daily basis. “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists [Greek-speaking Jews], because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” One of the things that separated Christians from those who were in the world was that as Christians were blessed by God, they gave back to the church, and the church was able to do good things. Christians daily tried to help people who were in need because that is what Christianity is about. First we must be sure that we, personally, love God with all our “heart, soul, mind, and strength.” Then, second, we must “love our neighbor as ourselves.” That is what it means to go and do good. James 1:27 illustrates this for us: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” Paul said in Galatians 6:10, “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Living as Christians on a daily basis is something that we ought to do because one day the Lord is going to come back. If we chose to neglect to live even one day for Christ, that one day might be the day that Jesus returns! We cannot give up on following Christ for even one day because for all we know, our lives might end on that day. Do you see the importance of not allowing a single day to pass without living it for Christ? In view of Christ’s Second Coming and the end of the world, we need to always be ready. Acts 17:31 teach-

es us that God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” There is a day coming when Christ will judge the world. We are told to repent (Acts 17:30) because God will not overlook our sins. In Matthew 24:36 Jesus said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” One day Jesus **will** return. The essence of living a Christian life is based upon that fact. We do know **that** the world will end, but we do not know **when**. In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Peter described that great event when he said in 2 Peter 3:10, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” We must stay ready. In Mark 13:35 Jesus said, “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning.” One of the saddest sections in Scripture is found in Matthew 25 where we have the ten virgins—five foolish and five wise. The five foolish virgins ran out of oil for their lamps, and tried to borrow from those who had enough oil. But they were told there was none to spare. They left to go get some oil, and while they were gone the Lord came. This life is our one chance to live for God. Are you **really** living daily for Jesus? Is that what your life is all about?

If not, you can become a Christian today by obeying God’s Word. The Bible makes it clear what you must do. In Acts 18:8 the Bible says, “Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.” If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then are you willing to repent of your sins and change your life? Are you willing to confess the name of Jesus? Are you willing to be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38)?

If you are already a Christian, but you have not been living as you should, you know it—and God knows it. Why would you want to waste another day **not** living for the Lord? In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Do not waste even one more day failing to live for Jesus. Christianity is about living for Christ every day. We are so glad that you joined us for our program today. If you would like to have a copy of this lesson, you can visit us at our Website ([www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com)). All of our lessons are available online. You also can request DVDs and CDs, which we will send to you free of charge. More than anything, it is our hope and prayer today that as you consider living for Jesus, you will be motivated to give up whatever may stand in your way and live for Jesus daily.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING”

1. In Luke 9:23, what did Jesus tell His followers they needed to do?
2. According to John 7:17, is it possible for us to know what we ought to do to follow Christ?
3. In Acts 9:6, what important question did Saul of Tarsus ask?
4. What, according to Mark 12:30, should we be doing every day of our lives?
5. What will we do, according to John 14:15, if we truly love God?
6. How, according to Paul's statements in Romans 12:1, are we to live our lives each day?
7. How, according to Paul's statements in Galatians 2:20, was Paul living his life?
8. How does Galatians 2:20 impact the lives of Christians today?
9. How does 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 teach us that we should live?
10. What was Paul's point when he said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, “I die daily”?
11. What important point is contained in 2 Corinthians 8:5 about first-century Christians in Macedonia that applies equally well to Christians of today?
12. According to Revelation 2:10, how long are Christians to be faithful?
13. What does 1 Peter 2:21 teach all Christians to do?
14. According to Acts 17:11, what did the Christians in Berea do that elicited an apostolic commendation?
15. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 admonish us to do as Christians?
16. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what has God given us in the Bible?
17. What reason is contained in 1 Peter 3:15 for Christians to study God's Word?
18. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
19. What, according to Hosea 4:6, was causing God's people to perish?
20. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, what are Christians to do “without ceasing”?
21. What does Hebrews 3:12-13 admonish Christians to do?
22. What does Hebrews 10:24 admonish Christians to do?
23. What principle for Christian daily living is contained in passages such as Acts 6:1, Galatians 6:10, and James 1:27?