

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS “Spiritual Insomnia”

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

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

Have you ever had one of those days in your life where, when you come home, you are dead tired? Your body is physically exhausted. You lie down in bed longing for sleep. Your body relaxes—and then your eyes open and you are wide awake! Have you ever had a case of insomnia like that? How horrible it is when you are dead tired, and all you can think about is sleep, yet your mind can't sleep. Most of the time that is a horrible incident—except one time. In the Bible there is a good case of spiritual insomnia found in Psalm 132:4-5. Notice what the psalmist says in this beautiful and striking passage: “I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” Sometimes in the Scriptures there are passages that sort of “jump out and grab hold of us.” This ought to be one of those passages. David is longing to build a place for God—a temple where people can go and worship. His mindset is, “I will not sleep until I find a dwelling place for God.” That is the background and context. It is such a practical passage for us about putting God first in our lives.

In the Scriptures, sometimes it is the case that people who were asleep physically also were asleep spiritually. For example, Jonah received the message from God, “Go to Nineveh—that great city. Cry out against its wickedness.” Jonah gets on a ship and goes the opposite direction. In Jonah 1:15, he is seen as being in the ship asleep. He was asleep physically, but he also was asleep spiritually. Think about the disciples in Matthew 26 where Jesus said, “You stay here. Watch and pray, while I go over there and pray.” Yet every time He returned, the disciples were sleeping. They were not where they needed to be spiritually. Think about Eutychus in Acts 20. Paul is proclaiming the Gospel. Eutychus is sitting in an open window, but goes to sleep, falls out, and dies. He probably wasn't where he needed to be spiritually. Are we sleeping spiritually? In our lives, are we really where we need to be? Have we found a place for God in our lives, as the psalmist suggested?

What place will God accept in our lives? David said, “I will not sleep until I find a dwelling place for the Lord.” The question we must ask as we look at the teaching of the New Testament, “What place will God accept in our lives?” Jesus helps us with this in Matthew 6:33 when He says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” God will not accept second place. And He certainly will not accept last place. God will accept only first place in our lives. Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “If any man desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” As the psalmist said, we must want to find a place for God. And we must realize that God will accept only first place. David said, “I want to find a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” In the context, he was wanting to build the temple—a place where people could go to worship so that God would be glorified. But do we today need to build a place like that temple for God to dwell? No, Acts 7:48-50 teaches us that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. God cannot be contained in such a manner. So where does dwell? Notice the

last part of Colossians 1:27 where the Bible says, “Christ, in you, the hope of glory.” Where do God and Christ dwell today? As we live out the teaching of Scripture, as we have the mind of Christ, and as we follow the example of Christ, God and Christ dwell within us in a spiritual sense. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read,

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Will we, like the psalmist, find first place for God in our lives? Will you—before you go to sleep tonight—find a place for God in your life as the psalmist said?

What does it mean to find a place for God in our lives? Let’s think about that for a moment. As Colossians 1:27 says, we must find a place for Christ (“Christ in you, the hope of glory”). Colossians 1:18 says that in all things (including our lives) Christ must have the pre-eminence. So how does a person find a place for God in his life? There are three things that a person must do to give God first place in his life.

First and foremost, if a person has not yet done so, he must obey God’s plan of salvation. If a person is going to put Christ first, then that person must submit to His will and obey the Gospel. Jesus clearly said in Matthew 7:21, “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.” In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” A person must hear God’s Word. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” A person must believe that Jesus is God’s Son, the Savior of the world. Jesus said, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24). A person must be willing to repent. Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). A person must make the good confession before men, just as the Ethiopian eunuch did in Acts 8 when he said, “I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (vs. 37). And a person must do what Jesus said concerning baptism. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). For a person to give God first place in his life, that person must obey the Gospel and become a Christian.

Second, to put God first in our lives, we must live for Him every day. What does it really mean to give first place in our lives? It means that every day that we awake, we recognize that life is no longer about us. It is no longer about fulfilling our desires, wants, or passions. Today, we are living for God. Paul had this mindset. Notice the words of Paul in Galatians 2:20—“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.” What was Paul’s mindset? He said that he had been crucified, and was living for Christ. He no longer was living his old life. That is what the Scriptures teach we must do. Paul said in Romans 12:1, “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.” Just as the dead sacrifices under the Levitical system that covered sin, we are a living sacrifice—in that every day we die to self and live for God. Revelation 2:10 says, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Jesus talked about what it really means to love God. Here is the greatest commandment of all: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” So a person must live for Jesus every day.

Third, if a Christian is in sin, he must confess that sin and repent of it in order to be right with God. If you are going to give God first place in your life, you cannot continue in a life of sin. Those who do so will not be right in the sight of God. Notice what the Scriptures say

concerning this in Proverbs 28:13—“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” If a person covers his sin, he will not prosper. So how does a person deal with sin? He confesses and forsakes his sins in order to be right with God. The psalmist taught us that a person in sin cannot be right with God. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18). Sin severs our relationship with God. Thus, in order to give God first place, a person must be willing to repent, to confess, and to walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7-9). Have you given God first place in your life?

Have you given God first place in your worship? Some people have the idea, “As long as I obey God, I have worshiped Him acceptably.” But such is not always the case. We must have the right attitude and heart in our worship as well. The Bible says that “it is better to obey than to sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). Yes, we must obey what God says. But Hebrews 12:28 tells us that we must worship Him acceptably “with reverence and godly fear.” A person can go through all the commands, yet still not be right if he does not have a reverent and fearful attitude in regard to worshiping God. This means that we must worship God “in spirit” (with the right attitude) and “in truth.” We must worship God only. In Matthew 4:10 Jesus said, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.” What does it really mean to give God first place in our worship? Is worshiping God a priority to you? Do you get to worship on time? One of the most disrespectful things that you can do in worshiping God is to walk in late. Do you know what that says? It says that God does not have first place in your worship. Do you get there on time? And do you get there all the time? Hebrews 10:25 makes it abundantly clear that we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. That is a command. If we are going to give God first place in our worship, we cannot and must not forsake the assembly of the saints. Unless we are sick or physically cannot be there, if we do not make it to worship, the something is coming before God.

Oh, how we need the attitude of the psalmist! There are a couple of passages I want you to notice. Psalm 122:1 is the attitude that every person who is putting worship first should have. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’” If you want to talk about a man who put worship first, there he is. It was a joy and a refreshment to Him to worship God. He was glad when someone said, “The house of the Lord is open; come on in.” He was glad to worship God. In Psalm 84:10 we read, “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” The psalmist said that a day in God’s court is better than a thousand anywhere else. He said that he would rather be a door keep in the house of God than dwell in tents of wickedness. Just to stand at the door and be a greeter in God’s house would be far better than living luxuriously in a house of sin. Is your heart where it ought to be in worship? We are taught in 1 Corinthians 14:15, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding.” When we sing songs of praise to God, we put God first in our worship by having our hearts and our minds engaged as we think about the words of the songs. Whenever the Gospel is preached, does the Word of God prick our hearts (Acts 2:37)? Are we really remembering the death of Jesus when we partake of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11)? Do we give regularly and cheerfully to the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 16:1-2)? God must not only have first place in our lives, but He also must have first place in our worship.

But ask yourself this, too. Does God have first place in your finances? I want you to understand that when I talk about finances, I am not like a lot of people on television who beg you for money. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about individual Christians, on the first day of the week, giving at the congregation where he attends. That is what the Bible talks about. That is the kind of giving God is talking about. That may seem different than what you hear on television. But we are talking about an individual Christian, on the

first day of the week, giving at the congregation where he attends. What does God say about Him having first place in our finances? Usually He says, "You are just a steward of what I have given you." It is found in stewards "that they must be faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1-2). Be sure that we are merely stewards of what God has given us. James 1:17 tells us, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." Who gives us all these things? God does. Everything we have comes from God. We are merely stewards, and we must be faithful regarding what God has given us.

When it comes to giving, one passage that teaches us that God must come first in our giving is Luke 21:1-4. In the context, Jesus is watching how some people give. The rich come by to drop in their money, and they put in quite a bit. You can imagine the sound as they drop their money into the bucket. Then here comes the poor widow—"clank, clank." She dropped in two copper coins that were worth barely anything at all. Yet Jesus said that the poor widow had put in more than all because she, out of her poverty, had given to the cause of Christ. She put God first in her finances because it was all she had. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 we are told that we are to give cheerfully to the cause of Christ. It ought to make us joyful to be able to give back to God. Then think about the words of Luke 6:38. This is not a social Gospel. We are not talking about the type of Gospel where if you put \$20 in the plate, God is going to give you \$100. In the sense, it probably is spiritual blessings coming to the person. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom" (Lk. 6:38). God is abundantly able to bless those who are good givers. Sometimes we are like the people in Haggai 1:6. The people had been neglecting their duty to God. They had been building their own luxurious summer homes, while the temple of God was lying in ruins. God said that they were like people who put money in a bag that had a hole in it. Can you imagine what it would be like if every time you put \$100 in your wallet, it fell out the other end? It would not be long until you would replace your wallet. God said that this is what these people were like. Because they were not putting Him first in their finances, and were not giving to Him, it was like putting money in a bag with a hole in it. Jesus clearly taught that we must give Him first place in our finances. Here's how it is practiced. Where is God when it comes to your budget? Is at the bottom? Is He somewhere in the middle? If you had a line-item budget, and you had things that you had to pay every month (like a car payment, mortgage, insurance, groceries, etc.), where would God be in your line-item budget? He should be at the top of that budget? God should come first in our finances. To really give God the place He deserves before we sleep, we must put Him in our finances.

Will we also put God first in our speech? God must have control of our tongues, or we cannot be pleasing to Him. James 3:1 clearly teaches that the tongue is an unruly evil that no man can tame. But God can tame it. If we will allow God to have control of our hearts, minds, and tongues, He will help us speak the way we ought to. How should a Christian speak? Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to "speak the truth in love." Truth must come first. We must do that with a mindset of love for lost souls. That does not mean we will skirt the truth. It does not mean that we will not say what we ought to say. Paul asked, "Have I become your enemy because I told you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)? Jesus, Paul, and John the Baptist all said some very hard and challenging things. But I guarantee you that it was because they wanted people to go to Heaven. We must speak the truth in love. And to really let God have first place in our speech, no deceit or guile can be found in our mouths. This means that our speech must be honest. We cannot lie because all liars will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). We also must not speak idle words. In Matthew 12:36-37 Jesus talks about idle words. "I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For

by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” What is an “idle word”? It is a word that is “stuck in neutral” and is going nowhere. It will not help anyone. It will not do any good. It is useless. It might be gossip or something of that nature. It might be hurtful words. Every idle word that we speak, we will give an account for. Jesus said, “By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” We will be justified by the things we say. This means that our speech will come up before God on the Day of Judgment. Thus, our speech needs to be with grace, “always seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). Sometimes I hear Christians say words that they ought never to say. I can assure you today that if you are saying four-letter words, God does not occupy first place in your life. In Ephesians 4:29 and Colossians 3:8 we are told, “Let no filthy communication come out of your mouth.” We cannot speak like a heathen, and then think, “God has first place in my life over my speech.” Such is not the case. We must allow God to control our tongues by looking to the Word of God to see how we are to speak.

Does God have first place in our homes? In Isaiah 39:44 Hezekiah was asked, “What have they seen in your house?” What do people see in our homes? The home is a wonderful place that was created by God (Gen. 2:18) where husband and wife can be helpmates for one another so they can get to Heaven. What do people see in our homes? What place does God have in our marriages? In your marriage relationship, does God have first place? The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are to love one another, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Is God ruling in your life and in your marriage? Do you really have the love of 1 Corinthians 13 that keeps no account of evil, puts others before self, and does not just say good-sounding words, but really means those words? Do you have the love of Song of Solomon 8:6-7—

“Love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.”

Is that the type of love that is in your home? Husbands, are you being the leader that you ought to? God does not have first place in your home if you are not being the spiritual leader that you ought to be. Are you the leader of the family as you try to help every member of that family get to Heaven? Are you providing for your family as you ought to—both physically and spiritually? Are you making sure that opportunities for Bible study are available, and that people come to know the Lord? Wives, are you being submissive in the home? Ephesians 5:21-31 teaches that the wife must submit to the husband, just as the church is in submission to the church. This means that a husband, if he is doing what God says, will look out for your interests. But you are responsible for submitting to the husband. Wives, are you being the keepers of the home? This does not mean “housework.” The home is not the house. The home is the people in it—just like the church is not the building, but the people. Are you helping everyone in your home to be taken care of? Is your home your first priority in everything you do? Are there things in your home that may be against the will of God? Is there language that ought not to be there? Are there things on your computer that you know ought not to be in your home? Are shows coming to your television that are not right with God? Is there anger or bitterness in the home? If so, God still does not have first place in the home.

Now ask yourself this: Will God find first place in your dress? The Bible says that when we obey the Gospel, our dress is important. In Galatians 3:27 we find a very powerful passage that relates in practicality to the way we dress: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on [clothed yourselves with] Christ.” Here’s the problem. Too many people, when they obey the Gospel, clothe themselves with Christ. But when they go out into the world, they take off the garments of Christianity. In Genesis 3:21 we learn about how God

redressed Adam and Even because their garments were not proper. In 1 Peter 3:2 and 1 Timothy 2:9 we learn that our apparel must be modest. It must proclaim to the world men and women who are professing godliness. It must not lead toward the sexual or the ostentatious. Rather, it must look toward doing the will of God.

Finally, does God have a place in your life today? We're not talking about yesterday or tomorrow. Let's think about right now. Does God have first place in your life right now? Think once more about the words of the psalmist—"I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob." Does God have first place in your life? If not, will you make sure before you lie down and go to bed tonight to receive a night's rest, that God has first place in your life? Wouldn't it be horrible if you intended to do that, but tomorrow never came? Now is the opportunity, and now is the time. Life is so brief. James 4:14 tells us that life is like a vapor that is here for a little while, and then vanishes away. Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a child of God? If you are a Christian, does God have first place in your life because you are putting Him above all your decisions? Have you taken care of the sin problem that may be in your life? Let each of us have the mindset of Psalm 132:4-5—"I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob." May God help each of us to put Him first, even before a good night's sleep.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “SPIRITUAL INSOMNIA”

1. What was the context of David's statement in Psalm 132:4-5, “I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
2. According to Matthew 6:33, what should all people “seek first” in their lives?
3. According to Paul's comment in Philippians 1:21, how important was Jesus Christ in his life?
4. According to Christ's statement in Luke 9:23, what does he expect of every person who follows after Him?
5. Where, according to Acts 7:48, does God **not** dwell?
6. According to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, to whom do our bodies and spirits belong?
7. According to Colossians 1:18, what place should Christ occupy in the life of every Christian?
8. What did Christ have to say in Matthew 7:21 about doing God's will?
9. Who, according to Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20, is supposed to live within every Christian?
10. In Romans 12:1, what did Paul admonish every Christian to do?
11. What does Revelation 2:10 admonish Christians to do?
12. What important point is found in Proverbs 28:13?
13. What type of attitude, according to Hebrews 12:28, are Christians supposed to have toward God?
14. What attitude is expressed in Psalm 122:1 that every Christian ought to possess?
15. What did the psalmist mean when he said in Psalm 84:10, “I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness”?
16. What important principle for us today is found in the story of the poor widow (Lk. 21:1-4)?
17. What important spiritual message did Jesus impart in Matthew 12:36-37?
18. What important point is made in Ephesians 4:29 and Colossians 3:8?
19. What important point for Christians is found in Galatians 3:27?