

Read: Matthew 25:1-13

Can You Stay Awake?

Matthew 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Get a bunch of boys or girls together for a sleepover and it won’t take long before a challenge arises: Who can stay up the latest? Of course, saying you’re going to stay up all night and actually staying awake until the sun rises are two very different things. It’s why we have fun taking pictures of someone who couldn’t do it and fell asleep before everyone else. It’s why parents have carried most (if not all) of you to your beds on a night when you begged to stay up a little later to finish a movie... but ended up zonked out on the couch 10 minutes later.

When you’re tired, you’re tired. Isn’t it interesting that in Jesus’ story, all the young ladies tried to stay up and wait for the groom to come to his wedding, but they all fell asleep? The thing that separated the five foolish ones from the five wise ones wasn’t whether they stayed awake or not... it was how prepared they were. The wise ones brought extra fuel for their lamps just in case the night ended up being longer than they thought. The foolish ones didn’t. And in the end, the foolish women were left behind, out in the cold, when the wedding started. That’s worse than some embarrassing pics on a friend’s phone!

In his story, Jesus is saying to you, “Are you ready? Are you prepared to go when I call?” Be prepared! Don’t be surprised and say, “But Lord, I didn’t think you would come this soon!” Keep your candle burning *now*. You don’t know when he is going to come back, so make sure you are awake and ready!

The good news is that Jesus, our “groom,” prepares us and our hearts for his arrival. He provides a ready supply of his gracious oil for our hearts and for the candle of our faith. It’s available! It’s free! It’s rich in forgiveness and long lasting in love! It keeps no record of wrong!

When we start to fall asleep spiritually, Jesus is like that friend at the sleepover who gives you a gentle nudge and says, “Stay awake!”

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What’s the latest you’ve ever stayed up? Was it easy or really tough?
- What were the ten young ladies waiting for in Jesus’ story?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What made five of the young ladies “foolish” in the story? How were the wise ones “wise”?
- Having a sleepy faith is what Jesus is warning about. Why do you think it is so hard to stay awake when we need to?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Sum up today’s story in one sentence using your own words.
- If God’s Word is fuel to keep our faith burning bright, discuss with your family whether you need more or less of it.

Closing Prayer:

Now let all the heav'ns adore you,
let saints and angels sing before you
with harp and cymbal's clearest tone.
Of one pearl each shining portal,
where, dwelling with the choir immortal,
we gather round your radiant throne.
No vision ever brought,
no ear has ever caught such great glory;
therefore will we in victory
sing hymns of praise eternally. Amen. (*Christian Worship* 486:3)