



# SESSION 1

## NOTES & QUICK QUIZ



**DEAN BRIGGS**  
MINISTRIES

# STILLNESS BY NIGHT: MEDITATION, DREAMS & 'THIN SPACE'

**INTRO:** Last 150 years human history different than the previous 6,000. Electricity changed mankind's relationship with the night. Days got longer with artificial light, sleep patterns changed. Prior to Industrial Revolution, it's thought that humans slept 4 hours, woke for 2, then slept another 4.

**A. STUDY: Psychiatrist Thomas Wehr** exposed volunteers to a world without artificial light. 14 hours darkness daily. After a month, study participants began to sleep in about two 4-hour stretches with a period of wakefulness between. During time of wakefulness, they had higher levels of hormone prolactin, associated with increased tranquility. Participants reported feeling more alert, happy, confident and at peace during those two hours middle of night. Subjects neither fully awake or asleep, but seemed to occupy unique state of mind, experiencing ordinary reality in a different way.

## B. EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS & TRANSACTIONS AT NIGHT

- Jacob wrestled with an angel until the breaking of day.
- Deliverance from Egypt began in the evening, wasn't final til morning
- Samuel heard God speak his name 4 times in middle of night.
- Ruth received her kinsman redemption in middle of night
- First seminary of New Covenant was under stars with angelic professors >> shepherds
- Jesus often rose before sunrise.
- **Psa. 57:7 — “I will sing and make melody! Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn!”** Rabbis say this means that David hung a special harp over his bed to wake him in the middle of the night when the north wind would blow across the strings. **“I get up at midnight to praise You...My eyes are awake before the watches of the night” (Psalms 119:62, 148).**

## C. THE HOUR OF GOD

- Liminal state called “Hour of God”: time of great creativity and mysticism pre-Industrial Age.
- Medieval rabbi Nachman of Breslov, founder of Breslov Hasidic movement, encouraged followers to talk aloud to God for an hour in middle of night in a field or secluded place.
- Great monastic traditions kept vigil all night. Alexander Akimetes founded monastery at mouth of Black Sea around 400 AD. Order called Acoemetes, literally “*the sleepless ones.*”
- Celts spoke about “thin places” in the world—physical places where the boundary between heaven and earth was very thin. Space between morning and late night can be a thin time.
  - Why? Lack of distractions or presence of stillness? In daylight, the visual part of our brain is activated, so everything is clearly defined. In darkness, a different part of your awareness comes alive. Other senses activate, beyond the normal rules that govern reality. Everyone is in Task Mode during the day, not so at night.
  - We become receivers, not givers. Our defenses are down, our antennae are up.

Perhaps why Jesus told his disciples “do not be afraid” during his visitation in the fourth watch.

- Mark 6: Jesus was going to “pass them by.” Greek word for “came to them” means he was ‘coming, arriving, making an appearance.’
- Moses: “glory passes by”; Elijah: “The Lord is about to pass by”
- Blind Man, Luke 18: “*Jesus of Nazareth was passing by...* he called out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- Mark 6 = Jesus revealing himself in middle of the night. Could it be that Jesus was reassuring his followers not to fear this time of revelation? We can miss it, we can fear it. **But if we see Him, he'll get in the boat with us. Thin Spaces = “CIA drop zones.”**

## SESSION 1: QUICK QUIZ

1. Based on the teaching, do you feel the relatively recent 150 year disruption of routine sleep cycles (out of nearly 6,000 years of human history) is significant? Explain your answer:
2. Describe the rhythm of the more traditional pattern of sleep demonstrated by psychiatrist Thomas Wehr's experiment.
3. Have you ever felt the Lord blow on the "harp strings of your soul" in the middle of the night? What was your experience? Was it positive or negative? What emotions did you feel? What was your state of mind?
4. What Biblical examples of divine activity most impact you when you read about them?
5. Describe your understanding of the concept of a "thin space." Is this a valid principle? If not, why not? If so, how might knowing this affect your pursuit of the Lord?
6. Since ancient cultures and monastic orders have consistently regarded the night as a time for creativity and divine encounter, what insights or truths can we glean from these traditions?
7. A number of reasons were offered for why God chose the state of rest and sleep as the window for dreaming. Why do you think?
8. In the story of the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee, what does it mean that Jesus "came to them" but intended to "pass them by"?
9. List the top 2-3 "storms" or burdens in your life that you presently carry into your sleep. After writing them, take a moment and ask the Lord to get in your boat.
10. Would you be willing to possibly disrupt, discover or discipline your sleep patterns if it could benefit times of solitude, encounter or dreaming?