

Program Transcripts

February 2022



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

FEBRUARY 6 – WHAT LACK I YET?

The rich young ruler wanted eternal life but lacked a necessary quality to please God. Others today lack necessary qualities to please the Lord. While God's grace saves, God expects His people to do His will.

FEBRUARY 13 – GOD'S LOVE FOR US

If we could but grasp how great the love God has shown for us, it would change our hearts and lives. No one loves you like the Lord Jesus. God's love is deeper and higher than we can measure.

FEBRUARY 20 – GOD'S WORD

Of all the books in the world, no book is so holy and so true as the Bible. We are going to explore some of the many reasons why we should read, study, and follow the words this holy book from God.

FEBRUARY 27 – THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Each life is the gift of God. Because God is the giver of life, it is indeed precious. God holds every life in sanctity, and to take an innocent life without cause is certainly against God's holy will.

What Lack I Yet?

Many years ago, a young man asked, "What am I still lacking?" We may all lack some basic spiritual convictions or skills that we need to grow. The inspired Word of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. God is able to take a man where He finds him and then transform his life into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The Bible provides us with everything we need to know about life and godliness. It helps us make the most of this life and then opens the door to eternal life. There simply is no greater treasure than the Word of God.

We are all in a state of development. We didn't enter this world full-grown, and we enter the church also as babes in Christ. It takes time to mature, and we all lack some things. We all have room for improvement; God is not finished with us yet. Paul said, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God has been working in our lives through His Word, answering prayers, providing our needs, and working in ways beyond our understanding.

Paul said, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14). Paul hadn't stopped growing; he wanted to keep developing as a Christian.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Matthew 19:16-22.

And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Then he said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

This must have broken Jesus' heart for this young man to walk away. The rich young ruler seemed to have everything going his way. He had youth and money and power. He had connections and respect. Mark 10:21 says that Jesus looking on this young man loved him. When the young man asked what he still lacked spiritually to have eternal life, the Lord Jesus told him, "If you would be perfect, (or complete) go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). The young man went away sorrowful. He counted his possessions as more important than following the Lord. Let's consider what some are lacking today.

First, some lack knowledge of God. I'm shocked at the number of people who have never read the Bible from start to finish. I hear many quote a passage here or there but have little idea what the specific book they quote is all about. Many want to speak out about this or that, but few want to listen to God. Hebrews 2:1-3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the

word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.”

Even many churchgoers have stunted their growth when it comes to the Bible. Going to church and knowing God's Word is not the same thing. Many know much about popular religion but little about the theology found in God's Word. The Hebrew writer said, “Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Second, because some don't know the Word of God, they lack faith in God. If you wish to grow your faith, the single most important thing you can do is to read your Bible. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Because people have not heard what God says, they cannot develop the strong faith in God and in Christ that they need. The Bible gives us many reasons to follow Jesus Christ and to put Him first in our lives.

John tells us specifically what he hoped to accomplish by writing The Gospel According to John. John 20:30-31 says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The Lord Jesus said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). That's why we must read, study, and take to heart the Words of Jesus found in the New Testament!

Some folks lose their faith by falling away from God and then they become hardened by sin. Hebrews 3:12-13 warns us, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” When our minds and our hearts stop studying the Word of God and they start listening to the worldly pleasures, then we lose sight of God and we begin to follow the world.

Paul warned, “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Colossians 1:21-23). We must hold fast to our faith!

Third, because some have little faith, they also lack hope in Christ. Paul reminds us of our lives before we became a Christian. He said, “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Outside of Christ, there simply is no hope of eternal life or an inheritance in the eternal kingdom.

First Thessalonians 4:13 says, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren,

about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." In Christ, people have hope for the future. They know Jesus will one day return for them. First Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." We need hope! Paul prayed, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). We have an inheritance in heaven. Let's never, never lose our hope.

Fourth, some lack love for God and for other people. Paul prayed, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

The more we know God, the more we understand how great His love is. First John 4:7-8 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." Every good thing we have comes from God (James 1:17); and 1 John 4:19 simply says, "We love, because He first loved us." I would hate to lack compassion for others, to be ungrateful, to be apathetic to other people's needs. First John 3:16-18 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

Fifth, some lack the virtue that God desires. Second Peter 1:5-11 says, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, (or virtue) and in your (virtue) moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities, is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

Paul reminded Timothy, "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness'" (2 Timothy 2:19). Paul recommends, "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (verse 22). Where is your heart? Is it on the fleshly things or on spiritual things?

People find ways to justify what they want to do. Some people in Paul's day thought they had liberty to do anything. They were saying, "All things are lawful for me," but then he answers, "but not all things are profitable." They would say, "All things are lawful for me," and he would answer, "but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for

immorality, (that is, fornication) but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:12-13). Many people lack peace in their hearts because they realize that they lack moral virtue and are guilty of sin. Guilt will cause great anxiety and rob you of your confidence before God.

Sixth, some fail to serve God. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” God created you to serve and to do good works. He gave you talents and skills to use for His service. The Bible says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10-11).

We need to be like the five-talent and the two-talent servants. Because they worked hard and sacrificed, the master said to them, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:23). We can’t be like the one-talent servant who fearfully buried his money (that’s what a talent is in this story), and he just returned it to his master. The master told him, “You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:26-30). God doesn’t expect the impossible out of us, but He does expect us to use whatever talents or skills we possess and to do it to His glory. My friend, what do you lack? Each of us needs to take a close look at ourselves and ask, “What am I still lacking? What areas of my life need improvement?” It could be one of the things we’ve mentioned or perhaps something we’ve not mentioned. Paul urged the Christians at Corinth, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). If you looked at your heart and at your life, would you see Jesus living there?

Would you be willing to pray what David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23-24). God already knows our hearts; but wouldn’t it be enlightening to see what God sees? It would be like a spiritual MRI that looks far beneath the surface into our inner being. When God chose David to be king, He looked upon David’s heart to see what kind of man he was.

If you’re lacking salvation, what should you do? You need to get right with God. For those who are outside of Christ, you must become a Christian to get right with God. Jesus is the only way to the Father; we can never take Him for granted. To be a Christian, place your trust in Him, repent of your sins and turn your heart to the Lord, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized, that is immersed in water, so that your sins will be washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. It might be that you’re a member of the Lord’s church but not right with God. Why not confess those sins, repent of them, and ask God to forgive you. Do it today!

God's Love for Us

If we could but grasp how great the love of God is for us, it would change our lives. No one loves you like the Lord Jesus. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's way. From start to finish the Bible is God's supreme story of love and redemption. The more we read the Bible, the more we can understand the heart of the God who created us and sustains us in our very existence. Though mankind can be hard to love, God has never faltered in wanting to bless those who seek His face and draw near. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

God hasn't hidden His love for us; God displayed it beyond dispute in the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The Bible says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). We were weak, ungodly, and sinners; but Christ was still willing to die for our sins and to wash us clean in His blood. Such love is truly abundant and beyond comprehension.

Jesus bore the cross to forgive us of our sins and to open the door to have a loving relationship with our Father in Heaven. The Lord loved us when we were weak and couldn't save ourselves. He helped us when we were ungodly and had little thought of Him. He died for us while we were sinners, who had offended Him. Christ loved our souls when we didn't deserve it, understand it, or appreciate it. Such amazing love!

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 3:14-19, and actually include part of a prayer that Paul is praying.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Oh, what a wonderful prayer.

Let's pray together. "Father we pray and bow our knees before You, knowing that You are our great Father, and that You love us. And help us Father to understand more fully, the height and breadth and length and depth of the love that You have for us. We know it surpasses knowledge, but we pray that You will help us to have a deeper understanding of that love, and to love You in return, and to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Old Testament uses a rich and amazing word to describe the love God has for His people. The Bible says God is abounding in this kind of love. Some versions call it "steadfast love," some "lovingkindness," and some simply "mercy."

Psalms 103:8-14 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He doesn't deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

“Steadfast” love is the deepest and best love; it’s the kind of true love that doesn’t let go and doesn’t fail. It’s loyal, faithful, kind, and good. It’s compassionate and merciful. This type of love is built upon a voluntary covenant, an everlasting commitment to those who are in His favor. Psalm 86:15 says, “But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” Because the God of Heaven is kind and good, He’s willing to pardon and forgive our sins, if we’ll remain faithful to Him.

When you consider all that Jesus gave up in bearing the cross to save us from sin, you can’t doubt His love. If anything, the magnificent love of Jesus was stubborn, unflinching, and utterly unselfish. Jesus didn’t merely give up something; He sacrificed Himself completely. On the cross the innocent Lord Jesus sacrificed everything. He kept silent and did nothing, while men slandered Him, falsely accused Him, condemned Him, scourged Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him. First Peter 2:22-24 says, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn’t revile in return; when he suffered, he didn’t threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

Jesus bore the punishment and death for our sins, sins we should have borne, and the punishment we should have had, and He bore it personally in his own body. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). His suffering was physical and spiritual. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Everything that Jesus did, He did out of an undeniable and pure love for us. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to know that he would suffer scourging and crucifixion? According to Matthew 26:38 Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful, even to the point of death. Luke 22:44 says, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

They didn’t simply bind Jesus, they nailed His hands and feet to a rugged cross and suspended Him in the most agonizing position. As they crucified Him, He prayed that the Father would forgive them. They mocked Him, insulted Him, and did their very worst to Him. Through all of His suffering, Jesus remained quiet; He uttered no threats. He didn’t even revile them in return. He didn’t call for the twelve legions of angels to wipe them out. The Lord’s stubborn love lasted for six long hours on the cross. No matter how ugly men were to Jesus, Jesus, His steadfast love held Him to the cross. He loved us to the end.

First Timothy 2:3-4 says, “This is good, and it’s pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Again, 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God doesn’t want a single soul to be lost, but our heavenly Father grants us the freedom to choose Him or to choose sin. You can’t make someone love you by force. Nor did God make us robots who mindlessly act at His command. God wants us to know Him, to know the truth and to love Him freely for Who He is. This means we must be free to choose Him or reject Him. God loves everyone, but His blessing and grace are reserved for those who choose to love Him. We must freely and lovingly choose to believe in Him, to repent of our sins, and to follow Him.

Occasionally I hear people speak of God’s “unconditional love.” Yes, I know what Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” God is certainly good to all! Jesus didn’t bear the cross for us only because we were so good and deserved it. No, Jesus died for us because we were sinful and lost. In that sense, He unconditionally took the initiative; but we cannot for that reason assume that to remain in God’s love we can do whatever we wish. We can’t assume that God’s love for us will continue to bless us if we turn from Him.

The Lord’s steadfast love, His covenant love of promise, has conditions. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone loves me (did you hear the word “if”), he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come

to him and make our home with him. But whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23-24). God promises love and abiding presence to those who love Him and keep His words. A person who doesn't love God won't care about keeping God's words.

We cannot sin all that we wish and still count on the favor of God. It's a fantasy to think we can rebel against God and still be right with Him. It's fantasy to think we can remake God in our own image and still please Him. It's fantasy to think we can rewrite His commandments, ignore His holiness, corrupt His character, and forget His justice but still count on His love.

Hebrews 10:26-31 says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who's set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We must never take the love and grace of God for granted. It's too valuable to squander.

You might be thinking at this point, "Well Phil, don't you remember what the Bible says? God is love." Yes, I know 1 John 4:8. But picking a passage out of the Bible and ignoring other verses that are just as inspired isn't accurately handling the word of truth. We shouldn't understand 1 John 4:8 that "God is love", without also consulting 1 John 1:5-7. These verses say: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, God, while we walk in darkness and sin, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

J. I. Packer said in his book, *Knowing God*, "that the God who is love is first and foremost light, and sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God's love is holy love. The God whom Jesus made known to us is not a God who is indifferent to moral distinctions, but a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should 'be perfect. . . as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). He won't take into his company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness of life."

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Some might wonder if God loves us, why does He insist on our living holy lives? Some think if God loved us, He wouldn't demand that we live by all those rules. Let's stop here and think. Is God childish and trivial? Are His laws petty? No. God insists His people live holy lives to protect us and give us peace. We should consider the righteous way of life as a precious gift, not a burden, petty, or trivial. God isn't being mean when He asks us to treat others kindly or to refrain from evil. He's showing us His love by helping us live good lives.

When we sin against Him by going against His commandments, He disciplines us with love. Godly discipline is not abuse; it's training given for our good. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Hebrews 12:10-11 explains that God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." God disciplines our sins that we may

share in His holiness and live with Him. He acts for the long-term and for that good not just simply for the moment.

Our society despises discipline, thinking love leaves people alone to do anything they want. They believe speaking against any behavior is mean-spirited and judgmental. But God speaks against sin out of love not meanness. Remaining silent about sinful behaviors that ruin lives is far more mean than warning somebody about sin. God speaks out against sin because He cares. He wants to bless us.

Why is this important? Because the Lord created us for more than what takes place in this life. God loves you enough to be interested in your life here on earth and in the hereafter. He wants you to live with Him forever and ever in heaven. Like Paul, we pray "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You love us enough to discipline us and to help us to understand what is good and what is bad. We're thankful that You loved us enough to send Your son Jesus to the cross to die for us, even when we didn't understand it or deserve it. And Father we're thankful for the day to day blessings You give us. Help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus touched lives throughout His ministry. He healed the sick, the lepers, the blind, and the deaf. He raised the dead, walked on water, stilled the storm, and fed the multitudes. When men did their worst to Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." Peter described Jesus as One who "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). The Lord Jesus is still doing good in the lives of people. He leads them out of bondage to sin and to become children of God. He leads them out of distress into hope, out of doubt into faith, and out of apathy into love.

We need the love of God in our lives every day! The more we grasp how much God loves us, the more we'll determine to demonstrate that same kind of lasting, committed love. Knowing the love of God will make us better fathers and husbands, better mothers and wives, better citizens, better children, and better friends. God's love teaches us patience and kindness, compassion and forgiveness, and forbearance and loyalty. Love motivates us to be holy and faithful. It teaches us to love the truth and to live with integrity and virtue. We need God's love to become better people.

The love of God should make everyone want to become a Christian. You become a Christian by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turning away from sin and begin showing your love for God, confessing Christ before others, and by being baptized into Christ. When you're baptized, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and adds you to His family the church. Nothing you will do today is more important than becoming a Christian. Won't you become one today?

God's Word

Of all the books in the world, no book is so holy and so true as the Bible. Today we're going to see many important reasons to hear and to follow the Bible. We're here to search the Scripture for God's will. The Scriptures show themselves to be true time and again! God gave us this unique and marvelous book to be the source of the truth that leads to eternal life. No other book has so many prophecies, practical advice, or relevance. The Scripture gives us the wisdom that we need to live as Christians and as heirs of eternal life in a world that doesn't always understand or appreciate us.

God gave us His word so that we might know Him, know His heart, know His will for our lives, know His promises, and know His warnings. No book ancient or modern provides the exhaustive spiritual wisdom found in Scripture. It provides what we most need. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows what we need. God has reserved the right to govern and to judge man by the words written in the Scriptures. This should cause us to study and apply every word carefully.

I challenge you to read the entire Bible. Reading God's Word and hearing His wisdom and His truth is the most valuable way to use your time. First Peter 2:1-3 says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you've tasted the kindness of the Lord." I hope you hunger and thirst for God's Word. Nothing else will bless you more than knowing and practicing the will of God!

Our reading comes from the book of Psalms. Psalm 1:1-6.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, help us to be people who delight in Your word, and in doing Your will, and in following You and loving You, and keeping steadfast in Your ways. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen."

What is your delight? What is it you look forward to each day? The psalmist said the blessed person has a delight "in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." The more one studies the Word of God, the more they will become a delight. David said, "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

Romans 1:2 calls the Bible the "holy Scriptures," and 2 Timothy 3:15 calls them the "sacred writings." Repeatedly, the Scriptures claim to be the very word of God. Henry Morris estimates that the Old Testament claims to be the word of God some 2600 times. The Lord Jesus considered the events of the Old Testament to be real history. Jesus took Jonah's three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish as historical. Jesus used the punishment of Lot's wife as a means to warn his disciples not to turn back (Luke 17:32). There's no evidence that Jesus ever regarded the creation, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, or any other story of the Bible as a myth or fable.

Jesus underscored the truthfulness of the book of Genesis when He referred to the "beginning" of creation as the time when a man and a woman were created and joined together by God in marriage. Jesus said, "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they're no longer two but one

flesh. And what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:6-9). By quoting from the creation account in Genesis, Jesus acknowledged its authority and truth. By using the words "What God has joined together..." He recognized God to be the author of these Genesis writings.

No one can destroy the word of God, because no one can conquer God. Just like God, the Scriptures are everlasting. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." The Lord Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The apostle Peter calls the word of God an imperishable seed. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:22-25). Yes, the word of God is here to stay and will last till the end of time.

The Bible contains the mind and heart of God. We can know God best by reading the Bible. He loves us and has always wanted the best for us. First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." From the beginning God has always wanted a close relationship with each person. He has wanted each to live godly lives, to stay away from the sinful things that destroy. The Bible is honest about people. It tells the good and the bad, it teaches how to live wisely and how to avoid the pitfalls. Psalm 119:9 asks, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The answer is, "By keeping it according to Your word." One can say along with the psalmist, "Your word have I treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). Have you treasured up the word of God in your heart? If you haven't, do you realize how you have cheated yourself?

The Bible offers us the precious gift of truth. We need the truth not a lie. We want to know what is real, not a myth or a fantasy. I would rather know the truth that hurts for a short time but blesses me eternally than to hear a lie that pleases for now but costs me my soul. The Scriptures give us the key to sort through the many voices of our day and unlock the truth. The psalmist proclaimed, "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting" (Psalm 119:160). The Lord Jesus could say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). He promised, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." The Lord Jesus told Pilate, "For this I have been born, and for this I've come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice (and of course, that voice is in the word of God)" (John 18:37).

Because the word of God is inspired and true, we can have hope. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The word of God tells us where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going, and what the promises of God are! They give us true answers and they give us hope that there's something better than this sinful and dark world. Sometimes we think we face problems that no one has ever faced before, but there's usually a circumstance in the Scriptures much like our own. God helped the saints of old, and He can help us too! God's character hasn't changed. He shows compassion on those who love and obey Him today, just as He did in earlier days. He will help us through every struggle and every heartache.

I love the promise of 1 Peter 5:8-10, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the

same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

Were it not for the Scriptures, we would know very little about God and His ways. We wouldn't know what the eyewitnesses said about Jesus. We wouldn't know anything about creation or heaven. We'd be as ignorant as the Stoics and Epicureans who built an altar to an unknown God. Scripture opens up God's heart, God's truth, and His promises to us.

God gave us His word to save us. The apostle Paul said, “For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). James 1:21 says, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” When Peter came to Cornelius' house, he brought “words” by which Cornelius and his household were saved (Acts 11:13). Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Second Corinthians 5:19 says of the gospel, it is the “word of reconciliation.” Philippians 2:16 calls it the “word of life.” The Lord Jesus said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I've spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).

Because the word is inspired and true, it has power to reach into our hearts and souls. Jeremiah 23:29 says, “‘Is not My word like fire?’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer which shatters a rock?’” At some point the word of God hits us between the eyes with a truth that we need to hear. Its truth sometimes stuns us, sometimes cuts us to the heart, but in the end it blesses us. Acts 2 tells about the response of the Jews when Peter preached about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Verse 37 says: “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Verse 38 gives the answer, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

They were guilty of his death on the cross. I'm sure they didn't at first want to hear about their sin against God. They didn't want to know they had crucified the Lord and the Christ who was the Son of God, but they needed to face the truth. The word reproves us and rebukes us, not because it's cranky or mean-spirited. The Scriptures speak out against sin but don't leave us hopeless and unredeemable. The Scriptures inform us to protect us from evil and to deliver us from sin. It helps us see when we're going in the wrong direction, and it gives us a direction that is for life, and not the direction that will cost our souls.

In Proverbs 2, a father is trying to impart God's wisdom to his son. He wants his son to “seek her (that is, wisdom, God's wisdom) as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures.” If his son pays attention and treasures up God's wisdom, God “stores up sound wisdom for the upright; And He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones” (Proverbs 2:7-8). Many books can give you the wisdom of men, but only the Bible can give you the wisdom of God.

Beyond this, the Scriptures help us to see ourselves spiritually. Yes, there are times we need to see ourselves, so that we can make the changes necessary to please God. James 1:22-25 says, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” Don't just listen to God's Word, do it!

Now why does this matter? It matters, because our relationship with God is involved. Listening and obeying is the basis of our relationship with God. The apostle John said, “By this we know that we have

come to know Him (that is, have a relationship with Him), if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I've come to know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected" (1 John 2:3-5). When you listen and obey the Lord, you show true and perfect love for God. Do you love God? Do you listen to His words?

Let's pray together. "Father, help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Help us Father to listen to Your word, to take it into our hearts and to treasure it up there. And to be obedient to Your will, so that we might show You how much we love You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Robert Johnson of Longview, Texas, recently wrote: "We must never be ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's will. It possesses those same qualities that God Himself possesses, endued with His divine authority. It will never fail. Though everyone has free will, and many will choose to ignore it, or try to alter it, or reject it altogether, the gospel will endure. The one who has committed his or her life to it will not be disappointed, as through His word, God will accomplish His good work of salvation. May we be committed to its principles and precepts, to living them out in our daily lives, and faithfully communicating them to those around us. Those who take their refuge in the enduring word of God, shall endure forever with Him. 'Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him'" (Proverbs 30:5). Thanks, Robert.

When people distort God's word to fit themselves, they cheat themselves and those who agree with them. Sadly, people often try to make the Bible teach something false. They're only fooling themselves. A distorted doctrine makes a distorted disciple. The Bible frequently says, "Be not deceived," because people often lie to themselves rather than face the truth. That's why we must continually listen closely to Scripture.

I worry about those who think they've been saved but haven't listened closely to the Scripture. Don't be fooled. The Bible teaches that one must believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God to be saved (John 8:24). Out of love for God, one must repent of sin and turn to righteousness to be right with God (Luke 13:3). A loving, penitent believer then must confess their faith and be baptized into Christ. Just as those on Pentecost needed to be baptized to have their sins forgiven, and so do we. Baptism is the time when God sets us free from sin (Romans 6:3-7). I hope that you will listen to God's Word and obey.

We hope today's study about the word of God has stirred you to buy the truth and not sell it. Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one.

The Sanctity of Life

Life is the gift of God, and because God gives it, life is precious! Today we're going to explore the sanctity of life! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. James 1:17 says that God is the giver of every good thing and every perfect thing. I'm grateful for the written word that teaches us all about God, and all He has done for us. His word teaches us, protects us from evil, and guides us to eternal life. What a blessing!

In 1970 a Texas woman became pregnant and decided to fight the antiabortion legislation of her state. Using the pseudonym Jane Roe, she took Henry Wade, the Dallas district attorney, to court. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court in January, 1973, and is now the renowned Roe vs. Wade case. The Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 that the Texas law banning abortion was unconstitutional. Its judgment inhibited all regulation of abortion during the first three months of pregnancy, and during the second and third trimesters regulated it only in relation to the mother's physical or mental health. This ruling permitted abortion on demand at every stage of pregnancy. In 2017, 862,300 babies were aborted. That's 2,362 per day, 98 per hour, and two since this program started.

Dealing with an unwanted pregnancy is indeed complex and emotional. It has physical, social, medical, psychological, and spiritual considerations. Sadly, many have chosen to end the pregnancy by removing the life within. They appeal to national law and to changes in culture, but we know that there is a higher law and a greater power to which we must all give an account. So, we ask, "What principles can we find in the Bible? What does God say about life in the womb?"

Our reading today comes from Psalm 139:13-16, and in this David speaks of his close relationship with God, even in the womb.

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.

David recognized that God knew him and was making him even in the womb.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we're grateful for Your word which helps us to understand Your will for our lives, the things that You can see that we cannot see, and how You understand us and know us from our very beginning of life. Father, bless us and help us always to love You and do your will. In Jesus' name we pray."

In the beginning, God made, created male and female in His own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27). We should note that of all His creatures God regarded only humans as made in His own image.

For this reason, God said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:6). God has a very high view of life and forbids the taking of human life because of our relationship to God. Psalm 8 reminds us that God is "mindful of man." Every person, male or female, young or old, handicapped or whole, mentally challenged or not, diseased or not, has a valued life. In fact, Acts 17:28 says, "we are His (speaking of God) offspring." Luke 3:38 calls Adam the

“son of God.” Hebrews 12:9 helps us to understand our relationship with God. It says, “Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?” Yes, God is our heavenly Father and He made the spirits that dwell within us.

The Scriptures also record how God loves and cares for little children. Abortion proponents argue that the taking of a preborn child's life is not wrong since the unborn do not measure up to the definition of a viable person. A person to them is “one who has good mental and physical health and the ability to socialize.” In their minds a fetus would not measure up. The Scriptures, however, view infants and children as a blessing from God. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.” God provided laws to protect unborn children. In Exodus 21:22-25 God penalizes those who would cause a miscarriage. The life of the unborn would call for the life of the one who caused the miscarriage.

The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament to refer to the unborn in Exodus is “yeled”, a word that “generally indicates young children, but may refer to teens or even young adults.” The Hebrews did not have or need a separate word for unborn children. They were just like any other children, only younger. The Bible refers to born children and unborn children, but there is no such thing as a potential, incipient, or “almost” child.

Jesus also loved children and blessed them. Luke 18:15-16 says, “And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, ‘Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’” Jesus spoke of these little ones as persons belonging to the kingdom of God. The Greek New Testament uses the word “brephos” to describe these little children. It is significant that the New Testament uses the same word to describe an unborn child as it uses to describe a little child, that's the word “brephos.” The Bible used this word to speak of John the Baptist who leaped in his mother's womb in Luke 1:41 and 44. This word “brephos” is also used to speak of Jesus as a newborn baby in Luke 2:12 and 16. We speak of a woman having a baby before birth and we speak of that child as a baby after birth. The Scriptures use the same words in both the Old Testament and the New to describe the unborn and a baby that has been born.

The Scriptures also speak of God's role in what takes place in the womb. In Psalm 22:9-10 David says, “Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth (I was cast from birth); And You have been my God from my mother's womb.” Samson told Delilah, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and become like any other man” (Judges 16:17). God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). Paul proclaimed that God “set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace” (Galatians 1:15). Yes, the Father of spirits takes life in the womb seriously and so should we.

David described God's work in the womb in Psalm 139:13-16: “For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” We should never think God somehow doesn't know what the unborn are or what they are to become.

To take a life is to rob a person of his existence on earth; abortion ends the life that already exists and robs the life that is to be. When people decide for others who lives and who dies, they presume the place of God. Women must make most abortion decisions this day and time, and of course they're making a very

difficult decision during a difficult time, but no one knows what the future will hold. Who knows what the child will become? We must not presume that we know. The Scriptures speak of some ill-timed pregnancies. Both Sarah and Elizabeth were too old to have children without God's help. If they had not given birth to these children, where would Isaac and John the Baptist be? If Jesse and his wife had thought seven sons were enough, there would have been no David. If Deborah or Esther's parents had wanted boys and aborted them because they were girls, where would Israel be?

There have been more than **60 million abortions** since 1973! Were all those aborted babies unworthy of life? Were there no scholars, no musicians, no scientists, no authors, no preachers, no leaders, and no doctors among them? Where would you be if your parents had some reason to abort you?

Abortion interferes with God's work in the making of a person. A fetus in a woman's body is not mere tissue or only the product of conception. Nobody mourns the loss of tonsils, or an appendix, or a gallbladder. We may not like either the pain or the bills, but we do not need comfort from grief. When a woman has a miscarriage, we mourn for her loss and the unborn child. More than one in my own family has lost a child due to a miscarriage or to death shortly after birth. If this loss isn't a person, why would we mourn?

By the time a mother knows she's pregnant, an unborn baby has its own circulatory and nervous systems. Blood cells, kidney cells, and nerve cells are developing. By eight weeks, eyes and ears begin to form. Arms and legs start to grow. The heart is beating, and blood regularly streams through the main vessels. The brain continues to grow, and the lungs start to form. The baby is not some useless organ; this is the beginning of a unique person.

Sometimes I hear mothers say, "It's my body, and I can do what I want with it." Technically speaking, the tissue of a fetus differs from the mother's tissue, even though it is in her body. Genetically speaking, the baby and mother are clearly not identical in their DNA. Consider also that a mother is always female. She is certainly different both biologically and genetically should the baby be a male. Milk is the product only of a mother, but a fetus is the product of both the mother and the father. A product of his body resides in her body, and that creates the person. That's why we have paternity lawsuits. The new baby is the result of the union of two people. Women do not produce babies alone.

When someone won't admit abortion is wrong, she may say, "You can't legislate morality." I like how Martin Luther King responded to this charge against legislating morals. He said, "We hear the familiar cry that morals can't be legislated. This may be true, but behavior can be regulated. The law may not be able to make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me." Remember: man's legislation doesn't change God's morals.

Many women think aborting a baby will be the answer to their problems, only to realize the abortion opens up a whole new stack of issues and problems. Having an abortion can burden a person for life. One lady wrote in 1994: "That women undergoing abortion have no idea what suffering they will encounter after the abortion, and daily for the rest of their lives, when it suddenly dawns on them that they chose to extinguish a precious life. Twenty-three years ago (she said), as a frightened young girl, alone, seeing no way out, I opted for a legal abortion that left me infertile to suffer an eternal hell on earth, constantly aching for a child of my own to nurture. And taking the life of an unborn child eats away at your soul continually, like a ravenous cancer, causing one to pray for a quick demise. You will always wonder if the fetus was male or female, what he or she would look like. Yearly, you will mournfully recall the day that your baby was taken from your body. If only someone had mentioned adoption to me as a viable alternative to a temporary condition, my child would be alive today, perhaps making a difference in someone's life."

According to a study published in 2011 by Britain's Royal College of Psychiatrists, women who have abortions are 81 percent more likely to experience subsequent mental health problems. The greatest increases

were seen in relation to suicidal behaviors and substance abuse. Their results came from 22 studies of nearly 900,000 women from six countries over a twelve year period. They found that women who delivered an unplanned pregnancy were significantly less likely to have mental health problems than similar women who aborted unplanned pregnancies. Women with a history of abortion were 55 percent more likely to have mental health problems than women who did not abort an unplanned pregnancy.

God desires that every unmarried man and woman remain sexually pure. A sexually pure person doesn't have to face the challenge of an unwanted pregnancy. If you find yourself with an unwanted pregnancy, my heart goes out to you. I pray that you'll not choose an abortion as a way out. As a parent of four and the grandparent of twelve, I know the sacrifices and challenges of bringing children into this world. If you're unable or unwilling to rear a child, others will gladly adopt that child and can provide what's needed. Choose life, give your child an opportunity to learn about God's love, and allow some Christian family to make a home for your child. You'll never regret doing the right thing.

Let us pray. "Father, we are mind-full of all the goodness that You have given to us in our lives. Help us to recognize the sanctity of life, and to do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen."

As a minister, I've known women who gave in to the temptation to abort their child as a quick solution to a difficult circumstance. Once they realize what they did, some think they cannot find forgiveness. Listen to me. Yes, what you did was wrong. You can't change things, but there's still hope. Christ sacrificed His life on the cross for you to give us hope. His blood is powerful enough to cleanse the worst sins. If Jesus could forgive that blaspheming, violent, and murderous persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, He can forgive you.

Paul wrote, "It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:15-16). God's grace is greater than our sins. His blood can wash us clean! We can't change the past, but God can forgive us and no longer hold us accountable for our sins.

Put your trust in Christ Jesus! Repent and turn away from that old sin and focus on serving the Lord. When we humble ourselves and come lovingly and penitently to the Lord, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God and are baptized, God washes away our sins, and in baptism it takes place with the blood of Jesus. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." By being born of water and the spirit, you can be born again! The old person of sin will have died; it was crucified with Christ and you are free from sin. That takes place in baptism (Romans 6:3-7). God can forgive you.

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church, you'll need a church home and there's a Church of Christ near you.