

# Program Transcripts

March 2022



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY<sup>®</sup>

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**March 2022**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **MARCH 6 – SIX SEARCHING QUESTIONS**

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.

## **MARCH 13 – PLEASING GOD**

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.

## **MARCH 20 – OVERCOME**

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.

## **MARCH 27 – BATTLES OF THE HEART**

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.

## Six Searching Questions

Some questions are more important than others. Today we're going to look at six of the most important questions that we'll ever ask! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We do search the Scriptures diligently, contextually, and humbly. We want to be sure that what we believe and what we teach are true. We know God will hold us accountable for the things that we teach. God will also hold us accountable for what we believe. We want to make sure what we believe follows the Scriptures, because we can count on God's holy word to be true.

Questions are important; and that's how we learn. Asking good questions and finding the correct answers are essential to life. Some people never ask or search for the answers, and they remain without the knowledge that they so desperately need. Some ask and hear the wrong answers, and are deceived about many things. Some find the right answers but reject them because they don't like what they hear. Some diligently search for the truth and find the right answers. Though the truth is sometimes hard to hear, they rejoice in the truth of God! God's truth tells it like it is, and this gives us hope for the present and for eternal life.

I hope and pray that you have a curious heart that is willing to search out the truth. There's so many voices saying so many things that it's easy to be deceived. The noble Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11). God will count you as noble if you too search the Scriptures to determine what is true. Don't be content to read the passages you like or those that you agree with, or that you think they say what you want them to say. Rather search diligently all that God has to say on the subject. You might find that what you thought differs from what God says.

Our reading comes from Proverbs 2:1-6. And in this passage a father is encouraging his son to incline his heart to the wisdom of God.

My son, if you will receive my words, And treasure my commandments within you, Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord, And discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

That's a great encouragement from the heart of a father to his son, about the wisdom of God.

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You have given us Your Word, that You have blessed us in so many ways, and we exalt Your Name because we know that You're more wise than any man or any group of men. Father, help us to listen to You, and to study from Your Word diligently. This is our prayer, in Jesus' name, amen."

Today we're exploring the six most important questions of life. Thankfully, the Scriptures give us the answers, so that we may understand what really matters. Each question gives us insight into ourselves, our purpose, our accountability, and our destiny.

First, we ask, "What are we as humans?" We're certainly more than an advanced animal. Though we have physical characteristics similar to mammals, we have many differences. The Scriptures make clear that only man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). Like God, we can reason, communicate, and make decisions. Like God we're endowed with an innate sense of morality; we instinctively know there is right and wrong. We also realize we are responsible for our conduct. Romans 14:12 says, "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."

This moral sense develops all through life. The Bible is a marvelous moral educator. We can read, we can learn, and can evaluate ourselves and show that we are not like animals. Consciences are always at work but must be educated. Conscience by itself doesn't give us all that we need to know about right or wrong. Our consciences can become dull or hardened if we ignore them or if we allow them to be affected by the world. Paul said, "I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day" (Acts 23:1); but he committed some of the terrible sins and called himself the "chief of sinners" in 1 Timothy 1:15. Paul sinned in ignorance, and God forgave him as an example for us all of His grace.

This leads to our second question: "Where did we come from?" Much has been said about the origin of the species. There is just one satisfactory explanation. We came from God. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being," that is a living soul. Paul said in Acts 17:28, "In him [that is, in God] we live and move and have our being." We are created in His image and in His likeness.

Only an all knowing, all powerful God could create and design this marvelous world and us. We're extremely complex, physical beings with trillions of cells, each of which possesses purpose and amazing abilities. The incredible design of our bodies demands an intelligent, powerful Designer. He made us not only physically but also emotionally, spiritually, and morally.

This leads us to our third question, "Why are our lives on earth temporary?" Our bodies were not made to live forever, yet we're more than a body. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." God made our bodies from the dust of the ground. The body goes back to the dust of the ground. God breathed into our bodies the breath of life. At death the spirit returns to God who gave it. Death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26).

Death is the end of the body, but there's more in our future than dying. We have an appointment at the judgment seat of Christ. This is a serious, solemn thought: "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27.) "For we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14:10). Second Corinthians 5:10 tells why, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." God judges our earthly lives to see where we will spend eternity.

So, we ask a fourth question, "What is our responsibility?" We must listen to God and live such lives that please and glorify Him. God declared from heaven on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5). There was a time when folks were to hear Moses and the prophets, but now God speaks to us by his Son. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." To believe we must listen to Christ, if we're going to believe the right things. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

Our responsibility is to believe the gospel. We believe Jesus died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He arose from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). We must do more than hear or listen, we must believe what we've heard, believe the truth, and whenever we've heard it to embrace it, to take it into our hearts. Hearing is not only listening; it's also responding to what we are told. Our duty is to obey the gospel. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although He [speaking of Jesus] was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."

We cannot earn salvation through meritorious works, but the grace of God does not save those who fail to obey. John 3:36 in the New American Standard says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Because of His grace we love the Lord. We show that love by keeping His commandments (John 14:15). Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." God washes us when we're baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16). That's when we're born again and that's when we have newness of life, according to Romans 6:4.

We then ask our fifth question, "What are our dangers?" There are two great dangers confronting us. One is that we will neglect our salvation. 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?" How shall we escape if we neglect? There is no escape if we continue to live outside the will of God.

Thankfully, God is patient with us. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." If we perish eternally, it won't be because God wished it. He wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God, however, will not save us against our stubborn wills. Repentance is necessary for salvation. This is true for the person who is becoming a Christian by obeying the gospel, and it's true for the Christian who walks, and maybe he decides to walk in sin, he needs to repent of it. Romans 8:6-8 says to the Christian, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it doesn't subject itself to the law of God, for it's not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Make no mistake: if we set our minds on serving sin, we're in danger of losing our souls. The devil would have us believe that we're in no great danger, but the devil is a liar. The Lord Jesus said, "For whoever wishes to save his life [that is his soul] will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:25-27). Jesus wouldn't talk about losing our soul if we were not in very great danger of doing that very thing.

This leads us to our last question, "What is our destiny?" There are only two destinies before us. One is heaven, where we will live eternally in love, and peace with God. We'll enjoy His blessing and kindness forever. Those who are righteous and cleansed by the blood of Jesus will enter heaven. First Peter 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Oh, I want heaven for my eternal home. I want to be with the Lord who loves me and has blessed me all my life.

The other destiny is hell, where there is punishment, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Those who are unbelieving, unrighteous and rebellious will be taken there and eternally separated from God. The Lord Jesus who loves us mentioned hell more often than any other person in Scripture. He spoke of hell to warn us and to keep us from going there. Those who love you will warn you of dangers.

Jesus Christ did everything He could to keep anyone from going to hell. He suffered on the cross to keep us from having to suffer for our sins. But do not imagine that He extends His grace to those who rebel against Him or to those who will not believe what He says. The Lord Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body

but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Each of us is facing one of these destinies, either one or the other. Which will it be? Will you spend eternity in all the blessings of heaven, or will you lose your opportunity by rejecting the Lord? Remember Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." You must make your decision now in this life, while you have opportunity. Because after death, there will be no more opportunities.

We are indeed moral creatures made in the image of God and accountable for our words and our deeds. We need to appreciate that God created us and gave us life. We must seriously and solemnly face the fact that we have perishing bodies and we'll go back to the earth, but our spirits will return to God. Let's set our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ who has loved us so greatly that He would die for us. Let's rejoice that He arose from the dead, assuring us that we too would have life after this life is over. May we hear, believe, and obey the truth in response to His love and promise, so that we may be free from our old sins. Let's keep on hearing, believing, and obeying. By continuing in our faith and hope, we won't neglect the great salvation.

Let's pray together. "Father, help us to be good listeners, to hear Your Word, to love You for what You've done for us, and, Father, to be obedient to Your Word. Give us strength Father to say no to the things of this world and to sin, and to say yes to the things that are right, and to Your Will. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Our lives are filled with warnings and predictions of disasters. Everyone seems to tell us the sky is falling, and we're living in fear. We're warned to prepare for all kinds of political, economic, and health devastations. We hear warnings about everything. Whether these things will happen, I don't know; but I do know one thing! The Lord Jesus is coming again. He promised, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

If you aren't prepared for His coming, then you can't enjoy His promises. If you aren't under the grace of God in this life, you can't expect to have God's blessing in the life to come. God created you so that you could live eternally with Him. He gave you a conscience so that you would avoid evil and learn to do what is right. He gave us His word so that we might know the truth and be saved. The Father sent His Son into the world to save us, to die on the cross for our sins, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

To be prepared, love the Lord Jesus, believe in Him, obey His commandments, and trust in His promises. Turn from sin and live for the Lord in righteousness. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and make Him your Lord. Be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, immersed in water in His name. When you're baptized into Christ, God washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and He counts you as His child (Galatians 3:26-27). There's no better day than today to prepare your soul for eternal life!

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.

## Pleasing God

When you truly love someone, you want to please them. Today, we're going to explore the joy and the value of pleasing our Father in heaven. We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God has delivered to us in Scripture His grace and steadfast love. Our gracious God promises us eternal life if we'll come to Him in faith and love. When you believe God, you take Him at His word. When you love God, you do everything in your power to please Him and meet His expectations. If you wish to please God, you must know Him and follow Him. God expects us to do His will.

I hope and pray you make it your goal each day to live pleasing to the Lord. It's amazing how many take the grace of God for granted and never think about improving their spiritual lives. The apostle Paul said, "So whether we're at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

When you love the Lord, you want to please Him. You don't act out of fear or because you feel compelled; you act out of love and respect. David said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). His loving and grateful relationship with God led him to take God's desires and His will seriously rather than to suggest that God ought to be happy with whatever we do. God is God, and we're His creatures and His servants. The Lord Jesus said we should seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Our reading today comes from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9:24-27.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

I hope that none of you are disqualified either, so that we can please the Lord and live with Him forever.

Let's pray. "Father, we're thankful for this example of Paul who worked diligently and hard to please You and to fulfill Your will. Help us to have the same mindset and the same desire. In Jesus' name, Amen."

"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, He watches all his paths" (Proverbs 5:21). God knows all about each of us. He knows how we behave and how we think. He can look into our hearts and know our intentions. The seer Hanani told Asa the king of Judah, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). It matters to God whether we're devoted to Him and willing to serve Him.

The Lord Jesus told two parables about the kingdom of heaven at the second coming in Matthew 25. The first speaks of five wise and five foolish virgins. The wise were prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, while the foolish were unprepared. The wise virgins entered into the wedding feast, while the five foolish virgins were not allowed. In fact the Lord said to them, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." (Matthew 25:12). We must be on the alert then, because we don't know the day nor the hour when the Lord will come a second time.

In the second parable, the Lord Jesus tells of a man about to go on a journey, who called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. He gave five talents to one, two talents to another, and one talent to a third servant. A talent was money and worth fifteen years of a laborer's wages. The man with five talents

gained five more, and the man with two talents gained two more; but the man with one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

When the master returned from his journey, he praised the five-talent and the two-talent men. He said, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Wouldn't it be wonderful on the Day of Judgment to hear these words from the lips of the Lord Jesus?

The one-talent man said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you didn't sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and I went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I didn't sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who doesn't have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 25:24-31).

At this point, the Lord tells us a little more specifically about what will happen on Judgment Day at the second coming. All the nations will be gathered before Him as He sits on His glorious throne. He will separate the sheep from the goats. The King will say to the sheep on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." Because they served their fellow man, they were honoring the Lord Jesus and serving Him.

To the goats on His left who failed to serve their fellow man, the King will say, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't invite Me in; naked, and you didn't clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit Me." The goats "will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:31-46).

Our culture has this notion that everyone will be saved no matter how we've acted or treated our fellow man; but not everyone will enter heaven. The Lord Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). The Lord has no desire for anyone to be lost, but people who choose to live in sin and choose to forsake the ways of God also choose to separate themselves from Him.

Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, and these people rejected Jesus as the Christ. In Acts 13:46, the Bible says "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you [that is, to the Jews] first; since you repudiate it and you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we're turning to the Gentiles." Yes, people have freewill and make up their own minds about whether they will believe. People also choose whether they would rather keep sin in their lives or repent. People choose whether they will treat others with kindness or live in anger and hatred. God has shown us the way to eternal life in Jesus Christ, but many choose their own ways. By doing so, they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.

If we wish to please the Father we must believe in Him and in His promises. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." The Lord has blessed us richly, and He's blessed those who call themselves Christians with the knowledge of His will found in the scriptures, and these also include His



promises, so that by His teaching and promises we may become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust. This is a great blessing to be treasured and never taken for granted. The Lord expects us to devote ourselves to becoming His people and following His will.

Second Peter 1:5-11 says, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an inheritance, an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The Lord Jesus is our example in all things, yet He realized His purpose was to do the will of the Father. When the disciples wondered why Jesus didn't eat the food they brought to Him as He sat by the well near Sychar, Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). On another occasion, the Lord Jesus said, "I can do nothing on My own. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30).

The Lord Jesus knew the day would come when He would die for the sins of the world. Many doubted Jesus during His earthly ministry, but Jesus knew why He had come to earth and that He was indeed the Son of God and the Messiah. The Lord Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man [that is, when I'm crucified], then you will know that I am He [that is, the Son of God, the Messiah], and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:28-29). At the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus determined to do the will of the Father and not His own will, even at the cost of His life on a cruel cross.

The Lord Jesus said in Hebrews 10:9 in fulfillment of the prophecy of His sacrifice found in Psalm 40:7-8, "Behold I have come to do Your will." If the Lord Jesus felt the necessity of pleasing His Father in heaven, and if we follow His example, shouldn't we do everything in our power to please the Father. The Lord Jesus said, "If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love" (John 15:10). I want to remain in the love of the Father, and I want to remain in the love of the Son!

The apostle Paul by inspiration also encourages us to please the Lord by our attitudes, our words, our deeds, and by how we treat others. Romans 12:1-2 says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." We are to live out the will of God in our lives and not be conformed to the ways of the world.

Let's look once again at 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Now everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." Athletes train for years to be the best at their sport for an earthly and perishable reward. Our spiritual training is to receive an imperishable crown and to live with the Lord forever. We don't want to be disqualified by failing to discipline our lives, to control our thinking, to control our actions, to control our

actions, to control our attitudes and to control everything about how we treat others. We want to remain free from sinful ways.

Colossians 1:10 urges us to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” and “to please Him in all respects.” Whatever God desires should be our heart's desire. We should love the things that God loves and stay free of the things that God is offended by. Paul urged the young man Timothy, “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Let's keep our hearts pure and serve the Lord with all our hearts and all our soul.

Let's pray together. “Heavenly Father, we're thankful that You have shown us the way that we need to walk and how we need to behave and how we need to think and treat others, so that we may please You. We pray that our hearts will be set upon doing Your will, on showing our love to You by keeping Your commandments, and by pleasing You. Be with us, give us strength and help us to discipline ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Matthew 17:1-5 says, “Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it's good for us to be here; if You wish, I'll make three tabernacles here, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ And while he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!’”

The Father in heaven wants us to listen to the Lord Jesus. Whether we listen to Him matters. He will judge us on the last day by His words (John 12:48). If we're obedient to His will, we can enjoy eternal salvation. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”

Obedience to the gospel is necessary to our salvation, and living faithfully to the Lord afterwards is also necessary. To become a Christian, hear the gospel, place your trust in the Lord Jesus and in what He says, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. And this means being immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And when you're baptized, you're baptized into the death of Christ; and God will wash your sins away (Acts 22:16). When you're baptized you're also raised with Christ in that baptism, and you're able to walk a new life, and it's free from sin (Romans 6:4-7).

Focus your heart on God today 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.

## Overcome

Life presents many challenges to our Christian lives. Can we overcome them? Today, we're exploring the challenge and the rewards to overcoming life's struggles. We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The word of God opens a mirror so that we can see ourselves as we truly are. It warns us of dangers, gives us promises, rebukes our weaknesses, and strengthens our faith. The inspired word of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. It gives us everything we need to know spiritually how to live godly lives and how to have eternal life.

In the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus addresses the seven churches of Asia. Some of these congregations were holding fast and doing well, while others were in spiritual danger. Some of these congregations had in the same assembly people who held fast to the Lord worshiping with others who were deep in sin. Some were facing harsh persecution, while others were challenged by evil or indifference. This sounds similar to churches in our own day. Some are healthy, some are dead, some are holding to the truth, and some are in great error.

The Lord speaks to these seven churches with authority. He is indeed Lord, and every church is accountable to Him. When churches fail to please Him, He calls them to wake up and remember, remember what the Lord did for them on the cross and how He saved them. Some churches simply need to repent of their sin and lawless ways. Some need to start loving the Lord again, because they have ceased to love or need Him. Whatever challenge they face, they could either fall away, losing their place as a church; or they could overcome the challenge and be the kind of congregation that God desires. The Lord knocked at the door of the people in Laodicea, and He will knock at our door. Will we let Him in or turn Him away? My friend, let Him in!

Our reading today comes from the book of Revelation 2:1-6.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: "I know your deeds and your toil and the perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Let's pray. "O, Father help us to love You, to serve You, and to stay close to You, and to live with You always in love and in service. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The book of Revelation makes promises seven times to those who overcome in chapters 2 and 3. These seven churches differ in their attitudes, their devotion, and their behavior. Churches are made up of people. Each person addressed was assembled with one of these seven congregations. Each church member faces a challenge to remain faithful to the Lord. Congregations today differ in many ways, and some today are very much like some of these seven churches. We may face different challenges, but the challenge to overcome and to be what God would have us to be remains with us all. Some have doctrinal challenges, some face social challenges, some have moral challenges, some have lost their first love, and some simply have stopped caring. You aren't the first one to face these challenges, and you can overcome just as many of them did.

The Lord Jesus told the church at Ephesus, "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they're not,

and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." Though they were doctrinally strong and persevered in their faith, they had lost the strong love they had in earlier days. Many Christians today face this same challenge to keep their love for God strong and alive. They may have taken their eyes off of the love found in Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

They needed to remember and to repent. The Lord said in Revelation 2:5, "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." Yes, a loss of love means this whole church can lose its place with God. Jesus gave them hope and an opportunity to change. The Lord said in verse seven, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

The Lord prepared the church at Smyrna for the tribulation that would come upon them. The city of Smyrna was loyal to Rome and its emperor. The church was poor in its possessions but rich with God. They faced slander and imprisonment from their enemies, from both the Jews and the Romans. The Lord said, "Do not fear what you're about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:9-10). He promises, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." The second death means that one will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). The one who stays faithful need not fear the lake of fire. He will have a crown of life and live eternally with the Lord.

The Lord saw a mixed group at Pergamum, the place where Satan's throne is. Some held fast to their faith and didn't deny their faith in the Lord. He even mentions Antipas, who died bearing witness to his faith. But the Lord Jesus had a few things against the church at Pergamum, because they allowed someone to teach them they could eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. Some also held the false views of the Nicolaitans, who like Balaam may have felt they could compromise with the pagans in public and could be sexually free. Jesus told them to repent or He would come against them with the sword of His mouth. The challenge to remain free from sin and from the teaching of the world is great even in our day. Jesus promised, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it" (Revelation 2:17). God would give them the manna they needed. The white stone probably meant God regarded them as acquitted of sin.

The Lord Jesus knew the works of the church at Thyatira, just as He knows our works today. The Lord knew Thyatira's works, their love, their faith, their service, and their patient endurance. Unlike Ephesus, their latter works exceeded their first. But the Lord had much against them, because they tolerated Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess. She taught and seduced the servants of God to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. The Lord gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. To hear some speak today, there's no such thing as sexual immorality; but the Lord demands that we live holy lives.

The Lord said He would punish those who commit adultery with great tribulation. Unless they repent, He will strike her children, so that all the churches will know that He is the One who searches the mind and heart and will give to each one what his works deserve. Others at Thyatira did not hold to her teaching, what some call the deep things of Satan. He told them to hold fast what you have until I come. He promised, "And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28). Notice these promises are to the person who remains faithful to the end.

The Lord Jesus knew about Sardis. Sardis had the reputation of being alive, but they were dead. They needed to wake up and to strengthen what remains and is about to die. I fear many congregations today are much like Sardis. The Lord had not found their works complete in the sight of God. He told them to remember what you received and heard; keep it and repent. If they would not wake up, Jesus said He would come against them like a thief in the night. In spite of this, a few people had not soiled their garments, and they will walk with the Lord in white, for they are worthy. Jesus promised, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Revelation 3:6).

The Lord also knew the works of the church at Philadelphia. He set before them an open door, which no one could shut. They had little power but had kept His word and had not denied His name. He promised to make the synagogue of Satan bow down before your feet. They will learn that the Lord Jesus loved the church at Philadelphia. Because of their love and faith, the Lord promised to keep them from the hour of trial. He urged them to hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize their crown. He promised, that "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name" (Revelation 3:12). Those who belong to the Lord are loved and live with Him forever.

The Lord also knew about the lukewarm church at Laodicea. They weren't hot or cold but had become indifferent to God. They didn't care; they could take up a cross or leave it. So offensive were they to the Lord that the Lord wanted to spit them out of His mouth. They were saying, "I'm rich, I've prospered, and I need nothing." You know, people today sometimes feel that they have everything they need and really don't need God. The church then didn't realize that they were in God's sight "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." People today are just as wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked; but they don't know it. He counseled the church at Laodicea to buy gold refined by fire from Him, so they could really be rich in the things of God. To buy white garments from Him, so that they won't be ashamed of their spiritual nakedness. Buy salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see spiritually. While they had physical blessings, they lacked a warm, loving relationship with the Lord. You may not be close to the Lord either. My friend, we all need the Lord; and nothing else, nothing else will do.

The Lord Jesus said, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (Those at Laodicea) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anybody hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:19-20). Jesus loves and wants fellowship even with those who don't need Him. Friend, He wants fellowship with you. He promised, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (verse 21).

Friend, are you overcoming the challenges of your faith or failing to overcome? Are you remembering and holding fast to the Lord's teaching, or are you casting aside His words to do your own thing? Do you love Him deeply, or have you left your first love? Are you tolerating sinful things, or do you need to repent of the sinful ways so prevalent that are in our world? Are you alive or are you dead spiritually?

Many people who were once faithful and practicing Christians have become indifferent to the Lord and to His church. They live according to their own rules and do as they please. They've forgotten the cross and they have forgotten what the Lord did for them. The Lord is not blind or naive. He knows and will reward or punish each person according to what he or she deserves. You may tolerate evil beliefs or sinful ways, but the Lord won't tolerate them. He will give us time to repent of our lawless ways; but when people refuse to repent, there comes a time when His patience ends. Sin will harden your heart and cause you to fall away in unbelief. In the end you will be lost.

The Lord loves those who love Him and keep His commandments. He seeks to make a home in our lives. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 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). The Lord wants to love you and for you to love Him. That's why He's knocking at your door, hoping you will open the door. He won't barge in; you must open it for Him. No matter what your heart or life has been in the past, you can repent and start opening the door of your mind and your heart and let the Lord come in.

Can you hear the Lord knocking at your door? Can you hear His words calling you? Will you open the door or leave it closed? Will you turn to Him?

Let's pray together. "O, Father, we pray that we may open our hearts, and open our minds, to Your Word and to Your love and grace. Help us Heavenly Father to repent of the things that we have done that are wrong, and to turn to righteousness, to hunger for it and to love You and to serve You with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength. This is our prayer in the Name of Jesus. Amen."

To each of the seven churches of Asia, the Lord Jesus said, "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Listening to what the Spirit says in the word of God is still just as important today as it was in the first century. The Spirit didn't speak these words to the people of the world, but to people who were members of the Lord's church. They knew about the grace and love of the cross; and they knew of the second coming and Judgment Day. They needed reminding, however, that the Lord knew what was going on in their lives.

The words "wake up" appear twice in this chapter, "remember" appears twice, "faithful" appears three times, "hold fast" appears three times, and "repent" appears eight times. The Lord Jesus was trying to get the churches to wake up, to remember, to repent, to be faithful and to hold fast to Him. What the Lord Jesus said to these seven churches is just what we too need to hear as well. As a Christian, you may need to repent, confess your sins, and pray to God to forgive you. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

By "Christian," I mean one who has obeyed the gospel according to the teaching of the Scripture. To obey the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of evil and turn to the Lord, confess Jesus as the Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. When you're baptized, God washes away your sins and gives you newness of life (Roman 6:3-7, and Acts 22:16).

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family.

## Battles of the Heart

Throughout Scripture we're exposed to choices people make. They'll either follow their own will or the will of God. Today, we're exploring three battles of the heart. We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures not only reveal the heart of God, they also help us to see ourselves. They help us understand the temptations and challenges we face, that they're not unique to us. The Scriptures do not shun revealing the good and evil found in our lives. They honestly reveal when people have done the right thing and when people have failed. Through the Word of God we can see the results of choices people make, some for blessing and some not.

I want to tell the story of three battles of the heart. Three men, who went through a tremendous strain, discovering a lot about themselves. Battles of the heart teach us a lot about ourselves. These battles define what kind of person we are. They reveal our strengths and our weaknesses. They reveal our commitment to God and what is right or what we are willing to permit in our lives. They show us our priorities and what we truly value.

The Lord Jesus said, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:20-21). Where is your heart? What are your treasures? Romans 8:5-6 says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." You're making choices now that will affect your eternal destiny. Will you win or lose?

Our reading today comes from the Gospel according to Luke, 22:31-34, and this event takes place, this discussion takes place on the night when Jesus of course was betrayed, the night before He was to be crucified.

Simon, Simon, Satan, has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.' But he said to Him, 'Lord, with You I'm ready to go both to prison and to death!' And He said, 'I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.'"

Ah, one of the great battles of the heart. Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You love us and that You care for us, and that You realize when we go through those difficult times. We pray Father that we may have faith and strength to endure the battles that face us in our lives. And now Father we pray that You'll bless us as we study, and help us always to do Your will and to love You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Battles of the heart come to all of us, tempting and testing us. The New Testament tells of three people who faced critical battles in their hearts over right and wrong. Each of them faced the consequences of their choices but each in a different way. These challenges of faith come to all of us. How we respond to matters makes a difference. So let's look closer at these three people.

First, we take a look at what Scripture tells us about the heart of Judas Iscariot. Judas had a problem with greed and money; he was in a position to use money that didn't belong to him since he carried the money box for Jesus and the disciples. Judas got into the habit of pilfering money to meet his own desires. You'll remember that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, broke an alabaster vial of perfume, to anoint the feet of Jesus. This perfume was a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard. Mary anointed his feet and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with fragrance.

John 12:4-8 says: "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?' He said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Therefore Jesus said, 'Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.'"

Judas apparently had heard of the plot to kill Jesus. Matthew 26:14-16 says: "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. Luke 22: says, "Satan entered into Judas." When Jesus and the disciples were observing the Passover on the night before Jesus died, Matthew 26:20-25 says: "Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, He said, 'Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.' Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord?' And He answered, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.' And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself.'"

Later that night in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed Him. Matthew 26:47-50 says: "While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He's the one; seize Him.' Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, 'Hail, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him."

Later Judas regretted the great sin he committed. Matthew 27:3-5 says, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself!' And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself." The name Judas Iscariot will always be associated with betrayal and shame. This ending is sad beyond measure.

The second person to face a battle of the heart that night was the Lord Jesus himself. Matthew 26:36-39 says: "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. And then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.'" Jesus is here accepting what He knows that He will be condemned. He knows He's going to suffer humiliation, false charges, beatings, scourging, and crucifixion. He knows He will die a long, agonizing death. There was indeed a great battle going on in his heart. Do I save myself from death and fail my Father's purpose, or do I die an agonizing death and fulfill His will? Thankfully, His love for the Father led Him to do what was right. His death blessed us all.

Hebrews 5:7-9 describes that night, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Because the Lord Jesus willingly offered His body as a sacrifice in obedience to His Father, we have hope in our obedience to Him.



The third person to face a battle of the heart that night is Simon Peter. The Lord Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.’ Peter said to him, ‘Lord, I’m ready to go with you both to prison and to death.’ And Jesus said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny me three times that you know me’” (Luke 22:31-34). These four verses reveal a prediction, telling us of the battle of a heart.

Jesus had said to Peter, James and John, “The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak” in Matthew 26:41; and this is certainly true. We want to do what’s right, we plan to do what is right, but circumstances can lead our fears and our flesh to battle against our best desires.

Matthew 26:69-74 tells the story of what Peter did: “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, ‘You too were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about.’ When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’ A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.’ Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know the man!’ And immediately a rooster crowed.”

Luke 22:61 says that the third denial took place in the Lord’s presence, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter.” Can you imagine how ashamed Peter felt when he realized how he had failed Jesus? Matthew 26:75 says, “And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, ‘Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ And he went out and he wept bitterly.” Have you ever wept bitterly over your sins? All Peter’s boasting and good intentions didn’t keep him from shaming himself in front of the Lord. Just as the Lord saw and heard Peter, the Lord also sees and hears us when we sin (Proverbs 15:3).

Thankfully, this is not the end of the story. Peter did turn back and strengthened his brothers. When the women came and told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, Peter went with John to the empty tomb. They saw for themselves the grave clothes without a body. When Peter saw Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, he professed his love for Jesus three times. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter with the eleven boldly preached and served the Lord for the rest of his days. Peter faced a crisis of fear and temporarily lost, but he later gained his strength enough to endure all that came his way. Let’s apply these battles to our lives.

Like Judas, some people fail God and decide life is all over. They believe they can never be saved, so they withdraw from God and die bitterly sad and alone. Judas regretted what he did, returned the thirty pieces of silver, but did not repent. Judas didn’t face up to his failure and come back in repentance, asking for forgiveness. Instead he withdrew from God and took his own life.

I wish Judas could have realized how great the grace of God truly is. The chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, became the apostle Paul. Paul said, “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). I hope you know God stands ready to forgive you, when you turn to Him in obedience.

Like Jesus, some folks know what they have to do, as hard as it is, and decide to do it, because they love God, and they love others, and they’re committed to doing what is right. The Lord Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I’ve spoken to you so that My

joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:8-11). Keeping God's commandments brings joy not regret.

Like Peter, many grow afraid, deny the Lord by their actions, and then later weep bitterly when they have to face it. Peter faced his sin, but he was able to grow from it and bless the lives of others. He knew what it was like to be frightened by persecution, but he also understood the forgiveness that God gives to the penitent and the help He gives to the persecuted. First Peter 5:8-10 says, "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've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Let's pray together. "Father, help us in our times of temptation, when we have battles within our heart to do the right thing and avoid giving in to our sins. Help us to love You and to love others always. In Jesus' name, Amen."

There's likely a battle in your heart. We all face them. Don't give up on yourself if you fail. Everyone fails at some time or another. Many of us have failed often. We may even have developed a sinful habit that controls us. When you fail, recognize what you've done, be honest with yourself, admit what you've done, and repent. As long as you hold on to a sinful behavior, you'll have to live with a guilty conscience; and you won't like yourself. Like the prodigal, you won't feel worthy to be called the Father's son or daughter.

You can let your guilt overcome you, as Judas did; or you can learn from your mistakes and repent. You can turn back to God. Even slaves to sin can become servants of God! Romans 6:16-18 says, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, that you're slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

No matter what your past has been, you can change! Slaves of sin became slaves of God when they obeyed from the heart what God says. You can become a child of God. Believe with your heart Jesus Christ is God's son, repent and turn from sin to the Lord, confess your faith, and be baptized into Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). You can have a new life and a good conscience. Obey the Lord today!

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone 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.