Program Study Guides

For

June 2016
Born Again
John 3:1-7

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

We hear a lot of folks __________ about being “born again.” What does that mean? We explore God’s Word because it contains the words of __________ life. It teaches the most important lessons and it gives us ______. Today we’re asking: what does it ______ to be “born again” or “born from above”? Is it some kind of “better ______ than told” experience? Is it some ______ feeling? Some people speak of “born again” Christians as if they were a ______ kind of Christian; but, the fact is one must be “born again” to be a Christian at all. Since there is a lot of __________ about what it means to be “born again,” it’s worth our while to go back to the Bible and see what God says about being “born again.”

Born again . . . Within the heart of most people is the ______ to start over. We see our ____ and we regret our past. We wish we could start over and do things differently. Some people even ______ the person that they’ve become and they just wish they could be somebody else. The Lord gives us that opportunity, an opportunity to put ______ the old sinful person and to put _____ the new man in Christ, to change our lives, our attitudes, and our behavior. Today we’re going to explore what this means and how this happens.


Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, said, “Rabbi, we know that you’re a ______ come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” The Lord Jesus is indeed the Son of God, but what He told Nicodemus was __________. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, ______ one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The words “truly, truly,” show that He is ______. The word “truly” in Greek actually is the word “________.”

Nicodemus questions, “How can a man be born when he is _____? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (verse 4). Nicodemus, as a ruler of the Jews, should have understood what Jesus was talking about. Gentiles who became proselytes were thought to be “born again” when they were ___________. Nicodemus was not a proselyte. He couldn’t imagine being compared to one of them.

Jesus makes it clear, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot ______ the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:5-7). Even a ruler of the Jews needed what Jesus required for eternal life.

Jesus said, “You must be born again.” That little word “must” means it’s necessary if you want to ______ God. “Must” refers to a “moral necessity.” Jesus later said that he “must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Matthew 16:21). Jesus saw the ______ as necessary. If you or I enter the ______ of heaven, we must first be born again of water and the Spirit. No matter who we are—even Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, had to be born again in baptism to go to heaven.
The baptism of Jesus was a birth of ________ and the _________. Both water and Spirit were involved. Water is involved in that baptism is a __________ in water, an immersion. The Holy Spirit is involved through the _________. Peter explains this, “Since you have in obedience to the ________ 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 abiding ________ of God” (1 Peter 1:22-23).

Without the preaching of the __________, we would not believe or know what we must do in order to obey the truth. But it’s in obeying the truth that we __________ our souls and are born again of the Word. The Word is an imperishable seed, and it’s for _____ generations. As a seed, what it produced in the first century, it will produce ________. That’s how we know we are Christians today like they were in the first century; we have obeyed the ________ gospel that they did.

The gospel produces ________ in us. The Bible says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). The more we ________ to God’s Word, the greater our faith will become. One listens, then because of faith, he wants to ________ that gospel. It’s when the Word works on our heart that it brings about ________ in life and we become a new person—truly born of the Spirit by His seed, the Word.

The Bible ________ this new birth, and where we came from, and how God has blessed us. “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of ________ which we have done in righteousness, but according to His ________, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7). We needed God’s ________; and we needed saving! He was willing to do that through the washing of regeneration.

God’s grace and mercy saved us. We didn’t ________ it; God gave us His grace ________. “the washing of regeneration” and the “renewing by the Holy Spirit.” The phrase “washing of regeneration” refers to a washing that ________ one to be regenerated, that is “born again.” This “washing” is a clear reference to ________ as the time of the cleansing from sin and being born from above. Let me emphasize that it is God who washes us and the Spirit who renews us. We are washed in the ________ of Jesus who died for us. Some people think baptism is a work of ________; but in baptism ________ does the work of cleansing, regenerating, and renewing.

How do we get this new life? The Bible says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His ________? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in ________ of life. For if we’ve become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be ________ to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:3-7).

To be reborn, one must first ________ to self and to sin. You’re either a servant of sin or a servant of the Lord. It’s only when you’re crucified with Christ in baptism that you die to the old man of sin,
and then you can be _________ to walk in newness of life—and be reborn! That’s the real _________ of bearing a cross. Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must _______ himself, take up his cross daily and _________ Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

That new life _________ at baptism but lasts our whole life through. When you’re baptized, you’re born into the _________ of God. Jesus said, “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the _________ to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, and who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13). By faith in God’s Word, we _________ Christ. We purify our _______ by obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). This is why we don’t question if we should be baptized; we do it out of _____ to obey Him and to be pure. It’s obedience to the Word, the seed, that opens the door for us to be born again by God.

When you’re born again in baptism, you become a _____ creature. The Bible says, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the ______ things passed away; behold, ______ things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ the old man of sin has been put away, crucified with Christ, so that a new man in Christ has come to be.

Ephesians 4:17-24 describes the _________ that not only takes place spiritually but also in our lives day to day. “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that’s in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you didn’t learn Christ in this way, if indeed you’ve heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, that you lay aside the _____ self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the _____ self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” The new birth _________ hearts, attitudes, desires and purposes. The new person wants to be like the Lord in all holiness.

This is the kind of life a Christian should live when he’s born again. Ephesians 4:25-32 goes on and describes this. “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are ____ of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome ______ proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who ______. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

Christians leave the sinful and turn to the holy in _________ because they become like Christ. Paul said, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, and joy, and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). A
person who is born of the Spirit shows these things.

When you’re born into the family of God, you have God as your __________. As a Father, God protects, provides, guides, instructs, and corrects. God gives His children the privilege of __________, listening to every request and every concern. He not only listens; He __________. In Christ, we’re deeply blessed. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every (every, every) spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Being born into the family of God gives us ______ the privileges of God’s favor and it gives us an inheritance. We are fellow-heirs with Christ.

When you’re born into God’s family, the Lord _______ you to the church and He ________ your name in the Lamb’s Book of Life. God says, “So then you’re no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow _________ with the saints, and you are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). You can do _________ more important than to be born again!

God wants you to be born again and to come into His family so He can love you and be close to you. So put your ________ in Him and turn away from sin. When you out of love obey Him in baptism, He’ll crucify the old man of sin and cause you to be born again. Oh, what a blessing!

Being born again _________ our lives entirely. Peter said of Christians, “But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

We turn from being a “nobody” to being “somebody” with God. We turn from shame to being a saint and from darkness to light. That’s what it means to be born again, God’s great blessing!

Some people ask the question, “Can God really make me over?” They feel so ________ of their past, they don’t believe they can live the Christian life. Oh, my friend, there’s ________ news for you. If you want to change—I mean really want to become a child of God—there’s ________ in the heart of God for you. The apostle Paul wasn’t always an apostle. He was once Saul of Tarsus, a man who blasphemed Christ and persecuted Christians. He described himself as the ________ of sinners, since he had violently persecuted the church. Paul said, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). The Lord loves ________ person on this earth, and the people He died for were all ________.

Paul continues, “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.” The Lord will also show you patience. You can go to heaven. You can be saved from all your sins and live eternally. How? You must be born again by believing with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ; repenting of your sins; confessing the name of Jesus; and by being baptized (that is, immersed in water) for the forgiveness of your sins. That opportunity is yours if you’ll take it and receive it. Don’t just believe, act on your faith!
June 12, 2016

Authentic Christianity
Acts 26:24-29

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

When people speak of Christianity, it’s often quite _________ from what the New Testament teaches about Christianity. What is authentic Christianity; what is it really _______? If you ask the question, “what is Christianity?” people will give you all kinds of ________. They’ll tell you what they __________ Christianity is or what they ______ it were. People see Christianity historically and socially as it ____________ in America; but if that’s all they see, they may never know what Christianity _________ is. Today we’re exploring the question, “What is authentic Christianity?” Is the Christianity we see today what God __________ when He sent Jesus into this world? In the early days Christians were known among themselves as “brethren,” “the faithful,” “the elect,” “saints” (all of them were called saints), and they were also thought of as “believers.” But people outside the church called them “Christians.” This term came by the ______ of God, and it was universally accepted.

You might think the word “Christian” would occur frequently in the New Testament, but it occurs only ______ times. The word “Christian” refers to an individual who “__________ to Christ.” Originally, words that ended in the letters “i-a-n” applied to the _________ belonging to the great households; it had passed into regular use to refer to _________ of an individual or a party. Some Bible dictionaries define the word “Christian” as “The name given by the Greeks or Romans, probably in _______________ to the followers of Jesus. It was first used at Antioch.” However, the name “Christian” is far more than that, as we will see.


The first time “Christian” is used in the New Testament is Acts 11:25 -26. “So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” The word for “called” here is chrematisai, not the common word for “called” from the word kalleo. Chrematisai refers to a __________ revealed name or instruction. The name “Christian” didn’t actually come from ________; it came from ________ in fulfillment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 62:2: “The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a ________ name, Which the mouth of the LORd will designate.”

To call myself a Christian means that I am a __________ of Christ. I wear His name; I follow His teaching; I call upon him as my Lord, and share in His spiritual and moral way of life. A __________ is a person who imitates his master, becomes like him in manner, in speech, in mind, and in behavior. The disciples were called Christians. Both words, “disciples” and “Christians,” show the ________ relationship between the Lord Jesus and those who follow him. I am happy and honored to wear the name of Jesus Christ. I love Him and I want to wear His name. And I don’t mind the world knowing that I am His servant.
The second time the word “Christian” is used is also found in the book of Acts. In chapter 26, Paul is defending himself and his _______ before the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king, Herod Agrippa. “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’ And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’ And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains’” (Acts 26:27-29). Paul wished __________ were a Christian, and so do I. I hope you’re a Christian.

People _________ to be Christians; nobody is born one. We might be ________ into a family of Christians, but that doesn’t make us a Christian. We have to _________ for ourselves. We must be born ________ to become a Christian. We do that when we by faith decide to follow Christ and to be ____________. The Bible says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you’re slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18). You can become a Christian by your heartfelt _____________ to the gospel. Each of you, each of all of us, must choose to believe and to obey.

The Bible teaches in Ephesians about the __________________ that takes place when a person becomes a Christian. Read Ephesians 4:17-24. You must make a _______ change when you decide to become a Christian. You must leave an _______ sinful way of life, a way that’s darkened and futile; and you must put on the _______ way of life that is patterned after Jesus Christ. A Christian who loves the Lord no longer ________ to live the way the world lives. He _______ an abundant life that is higher and nobler than his old way. Christianity is the way that people become new. They’re no longer darkened in their understanding, living callous and impure lives. In Christ, they have _________ a better way, full of love and full of good deeds. People learn Christ, and as they ________ in their knowledge, their lives become better and better.

The third Scripture which mentions the name “Christian” is 1 Peter 4:15-16. These verses say: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.” In this passage, the Bible says that one should not be ___________ of being a Christian but to glorify God in THAT name, that God-given name that associates us with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Christians were undergoing serious ______________ at the time that Peter wrote this to them. I could see how some might feel hesitant to ________ that they were Christians, if it meant persecution. Others might _________ if they acted sinfully and brought reproach upon their faith. But wearing the name of Christ honorably glorifies God. This is truly the name that God designates for his people.

The apostle Paul, like Peter, was willing to __________ whatever shame and punishment was necessary in order to preach the gospel and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul felt obligated to ________ the Lord in a pagan society. He said, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I’m ________ to preach the gospel
to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the __________ of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:14-16). No one has to be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus because of all the ________ that Christ does in their lives.

A Christian doesn’t have to be ashamed when he ______ up without a hangover. A Christian doesn’t have to be ashamed that he tells the __________, that he keeps his word, that he practices what is right, and that he loves his neighbor. The way of Christians is God’s way, God’s plan to ______ all of mankind. That’s why Christians are the ______ of the earth and the ______ of the world. They are God’s people making a difference for good and right in an ______ world. In their lives they ______ what the will of God is, that which is “good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

What does it mean then to be a Christian? It means: I don’t belong to me; I __________ belong to my Lord Jesus Christ. I have given Him ______ place in my life. I believe what He ______. I practice a life that _________ Him. He loves, so I love. He gives of himself, so I give of myself. He avoids evil, so I avoid evil. He kept his heart right, so I keep my heart right. To belong totally to Christ is a ______ notion. The reason many people wonder what a Christian is arises from the fact that many so-called Christians ______ with the notion of following Christ but never _______ embrace the idea that we fully belong to him and not to ourselves.

Many think being a Christian is a great thing until it interferes with what they _______ to do. They’re willing to let God be a part of their lives to some extent, but they’re unwilling to follow Jesus when they don’t _______ with Him or they don’t like what He asks of them. They like Jesus until he interferes with their ________ to live as they please. Such people may call themselves Christians, but they’re only fair-weather Christians.

They’ve forgotten the _________ that Jesus paid to redeem them. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19. The Lord Jesus paid His precious ______ to save and redeem you from sin and from hell. What He has done for you and will give to you far outweighs any earthly __________. We all ought to count it an _________ to belong to Jesus.

The Bible says, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and then transferred us to the ________ of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). Jesus took us from sin and darkness and brought us into the kingdom of hope and peace and promise. He ________ us from an evil world and brought us to the love of God. How could we imagine living ungodly lives when we consider all that he has done for us? First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a _________ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a ________: therefore glorify God in your body.”

In the book of Philippians, Paul described himself in chapter one and verse one as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus. To be a bond-servant means that I am a slave, a slave in chains to my Lord. The Lord ______ me, and He has a right to make important decisions that affect my life, decisions that I cannot change, that I cannot overrule. Christianity is not a ______________ where I can vote things in and vote things out; it’s a ____________ . Jesus Christ is the King of kings and
the Lord of lords. He is in charge; He makes the rules, and we must submit our hearts to Him.

So much of what people think of as “Christianity” is __________ from what Jesus meant for it to be. People have filled it full of human _______ and human ___________ so that it hardly resembles His divinely revealed will in the New Testament. For many people, Christianity is like a smorgasbord laid out for them, and they can pick and choose whatever they _______. In their minds you pick the kind of Christianity, the kind of Jesus that you _______. You pick the kind of _______ that you like. You pick what you want to _______, and you can leave the rest alone if you like. Many fail to hear God fully but hear ______ what they want to hear. That kind of religion is not the Christianity of the Bible; it’s the kind of Christianity that people manufacture for themselves. It’s not divine; it’s human!

New Testament Christianity is ______ upon the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! It’s built on divine _______ found in the Scriptures because God never lies. Jesus loves us so much that He willingly _______ for us. His grace and forgiveness are available to _______. He’s the ________ of all mankind, you and me and everybody. His words are the final __________ for our faith, our practices, and our morals. You may think that you have a say so, but God has the last say, and what He says is powerful and authoritative. His promises are open to all who will believe and _______, and He’s coming again to _______ the world in righteousness.

Biblical Christianity is the most exciting, fulfilling, powerful, and loving _______ imaginable. To have Jesus as Lord and Savior, and God as our Father is the best life with the best mission and the best _______. God wants us to spread the good _______ to everyone. In Mark 16:15-16 Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” Jesus is in the saving business, and His _______ is the way that He spreads the gospel to all.

People often _______ Christianity unfairly. Many don’t __________ the Christianity of the New Testament. Talk to some about Christianity and they bring up the crusades or witch trials. But neither the crusades or the Salem witch trials or the inquisition _______ New Testament Christianity. Titles, robes, cathedrals, and icons don’t show ________, New Testament Christianity. Monasteries, and incense, sitting on flagpoles, vows of silence, and forced celibacy don’t reflect the Christianity of the __________. Worship concerts, enterprises, fake healings have nothing to do with the Christianity of the New Testament. If you want to know what _______ Christianity is, look in the Scriptures. The New Testament gives God’s truth. New Testament Christianity is God’s way to ________ this world with love, with purity, with grace, with hope, and with heaven. Read Titus 2:11-14.

Are you one of the redeemed? Have you become a Christian? To become one, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repent of your sins, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church. He’ll rescue you out of the domain of darkness and transfer you into His kingdom. Don’t let even one day go by outside of Christ or true Christianity.
Knowing Christ
John 17:1-5

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

People say, “knowledge is __________.” If you could closely and personally know someone who could give you eternal life, would you want to ________ Him? Eternal life can be yours! If we could live _________ with good health, joy, peace, and love, we’d feel truly blessed! The fact is: while this life on earth is temporary and filled with troubles, there’s an eternal life beyond _________ with joy, peace, and love. You can have this eternal life and much more; it’s _______! It comes by the grace of God and by knowing Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus in a prayer to His Father said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only ________ God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

Eternal life is not merely living forever and ever; eternal life is a __________ of life built upon a relationship with God who gave us our life. We have eternal life because we know—and we have that close relationship with—God! To know God well will bring about _____ and devotion. To let God’s _________ permeate our heart and our life brings about the greatest blessings. God’s life is the best life forever; it’s true life forever; it’s love forever; peace forever, and joy forever! Eternal life can be yours, if you let it.

The inspired apostle Paul said, “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living” (Romans 14:7-9). Eternal life means I __________ to the Lord, and I belong to him now and in the life to come.

Today’s reading comes from the lips of Jesus in The Gospel According to John 17:1-5. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. More than wisdom, more than might, and more than riches, God wants you to __________ and know Him. In God’s mind, that’s the greatest blessing and the greatest ______ of our time. Can you say honestly that you understand and know the God of Heaven and His Son Jesus? The Lord Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). There are different _______ of knowing. We might say we know Tiger Woods, but most of us have never ______ him face to face or shook his hand. We know a little about who he is, but we don’t know him personally. The next level is that of an acquaintance, someone we’ve met but aren’t necessarily _______ to. Then there are colleagues who _______ some part of our lives. A colleague may or may not be a __________. A friend is someone you truly _______ for and are interested in. You want to be around a friend; you
him. Then, there is __________. Families live and work together; they know each other at a very deep level. The Lord Jesus wants us to know Him on that deep family level.

We cannot say that we’re really close to the Lord, however, if we don’t know and _______ His will. Read what the Bible says in 1 John 2:3-6. Many people _______ that they’re close to the Lord but show by their lives that they’re only deceiving themselves. Knowing God is the same as loving Him; and our love for God is perfected by __________ His commandments.

Some think they can know God by getting out into __________, but nature won’t tell you all you need to know about God. One comes to know God through a __________ of God’s Holy Word. The apostle Paul wrote, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom didn’t come to know God, but God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the __________ preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). It takes _______ God’s Word, the message preached and recorded in the Bible, to know God. The Bible helps us to understand who God is and what His _______ is for our lives.

Read what the Bible says in Romans 10:14-17. We come to _______ in God by hearing what He has to say in the Words of Christ.

Scripture speaks of the noble-minded Bereans who were __________ to find out what God says. Acts 17:11 says, “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so.” The Bible helps us distinguish what is and is not _______ about God. Many articles and television programs say things about God that simply are not _______. But you can always trust your _______ to tell you the truth. You should _______ what you hear by the Scriptures. Without the Scriptures we lose spiritually. There’s a significant __________ between people who know the Lord and people who don’t.

People who don’t believe in God or love God don’t realize what they _______ in rejecting God. They become futile in their __________, selfish, callous, and confused. People who _______ God turn to selfishness and sin which ruins their lives. It ought to be obvious to all of us. When fleshly ways _______ our lives, we get in a terrible mess. Read what the Bible says in Galatians 5:19-21. You can’t have sin as the focus of your life and expect to _______ favor and joy with God.

Whether a person truly loves God matters. One who loves will not _______ like one who doesn’t love. When someone doesn’t love and _______ God, he becomes selfish and apathetic. But someone who knows the love of God _______ caring and generous. One lets sin _______ him, while the other finds _______ in Christ. One lets his selfish desires _____ his life, while the other lets Christ be Lord of his life. Our society is morally confused because it has set God _______. People ignore God to their own destruction.
God spoke through the prophet Hosea to Israel who had forgotten Him and had followed the pagan nations. They no longer knew God, and their apathy toward God _______ them. God said, “My people are destroyed for _______ of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). When people reject God, they _____ their children of an opportunity to know the truth about God and about the life that God gives.

A recent survey said that eighty percent of American adults recall attending church regularly as children, but many have wondered away from their spiritual _______. They’ve been _______ by the worldliness of our culture that has pushed God out and brought in an anti-God, anti-church mindset. This mindset _________ children morally and spiritually. We constantly teach our children that moral truth is relative and not to ______ anything as right or wrong. What happens? We have more immorality than we’ve ever had, and we have more confusion than we’ve ever had. In a world without God, people do unspeakable things. Without God reigning in their hearts, you can be sure that sinful, destructive things will control their lives.

**Read what the Bible says in Romans 1:18-26.** Again, the Bible says: “For those who are according to the flesh set their _______ on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is _______, but the mind set on the Spirit is _______ 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 is not even able **to do so**, and those who are in the flesh cannot _______ God” (Romans 8:5-8).

God loves us so much, however, that He wants to ______ our hearts and our minds away from what will destroy us to what will bless us. God wants to bring you back to Himself. That’s why He sent Jesus into the world. Romans 5:6-8 says, “For while we were still ________, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet ________, Christ died for us.” God was willing to go to that extent so that you might have a _______ life on earth and live with Him in joy and in love ____________.

We can know God by __________ to Jesus. The Lord Jesus told his disciples, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him, and have ______ Him” (John 14:7). Again, in John 1:18, Jesus _______ God to us. We know a better way of life _________ of the love and the goodness of Jesus Christ. He is the __________ of what righteousness and goodness is. He teaches us by his life what _______ life is all about.

Jesus can make such a meaningful difference in our lives if we are __________ to let
Him. The Bible says, “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we’ve done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).

God wants something __________ for us, lives full of hope and love, not sin and apathy. He wants to _______ us from the enslavement of sin so we can live righteous and productive lives. God knows how sin _______ our lives and homes and how it _________ us from everything that’s good. Through Jesus Christ, God opens a _______ to life that rises above what the world offers. The Bible says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). The most beautiful, wonderful people I know have ________ in their lives. The Lord Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). I’ve seen what Christ can do in the lives of believers, and I know what He can do in your life.

If you let Him, Christ can _______________ your life here on earth and give you eternal life with Him in heaven. When I think of heaven, I think of Ephesians 2:4-7. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us ________ together with Christ (by grace you’ve been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

God wants to ___________ the kindness of His grace and love on you forever. He starts that process on this earth by giving us the ________, a message of good news about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died for your sins, so that you might be ____________; and God raised Jesus up from the dead, so that you might be justified and have hope of eternal life. You can have this life when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus.

“Without faith,” the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, “it’s impossible to __________ God.” Out of this faith and love for God, you must turn away from sin in ____________ and turn to the Lord. When you __________ the name of Jesus as your Lord and Christ, you are ready to be __________—that is immersed in water—for the forgiveness of your sins. God will forgive your sins; add you to the __________, His family; and call you His son or daughter. It’ll be the beginning of a new life that can last ____________. I hope you’ll be baptized this very day.
You Can Be Sure
1 Peter 1:22-25

While this world is filled with uncertainties and disappointments, there are some things about which you can be _______. There are absolutes that never _______. We go to the Bible because we know the Bible has _______ itself true time after time.

I get to travel throughout the United States and usually fly out from the Oklahoma City airport. I sometimes have to fly when the ______ are filled with dark clouds and rain. You can easily get wet and cold. Going through the airport lines and waiting to board the airplane can be stressful. But there’s an experience in an airplane that never gets _______ to me. It reminds me of something that I need to know. No matter how dark, how wet, how cold, or how dreary a day may be, the sun still _______ above the clouds. The clouds may temporarily __________ out the sun, but the sun is still shining. Life may seem dark and dreary on earth, but the brightness of the sun hasn’t diminished one bit. Truth may seem _______ for a time by our culture, but it’s not lost or any less true. The Bible urges us to “Buy truth, and do not sell it. Get wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). Buying the truth means taking the time to _______ it out in the Word of God. God wants us to _______ the truth and to _______ it out in our lives. Today, I want us to explore some _______ truths that are unchangeable and undeniable. They’re truths about which you can be _______.

Our reading today comes from Peter’s first letter, chapter 1, verses 22 to 25.

Some things are disposable, some last for years, some last a lifetime, and some last forever. Many people live for the _______ and lose sight of what lasts forever. We’re wise when we _______ what is eternal.

Thousands of years ago, God told Noah, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not _______” (Genesis 8:22). What God told Noah has remained _______ to this day after thousands of years: the regular passing of day and night and the seasons of the year have not changed. The whole world _______ on these reliable laws. The earth rotates every twenty-four hours. It takes the Moon 27.32 days to go around the Earth once. It takes the Earth 365 and ¼ days to circle the sun. How come there’s been no change in all these years? It’s because God regulates it and God keeps His _______. He is the power behind it. You can be sure.

The Bible praises Moses for his _______ in choosing what is lasting. Read Hebrews 11:24-26. Moses realized that there’s something _______ than being Pharaoh’s grandson. In spite of all the riches, power, and advantages of being Pharaoh’s grandson, Moses _______ to live like an Israelite. In those days, God’s people of Israel were enslaved to
and treated horribly. But Moses chose the God of Israel over the gods of Egypt because the God of Israel was and still is the ________ God.

We all live between two worlds, one filled with ___________ things and one with ___________. We must understand that what we _______ physically in this world is not all that exists. Read what the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

What are some of these eternal, absolute truths? What is eternally sure and certain? There are at least five things more certain than the shining sun. You can count on them as more certain than a twenty-four hour day. They are __________ truths that are eternal, and they will last longer than the __________. You can be sure of them. They are absolutes.

First, you can be sure that ________ exists and He is eternal. The Bible says, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal ________ and divine _________, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). The existence of the sun, moon, and stars ________ clearly of the eternal powers and the divine nature of God. Psalm 19:1 says, “The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

Our own physical bodies bear witness that a very powerful and intelligent Being _________ us. The more you know about how complex and intricate your body is, the more you’ll realize that we could never be the _______ of an accident or evolution. We are designed physically and morally by God. It’s clear that God designed us to live in this _________. If this world was different or we were different, we could never have survived. Without an intelligent Designer and a moral Designer, this world wouldn’t make sense. You can be sure there is a God.

Moses proclaimed, “LORD, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psalm 90:1-2).

Second, you can be sure that Jesus is the Divine Son of God. The Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was _______ God, and the Word _______ God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things were made ___________ him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). In verse 14 of this same chapter, John 1, the Bible says, “And the Word became flesh, and _________ among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus has always been Divine. He became flesh and dwelled among us.

The Scriptures go on to say about Jesus, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not _______ the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:35-36). God has made Jesus Lord and has given everything into His hands. He has all ___________ in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). He is Lord of all and has authority over all flesh (John 17:2).

Moses predicted that Jesus would come and be Lord of all. Acts 3:22-24 quotes Moses saying, “The Lord God will raise up for you a ___________ like me from your brothers. You
shall ________ to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.” Because Jesus is the Lord and is the Son of God, the most important thing that you can do is listen and ________ Him.

Third, you can be sure that God’s ________ is true and it’s eternal. Psalm 119:89 proclaims, “Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed (or settled) in the heavens.” God’s Word doesn’t ________ with the generations; it remains the same. It was true when it was written and it’s _______ true today. When Jesus told the devil, “It is written,” in Luke 4, He was making it ________ that what God had Moses write some 1200-1500 years before was still true and authoritative. One might translate the phrase, “it is written” as “it _________ written.” God wrote it, and nothing can ________ its authority. It stands because God meant for it to stand. You can deny it, avoid it, hide it, or debate it; you can even get everyone to agree with you against the Word; but at the end of the day God’s ________ Word stands as the spiritual and moral authority in our lives. God’s Word stands because God stands! God’s Word is the inspired Word, the authoritative Word, and it’s the last Word. The Lord Jesus promised in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” God’s book, God’s only book, the Bible, will ________ when everything else is gone.

**Read 1 Peter 1:23-25.**

The Lord Jesus said, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a ________; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” (John 12: 48). We will be judged by every word the Lord Jesus speaks. You can’t ________ the Words of Jesus forever. They’ll be brought forward as the ________ of what is right and true and moral. You’ll be judged by them, not by opinion polls or the ideas of the day. You can be sure God’s Word will be present on the last day, the Day of Judgment.

Fourth, you can be sure of the ________ of God for His people. God’s love is undeserved; it’s intentional; and it’s sacrificial. God loves us even when we don’t ________ to be loved, and His grace is greater than our sins. God’s love is intentional. Jesus laid down His ______ on His own initiative. God isn’t obligated to us; we’re obligated to Him. He intentionally chose to love and bless us. God’s love is _________. He so loved us that He was willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son Jesus, and Jesus bore our sins in his body; it was personal, so that we might _____ to sin and ______ to righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The love of God is far greater than I can understand or even describe. There’s never been a moment when God has not loved His people. **Read what Romans 8:35-39 asks.**

Fifth, you can be sure that Jesus is ________ ________. The Bible tells us in Acts 1:10-11 that Jesus ascended to heaven. While the disciples were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand ________ into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the
as you saw him go into heaven.” They made it clear: Jesus is coming a second time; and one day we will meet Him in the ______ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

When Jesus comes, He will raise ______ the dead and will judge mankind. The Lord Jesus said, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done ______ to the resurrection of life, and those who have done ______ to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).

Each one of us must one day give an __________ to Jesus Christ, for the lives that we’ve led. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his ______ done in the body, according to what he’s done, whether good or bad.” Those who have rejected Jesus and lived ungodly lives have reason to ______ His coming, but those who have believed in Him and obeyed Him can look forward to His coming with ______ and __________.

God keeps His ___________. The Lord Jesus said, “Let not your ______ be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to __________ a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I’ll come again and I’ll take you to myself, that where I am there you may be also” (John 14:1-3). We can put our trust in God; we can put our trust in His Word; it means living lives that are _______ of His promises, it means living for Him and doing His will. Would you do that? Truth is still true and authoritative regardless of what people think or say. You can try to hide it, ignore it, deny it, rationalize it away, forget it, hate it, or argue against it; but the Truth remains _______ and untouched. It stands the ______ of time and circumstance because God spoke it.

So the Bible urges in Proverbs 23:23, “Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” Don’t settle for anything ______ than the truth. Don’t be deceived by a half-truth or by a counterfeit. God gave us the truth in Christ and the Bible, but we have to _____ it up in our hearts; we have to buy it. We have to then use the truth to ______ between what is from God and what is not. We have to ______ out the truth to have confidence in what we believe and practice.

We must ______ and ______ the truth if we hope to have eternal life. We must __________ Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith, we can’t ______ God. The truth means that we’re ______ about our sins. We know they’re wrong and we must forsake our sins in ___________. The truth means that we’ll ______ Christ before others and be _______ for the remission of our sins. Jesus taught baptism is necessary to salvation in Mark 16:16 and John 3:5, and so we immerse penitent believers in water so that they might have their sins washed away and be united with Christ. Why not find reassurance by placing your faith in Christ and obeying His teaching. Nothing, nothing, nothing will bless your life more than knowing that you’re right with God!