



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
June 2016**

June 5, 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.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 3:1-7.

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!

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.

Our reading today in the New Testament comes from the book of Acts 26:24-29.

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 wandered 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

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

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!