



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
January 2017**

God's Word Psalm 1

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

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

I was blessed eight years ago to come to In Search of the Lord's Way. The Lord permitted me to be a part of this great _____ to America and many other nations. We all miss brother Mack Lyon and are deeply grateful for what he has done. We're also deeply grateful for all the churches and individual Christians who _____ for us and are behind this ministry. We're praying that God will give us many more years to serve, and _____ the gospel of Christ to the nation and the world. As we begin this New Year, please keep us in your prayers.

I challenge you to _____ the entire Bible during 2017. Reading God's Word and hearing His wisdom and truth is the most valuable way to use your _____. First Peter 2:1-3 says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." I hope that you hunger and thirst for God's Word. Nothing else will bless you more than knowing and practicing God's will!

Our reading today is from Psalm 1.

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

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

Jesus underscored the truthfulness of the book of Genesis when He referred to the "beginning" of creation as the time when a man and a woman were created and joined together by God in _____. **Read what Jesus said in Mark 10:6-9.** By quoting from the creation account the Lord Jesus acknowledged its _____. By using the words, "What God has joined together..." He recognized God to be the _____ of these Genesis writings.

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

The apostle Peter calls the Word of God an imperishable _____. **Read 1 Peter 1:22-25.** Yes, the Word of God, found in the Bible, is here to stay and it will _____ till the end of time.

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

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

Because the Word of God is inspired and true, we can have _____. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The Word of God

tells us where we came from, why we're here, where we're going when we die, and what the promises of God are! They give us true _____ and they give us hope that there's something better than this sinful and dark world that we live in today. Sometimes we think we face problems that no one has ever _____ before, but there's usually a circumstance in the Scriptures much like our own. God helped the _____ of old, and He can help and He will help us, too! God's character hasn't changed. He shows compassion on those who _____ and _____ Him. He'll help us through every struggle and every heartache.

Read the promise of 1 Peter 5:8-10.

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

God gave us His Word to _____ us. The apostle Paul said, "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 1:16). James 1:21 says, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in _____ receive that word (that is, the word that's in the Bible) that's implanted, which is able to save your _____." When Peter came to Cornelius' house, he brought "_____ " by which Cornelius and his household were saved (Acts 11:13). Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Second Corinthians 5:19 says the gospel is the "word of reconciliation." Philippians 2:16 calls it the "word of _____." The Lord Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).

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

These folks were _____ of Christ's death on the cross. I'm sure they didn't at first want to hear about their _____ against God. They probably didn't want to _____ that they had crucified the Lord and the Christ who was the Son of God; they needed to _____ the truth. The Word reproves them, and reproves us and it rebukes us, not because the Word of God is cranky or mean-spirited. The Scriptures speak out against sin but they don't _____ us hopeless and unredeemable. It informs us in order to _____ us from evil and to deliver us from sin. It helps us see where we're going; and when we're going in the _____ way, it

straightens us out so we can go in the right way, in a direction that will help us save our souls.

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

Beyond all this, the Scriptures help us to _____ ourselves spiritually. There are times that we need to see ourselves so we can make the _____ necessary to please God. **Read James 1:22-25.** Don't just listen to God's Word, do it!

Listening and obeying is the _____ of our relationship with God. The apostle John said, "By this we know that we have come to know Him (that is, have a relationship with Him), if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I've come to know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a _____, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the _____ of God has truly been perfected" (1 John 2:3-4). When you listen and obey, you show true and perfect love for God. Do you love God?

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

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

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

January 8, 2017

Not Too Hard Luke 1:1-4

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

The Bible is the best-selling book of _____ time and it comes today in hundreds of languages. Some think the Bible is too _____ to understand. Is it really? God's way is always a _____. God loves us and He gave us His will in _____ form in the Bible so that every age and every nation could know the _____ and be saved. God wants every person to come to faith and to _____ His will.

Perhaps you've heard people say, "The Bible is not _____ to be understood." Or, "The Bible says different things to different people." Or, "What is important is not so much what the Bible says but what the Bible says to _____." I've heard people claim, "The New Testament addressed the _____ of the first century and really doesn't speak to us at all." Others dismiss God's Word by saying, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're _____ and love Jesus." Then there's the skeptic who says, "You can make the Bible say anything you _____ it to." Some say, "You can just take a passage of Scripture and _____ it to a group of people and there'll be as many interpretations of that passage as there are people in the room."

These charges against the Bible lose sight of God's _____ in giving us His Word. They seem to forget about God's incredible desire to have a relationship with us that lasts for an _____. That relationship means that we can _____ Him and His will. The Lord Jesus promised us, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you _____" (John 8:31-32).

Today's reading is from The Gospel According to Luke 1:1-4.

Is the Bible meant to be understood? The answer is yes, but let's see what the Bible says for _____. Psalm 19:8 says, "The precepts of the LORD are _____, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is _____, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 119:18 says, "Open my eyes, that I may _____ wonderful things from Your law." Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my _____." Verse 125 says, "I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies." Verse 130 says, "The unfolding of Your words gives _____; It gives understanding to the simple." Proverbs 6:23 says, "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for _____ are the way of life."

When people say that the Bible is not meant to be understood, I wonder how they came to that conclusion. Did they get it from the Bible or from _____? Surprisingly, some churches don't want you to read your Bible. These churches worry that if you read your Bible, you'll find

that what the Bible teaches is _____ from what they teach and practice. The Bible has God's _____ attached to it, and it challenges those who vary from it.

The apostle Paul _____ in Scripture that there were people who were misusing and tampering with God's Word. He said, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to _____ cunning or to tamper with (that is, twist) God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has _____ the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2-4).

The devil will do anything to keep people from understanding the _____ of God's Word. He'd love to blind people to the _____ so they wouldn't know the truth. If he can tamper with; that is, twist the Word so that you begin to _____ something that is only partially true, he'll do it. He realizes that his message must _____ true or you won't buy into it. If he tells a lie that sounds true, he can lead people astray. If he can tamper with the Word to make his lie really appealing, he will. But, when people _____ the lie rather than listen to God, they are deceived with a counterfeit religion. The devil has supplied plenty of counterfeits today.

We wouldn't know what the truth is and what error is if it weren't for that permanent _____ of truth. The Bible provides that standard of truth for _____ time. God's Word is settled in heaven and does not _____. It's this stability, this solid foundation, that allows Christians to remain _____ to God. God was wise to give to mankind His _____ in written form in the Bible because by giving us the Word, the written Word, we can know the truth which makes us free. The difference between Christ's true disciples and others is that true disciples _____ in the Word of God, and the others _____ away from it.

This is why we must stay with God's Word. God expected ancient Israelite parents to _____ their children the Law of God. God was concerned that a generation might arise that didn't _____ His commandments. **Read what Moses commanded them in Deuteronomy 31:10-13.**

If the Bible were so hard to understand, God wouldn't have commanded all Israel to do this every seven years. Truly we can understand the Bible. The Bible says, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are _____ belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). God gave us His Word to _____ us.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-14. God not only wants us to understand it, He also expects us to _____ and _____ it.

The Word of God went out to all Israel. There were all kinds of people _____. They were the smart; they were the not so smart, the conservatives, the liberals, the educated, the young, and the old. Those who didn't know God's Law were expected to _____ the Law and to obey it. My friend, you are not an exception. God wants you to know His will. First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to

be _____ and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” God doesn’t communicate in riddles, nor does He hold back some secret message only for the select few. God wants everyone to be _____ to know the truth, to be saved, and to live in heaven with Him forever. Jesus, the Bible says in Hebrews 2:9, tasted death for _____ person. Why then would God give us a Bible with the words of life, but give it in such a way that we couldn’t understand it?

When God inspired Luke to _____ a gospel account, he chose this Greek Gentile, Theophilus, a Roman authority, to write to about Jesus. Theophilus had only heard bits and pieces about Jesus. **Read again the text in Luke 1:1-4.** Theophilus apparently wanted to know the truth, and Luke wrote to him with _____ (that is, exact knowledge) the things concerning Jesus Christ. The Bible was written to _____ to us true knowledge, exact knowledge, and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Read what the apostle John said in John 20:30-31. God gave us this book, the Bible, so that we might _____ in Jesus Christ and by believing be saved and have life in His name. I can’t imagine why, if this is the _____ of the Bible, that God would write something that no one can understand. The fact is, we can understand what we _____ to know to be saved, and go to heaven and live with God forever!

Read what the Bible says in Acts 17:2-4. The Scripture is not some strange _____, but a book that gives life and tells the marvelous story of Jesus Christ.

From this inspired book, we learn the most wonderful _____ of love and sacrifice. To some it may be meaningless, but to us it’s the most meaningful story in the entire _____. I’m so thankful that God chose men and inspired them to _____ that story down in the first century, and He did it so that we could hear and could _____ it as it really happened. The New Testament gives us eyewitness accounts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a story of _____ that saves our souls. There simply is no better, no more important, no more meaningful story in the entire world, than the story of Jesus.

The gospel is God’s _____ unto salvation to everyone who believes it, according to Romans 1:16. God knew that He had to _____ Himself to mankind if they were to know and believe in Him and find salvation. We can know some things through observing the universe, but we cannot know the _____ story apart from the Word of God. The Bible says, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased that through the foolishness of the message _____ He could save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). If we want to know the precious _____ about God, we must go to His Word. Our task is to hear it, to believe it, to love it, to obey it, and to share it with others. Oh, thank God for the Bible!

The apostle Paul said, “For we write _____ else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand it until the end” (2 Corinthians 1:13). Paul wrote no other thing but what the Corinthians could understand, and _____ too can understand the Bible. In fact, we must understand the Word of God and _____ it. Why? Because one day we’ll be

_____ by the written Word of God. The Lord Jesus said: “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the _____ that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). You and I will be judged one day by the words that are written in this book. We’ll stand before God and we’ll give an _____ for our lives, and the standard will be these written words.

The Lord Jesus said: “Not everyone who _____ to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, the one who _____ the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matthew 7:21). For that _____, we must know what the will of God is. We mustn’t let anything keep us from our _____ to the Lord. The purest _____ of God’s will is found in the New Testament. So don’t settle for anything _____ than the Scriptures. They will lead you to an exact knowledge of the Lord’s will, but other things will lead you _____. The Scriptures will give you the unfailing, truth that leads to _____ life. That’s what we need. What kind of God says, “I’m going to judge you by the things _____ in the books?” Revelation 20:11-15 teaches us that we’re going to come before the great white _____, and that the books will be opened, and we will be judged according to the things written in the books, and according to the things that we’ve _____, whether good or bad. Jesus said in John 12:48 that we’re going to be judged by His _____. Why would He give us this book, and tell us we’re going to be judged by these words, but give us a book that is a riddle that people _____ understand? Wouldn’t such a God be a _____? But our God isn’t like that. He gives us a book that we can understand. Our God loves us and wants all men to be _____ and to _____ the truth. Shouldn’t we _____ to know His will? If our knowing and doing the will of God is the difference between eternal life and death, can we afford to _____ what He says?

The apostle Paul said, “Do your best to _____ yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). God wants us to _____ the Bible so that we will know the truth and not be ashamed on the Day of Judgment because we didn’t follow the teaching of the Bible. Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy truth, and do not _____ it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding.”

I hope you’ll follow those teachings and _____ to Christ. To do that _____ the words of Christ and _____ them. Repent of your sins and _____ the name of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Repentance means that you _____ your heart, that you leave sin, that you turn to the ways of God. With love and faith, be _____ for the forgiveness of your _____ as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 teach. Romans 6:3 says that when we’re baptized into Christ, we’re baptized into His _____. That’s when we come into contact with the _____ of Christ that cleanses us. Won’t you be baptized, my friend? Won’t you do it today?

January 15, 2017

Prepare Your Heart Psalm 78:5-8

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

What is in your _____? Do you have a heart prepared to _____ what God has to say? Do you have a heart prepared to _____ God? Paul said, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a _____ heart and a _____ conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). That's our goal, too! We want to have that pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith. We fervently want that for each of you as well. We want everyone to _____ and to _____ the Lord. That's why we go to the Lord Jesus to _____ "the words of eternal life" in Scripture. He is our hope and our delight! He is our Savior, and we need Him.

The Scriptures speak about the heart and how it is the _____ of our very being. The heart is where we think, where we feel, where we choose, where we plan, and where we determine what we will or we won't do. The Lord Jesus said, "for where your _____ is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). Our hearts, more than anything else, _____ our character and our disposition. The heart determines whether we _____ and to what extent we'll make a commitment. Proverbs 4:23 warns, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of _____."

If we're not careful, our hearts can _____ us. We can imagine something is true because we _____ it to be true. God said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Don't imagine that God doesn't _____ about our ways and our deeds. We can come to the Lord "just as we are," but we cannot _____ that way. God expects our hearts to change, to leave the things that oppose His will, and to grow to be people who delight in pleasing Him. What is in your heart?

Our reading today comes from Psalm 78:5-8.

If we are to _____ our hearts to have a relationship with God, we must do four things. First, we must put our _____ in God. Proverbs 3:5-7 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not _____ on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your _____ straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from _____." It's easy to think that we live in the 21st century and know more than our ancient God. Of course, God is not like us. He's much _____ about life; He's seen men and women fall into the immoral traps that can _____ them. He can see the _____ that lies hidden to us. That's why we trust Him and hold to His hand.

Second, we must not forget the _____ of God. James 1:17 says, "Every good thing given

and every perfect _____ is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” Every _____ that we enjoy comes from our Father in heaven. The Lord Jesus said, “your Father knows what you _____ before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:8). Our food, clothing, housing, and all of our spiritual blessings – _____ of them come from Him. So, we remember the Lord Jesus dying on the cross, suffering for the forgiveness of our _____. We remember His _____ to care for us, to comfort us, to strengthen us, and to never forsake us. We’re blessed to have a Father who _____ our every prayer. We cannot forget what He has done for us.

Third, we must _____ His commandments. Love and gratitude lead us to _____ and to observe what He’s taught us, His commandments. Some people think of obedience as slavery, or legalism, or a thoughtless ritual. Actually, obedience from the heart is none of these things. Jesus willingly and lovingly endured the _____, taking the form of a servant. Obedience humbles us! But it humbles us for the _____. If we wish to be great in God’s eyes, we must learn to _____ as a servant. The Lord Jesus said, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to _____, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Though He despised the shame of the cross, He endured it for the _____ that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

Fourth, we must not allow ourselves to _____ stubborn and rebellious. Our deceitful hearts can lead us to _____ that we can challenge God, as if we knew more or we knew better than He does. Selfishness and pride can lead to a _____ heart and a loss of faith. It’s folly to think we can do _____ without God than with God. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools _____ wisdom and instruction.” Again Proverbs 14:15 says, “The naive believes everything, But the _____ man considers his steps.” Once more Proverbs 22:3 says, “The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naive they just go on, and they’re _____ for it.” Don’t imagine that you can _____ sin, that you can _____ against God, and then go unpunished. God sees and God knows!

Instead, _____ your heart to be faithful, loving, and obedient. Build up your _____ in God and stop doubting! You’re not an accident; God _____ you! To believe that you just happened to exist is absurd. The theory of evolution is an unproven _____. Every cell in your body _____ the wisdom and the intelligence of God. Talk to any microbiologist about the complexity and the incredible resourcefulness of the human _____ and know that David was right! He said, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give _____ to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Prepare your heart, and do it by repentance. Repentance is a change of _____ that leads to a change in _____. We have to _____ whether we will live godly lives or ungodly lives. A godly person is one who takes God and His Word seriously. He turns away from sin and turns to righteousness because he _____ the Lord. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God

and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and _____ your hearts, you double-minded.” A godly person _____ his old sinful ways and he _____ in doing what is right. God said, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good” (Isaiah 1:16-17).

You prepare your heart by having the _____ of God. Nothing will cause you to love God more than gratitude. You can't remember the suffering that Jesus _____ on the cross, shedding His blood, and not be _____ that He was willing to sacrifice Himself. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This love for Jesus prepares us for the cross that we must bear and the _____ we must make. We do so joyfully, knowing that our love and sacrifices _____ Him.

We don't want a hard heart; we don't want a rocky heart, or a heart choked with worries and pleasures. We want a good and honest heart. We want the _____ of God's Word to be planted in our hearts, and we want it to bear _____. **Read what Jesus explains in Luke 8:11-15.**

In this parable, the seed is the _____, and the different kinds of soil describe how people _____ the gospel. Some have hardened hearts that never let the seed in to germinate. The devil comes along and _____ the seed, so the person never believes or is saved. Some hearts are like the rocky soil that doesn't allow the _____ to go deep enough to keep the plant alive. These hearts _____ the Lord when times get rough. The third kind of heart is like a plant in the middle of a bunch of weeds that _____ out the water and nutrients. They cannot produce _____ because they have their hearts set on worries, and riches, and pleasures. They have no _____ for God in their hearts.

But an honest and good heart is _____ from the others. It takes in God's Word _____ and holds it fast. It doesn't let the rocks or the weeds keep it from growing and producing the fruit intended. That heart glorifies Jesus and honors the Father. It lovingly _____ the Lord and blesses others. A good heart knows how to love, how to be kind, how to forgive, how to help, and how to encourage. A good heart has hope, joy, patience, and inner peace.

A person who has a good heart given to the Lord is indeed _____. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount describes three important characteristics of the blessed person that is associated with the heart. First, He said, “Blessed are the _____ in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The idea of being “poor in spirit” means that I am destitute spiritually on my _____. I know that I need the Lord; I cannot _____ myself by my own strength. The blessed man knows that apart from Christ he can do _____ (John 15:5).

Second, the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are those who _____ and _____ for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). The prepared heart knows that it must get right and stay right with God. We must have the _____ of Jesus to cleanse us from sin; we don't want to _____ the Lord without hope. We desperately hunger and thirst for righteousness; and we must have it to _____.

Third, the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the _____ in heart, for they shall see God”

(Matthew 5:8). The pure in heart are not double-minded; they are _____ from guilt and sin. They've made the decision to "flee from youthful _____ and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). They hunger for purity and they _____ it. They will do their best to be pure in heart and mind and body. Do you have a heart that is poor in spirit, that hungers for righteousness and is pure?

A person with a prepared heart is not _____ to sacrifice. When it came time to build the _____, the Lord God told Moses, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise a contribution" (Exodus 25:2). They brought their _____ offerings. In fact, they brought much _____ than was needed to build the tabernacle and were told to stop bringing any more.

The selfless Macedonians gave to the needy saints in Jerusalem, and while in a great ordeal of affliction and in deep poverty, they did it; and they did it with _____! Paul said they gave beyond their ability and begged for the _____ of participating in support of the saints. He explained, "they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:5). My friend, have you given yourself to the Lord?

A prepared heart gives of _____ generously and cheerfully. Paul taught, "Now this I say, that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has _____ in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). This is true of our _____; it's true of our _____; and our _____. Give of yourself to God. First John 4:19 says, "We love, because He _____ loved us."

Why does this matter? How we _____ of ourselves to God affects how God will _____ us in the judgment. We should all _____ God's favor and love. **Read David's advice in 1 Chronicles 28:9.** Are you seeking the Lord?

Read what God said in Ezekiel 18:30-32. Repentance turns the heart away from the ways of sin to the ways of God. Repentance gives us a new heart, new values, and new priorities.

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day to be _____ for what we have done, good or bad. God doesn't want to condemn us; He wants to _____ us. "The Lord is not slow about His _____, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Love, faith, and repentance _____ our hearts for obedience. When we obey from the heart, we leave an old way of life and begin a new one. "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, you become the slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

We _____ when we're baptized into Christ. In baptism, God _____ us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to Romans 6:3-7 and Colossians 2:12-13. It's the _____ of Christ that washes away our sins when we're baptized into His death. So, prepare your heart to obey the Lord. Don't wait another day to obey Him.

The Sanctity of Life Psalm 139:13-16

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

Life is the _____ of God; and because God gives it, life is precious! Today, we're going to explore the sanctity of life! James 1:17 says that God is the _____ of every good and perfect thing. I'm grateful for the written Word that _____ us about all that God has done for us. His Word teaches us, protects us from evil, and guides us to eternal life. Oh, what a blessing!

In 1970, a Texas woman became pregnant and decided to _____ the antiabortion legislation of her state. Using the pseudonym Jane Roe, she took Henry Wade, the Dallas District Attorney, to court. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court in January, 1973, and is now known as Roe vs. Wade. The Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 that the Texas law banning abortion was unconstitutional. Its judgment inhibited all regulation of abortion during the first three months of pregnancy; and during the second and third trimesters, it regulated it only in relation to the mother's physical or mental health. This ruling implicitly permitted abortion on _____ at every stage of pregnancy. In 2014, the latest year for these statistics, 954,000 babies were aborted. That's 2,614 per day, 109 per hour, and three since I began speaking.

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

Our reading today is from a Psalm of David, Psalm 139:13-16.

In the beginning, God made man in His own _____ and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. **Read what God said in Genesis 1:26-27.** We should note that of all His _____ God regarded only man as made in His own image.

For this reason God said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:6). God has a very high _____ of life and _____ the taking of human life because of our relationship to God. Psalm 8 reminds us that God is "mindful of man." Every person, male or female, young or old, handicapped or whole, mentally challenged or not, diseased or not, has a _____ life. In fact, Acts 17:28 says "we are His _____." Luke 3:38 calls Adam the "_____ of God." Hebrews 12:9 helps us to understand our relationship with God. It says, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be _____ to the Father of spirits, and live?" Yes, God is our heavenly Father.

The Scriptures also record how God _____ and _____ for little children. Abortion

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

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

Jesus loved little children and _____ them. **Read what the Bible says in Luke 18:15-16.** Jesus spoke of these little ones as persons belonging to the _____ of God. The Greek New Testament uses the word "brephos" to describe these little children. It's significant that the New Testament uses the same word to describe an _____ child as is used to describe a little child, the word "brephos." This word is used to speak of John the Baptist who _____ in his mother's womb in Luke 1:41 and also verse 44. This word "brephos" is used to speak of Jesus as a _____ baby in Luke 2:12, also in verse 16. We speak of a woman having a baby before birth and a baby after birth. The Scriptures use the same words in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to describe the unborn and a baby who has been born.

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

David described God's work in the womb in Psalm 139:13-16 (our text). We should never think that God somehow doesn't _____ what the unborn are or what they are to become.

To take a life is to _____ a person of it's existence on earth; abortion ends the life that already is and robs the life that is to be. When people _____ for others who lives and who dies, they presume the place of God. Women make most abortion decisions during a very _____ time in their lives, but no one knows what the future will hold. Who knows what some child will become? We must not presume that we know. The Scriptures speak of some ill-timed pregnancies. For

instance, both Sarah and Elizabeth were too _____ to have children without God's help. If they had not had children, where would Isaac and John the Baptist be? If Jesse and his wife had thought seven sons were enough, there would have been no David. If Deborah or Esther's parents had wanted boys and aborted them because they were girls, where would Israel be?

There have been 58 million, 586 thousand, 256 abortions since 1973! Were all those aborted babies _____ of life? Were there no scholars, no musicians, no scientists, no authors, no preachers, no leaders, and no doctors among them? Where would _____ be if your parents had some reason to abort you?

Abortion interferes with God's _____ in the making of a person. A fetus in a woman's body is not just tissue, not mere tissue, or only the product of conception. Nobody _____ the loss of tonsils, or an appendix, or a gall bladder. We may not like the pain or the bills from those surgeries, but we don't need comfort and we don't grieve over the loss of tonsils. But, when a woman has a miscarriage, we mourn for her _____ and we mourn for the unborn child. More than one in my own family has lost a child due to a miscarriage or to a death shortly after birth. If this loss isn't a person, why would we mourn?

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

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

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

Many women think aborting a baby will be the _____ to their problems, only to realize that abortion opens up a whole new stack of issues and problems. Having an abortion can _____ a person for life. One lady wrote in 1994, "Women undergoing abortion have no idea what _____ they will encounter after the abortion, and daily for the rest of their lives, and when it suddenly dawns on them that they chose to extinguish a _____ life. Twenty-three

years ago, as a frightened young girl, alone, seeing no way out; I opted for a legal abortion that left me infertile to suffer an eternal hell on earth, constantly aching for a child of my own to nurture. Taking the life of an unborn child eats away at your _____ continually, like a ravenous cancer, causing one to pray for a quick demise. You will always _____ if the fetus was male or female, what he or she would look like. Yearly, you will mournfully recall the day your baby was taken from your body. If only one had mentioned adoption to me as a viable alternative to a temporary condition, my child would be alive today, perhaps making a difference in someone's life."

According to a study published in 2011 by Britain's Royal College of Psychiatrists, women who have abortions are 81 percent more likely to experience subsequent mental health problems. The greatest increases were seen in relation to suicidal behaviors and substance abuse. Their results came from 22 studies of nearly 900,000 women from six countries over a twelve-year period. They found that women who delivered an unplanned pregnancy were significantly less likely to have mental health problems than similar women who aborted unplanned pregnancies. Women with a history of abortion were 55 percent more likely to have mental health problems than women who gave birth.

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

As a minister, I've counseled women who gave in to the _____ to abort their child as a quick solution to a difficult circumstance. Once they realize what they have done, some think that they cannot find _____. Yes, what you did was _____. You can't _____ the past, but there is still hope. Christ sacrificed His life on the cross for you to give us _____. His blood is powerful enough to cleanse the worst of sins. If Jesus could _____ that worst of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, He can forgive you.

Read what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15-16. Oh, God's grace is greater than our _____. His blood can wash us clean! We can't change the past, but God can forgive us and no longer hold us accountable for our sins.

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