



IN
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*Program
Study Guides*

**For
February 2017**

At Your Word

Luke 5:1-6

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

Does God _____ seriously? Does He _____ what He says? We're going to compare God's way with _____ reasoning. The Lord Jesus promised His disciples, "If you continue in My _____, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you _____" (John 8:31-32). We want the truth; we don't want to be deceived by speculation or human tradition. We want the truth that makes us free, and the Lord Jesus is the trusted _____. He never misleads with half-truths or false promises. He doesn't play games or _____ the rules. You can _____ Him to speak straight and to lead you to righteousness.

The great question of life is not whether God created the world in six days, or whether Jesus really lived, or whether there is life after death. The great question of life is whether we will _____ when God speaks. Will we _____ Him or will we trust our own judgment? If we listen to God, He will _____ the other questions for us. If we're unwilling to listen to God, we'll live in uncertainty, blindly searching for a clear conscience and eternal life and yet missing the _____. Wouldn't it be sad to _____ your opportunity to know the truth? Don't let that opportunity slip away. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not _____ it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding."

When it comes to eternal life, ignorance is not _____. To ignore the way of the Lord is to _____ His grace, His favor, and His blessing. To ignore the way of the Lord is to abandon _____ for heaven and living with God eternally. Don't miss the blessing of God; open your heart and your ears to hear God's _____.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to Luke 5:1-6.

This event in the _____ of Jesus took place on the Lake of Gennesaret, sometimes known as the Sea of Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Chinneroth. Two empty _____ were standing by the shore. The owners had returned from a night of _____; they had caught nothing and were washing their nets. Jesus entered one of the boats, and Simon pushed the boat off the land a little. Jesus sat down and began teaching, using the boat for his _____.

After teaching, Jesus said, "Put out into the _____ and let down your nets for a catch." You can imagine how they must have felt after a long night's work with _____ to show for it. Simon Peter answered, "Master, we _____ all night and took nothing! But at your _____ I will let down the nets." Even though they didn't feel like it, even though Jesus wasn't a professional fisherman like they were, and even though they were ready to quit, they _____ what Jesus said. They put out their nets and they enclosed a great number of fish, to the point that their nets were breaking and they needed _____ to draw in the fish. Both boats

were so full of fish that they began to _____. Astonished, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a _____ man, O Lord" (verse 8).

Peter, by trusting in his own experience and judgment, listened to Jesus with _____ and questions. He had to _____ for himself what God could do. When Jesus' Words proved _____ beyond any expectations, Simon Peter recognized his _____ in failing to trust the Lord. Luke, guided by the Holy Spirit, recorded this true story for our learning and our _____. We would do well to _____ from this story.

First, we need to know that God's instructions do not arise from _____ philosophy or reason. The time for fishing had passed. To continue casting their nets now that it was sunny was _____ to their human standpoint. I'm sure that they could have made some informed arguments _____ following the Lord's instructions. This is not the first time the Lord commanded something that _____ human reason.

Do you recall the Lord's admonition through Moses that the children of Israel sprinkle _____ on their doorposts to avoid the tenth plague? From a human viewpoint, one may _____ what one has to do with the other. Do you recall Moses stretching out his _____ over the waters to bring about the parting of the Red Sea? Do you recall God command to Moses to _____ the rock to bring about water? Do you recall God's telling Moses to put a bronze _____ on a pole, which could cure everyone who looked on it? Human philosophy would never connect the command with the _____. Do you recall Joshua and Israel marching around Jericho for seven days in order to see the walls of Jericho _____? Surely, this was not a military _____ that humans would design! Do you recall Naaman, the leper, dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River to _____ his leprosy? When Elisha told him to do this, Naaman got _____. He thought Elisha would call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper. Dipping in a muddy river was offensive to his human pride and his wisdom.

In the wisdom of this world, the cross is foolishness. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-29.**

God is the _____ of all spiritual truth; it is His place alone to say what His conditions are in order to receive the blessings of His promises. Human philosophy may _____ us understand some things, but listening to God is necessary. God didn't ask the counsel of the wisest men but has at all times _____ His divine wisdom in dealing with men. **Read Romans 11:33-36.**

Second, we need to remember human experience does not measure up to Divine _____. Many people today reject anything and everything that doesn't correspond to their own _____. But our Lord's power and wisdom cannot be _____ by human experience. We cannot _____ something simply because we don't understand it. Many can't accept the virgin birth or the resurrection because they can't understand _____ these things could happen. They say such things are against _____. They've never seen a man _____ from the dead, so they don't believe it can happen. However, the believer accepts whatever the Word of God says, even though he has _____ experienced such things. He realizes that truth can come from more sources than his five _____.

Some people refuse to _____ the commandments of the Lord because they think these commandments are foolish or because they go against the social grain of our day. Frankly, we need the _____ that Peter showed. He said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will _____ as You say and let down the nets.” (Luke 5:5). Peter sacrificed his own practical knowledge and skill as a fisherman to _____ to the authoritative Word of Jesus. We too need to say, “I will do as You say....”

When we truly love the Lord and believe in Him, we want to know what His _____ is for our lives. So, we’re _____ to ask, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” We’re ready and eager to do the will of the Lord, because we know that His wisdom and power _____ with what He teaches and instructs us to do. When the Lord teaches us His will, we don’t _____ with others. We listen to the One who bore the cross, the One who _____! We don’t want other _____ to confuse and mislead us.

Third, we need to see the _____ between listening to the Lord and refusing to listen. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed God’s Word when Israel _____ to hear. He said, “To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are _____ And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no _____ in it” (Jeremiah 6:10). Their refusal to listen to God led them to follow _____ and to be enslaved to sin.

Jeremiah _____ over how far the children of Israel had fallen away. They became greedy and cheated one another; they worshiped other gods; and they scorned the Word of God. Jeremiah asked, “‘Were they _____ because of the abomination that they’ve done? They were not even ashamed at all; They didn’t even know how to _____. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; And at the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 6:15).

Though the Lord wanted to give them every opportunity to _____, the people refused. Jeremiah said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient _____, Where the good way is, and _____ in it; And you will find _____ for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will _____ walk in it’” (Jeremiah 6:16). Oh, they were stubborn and rebellious people. Jeremiah’s prophecy that Babylon would come in and _____ them came to be true. The Jews _____ greatly because they would not do what the Lord says.

When the Lord _____ us what to do to be saved, how the church is to meet, how to worship, how to live pure lives, and how to serve others, are we listening? When the Scriptures teach that we are no longer under the _____ covenant but are under the _____ covenant, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us about the _____ of life and marriage, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us that some behavior is _____, are we going to debate with Him? Are we going to treat the Lord as if He doesn’t understand our _____, as if He were naïve and has no right to govern our lives?

When it comes to our salvation, instead of debating with the Lord who _____ us,

shouldn't we say, "I will do as you say"? If the Lord commands us as penitent believers to be _____ in His name, immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, why should we argue with Him? When it comes to how we _____, shouldn't we take into account what pleases the Lord? You can't entertain people to the point that they will _____ themselves and take up a cross. Conversion to Christ _____ more than pop psychology, preaching, and an entertainment form of worship. You can't get people to repent of their sins if you never _____ against sin. Sadly, some preaching has become so _____ and ineffective that many don't even know their behavior is sinful. In some cases, they've never been taught the Word of God; they've been deceived with a _____ of selective spirituality and cultural dogma! Teachers have led them to believe that they will _____ no consequences for their sins. The wisdom of men sounds reasonable, but it's not the Lord's _____. It's a broad way that leads to destruction, always has been; it's a house that's built on _____.

If we intend to _____ the promises and blessings of God, then let's listen to His instructions in the Word of God. When God makes a _____ with a condition to be met, He never grants the blessing until the condition is met. The blessings of God come _____ obedience, not before. God cleansed Naaman after he dipped seven times; God healed the Israelites of their serpent bites after they looked upon the bronze serpent; God gave Israel water after Moses struck the rock; and God saves us after we obey His teaching. Have you obeyed?

When we obey the Lord, the Lord blesses us far _____ our expectations. When Peter let down the net, "they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break." Peter never imagined that they would catch so _____ fish. They had to get their partners to come and _____ them! They filled up both boats, so that the boats were beginning to sink! Our God is "able to do _____ more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the _____ that works within us" (Ephesians 3:20). When we _____ the Lord in repentance and baptism, God grants us the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). But, He gives us far _____ than forgiveness. He causes us to be _____ again (John 3:5). He adds us to the number in His _____ (Acts 2:47). God makes us His _____ (Galatians 3:26-27). He _____ us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

Someone says "Well, I don't understand how being immersed in _____ saves us; I thought the _____ of Christ saves us." The cleansing blood _____ away our sins when we are baptized in water. God does the cleansing. Romans 6:3 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His _____?" Baptism _____ us with Christ in His death. Baptism is the time when our souls come in _____ with the death of Christ. Romans 6:6 says, "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." This takes place when we are baptized. We have been buried and raised with Him in baptism, and that's when we begin our _____ in newness of life. The blessing follows the obedience. I'm asking you, won't you be obedient to the Lord today?

Overcoming Temptation 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

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

What do you do when you're _____ to sin? Today, we're going to learn some ways to _____ temptation. Life challenges us every day, but God's Word provides _____ to those challenges. Life's problems can overwhelm us, but God's Word can _____ us. In a _____ world filled with sin, we need the Lord's help! Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a _____ to my feet And a _____ to my path." It leads us in the paths of righteousness and away from the dangers that can _____ us. This is why we listen and study the Word of God.

From the moment that we're old enough to understand right from wrong, truth from error, and good from evil, we _____ the temptation to please our selfish desires rather than to please God. Temptations come in many _____, and what affects one person may not affect another. Some are _____ to tell a lie, some to steal, some to take revenge, some to gossip. When we're afraid or hurting, we may be tempted to get _____ or to strike out. When we're greedy or jealous, we may be tempted to _____ what is not ours or to put others down. The devil strives to make sin _____, but sin is offensive to God.

With the Lord's help, you can overcome Satan's schemes and his tricks to _____ you astray. With the Lord's help, you can find _____ to overcome sin. With the Lord's help, you can _____ your desires and live a righteous life. Don't doubt that people can _____. With the Lord's help, you can become a _____ person who lives in righteousness. You can't change the _____, but you can change your _____. With the Lord's help, you can _____ above your past and be the person you always wanted to be!

Our reading today comes from the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians 10:6-13.

The apostle John describes the three appeals that Satan uses to _____ us toward the world and away from God. First John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the _____ is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the _____, the lust of the _____, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is _____ away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." Every temptation comes in one or more of these three forms. The devil uses our _____ to lead us astray from God.

James warned, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by _____'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is _____ by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives _____ to sin; and sin, when it's full-grown, brings forth _____" (James 1:13-15).

Satan appealed to the flesh, the eyes, and pride when he tempted _____ to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Genesis tells how Satan tried to get Eve to _____ what God said by appealing to her desires. **Read the story in Genesis 3:1-5.**

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The devil first tries to get people to _____ God. He wants to make them think God is trying to withhold some _____ from them. Once Satan gets people to be self-centered rather than believing in God, he's able to tell them _____ that contradict God. Jesus told some Jews who did not believe in Him, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a _____ from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a _____ and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me" (John 8:44-45).

The devil urges people to _____ in their own judgment rather than _____ to God. Of course, trusting your own judgment will _____ you to give in to your desires. Satan tempted Jesus to use His _____ to make food. **Read the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-4.**

Jesus said no to the devil, because Jesus knew His relationship to God was _____.! God helps us overcome temptation by _____ us who we are in Christ. We don't belong to ourselves but to Him, to Christ, who purchased us with His _____. God also helps us by giving us His Word to _____ us how to live and how to avoid sin. The more we _____ on God's teaching, the more we're able to _____ temptation.

Solomon advised his son: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your _____ understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be _____ in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:5-7). The Word of God, the Bible, can give you strength and can help you through those _____ that you face with the devil and with the world. The Word protects us in times of _____. The psalmist said, "Your word I have _____ in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

Sometimes the devil appeals to the sinful desires that are _____ of us. The Lord Jesus warned us to be _____ what we look at. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever _____ at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:27-29).

Society glamorizes sex. The desire for sex has led many young men and women _____ from God into sin. The consequences of sin are always _____ than people think. Sexual immorality can _____ to an unwanted pregnancy or a disease. People who get involved in sexual activities outside of marriage often feel great _____ for what they've done and wished that they had never violated God's will.

Christians must be careful what they _____ at. They should _____ their eyes away from the things that tempt them sexually, so that they may remain pure in their thoughts. Young men who love the Lord learn to _____ their eyes and avoid temptation. Young women need to consider how they _____, so that they might not tempt young men or send the wrong message. We all must be careful not to tempt _____ to sin. A young woman who dresses in a sexually provocative way shouldn't be _____ that boys will see her as willing to be sexy. Young women who profess godliness should dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9-10). When people, and that's

either male or female, dress modestly, they can _____ many embarrassing situations and temptations. The devil loves to appeal to the _____; and that's why every Christian should pay attention to how he or she appears to others. Our clothing and appearance _____ much about our character.

The apostle Paul lived in Corinth in the first century, and it was a place where people _____ a lot of sexual immorality. So, he advised them, "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his _____ body. Or do you not know that your body is the _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a _____; and therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). When temptation confronts you and you're inclined to _____ because no one else seems to be around, remember that God is always watching. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping _____ on the evil and the good."

Learning to _____ in times of temptation is a great strategy for avoiding sin. Those who _____ around sin usually get caught up in it. Paul later warned the Corinthians, "Do not be deceived: Evil company _____ good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). So stay away from the things that will _____ you spiritually. Paul told Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts; but _____ righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

Whether the devil appeals to the eye, to the flesh, or to pride, he is actually appealing to our _____. Our selfish desires can lead us _____ from God. Luke tells how the devil tempted Jesus: "Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the _____ of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give to You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will _____ before me, all will be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him _____ you shall serve"' (Luke 4:5-8).

Jesus knew whom He should _____ and serve, and it wasn't the devil! In spite of all the treasures and power that He might have received in ruling the world, Jesus knew that he would be a _____ to Satan if He had given in to the temptation. Jesus knew that there was only _____ person to worship and serve, and that's the Father in heaven.

Sin has a high _____! Jesus knew that when the _____ of sin wore off, they had to deal with the consequences of sin. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is _____." Ananias and Sapphira decided that they wanted to keep back part of what they had _____ God; so they lied to God in order to possess some money. They never expected that their decision would cost them their _____ (Acts 5:1-10 tells the story).

Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, but it filled him with _____ and _____. He went away and _____ himself according to Matthew 27:3-5. We must never assume that sin is _____. Sin was so serious that Jesus bore the _____ so that we might die to sin and

live to righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

Take heart! If the temptation is too _____ for us, God will make us the way of _____. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is _____, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” When you feel the temptation is too strong for you, start _____ for the way of escape. As a loving Father, the God of heaven wants to _____ us from getting into situations that we can’t handle.

The apostle Paul recalled the time that he appeared before Caesar and did not know whether he would live or die: he said, “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all _____ me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the _____ might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:16-18)! We need confidence that the Lord will also _____ us from every evil circumstance beyond our control. He will indeed strengthen us or give us the way of escape so that we may remain _____ to Him as His children.

You don’t have to face temptation _____. You have the _____ of God through His Word and through prayer. The Bible stands as God’s written Word! Ask, and it shall be given you. You have the _____ of fellow Christians who want to live godly lives, too. You have the _____ and _____ of heaven. With the Lord’s help, you can overcome! Sometimes God allows us to go through _____ to test and strengthen us. He’s not being _____ to us but is helping us to mature and to be able to stand on our feet as Christians. First Peter 5:8-10 says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring _____, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

God _____ helps His children through their difficulties. When the trial is over, the God of all _____ perfects, establishes, strengthens, and settles us. Wherever you are in life, whatever you’re going through, and whatever struggle you face, remember that nothing will ever be _____ than what God and you can handle.

With God’s instructions, you can _____! Romans 6:17-18 says, “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.” You don’t have to stay a slave of sin! Obey the Lord, and He will set you _____.

Put your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. With love in your heart, turn from sin in repentance. Confess the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, the blood of Christ will wash away your sins, cause you to be born again with newness of life, and make you a child of God! Oh, do it today!

Maturity in Christ Hebrews 5:11-14

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

When we first become Christians, we have a lot of _____ growing to do. What does a spiritually mature Christian _____ like? We want to _____ God in every respect, and the Word of God teaches us how! The Word tells us how to _____ ourselves spiritually and how to treat other people. It sheds light on the _____, so human traditions and sin won't blind us. Because of the Scriptures, we can _____ the pitfalls and _____ the storms. It challenges us to make us brighter and stronger. It gives _____ to stretch our minds and our behaviors. We're blessed beyond measure to possess a copy of God's Holy Word!

All four of our children are now grown. Jackie and I watched them mature into responsible and loving people, and we're proud of them. We raised them to be _____ and to pursue lives of their own. We didn't want them to be childish. We wanted our daughters to be like Jesus, who matured as God desired. Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus kept _____ in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." He grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. Loving and godly parents want that for their children. We did our best to meet their needs to _____ them mature properly. We also felt the need to _____ them spiritually.

Likewise, Paul urgently wanted to _____ young Christians grow to spiritual maturity in Christ. He said, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man _____ in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). We must do _____ than just become Christians; we must become complete in Christ, fully functioning as servants of the Lord.

Our reading today comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews 5:11-14. A worthy exhortation. No one knows for sure who wrote the inspired book of Hebrews, but the book calls itself a "word of exhortation"; it's written to spiritually _____ Christians. The author _____ those to whom he's writing as people drifting from the faith, neglectful, dull of hearing, immature, and sluggish. Some had begun forsaking the assembling of the _____; others were in danger of unbelief. Some who should have become _____ needed training in elementary principles. Like little children, they could only digest the most basic teaching and couldn't handle a more advanced understanding of the _____. He worried that the deceitfulness of _____ had hardened their hearts and caused them to cast away their confidence in Christ. He realized that _____ teaching had led many astray. For these reasons, he worried that they might grow bitter and come short of the _____ of God. The

writer warns that they might miss the eternal _____ in heaven. Sadly, they could not renew some to repentance.

The book of Hebrews could easily _____ many today. People own Bibles, but they don't _____ them carefully. They've become sluggish and dull of hearing. Interestingly, they think they know God's will but they're easily led _____ by pop psychology, human traditions, false prophets, and their own feelings. They're vulnerable to _____, because they are spiritually immature and not grounded in the truth. Millions have stopped attending church, and some have ceased to _____ in Jesus Christ. Because much of Christianity is so weak, people have lost _____ of what is the true faith in Christ, and what it looks like.

I want to _____ the mature Christian. First, mature Christians know God and they take Him seriously. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of _____, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Fearing the Lord means that one has a profound _____ for God, knowing that we will one day face the judgment seat of Christ. Since our _____ is at stake, we take the Lord seriously. We take His commandments seriously and His _____. We respect His _____ and believe what He says is true. We know He is both compassionate to those who love and _____ Him and just in condemning those who _____ Him.

John 1:18 says that Jesus _____ God the Father to us. We know what God is like because we can _____ God the Father in the character and the behavior of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that the Son can do _____ of Himself, unless it's something that He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19). We know God is holy, loving, and compassionate by _____ at Jesus. We know the Father is firm and just by looking at Jesus. We know God wants us to be _____ because of Jesus on the cross; and we know God's _____ through Jesus being resurrected. We know God keeps His _____ because Jesus kept His. Yes, Jesus explains the Father to us.

Second, mature Christians are not naïve. Many people want to paint Christianity as naïve and gullible, but mature Christians by practice have their "senses _____ to discern good and evil." Mature Christians _____ right from wrong, good from evil, and truth from error. They've seen the destructive _____ of evil and immorality; they know God's Word proves true. Some naïve Christians really don't _____ what God says. Proverbs 14:15 says, "The naïve believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps." The naïve are presumptuous and willing to act foolishly, but mature Christians are _____. Proverbs 22:3 says, "The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naïve go on, and are punished for it." Mature Christians have taken time to _____ through the moral and spiritual challenges. They see _____ to say no to temptation and sin, while others walk right into trouble. Proverbs 14:18 says, "The naïve inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with knowledge." The difference between being naïve and prudent matter.

Galatians 6:7-8 warns, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man _____, this will he also _____. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Don’t deceive yourself into thinking that sin will not _____ you. It always does. The naïve or simple-minded person thinks he can sin and get away with it.

Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs to his son to _____ him grow wise and avoid the traps of life. In the first chapter, Solomon has wisdom crying out in the street! **Read Proverbs 1:22-33.**

How much better it would be for us to _____ our hearts and follow God’s teaching rather than thinking that we can do as we please! Sin has consequences; and that’s why God teaches us to _____ to sin. God is a loving Father who wants to _____ us from evil.

Third, mature Christians fix their eyes on Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:1-3 says, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the _____ that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the _____ that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow _____ and lose heart.” They know the _____ of their blessings and hope; they realize that the way is often difficult and can be hostile. In spite of all, they serve with joy looking to the _____. Just as Jesus died for sinners, so the Lord _____ us to love our enemies and to do good to those who persecute us. Mature Christians follow Christ.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus means standing _____ in His teaching, His commands, and His promises. It means taking Him and His Word seriously. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so _____ in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”

Fourth, mature Christians show _____ when they face difficult days. Christians show their maturity by how they _____ to troubles and heartaches. Immature people get _____ and rant about their problems. Immature people _____ correction. Immature people _____ others for their faults and fail to learn from their mistakes. They don’t realize that the struggles of life may be the _____ to their growth and blessing.

The apostle Paul opened his life to us, and he helped us to understand a valuable _____. **Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.** God’s grace is sufficient for us, _____ when we suffer and struggle. It’s a great moment in life when we _____ how dependent we are on God! It’s a great moment in life when we see how His grace _____ us through our weaknesses.

Mature Christians keep a check on their _____. They find the silver lining in the

_____. They see _____ the present! James 1:2-4 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the _____ of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” God allows us to be tested to _____ us grow and develop spiritually. The test of our faith produces the _____ to endure, and endurance helps us to become complete. Without the testing, we wouldn’t grow _____ in faith.

Fifth, mature Christians _____ the Lord. They obey out of _____ and _____ for God. First John 2:3-6 says, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we _____ his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but doesn’t keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. And by this we know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the _____ _____ in which he walked.” Many people _____ about loving God, but those who genuinely love God keep his Word! They live up to their _____. Love is perfected, matured, by obeying the will of God.

I’ve known folks who will _____ of their faith and love but live like the world. You cannot find them when you need them. **Read what James said in James 2:20-23.** Abraham didn’t have a _____ faith. Faith that will not obey is _____. Faith is perfected and matured by obeying the will of God.

Why does this matter? It matters because God _____ His people to mature and to grow to be like Jesus. The Lord Jesus commands us to _____ holy lives, to _____ to the truth, and to _____ others the way that He has loved us. How would you describe yourself? Are you a mature Christian who loves and serves the Lord with _____ your heart and soul? We are all a _____ in progress! Hopefully, we’re growing _____ in faith and love each day. Philippians 2:12-13 reminds us, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always _____, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” God will _____ us mature; and He’s at work in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure. The apostle Paul _____ to be right with God and to attain the resurrection; that is, to go to heaven and live with God eternally.

Read what Paul said in Philippians 3:11-15. Are you _____ on to that high calling?

You can become a Christian by placing your _____ in the Lord Jesus, repenting of your _____, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and by being _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. God expects _____ than merely becoming a Christian! He expects you to _____ Him lovingly and faithfully for the rest of your life. He wants you to _____ Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. That’s the ultimate goal of every Christian!



February 26, 2017

Religious Confusion
2 Timothy 3:1-7

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

The *Encyclopedia of American Religions* lists 2,300 religions. Religion in America is terribly _____ and diverse these days. So how can know you what's really _____ about God? The Bible provides the _____ out of confusion and into religious truth. This Word has stood the test of time; and the more you know about the Bible, the more you'll _____ what it has to say.

We live in the most religiously _____ culture of all time. You might wonder _____ you should choose Christianity. There are so many different kinds of Christianity, you might wonder why you should choose one _____ over another. Religious division _____ doubt, cynicism, arguments, broken families, and broken friendships. So, we ask, "How can we find our way out of all the confusion?"

Our nation is like the ancient city of _____. In the first century, Athens was full of _____ devoted to pagan deities. The Greek writer Pausanius said the Athenians worshiped the gods more than any others and had more religion than any other _____. But, we too are a religiously diverse _____. There are _____ major denominations of Christianity and countless independent groups. This division is confusing; and it's no wonder the _____ growing religious group in America is the one that replies, "no religion." The number of people who don't go to church has _____ from 39 million in 1991 to 75 million people today. This diversity has brought nothing but division and confusion. We believe there is something _____ and something _____ from God. And, it's right where it's always been.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:1-7. That's a great _____ for us today as well as for those in the time of Timothy.

In Acts 17:16, the Bible says, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was _____ of idols." It should provoke the _____ of any faithful Christian today to see so much religious confusion. There are so many _____ saying so many different things and that must leave us trying to figure out what is the truth. What Paul did in a religiously divided world was simply to _____ the gospel of Christ.

Acts 17:17-18 says, "So he _____ in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. Some said, 'What does this babblers wish to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of _____ divinities'—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection."

Epicurus, who lived 300 years before Christ, held that _____ was the chief goal of life, and wanted a life free from pain, passions, superstitions, fears, and anxiety about death. He believed in the gods but thought they didn't really care, so he pursued pleasure. A contemporary, Zeno, founded the Stoics and emphasized man's _____ and self-sufficiently. For him, God was everywhere; it was

the “World-soul.” Neither the Stoics nor the Epicureans ever understood the _____ of God! Some of them _____ with Paul and called him a “babbling.” Babblers to them were a ne’er do well and they put forth other people’s ideas as their own and didn’t understand what they were _____ about. Paul was not a babbling; the babblers were the Athenians who spent all their time talking and listening, hoping to hear something _____.

So, they invited Paul to _____ at Mars Hill. **Read what Paul said in Acts 17:22-25.**

Many today think they _____ God. But, the God they think they know and the _____ God of the Bible are often quite different. People confuse themselves when they believe their perceptions of God rather than what the Bible actually _____ about God. Their perceived God is quite different from the God who _____ them. Many want a God of their own _____ who always agrees with them rather than the God of Scripture. Popular religion would have you believe that God so loves everyone and is so full of grace that He accepts us just as we are, even if we never _____ of our sins. But the God of the Bible _____ people to repent.

Some say that “sin” is an _____ word that no longer people should use. They imagine using the words “sin” or “sinner” is offensive and keeps people from _____ to Jesus. The Bible, however, says that Jesus “came into the world to save _____” (1 Timothy 1:15), and he “died for our sins, according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Sin is not merely breaking a law; it is breaking _____ law! Sin breaks God’s law and God’s _____. The gospel says Jesus bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). With God, the idea of sin is very _____. God hates sin and He wants to transform our lives. **Read what Paul said at Athens in Acts 17:30-31.** God demands repentance and will _____ people in righteousness at the end. You can be _____ of it, because God raised Jesus from the dead! Any preacher who doesn’t _____ you to repent is not a gospel preacher.

In the paganism of old, everyone had their _____ god. They chose the god that they liked. The idols of Greece couldn’t _____; they didn’t have a Bible, and asked nothing of their followers. Idolatry was often associated with sexual immorality, and paganism allowed people to _____ in sin. That’s very convenient to serve a god that expects _____ out of you. As long as you didn’t mess with their god, they didn’t mess with yours. Everyone could believe as he _____ and would leave each other alone. That’s very similar to our culture of “live and let live.”

But, this is why Paul was _____ a trouble-maker by the Athenians; and frankly, Biblical Christianity is thought to be troublemakers today. It doesn’t live and let live. Jesus asks for people to _____ that He is the Messiah, the _____ way to heaven. Jesus demands that people repent and live righteous lives according to His _____. Jesus asks each of us to take up our _____ and follow Him. Some will _____ this, just as they did when Paul preached. They would rather have a Christianity that _____ nothing and _____ nothing. That’s why much of popular Christianity is in such a _____!

When Paul spoke of the resurrection, some mocked him but others said, “we’re going to _____ you again about this” (Acts 17:32). Some of those men _____ Paul and believed on the Lord. Much of the differences in people come from _____. Some people are willing to _____, while others mock and make fun of Christianity. Some think they know more than God knows and they

sit in judgment of the _____ itself. They don't realize that one day the Word of Christ will judge them and decide their eternal _____ (John 12:48). Will you tell God, or will God tell you what is _____ and _____?

People say, "Put twelve people in a room and _____ to them a passage of Scripture and you'll have twelve interpretations of that passage." I've heard that a lot, but is it really _____? Does the Bible itself cause the confusion, or is it that we tend to place our own _____ above the Bible? The Bible was written to be understood, but God also wants us to understand it _____. Like a textbook in school, the Bible was written for groups of people to _____ and use. Why would God give us a Bible that we could not understand and then tell us that He will judge on the basis of that book? God is in the business of _____ not confusing.

Paul said to the Ephesians, "When you read this (speaking about what he had written), you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:4-6). In the New Testament, a mystery was not an unsolvable riddle but something _____ from one generation but _____ to another. Jesus made some _____ to us that can help us through this confusion.

The Lord Jesus said, "If you _____ in my word, you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you _____" (John 8:31-32). The way to know the truth is to _____ the Bible, to stay in the Word, and not abandon it for human opinions or human traditions. Only the Word of God can set us free from sin, free from darkness, and free from the confusion of our day. The Bible will bring _____ to a confused and decaying society. We need the Bible now more than ever! We ought to be grateful that the Lord _____ us enough to tell us the truth!

Jesus also promised the apostles, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into _____ the truth" (John 16:12-13). We not only can know the truth, we can know the _____ truth that leads to life and godliness in the revealed Word of God. We're not _____ anything that God intended for us. The Bible is all-sufficient and can _____ us for every good work. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and _____ for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Don't settle for opinions or assumptions. Don't settle for human traditions that stand outside the Bible. Go to the Bible. If you can't find it _____ in Scripture, don't believe it or practice it.

Why is there so much religious confusion? People _____ listening to God and His revealed Word and _____ trusting their own thinking. When you get away from the Bible, you can count on confusion. When you have confusion, people end up doing what they _____. They live without God's teaching, and they _____ the morality taught in the Word of God. When people are morally and doctrinally confused, they lose sight of what matters and they make up their own _____. Pagan Athens was like that, and I fear much of our world today is going in the same direction. More than ever we need to _____ to the Bible!

The Bible contains a message ensured by God that will never _____. You can count on its

promises and its warnings. You can believe every word of it as a sure _____ of truth. First Peter 1:23-25 says, “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord _____ forever.’ And this is the word which was _____ to you.” The everlasting gospel message is your true hope, your sure anchor, and your only opportunity for eternal life.

Paul said, “God is not a God of confusion but of _____” (1 Corinthians 14:33). God never intended to throw this world into _____ by having hundreds of religions and hundreds of ways to live. God wants everybody to _____ under His teaching. On the other hand, the devil is always at _____, telling lies, making spiritual counterfeits, and encouraging new religions. The devil will do anything to _____ people away from the Truth. He makes every effort to discredit God, to discredit the Lord Jesus, to discredit the Bible, to deny miracles, and to suggest that man evolved rather than was created. He wants men to have their own gods rather than to _____ to the one true and living God.

The Bible says, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being _____ to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). Jesus is the one and only Lord, but have you made Him Lord in your _____? The way to overcome confusion is to recognize the uniqueness of Jesus—unique in His birth, unique in prophecy, unique in His miracles, and unique in being raised from the dead. Only His _____ can cleanse your sins. Oh, let’s follow the Lord Jesus!

Many in this land once found their moral and theological _____ in the teaching of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament. The farther we drift from those values, the more confusion and chaos we’ll see. We need a great _____ of Bible study and prayer. We’ll never overcome our moral and spiritual decay until we _____ our love and respect for God and His Word. We need to _____ God’s Word so that we won’t be fooled by counterfeit religions and false doctrines. Let’s turn to the one _____ that we can always trust! We must go back to the Bible as our constant companion to _____ us know the truth and to live righteously.

Following the Bible only makes Christians. We intend to _____ the teaching of Jesus Christ in Scripture, and nothing else. If you add other doctrines from other sources, you’ll be spiritually confused and will corrupt your _____. You can become just a Christian today.

You do this by faith in Jesus Christ. Without faith, you can’t _____ God (Hebrews 11:6). You must _____ of your sins. You can’t live on in sin and still please God. You must also be _____ into Christ by an immersion in water for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized into the death of Christ, the blood of Jesus will _____ away your sins (Romans 6:3).

Perhaps you’re a member of the church of Christ who has _____ from God, turned to sin, and quit the church. My friend, will you return to God? If you fall away from God, you’ll find only confusion and chaos. You can’t thumb your nose at God without consequences. Repent of your sins and ask God’s forgiveness. Today is the best day to follow the Lord and to worship with the church of Christ. We’re here to help you know God and to love Him.