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*Program
Study Guides*

**For
September 2017**

The Cost of Discipleship Luke 14:25-30

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

Just because something is _____ doesn't mean it's _____. Grace is free, but the cost of discipleship is another matter. To find the difference between authentic Christianity and some watered-down forms of Christianity, _____ the Bible. To know what God desires from you, study _____ day. God's Word provides everything that we need to have _____ life with God. We _____ God's Word!

Many today want a convenient Christianity that asks _____ of them. They go to _____ sometimes, read their _____ occasionally, and _____ when it's convenient. They _____ token amounts to the Lord but never really learn to sacrifice. They want God to commit fully to them, but they don't want to make a commitment that _____ very much. They want a Christianity that allows them to believe whatever they like and live however they want.

They want a Christianity that _____ embarrasses them in front of their non-Christian friends. They don't want a strict morality or to talk about _____. They don't want to be _____ anything that's different from the popular opinions of the day. Sadly, there are plenty of _____ willing to give them a watered-down faith and a gospel that asks nothing. While salvation is a free gift, being a disciple of Christ _____ the denial of self and bearing a cross.

The word disciple describes a student who strives to _____ his teacher. A disciple of Jesus wants to become just _____ Him in every way. The essence of discipleship isn't a self-help plan for losing weight, or getting rich, or finding happiness. Discipleship is about putting God's kingdom and His righteousness _____ in our lives. It's about Christ _____ in us through humble service and pure lives. It's about commitment to the one _____ way of salvation.

It was 37 years ago that Mack Lyon began this program on one station in Ada, Oklahoma. Today we go throughout the United States and in many other countries. Thanks for being loyal viewers of this program as we begin our 38th year.

Our scripture reading today comes from the Gospel According to Luke 14:25-30.

Have you considered how valuable your _____ is? Your most valuable possession is your soul. It's the one thing that you will _____ have. When you die, you won't take anything into _____ with you, except your soul. You can't take your possessions, your money, your house, or your car. You can _____ take your soul. Because of this, we must take, all of us, _____ to think about our souls.

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord." Your salvation was a _____ from God; it's free. God invites you to take _____ of eternal life freely. The Bible says, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who _____ say, 'Come.' And let the one who is _____ come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without _____" (Revelation 22:17). Just because something is free doesn't _____ it's cheap.

When Jackie and I married, the preacher, Dewayne Thomas, asked, “Who gives this woman to this man in marriage?” Her father and mother gave her to me to be my wife. She was indeed a gift of God, and the human I love the most. She’s a gift, and I treasure her. But she’s not cheap. The Lord gave Jackie and me our four precious daughters. Psalm 127:3 says, “children are a gift of the LORD”; but some say it will cost as much as \$300,000 to raise a child through college. Just because something is free doesn’t mean it’s cheap.

God had to pay a _____ for your soul to be saved. He sacrificed His own Son to _____ for your sins. First John 4:9-10 says, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might _____ through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our _____.” That big word “propitiation” means that Jesus had to die on a cross as an atoning sacrifice so that you could be _____ of your sins and reconciled to God.

I can’t imagine the anguish the Father felt in sacrificing His Son Jesus to such a _____ death. As a loving parent, I cannot see my children _____ without having anguish in my own heart. I hurt when they hurt. I’m just an imperfect man, but _____ is perfect in love and holiness. If I suffer over my children’s pain, think how much more so does our Father in heaven.

The Father sacrificed His Son, and the Son also _____ the ultimate price to save your soul and mine. First Peter 2:24 says, “He himself bore our _____ in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his _____ you have been healed.” Jesus bore our sins personally in his body. Sin against Christ is personal, and His loving sacrifice for you is personal. Sin is not merely breaking a law; it’s breaking God’s law and breaking God’s _____.

Jesus gave His _____ to a crown of thorns. He gave His _____ to a horrible, life-threatening scourging. They spit on Him and mocked Him. He gave His hands and His feet to _____, and they suspended His body between heaven and earth. In crucifixion, every _____ the Lord Jesus took demanded great energy and was excruciatingly _____. He had to pull Himself up by the pierced hands and feet to draw a breath. He hung on the cross for _____ long hours until at last his heart could take no more. Jesus sacrificed _____ for your soul. My friend, your soul’s salvation is not _____!

We shouldn’t think that Jesus merely endured physical _____ on the cross. The true punishment of the cross came in His _____ the sins of the whole world. He bore real _____ to heal us. Isaiah 53 reminds us that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all; He received the stroke that was actually _____ us. When the Father saw the _____ of the Son’s soul, His only Son who was a guilt offering, He was satisfied and He justified the transgressors, that’s you and me. Second Corinthians 5:21 says the Father “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might _____ the righteousness of God in Him.” For this great gift of salvation and reconciliation, we owe everything to Him.

Peter said that you were redeemed “not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a _____ without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). We should never take our salvation for _____. We thank God every day for the Lord’s _____ for our sins. His death not only atoned for our sins, it also gave us _____ life. It opened the door for us to live with God in glory as His _____. According to Ephesians 1:3 we have every

spiritual _____ in the heavenly places in Christ. God has given us an indescribable gift!

Just because the gift of eternal life is _____ doesn't mean it's cheap for us either. God expects us to _____ this gift more highly than anything. **Read what Jesus said in Matthew 13:44-46.**

The kingdom of heaven is worth sacrificing everything that we _____ and everything that we _____. We should be willing to give up anything and everything so that we might have eternal life and enter the kingdom of _____. The Lord Jesus said, "So then, none of you can be My _____ who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). If I follow the Lord, I can't consider my possessions as more _____ than my Lord.

In fact, if a disciple must choose between loving his own _____ and loving the Lord, he should choose the Lord. The Lord said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not _____ his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). The Lord isn't _____ hate here. He's comparing the love that we must have for God and the love that we must have for our families and ourselves. To be a true disciple, God must come _____.

To have eternal life and enter the kingdom of God, we must _____ disciples of the Lord. The Lord Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his _____, nor a slave above his _____. It is enough for the disciple that he become _____ his teacher, and the slave _____ his master" (Matthew 10:24-25). A disciple _____ his master as well as his master's teaching. His task is to become as much like his master as _____. We should become like Jesus in our thinking, in our practices, in our attitudes, and in our _____ to please and glorify the Father.

Some aren't content to _____ the Lord or do His will. In Luke 9:23-24, Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must _____ himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My _____, he is the one who will save it." If you live on your own terms, fulfilling your desires, you'll lose out in the end. If you deny yourself and take up your cross daily, you'll find God saving your life and your soul forever.

The cross is necessary to be a disciple. The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me _____ be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Some people want the _____ of life but are unwilling to carry the cross and die to themselves. If you won't bear the cross, then you can't wear the crown. Some want God's _____, but not His ways. They want redemption but not _____. You can't hold onto the _____ and to the Lord at the same time.

Jesus encountered three prospective disciples. Jesus helped each of them to consider the _____. The first is found in Luke 9:57-58: "As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His _____.'" Jesus didn't promise this man health and wealth if he came along. The Lord will meet our physical and spiritual _____, but He's not in the millionaire-making business. We must _____ God for Himself. We don't follow Him for what we can get out of Him. You cannot serve God and _____ at the same time.

Second, Luke 9:59-60 records: "And He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to go and _____ my father.' But He said to him, 'Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and _____ everywhere the kingdom of God.'" Jesus wanted this man to follow Him, but he hesitated. He had a father in bad _____. He wouldn't commit to _____

until after his father had died and was buried. How Jesus responded may seem unfeeling at first. It probably _____ this man when He said “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.” Caring for parents in their final days is important, but answering the Lord’s call is even _____ important!

A third man said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at _____.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is _____ for the kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:61-62). Discipleship is for a lifetime. There’s no salvation for the one who abandons his _____.

Why have we talked about all this? Because, while God’s grace is a gift, He expects those who receive the gift to place the highest _____ on it. The Lord Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much _____, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My _____, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:8-10). Serving the Lord Jesus causes us to _____ in His love and to glorify the Father. The phrase, “abide in My love,” is intriguing. It suggests that if we fail or cease to keep the Lord’s commandments, then we’ll fail or cease to abide in His love.

The Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus could live anywhere on earth that they _____ to live. They enjoy Heaven and the most beautiful places on earth. But think what the Lord says in John 14:23, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our _____ with him.” God, the Father, and Jesus, the Christ, choose to make their _____ with people who love them enough to keep their commandments. If someone looked at your life, would you _____ to be a disciple?

The Holy Spirit said, “And do not be conformed to this _____, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). To be disciples of our Lord Jesus, we must take the _____ of our minds off of the world and put it on the will of God. God’s will is good, because God is good. His will teaches us how to _____ morally, spiritually, and respectfully. God’s will is acceptable; it _____ us how to please God and how to be acceptable to others. God’s will is perfect or complete; it doesn’t lack anything that we need to _____ to have eternal life.

You’ll never regret choosing to be the Lord’s disciple. The Lord has the _____ of eternal life. There’s no other path. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one _____ to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). Only Jesus has the way to heaven, the spiritual truth that we need, and the life that never ends. Serving Him is worth every _____ and demands our complete attention. We must be good _____ of His will, so we please Him always.

To become a Christian, that is a disciple, you must listen to and accept the _____; you must _____ in Jesus Christ; _____ of your sins; _____ Jesus Christ; and be _____ in His name. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. When you’re baptized, God _____ away your sins according to Acts 22:16. He also adds you to His _____ (Acts 2:47); He unites you with Christ and gives you _____ life (Romans 6:4-5); and He makes you His _____ (Galatians 3:26-27). I hope and pray that you’ll become a disciple of Jesus Christ today, and that you’ll live faithfully to Him for the rest of your life.

Is God Active Today?

Proverbs 3:5-8

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

Some think God is _____ in our world today; and others say that God is _____. Is God alive and active in the world today and working for our _____? We want to know all we can about God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and the way to know God is through a _____ of His Word, the Bible. So we go again and again to the Scriptures.

How we view God matters greatly in how we view life and how we understand our _____ and role in this world. An atheist doesn't believe God _____ at all. An agnostic says he doesn't know whether God exists, because he _____ God is unknowable. Some believe God got the _____ going and then just abandoned it. Others believe God was relevant in _____ times, but now God is dead. They say we no longer _____ God.

Several years ago in graduate school, I spent a couple of semesters studying skeptics and atheists. One thing I found was that skepticism and atheism grew more out of an _____ than it did out of the _____. Atheists and skeptics tended to _____ on the disorder and the ugly in life. They seemed to _____ the intelligent order, the beauty, the grandeur, and the wisdom that's so evident in our universe. They were intelligent, but they missed the intelligent _____. I'm amazed at how easily people can slip into a very _____ view of life and of God. Some folks choose to close their eyes and their minds to the _____ of God and see only the _____. God is good and actively blesses us every day. Thankfully, we can _____ Him and what He has done for us to bless us and to give us eternal life.

Our scripture reading today comes from the book of Proverbs 3:5-8.

Paul said in Ephesians 1:18-19, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may _____ what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." God wants our hearts to be open to His _____. God's power towards us who believe is _____ than we think!

Have you ever had an "aha!" experience—awakening to some great _____ that had eluded you up until that time? That's what Paul wanted for the Ephesians. He wanted them to understand what God _____ to happen—God is at work! God has great power—and His power _____ in the lives of His people.

You might ask _____ God is at work. He is working in a variety of ways. First, God works in the _____. As a prophet of God, King David said, "The heavens are telling of the _____ of God; and their expanse is declaring the _____ of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). One can hardly look at the beauty, the order, and the wisdom of our universe and not see how

wise and powerful God is. The God who makes the sun shine and flowers bloom, the God who regulates times and seasons has such great power and wisdom that it is truly _____ our understanding. Paul proclaimed: "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their _____ ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). All that we have, all of our blessings _____ from God!

Jesus is not only our Creator, He is also the one who _____ this world together. **Read what the Bible says in Colossians 1:15-17.** God's _____ and _____ cause our seasons, cause the earth to rotate every 24 hours making night and day, cause the moon to revolve around the earth every 28 days and controlling the tides of the ocean, and cause the earth to go around the sun every 365 and one fourth days determining our year and our seasons. This couldn't just happen on its own; God has been in _____.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us this day our _____ bread" (Matthew 6:11). We're blessed to have food to eat each day, food that God _____. Have you ever thought about the power of one _____ planted in the ground? One kernel of corn planted in the ground, watered, and fertilized can _____ an ear of corn with sixteen rows and 800 kernels. Many cornstalks will have _____ than one ear! God created that kernel of corn with the information and the ability to _____ itself in that marvelous way.

God is indeed powerful and wise! **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 4:27-29.** God has been taking _____ of us in marvelous ways for a very long time.

Second, God is at work in our _____. God sent His only Son to die on the cross; God through the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible including the gospel, which has the _____ to save; and Christ built His _____, who are the saved. From the beginning, God has been _____ toward our salvation. **Read what the apostle Paul by inspiration said in Ephesians 2:4-9.**

The salvation that we enjoy through Christ was _____. It's the gift of God, and for that we are thankful. Great gifts are never _____, and our redemption came at a _____ greater than silver or gold. God sacrificed his Son Jesus, and Jesus sacrificed His _____ on the cross. We must not take our salvation for granted or treat it lightly as if it were _____. People who mock the Lord, ignore the cross, and criticize the church are usually people who are unthankful for what God has done to _____ them. They don't realize what He sacrificed to give them _____ life. The Bible is the message of that life. Without the message of the Bible, we would all be in great peril—without _____ and without God in this present world.

The Bible teaches us how to come to Christ, and how the blood of Christ cleanses us, and how we can have _____ life with Christ. The Bible says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through _____ in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you _____ together with Him, having forgiven us

all our transgressions” (Colossians 2:12-13). It is God who is “at work” in baptism.

In baptism, God _____ us with Christ, and washes away our sins, takes away that old man of sin, buries us with Christ, and raises us up from spiritual death to life. In baptism, God adds us to the _____ and makes us His children. God is very _____ working on us in baptism. For this reason, I cannot understand why anyone would say baptism is unnecessary for our salvation. Read what the scripture says. Baptism is _____ God works on us.

God doesn't _____ us once we are saved as Christians, once we've been baptized. Every Christian still has weaknesses and still _____. Christians wish they could keep from sinning; they hate it _____ they sin and they want to stop it afterward. God knows that we're _____ but He has provided for our weaknesses. The Bible says, “He is _____ to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). That's what Jesus is _____ right now for us. He is interceding with the Father on our behalf, asking the Father to forgive us and to continue blessing us, even when we have sinned. I am so thankful for the Lord who _____ me enough to pray for me.

Third, God is at work answering _____. The Bible says, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will _____; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). God wants to _____ your prayers. He _____ you to pray to Him. The Bible says, “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from _____, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow” (James 1:17). God loves us enough to hear our prayers and to help us when we _____ Him. The apostle Paul reminds us, “Now to Him who is _____ to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the _____ in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Fourth, God is busy _____ our lives. He works in us. The Bible says, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good _____ in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). God _____ His people to do His work, so we may live for an eternity in heaven with Him. What God is doing in us now prepares us for the life to come. The Bible says, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your _____ with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). God is shaping our hearts, our attitudes, our will, and our lives to _____ to His will, so that we might live with Him always.

God also saved us so that we might be His _____, doing good works and impacting the world for love and righteousness. The Bible says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for _____ works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). So much good is being done in the world; _____ of the love of God and the teaching of the Bible, Christians feed the hungry, take care of widows and orphans, help unwed mothers, provide help to the lonely and homeless, and point sinners to

righteousness. Oh, yes! God is at work through the _____.

I saw a book the other day written by a skeptic, called, The God Problem. His subtitle suggested that God never addresses the problem of _____ in the Bible. I wondered _____ Bible he was reading, because it's _____ the Bible that I've spent my life studying. God knows about our suffering, and the cross of Christ demonstrates God's willingness to _____ for us. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for _____ to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." God doesn't stop every event of suffering, but He _____ even suffering to work for our good. We don't always understand what God is doing or why; but we know that God loves us and will use every circumstance in our lives, good or bad, pleasing or painful, to work for good in some way. We can _____ God!

Read what David, who was inspired of God, said in Psalm 103:1-5.

God has been working in our _____ a very long time. He isn't hidden or dead; and the Bible reminds us of all the good that God is doing _____ us and _____ us. The apostle Paul said, "And now I commend you to God and to the _____ of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). God's Word is far from being _____. It is the _____ of love and life and good and righteousness. We need the Bible every single day to help us _____ spiritually and in character, and to _____ like God intended.

I join Paul in His prayer: "and I pray that the _____ of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His _____ toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18-19). God can work in your life, IF you let Him. He won't twist your arm; He won't _____ you to do anything. But if you out of love and _____, put your life into His hands, God can do amazing things. It's not the _____ of God that's lacking. It's not the willingness of God to _____ in our lives that's lacking. What is lacking is our willingness to let God into our _____ and into our _____.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your _____ and do not _____ on your own understanding. In all your _____ acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." You must trust Him and let Him work in you. God desires that we believe in Jesus Christ enough to _____ Him and _____ His promises. Do you?

That starts by trusting Him enough to _____ of your sins and _____ the name of Christ before others. Christ doesn't want a _____ disciple. He wants you to confess with your mouth that He is your Lord and that you believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. After you've repented and made that confession, God wants you to be _____ into Christ where God cleanses you with the _____ of Jesus and makes you into one of His own children. Won't you do that today? Won't you obey the gospel and put the Lord Jesus Christ first? Will you let God work in your life?

The Church is Necessary

Acts 20:28-30

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

Many people think you can be a good Christian without being a _____ of any church. Is church _____ necessary? Today, we're going to explore what _____ says about the church, and you can't afford to miss this study!

We know the Lord's way is the best way, the right way, and the holy way of _____. The best way to know the Lord's way is to _____ the Scriptures. They are God's _____ to us today. They were true when the Holy Spirit _____ the apostles and prophets to write them, and they're true for all time.

When you mention the word "church," people _____ in a multitude of ways. Some think of the church as _____. Some think of the church as an _____. Some think the church is made up of prejudiced _____. Some think the church needs reinventing in a style more like the _____ of our times. Everyone seems to think they know what the _____ should be like. Even folks who have never read the Bible or have not entered a church door in many years have an _____ about what the church should be.

You've probably noticed religion in America has _____. Many groups have become religious _____ venues and others have become like shopping malls. Some think the primary purpose of church is to _____ to my wants and desires. We've become self-centered, thinking Jesus ought to be our _____ rather than thinking we ought to be His. It's no wonder some see the church as _____ and others as a waste of _____. Few want to _____ what Christ envisioned for the church that He built or what place it has in His heart. The Lord never thought of the church as an option; in His _____, it's necessary.

Our reading today comes from the Book of Acts 20:28-32.

The Lord Jesus considered the church as necessary. He wants everyone to be a member of His church and to _____ worship regularly. The idea that you can be a good Christian and yet not be a member of the church is not from the _____ of God. Anyone who takes a _____ look at the New Testament will see that the church is quite necessary to our relationship with the Lord. The church Jesus built does not _____ to you and me. It belongs to the Lord. He _____ it. After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (that is, the confession that He was the Christ) I will build _____ church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus took the time to build His church, and not even His _____ could prevent it.

The church belongs to the Lord, because He _____ it with His own blood. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Be on guard for

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yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own _____” (Acts 20:28). If Jesus loved the church enough to _____ for it, how can we think so little of it. The church must be precious to the Lord.

The Bible reveals how _____ related Christ is to the church in Ephesians 1:22-23: “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as _____ over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Just as your head is inseparably connected to your body, so Christ is inseparably connected to the church. Just as your body does your will as it is conceived in the brain, so the church does the will of its head, Jesus Christ. The church is the _____ of Christ. We must never _____ Christ from His church or the church from Christ.

The church is most precious to the Lord; in fact, He considers the church as His _____. **Read Ephesians 5:25-27.** Jesus has gone to great lengths to _____ and to sanctify the church. He wants the church to be radiant with _____. We need to be _____ how we think of the church. When people slander the church or make it trivial, they mock and really _____ Jesus Christ Himself. They’re saying Jesus is _____ to sanctify and glorify the church. If you wish to make a man _____, just slander his wife. Do you think the Lord Jesus will look _____ on anyone who slanders His bride?

I want to _____ the church that the Lord Jesus calls His bride from what people today think when they hear the word “church.” What I am speaking about is the Lord’s church described in the New Testament. Many religious groups who call themselves “churches” are not anything _____ the New Testament church. They differ in name, in organization, in doctrine, in mission, and even in worship. They’re often more a reflection of _____ culture than of what God intended for the church to be. Some groups have so little _____ value and content it is no wonder people see them as unnecessary.

This difference confuses and causes people to _____ from the will of God. More than ever, people need to know the _____ revealed in God’s Word about the church. They need to think clearly about what God desires rather than be pulled into a _____ hope by something that calls itself a church but differs greatly from the church that Jesus built as described in the New Testament. The Scriptures clearly make the church Jesus built a necessity for us to _____ if we wish to please God.

Why is the church so necessary? There are several reasons. The first is this: the Lord _____ the saved to His church. When the Jews at Pentecost heard Peter _____, they were pierced to the heart and they wanted to know what to do. Peter replied that they _____ repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Acts 2:41 says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were _____ about three thousand souls.” In verse 47 the Bible says, “And the Lord was _____ to their number (that is, to the church) day by day those who were being saved.” The Lord adds the saved or the baptized

forgiven to His church. Baptism was the _____ that they were forgiven or saved and when they were added.

When a person is _____, the Lord Himself adds that person to His church. To be in the church means the Lord has _____ you. The Scriptures never see a person who is saved as a person who hasn't been baptized or a person who's not in the Lord's church. The apostle Paul told the church at Colossae, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the _____ of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Just as the Lord grants forgiveness when one repents and is baptized, so the Lord adds the baptized to His church. The church is the kingdom of Christ!

When John wrote to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapter one, he revealed what Christ had done for them. **Read what the Bible says in Revelation 1:4-6.**

When John wrote the seven churches of Asia, he spoke to a people who had come into a _____ and were priests to God. John taught that "we" Christians "are of God, and the whole world lies in the _____ of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). There are but two kingdoms, and that's the domain of darkness and the kingdom of His beloved Son. To enter the church is to enter the kingdom of the beloved _____.

The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of the church as a kingdom. **Read what the Lord said in Matthew 16:18-19.** Why would the Lord _____ one thing and then give Peter _____ to something else? He doesn't do that. The church is the kingdom of God today.

How do I know that? Think about this. In Acts 20:28 the Lord Jesus _____ the church with His own blood. We have no _____ anywhere in the New Testament that the blood of Jesus ever purchased anything but the church. **Read what the twenty-four elders sang in Revelation 5:9-10.** The same blood did not purchase _____ different things—the church is that blood-bought kingdom.

Being in the church means that you're blood-bought, but there is no _____ of being blood-bought to those outside the church. The church contains the cleansed, but the others outside are not cleansed. The kingdom contains priests to God, but outside there are no priests to God. The Bible says, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). Being in the Lord's church is vital to our eternal salvation.

Ephesians chapter two contrasts the difference between people who are in the _____ and outside of Christ from those who come into Christ and His _____. The apostle Paul reminds those who came out of paganism at Ephesus of what they had _____ they became members of the church or body of Christ. **Read Ephesians 2:12-13.**

Read Ephesians 2:19 to 22, where Paul describes them after they became Christians, after they became _____ of the church. Before, they were _____ without hope and without God. Now, they are God's family and fellow citizens in God's kingdom, the church.

The church is vitally necessary because being in the church means that you are a member of God's _____. Paul told Timothy, "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know

how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). In this passage, Paul identified the _____ as God’s household or family. The children of God are _____ the church. If you claim to be in God’s family, but then say church membership is unnecessary, my friend, you are confused and may be deceiving yourself.

The very act that puts one into the family of God is the _____ act that puts one into the church. Compare two passages. First, Galatians 3:26-27, “For you are all sons of God through _____ in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have _____ yourselves with Christ.” Baptism as an act of faith is what _____ us children of God. Then second, consider 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” This verse says that we were _____ into the body. The body of Christ is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). So, God makes one His child, a member of the church, the body of Christ; and He does that through baptism.

When we realize the church is God’s family, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the saved, and bought by the blood of Jesus, we will see _____ the church is so important in God’s eyes. Being a member of the Lord’s church is not _____. My friend, are you a member of the church that Jesus built? The one that you can read about in the New Testament. I hope you are. If not I hope you will become one.

Many people claim to be members of the church, but they aren’t _____ members. They’ve ceased to _____ church or to support it. By their actions, they’ve actually abandoned the church and in that sense abandoned the _____. The Bible says, “let us consider how to _____ one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25). The Lord wants us to _____ each other to love and good works, and to not forsake assembling with other Christians. You can’t encourage other Christians to stay faithful if you _____ going to church altogether.

I know some of you can’t attend worship because of your _____. The Lord understands your situations. But, if you can attend worship yet _____ to forsake meeting with the Lord’s church, you’re forsaking the Lord, too. The Lord loves His people and knows His church. If you quit _____ Him, He knows it. When you stop attending, you also open the _____ to temptation of every kind. To stay spiritually healthy, stay in church!

To become a member of the church and to be saved, _____ with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; _____ of your sins; _____ Jesus as the Christ; and be _____. When you’re baptized, the blood of Jesus will _____ away your sins and cause you to be added to the church. You’ll become a child of God, born again into His family. If you’re a member of the church of Christ and you’ve stopped attending, why not come back to the Lord and to the church. Get right with God!

Moral Excellence

2 Peter 1:3-4

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

In a world growing more secular and less religious, I wonder if we've _____ something precious. What is it? Virtue! Today, we're going to explore the _____ for virtue. God gives us precious and very great _____ in His Word. We don't want to _____ a single one of those promises. Considering those promises, we must _____ the will of God and practice it in our lives. God wants His people to live virtuous lives to demonstrate God's love and holiness to a world that needs to see godliness and love in _____.

Many people are content to go along with the _____. One man recently revealed that he was _____ with his salvation and didn't feel he needed to do anything more than what he had already done many years ago. God expects _____ than a lazy, complacent faith. He wants us to "be all the more diligent to make your calling and election _____" (2 Peter 1:10). Wouldn't it be sad to presume we are right with the living God, only to find on Judgment Day we were _____ right with Him or we had fallen from His favor?

Instead of listening to what people think, turn to the Bible to find a _____ morality that comes from God. We should _____ what God requires morally, rather than falling for worldly ways that ignore God and lead to chaos and confusion. Instead of following popular opinions and conforming to this world, we should look to God's Word as our moral _____. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may _____ what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." When people follow God's will found in Scripture they demonstrate a life that is indeed good and acceptable and perfect.

Second Peter 1:3-4 provides our context. God has given us everything we _____ for life and godliness through His Word, the Bible. God has called us by the _____ to His own glory and excellence. This message has granted us His precious and very great promises. Where else can you go to find the promise of eternal _____? Where else can you go to find the forgiveness of _____? Where else can you go to learn how to _____ as God desires? Where else can you go to _____ the corruption that is in the world?

Because this is true, God expects us to be diligent in our faith, to give it our _____ effort. We must make living our faith in God a _____. To do that we must _____ some virtues to our faith! Saying that we believe and demonstrating our faith are two different things. Sadly, many people profess faith but don't _____ it. We must do better than that!

First, we must add to our faith _____. Virtue is moral and ethical excellence. This is a comprehensive term that refers to our morals and ethics. It calls us to _____ what is right and to _____ what is wrong. It calls to the inner person to be everything he or she _____ to

be. This calls for moral thinking, moral attitudes, moral relationships, and moral behaviors. God _____ excellence from his people. Peter said, "But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). God is not mediocre but excellent, and He calls His people to _____ mediocrity to a moral and spiritual excellence!

Even in our everyday lives God expects us to _____ morally excellent thoughts rather than spend our days in worldly desires. **Read Colossians 3:1-4.**

Instead of complaining, coveting, and giving in to despair, God wants Christians to _____ on blessings and good things. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." People _____ those who have an exceptional character, virtue, uprightness, and righteousness. People appreciate purity and holiness. Employers want _____ people of character. Our society _____ people of integrity and character who live honest lives.

Second, we must add to our virtue _____. We need a true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowledge that comes from the Scriptures. If everyone knew and loved the Lord Jesus, we'd see a _____ world. Crime, war, chaos, and dishonesty would cease. People think ignoring God makes a _____ world, but they are wrong. The more people get away from God, the more confused and chaotic our society becomes. The prophet Hosea realized how devastating ignorance of God truly is. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for _____ of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

If we forget God and His laws, do you think we can count on God's continued _____? Let's not fool ourselves. If we ignore the moral laws of God, we'll have a life filled with _____. You may say, "I don't want to live by God's morals"; but I guarantee you will _____ everyone else to live by them. You want other people to be honest with you, fair with you, kind to you, and patient with you. If you think it is okay to ignore God's laws, then you have no _____ to complain when people treat you in an ungodly way. They are merely following your rules. Think about it. Don't you wish everyone followed the Lord's teaching?

Third, we must add to our knowledge _____. Self-control is the opposite of self-indulgence. First Peter 1:14-16 says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'you shall be holy, for I am holy.'" We must learn to say no and deny ourselves sinful _____ and place our hope in the Lord Jesus. The pleasures of sin do not _____; they will in time cause misery and ruin. The truth and the love of God give us courage and strength to find _____. The Lord teaches us self-control, so that we are able to overcome _____ and break the chains of sin.

Self-control leads to virtue. Self-control means I no longer allow what might hurt me to enslave me. I am no longer a child; I can and will do what is right and best.

Fourth, we must add to our self-control _____. Patience or perseverance enables us to keep on keeping on in our pursuit of a godly character, even though we may _____ for doing so. **Read 1 Peter 2:21-24.**

God sent Jesus to this earth to sacrifice His _____ for our sins; I cannot _____ how difficult and painful His trials and crucifixion must have been. I do know, through it all, Jesus did not call for twelve legions of angels or _____ His suffering. He suffered many _____ until He died. He never gave up on us. All the misery and insults didn't stop Him from fulfilling the Father's will. He patiently and lovingly endured the cross by entrusting himself to His Father. When we need patience, we too should entrust our _____ to the Father's hands.

Fifth, we must add to our patience _____. Godliness refers to our faith put into _____. Because we believe and take God _____, we live godly lives. Godliness is the devotion to God we _____ in our day-to-day walk. It's the attitude of reverence, which seeks to _____ God in all things. It desires a _____ relationship with both God and others. Godliness leads to a holy life and sets us _____ from what is common or profane. Godly people work hard to be more and more like _____.

The apostle Peter wrote, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16). Some folks think that because we're saved by _____ we don't have to worry about our salvation and can live any way we want and still go to heaven. This is not God's teaching; God expects us to _____ of our sins. Second Peter 3:9 speaks to Christians and says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is _____ toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Grace doesn't _____ the door to sin; it _____ it! Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to _____ ungodliness and worldly desires and to _____ sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

Sixth, we must add to our godliness _____. "Brotherly kindness" is the love saints should have for one another. The Lord Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Brotherly love arises from our common _____ in Christ, our common _____ in heaven, and our common _____ for God. Love for Christ overflows into loving our brothers and sisters fervently from our hearts. This love, based on a _____ relationship with Christ, can be sensed immediately even though two saints may never have met before. Peter wrote, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the _____" (1 Peter 1:22).

Seventh, we must add to our brotherly kindness _____. First Corinthians 13:1-3 says, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have _____, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am _____. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.” God is love, and we know how to love because the Father and the Lord Jesus loved us. Without love in our hearts and lives, we can _____ be what God wants. Loving God and others is our highest calling.

The Lord Jesus said, “But I say to you, love your enemies and _____ for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what _____ do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:44-48).

God loved us, even _____ we thought to love Him. “For God so loved the world, that He _____ His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). First John 4:19 simply says, “We love, because He _____ loved us.” We love God, because Jesus loved and forgave us. We love and forgive others, because God first loved and forgave us.

How are you doing on this _____ of seven virtues? Are you making your calling and election sure, or have you become _____ and forgotten how God forgave you?

Peter speaks clearly about these seven virtues. Peter said in chapter 2 verses 8-11, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who _____ these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make _____ about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you _____ these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

I suspect you want to be useful to God and fruitful. I suspect you want an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord in heaven. I know I do! I want to make _____ God’s calling and choosing me. I don’t want any _____ on Judgment Day. To do this we must be all the more diligent to make our calling and election sure. We don’t want to forget the great _____ the Lord Jesus paid for our sins. We want to add to our faith the virtues that God expects from His children.

To add these things to your faith, you must first come to the faith. You must become a Christian by placing your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, publicly confessing your faith, and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. God washes us clean with the blood of Jesus when we’re baptized. He gives us newness of life and adds us to His church. After you become a Christian, remain faithful to the Lord. Don’t let anything keep you from serving the Lord all the days of your life. Make your calling and election sure!