

January 12, 2020

What Matters? Matthew 17:1-5

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

We hear many talk about “my truth” and “your truth,” but does _____ have a truth? Today, we’re exploring God’s truth, and it matters! Occasionally in my conversations, I hear people say, “That’s just _____ interpretation!” They mean that one belief is as _____ as any other. They don’t believe that God has _____ clearly enough to make His will understandable. However, God has spoken, and He _____ what He says, and He speaks with _____. That’s why we study what He says.

I sometimes hear people say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you _____ Jesus.” For them, loving Jesus is all that matters. Some quote John 13:34-35, “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.” They correctly see love for others as an identifying _____ of Christianity. The problem is that they think love is the _____ identifying mark of a disciple. Are there any other things that identify a true disciple of the Lord?

God desires all people to be saved, but He also desires that they come to “the knowledge of the _____” (1 Timothy 2:4). Why? Because God holds the truth to be _____ to our salvation. The Lord Jesus said, “If you _____ in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). A true disciple _____ to the Lord Jesus and doesn’t try to edit or rewrite His Words. He doesn’t try to remake Christianity in the image of 21st century _____. “The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord _____ forever” (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Matthew 17:1-5.

Jesus distinguished his disciples not only by their love (John 13:34-35) but also by their willingness to _____ in His Word. The Lord said, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31-32). Continuing in His Words matters to the Lord. It has always mattered what we _____. We can’t claim to be true disciples of Jesus if we’re not _____ to abide in His Words. That’s how the Lord distinguishes His true followers from people who claim to be His followers. Authentic disciples actually hear what He said and _____ by His Words. Jesus once asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I _____?” (Luke 6:46).

For Jesus to be our Lord means that He must _____ our lives. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will _____ My commandments” (John 14:15). Loving the Lord means obeying His Word; we need to _____ what He says the _____ that He says to do it. The Bible warns us not to _____ the gospel. **Read what Paul said in Galatians 1:6-9.** This is strong and frightening language.

Not only must we be careful what we teach, we must also be careful what teachers we _____.

The apostle John said, “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of _____.”
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PO Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 1-800-321-8633

This study sheet is prepared by Jerry Campbell – www.searchtv.org; jerry@searchtv.org

Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. Now, if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not _____ him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds” (2 John 9). While some say this passage speaks only about the deity of Jesus, and certainly that’s under thought, we recognize that there is a _____ that cannot be ignored. The principle is to change God’s teaching is offensive to God and considered by God evil.

All of God’s Word is _____. To change any part of it or to go beyond its teaching is to ignore what is Divine, and if we just _____ ourselves we can offend God. When we change things, we aren’t listening to the Lord. Man-made teachings step into a realm that belongs _____ to the Lord. We have no right to say to God, “We think our way is _____ than Your way, so we’re going to change the teaching to suit ourselves.” Those who teach false doctrines _____ what is human over what is Divine. They actually defy God. Whether we teach a false doctrine or support a false teacher, we’re _____ of committing an evil deed. It matters to God whether or not we support _____. Love means staying with God and His Word.

What God says matters to our _____.! Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who _____ him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). We can’t _____ what we like in God’s teaching and _____ what we do not like. The standard, which will judge us on the last day is God’s Word. God is God, and He doesn’t take opinion _____ to determine the Truth. We live in an age that stresses political correctness, but God is not _____ to our culture. While we see changing _____ in our culture, God has spoken to all people in all places for all time (Jude 3). His will doesn’t change. We cannot assume that God’s _____ will include every idea that people embrace.

Rather than thinking that we can say and do religiously what we please, we should seek God’s face and _____ His will. The real issue is: Are we willing to _____ our will to God’s will and make Him Lord of our lives? Are we willing to listen to Him and _____ God? Many people think they can live and believe as they _____ and God won’t know or care! But God does know and God does care. We can’t believe man-made doctrines and practice man-made traditions and expect God to be pleased about it. He wants us to follow His will and to give _____ to His name. You can’t serve God and also serve yourself!

Jesus said, “Enter through the _____ gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are _____ who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are _____ who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). These verses surprise most people. They think that nearly everyone is on the right road, but that’s not the way things really are. The broad way is _____ and filled with people. It’s going to be popular, but tragic. Not many people are willing to _____ for themselves and find the truth by looking to the Words of Jesus.

Acting on our own wisdom, our own judgment, rather than obeying God reveals a lack of _____ in the wisdom of God. Proverbs 3:5-7 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your _____ And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be _____ in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.” We

must believe in God's _____ and not our own. God sees and knows things that we can't see or know. His understanding is unlimited, and we need to _____ that what He teaches is right. Even when we don't understand why He says what He says, we need to trust His wisdom.

Let's take a look at ourselves. Let's consider what we believe and practice as Christians. "Are my beliefs the will of man or the will of God? Are my religious practices the will of man or the will of God?" Can we read this teaching or find this practice in the _____? Or did this belief or practice come in later centuries by the _____ of men? If we can read that the Lord or the apostles taught this belief or practiced it, we can have confidence that God _____ of it. But if it's something that began much later, and is a departure from the Truth, it should have no _____ in the life of a faithful Christian. We should leave the humanly designed theology and return to the Lord's will!

People should investigate their beliefs and practices, asking the question, "Is this Biblical or is this something from men?" This would mean that we have to do some _____ study into the Bible to see what we would find. If we find it's Biblically approved, let's stay with it; but if it departs from the New Testament, we should abandon it. Forty-five years ago I was preaching in a country church in Oklahoma. I met a sweet, wonderful lady named "Oleta." She had been sprinkled as an _____ in her church. When she became an adult, she got acquainted with some members of the church of Christ, and they began studying the Bible.

When some members of the church told her that we baptize by immersion and only baptize people old enough to believe and repent, she was _____ and began asking questions. The members replied, "That's the _____ they did it in the Bible." This upset Oleta. She was just _____ that what she had been taught as a child was in the Bible! So, she got out her Bible, and she studied for days, looking for verses to show baptism includes the sprinkling of infants. The more she read, however, the more she realized that the Scriptures _____ the immersion of penitent believers. Oleta was honest and said, "I was studying to _____ them wrong, and what I found was that Oleta was wrong." This honest lady saw that even cherished beliefs can be _____. It wasn't easy for Oleta to reach that conclusion, but she was _____ with God and with herself. The baptism into Christ is a burial. The very word "baptize" means immerse. The Bible says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The Bible also teaches that the early church baptized _____ penitent believers. Acts 2:41 says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." Acts 5:14 says, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women." Acts 8:1, says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." These were penitent people _____ to believe and receive the Word. They weren't infants.

I've also known some who believed that they were saved by faith _____ and didn't need to be baptized. However, Mark 16:15-16 says, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will

be condemned.” According to these verses, preaching and believing take place before baptism, and one is baptized before he is _____. Once people heard and believed the gospel they were baptized, and this resulted in their salvation. Acts 2:38 says, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Ananias told Saul, after three days of prayer, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and _____ away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). If you’re being taught that baptism isn’t necessary to salvation, I ask you to study the Scriptures. While faith is necessary to salvation, the Bible also teaches the _____ for baptism. God washes away our sins at the time of baptism.

Some think that every doctrine of every church is okay, and every doctrine is as good as every other doctrine. But is that so? Doesn’t the _____ matter to God? It may sound neighborly to get along with everyone, but to believe everything is to believe _____. It doesn’t make sense to believe contradictory teachings are still _____ true. Those who hold this idea aren’t listening to God; they’re listening to _____ culture.

Galatians 1:6-9 says there is but _____ gospel. If there is only one, there cannot be _____. Would you want to accept a “distorted” gospel? What if you were given false _____? Wouldn’t that be tragic to believe a doctrine that departs from God’s Word? Believing everything is all right isn’t listening to the Lord Jesus; it’s listening to _____. Wouldn’t it be better to stay on safe ground? In the Bible, we can _____ the things that God approves and teaches. We can know what He wills for our lives, and for our churches, and for our beliefs. We need to conform to His Words in the New Testament. So why not _____ the Scriptures and find out for yourself? You might find that you’re like Oleta. Examine what you believe! See if it’s _____ to what the Bible teaches.

God’s declaration in Matthew 17:5, “Listen to Him,” is still relevant today. A thousand _____ seek our attention, but God points only to His Son, Jesus. Moses was a great _____, but God points to His Son. Elijah was a great _____, but God points to His Son. Only Jesus has the _____ of life (John 6:68). “Listen to Him!” Love Him, follow Him, obey Him, and serve Him. Study the Scriptures and _____ your life. Are you walking in the Lord’s way?

If you can’t read in Scripture what you believe and practice, abandon those things and come to the Lord. Let Him _____ you to eternal life. Remember Proverbs 3:5-7 quoted earlier.

Love moves us to trust Jesus. Love moves us to confess faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. We gladly acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and we belong to Him. Love also moves us to think of sin differently. We realize that sin will ruin our lives and so we repent of sin and turn to the Lord’s way. Love moves us to clothe ourselves with Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27). We’re baptized into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3), where Christ shed His blood. In baptism God washes away our sins and gives us newness of life (Acts 22:16; and Romans 6:4-7). Why not take the necessary step of being baptized into Christ? That’s when you’ll receive the forgiveness of your sins. Today is the best day for you to do that.