

Program Transcripts

December 2025



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

January 2026

Topics subject to change without notice

JANUARY 4 – THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament provides many instructions for the church. Through Scripture we can know how to obey the Lord properly. Our task is to evangelize the lost, edify the congregation, keep the saved right with God, and help the needy.

JANUARY 11 – DO WORKS MATTER?

Many religious teachers quote Ephesians 2:8-9 and say salvation is not as a result of works, so we should not imagine our works matter. The Scriptures, however, tell us we will be judged by our works. We are saved by an active faith, not a dead one.

JANUARY 18 – HOW JESUS ENDURED

Perhaps you have considered the terrible and agonizing things that took place on the cross and wondered how Jesus found the strength to endure the cross. The Scriptures give us some ways Jesus endured that can help us endure.

JANUARY 25 – DO NOT GROW WEARY

Life is filled with many challenges that can wear us down or cause burnout. Problems within and without sometimes make us wish we could run away to quiet place. Yes we need to rest sometimes, but then let's get busy once again!

The Work of the Church?

Today is a special day. I began working with In Search of the Lord's Way 17 years ago. They've been wonderful years but they've passed by quickly. I'm grateful for all the viewers and listeners to this program, to those who pray for us, and to my colleagues who work in this ministry. We strive to preach the truth in love. And in the 45 years of broadcasting, we have never asked for money. God has always provided for our needs as we strive to do His will. 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

Everything we do here is for the local church. We help people every week to find a local congregation where they worship and serve the Lord. Assembling with God's people is important. And we know some people are confined to home due to health reasons and other problems, but we encourage everyone who can attend worship to do so with a local church of Christ. Though some think little of organized religion, they're missing out on the love, fellowship, and purpose of what God intends for His church to be.

Our reading is from the book of Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 through 16. And talk about the work of the church.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

That's what God would have all of us to do. Growing up knowing the truth and working. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're grateful for Your love. We're grateful for the work that You have done in our lives. And help us to be workers with You and workers for You. Help us to reach the lost and to bring those who are erring back to the truth. In Jesus name, Amen.

The church is composed of people committed to the Lord Jesus by their obedience to the gospel. Christians were first known as disciples who listened and learned from the Lord, repented of their sins, and were baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Now according to the book of Acts, the disciples were men and women old enough to believe and repent. They chose to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, and to follow the Lord. Now there's a difference between Christians in name only and authentic, practicing Christians.

Jesus revealed those whom God calls disciples. First, the Lord Jesus defined authentic Christians from people who call themselves Christians. John 8:31 to 32 He says about to those who were Jews who believed in Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now we can't call ourselves true disciples, if we don't know what Jesus taught. Authentic disciples are students of the word and students of the Lord who seek the Lord and are willing to obey Him. Jesus said that, "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18 verse 37). Sadly many who call themselves Christians today, listen to human traditions, pop psychology, and doctrines never found in Scripture.

The Lord Jesus, second, defined true disciples who are Christians and they love one another. The Lord Jesus said in John 13:34 to 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." Yes love for others is necessary to discipleship. And if you don't love others, you can't be a true disciple.

Third, the Lord Jesus revealed that you can tell true disciple by whether or not they produce fruit by living what they believe. The Lord said in John 15:8 to 10, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, 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 commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." We produce fruit by keeping the Lord's commandments, by functioning as the church, the body of Christ we're going to stay close to Him. Now you might ask how Christians do this. Well, here are some things that God desires from us.

First, the church should be involved in the ministry of preaching the gospel to the lost.

The Lord Jesus said to His apostles in Matthew 28:18 to 20, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." They were to teach others what they were to do. The apostles were sent with a message and they must train others to teach that message to all nations till the end of the world.

The Lord also said in Mark 16:15 to 16, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." We have a responsibility to teach the gospel to the lost in every corner of this created world. And I'm thankful this mission was for all the world, because that includes the new world, where we now live.

Paul could say in Romans 1:14 to 16, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

There are many ways to teach and preach the gospel. We do it through preaching, radio, television, literature, the internet. We do it in our assemblies and through private studies. We do it through our behavior as Christians and our examples to the lost. Churches, as the body of Christ, are in the business of reaching out to the lost souls and bringing them to Jesus and to eternal life. Now every Christian should find some means to teach the lost or help others to do so. One of the best means is to bring people to our assemblies.

Salvation in Christ washes, sanctifies, and justifies! 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (and then he says) Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Bringing people to Christ is a ministry of reconciliation to God. Sin separates us from God, but the blood of Christ and the gospel brings us back to the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:17 to 19 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (and then he says) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

The cross of Christ has given us the hope of God's grace and favor. This is why we preach Christ crucified. Churches show how God condemns sin, yes, but he does so, so that people will repent and obey the Lord. People must respond to God's grace to be saved. 2 Corinthians 5:20 to 21 continues, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him (that is God made Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus died for your sins, so that you could be right with God.

Second, the church should edify or build one another up spiritually. Ephesians 4:11 to 12 says, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." God didn't want His church to be led astray by the false doctrines of the world. He wanted His people to be mature spiritually. "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (that's Ephesians 4:14 to 15).

Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 2. He said, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." I tell you nothing can substitute for serious Bible study and the teaching that comes from those who are wise, Bible scholars who stay with the word. The Scriptures keep us strong in faith, and prayer and it keeps us close to God.

Now assembling to worship means we can strengthen one another and that's vital to the Christian life. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 urges us, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate 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."

The time we spend studying God's word, singing, praying, giving of our means, and partaking of the Lord's Supper is vital to our souls. And those who stop assembling lose the blessings of the mutual strength that comes from brothers and sisters of like faith. They lose the stimulation to love and to do good works. They miss the opportunities that come from spiritual training. I tell you we all need each other to be stronger and better prepared to meet the challenges of life.

Third, the church should strive to keep the saved right with God. People who were once saved can leave the truth and lose their salvation. Yes they can. It's not the person who starts out strong but the one who remains faithful and involved that is saved. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, "it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." The Lord told the persecuted at Smyrna in Revelation 2 and verse 10, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Those who are mature and spiritual need to watch out for those who are young and weak as they face the challenges of sin and the things of this world. Young Christians often make bad decisions and they need encouragement and teaching. Galatians 6 and verse 1 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." 2 Timothy 2 and verse 24 to 26 continues, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

Yes, a child of God can lose his salvation, if he turns away from the Lord. And so we must bring those who stray back to God. James 5:19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Now just as the father opened his arms to the Prodigal son, so we should welcome back those who come home and reach out for them.

Fourth, Christians provide for those in need. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." 1 Timothy 6 verses 17 to 19 says, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

I tell you how we live as Christians matter it matters! Christianity is a life of doing good. A life of caring for others and teaching. Jesus healed the sick, He fed the hungry, He lifted up the oppressed, He freed the captives from sin, but He also taught them the truth. He showed them how to live godly and righteous lives. And wherever He went, broken lives transformed into productive people. Slaves of sin became slaves of righteousness. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Are you working for the Lord?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help always to love You from all our hearts. To serve You and to serve others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you aren't devoted to Christ Jesus and His truth, willing to deny yourself, willing to take up your cross daily, and willing to follow Him in every way for the rest of your life, then you aren't living up to being a disciple. The Lord's church is more than a social club. Loving others is important, but truly hearing the truth and producing fruit are also necessary to be a true disciples. If you don't believe what Jesus teaches in Scripture, you really don't believe in Jesus. And if you don't practice what the Lord instructs, you aren't following Christ.

Being in a religious group that calls itself Christian isn't the same as truly following the Lord. Many groups that say they are Christians follow doctrines and practices of the sixth or the sixteenth century. You cannot follow the world's beliefs and follow the words of Jesus at the same time. Authentic Christianity follows the New Testament and doesn't burden itself with centuries of human traditions and innovations. Romans 12 verse 2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, 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." The Lord's teaching is good and acceptable and perfect. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life.

To become a Christian, to be born again, you must believe in the Lord Jesus, you must repent of your sins and turn to righteousness, you must confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and you must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Romans 6 and verses 3 to 7 says that in baptism you rise to walk in newness of life, freed from the enslavement of sin. Now God wants every person to know the truth and to be saved. And that includes you.



Date: _____

What is the title and main subject of this lesson?

What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?

If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?

Why is this message important?

Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?

How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?

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Do Works Matter?

When we speak of “works,” some misunderstand. They rightly say one cannot earn salvation through works. Yes Ephesians 2:8 to 9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” We all needed to be saved, rescued, from sin by the Lord Jesus. So, we cannot speak of earning salvation. Now others cite passages speaking of the works of the Law. Galatians 2:16 says, “nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus.” So, we don't turn to the Law of Moses but trust in Christ for salvation.

Well in spite of this, there are works the Lord requires and He judges if we fail to do them. Paul said that he “received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith” in Romans 1 verse 5. Faith obeys. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” We must do the Father's will. The Lord asked, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” We must obey the Lord's voice. John 3:36 says that, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” So obeying God in faith does matter.

Our reading is James chapter 2 verses 14 to 18. And there James makes it very clear that we need an active faith.

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

There James makes an important observation. That faith needs to act. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are grateful for Your word that keeps us straight and helps us to do what is right. Father we pray that our faith will always be active, that we will live what we believe, and Father we pray that we'll always do Your will and love You from our hearts. In Jesus name, Amen.

James makes it clear that an inactive faith, a faith that doesn't do anything, cannot save him. Such a faith is no good, useless, and dead. Later James 4 and verse 17 says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” Now doing what is right matters to God. God notices when we obey and He notices when we sin. Faith alone without works is a failure and sinful.

God knows our works; God always knows what is going on in our lives. The Lord Jesus told the church in Thyatira in Revelation 2:19 to 23, “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, (he says) and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.” Later in the book of Revelation, Revelation 22 verse 12, there the Lord Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

Now how we live has always mattered to God. David wrote in Psalm 62:11 to 12, "Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work." Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 11 verse 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." The prophet Jeremiah also understood God's ability to see into our hearts and lives. God said in Jeremiah 17:9 to 10 that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Paul wrote to some Jewish Christians who were practicing what they condemned in others in Romans 2:1 to 5, he says: Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Paul then shows how God will deal with each person in Romans 2:6 to 11: He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

We will be judged at the end of time. Ecclesiastes 12:13 to 14 says, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." We may ignore our sins, but God remembers them. Sin offends God. The Lord Jesus said in John 5:28 to 29, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and (will) come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

In Matthew 16:24 to 27, God's word says: Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done." On that day, we'll wish we had followed the Lord.

The Lord Jesus urges us in Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." In verse 44 He says, "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." And Jesus explains then in chapter 24 of Matthew verses 45 to 51, "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

"But if that evil slave says in his heart, (well) 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and (he) begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces

and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” My friend will the Lord Jesus find you faithful, sensible, alert, and ready?

The Lord tells three illustrations of what the Judgment will be like and who will enter the Kingdom of heaven in Matthew 25. First, he speaks of ten virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. The five wise virgins prepared their lamps properly for the coming of the bridegroom, while the five foolish virgins failed to do so. While the foolish left to buy oil for their lamps, the bridegroom came, and the door was shut to the foolish virgins. They were not ready, and the Lord would not open to them. He said, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” My, wouldn't you hate to be unprepared? Wouldn't you hate to find the Lord did not know you?

Second, the Lord Jesus speaks of the master of three slaves, whom he entrusted with his possessions. The one with five talents gained five more talents, a great sum of money. The one with two talents gained another two talents. And he said to them both, “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’” But the third slave who received only one talent brought back the talent that he received. This third slave was wicked and lazy; he failed to do his duty. The master said, “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” You see the Lord expects us to use what He entrusts to us for His glory.

The Lord Jesus said in John 15:8 to 10, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, (Jesus said) I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” You see living for Jesus is how we love the Lord and how we produce fruit that pleases and glorifies Him. You see our efforts matter!

Third, Jesus in Matthew 25:31 to 45 speaks of sitting on His throne on Judgment Day. He distinguishes the sheep on His right hand from the goats on His left. He welcomes the sheep to inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Why? Well, He explains, “For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.” When Christians serve people in need, they are also serving Christ.

But to the goats, the Lord Jesus will say, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.” Jesus concludes by saying, “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” You see what we do for the Lord matters; and what we fail to do also matters.

Judgment is coming for all people. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5 verses 9 to 10, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Yes, we will be judged by what we do and whether we believe. Romans 14:12 says, “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

John wrote about Judgment Day in Revelation 20:11 to 14. It says, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which

were written in the books, according to their deeds." Now every person who has ever lived will be judged by what is written in the Bible, in the books, according to their deeds.

And whether we believe and whether we obey matters! 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 10 describes how "the Lord Jesus, one of these days, will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." Yes faith and obedience both are necessary. Is necessary to be right with God and to inherit God's promises. So the question I have to ask all of you is are you prepared? Is your faith a living faith or a dead one. Are you what God would have you to be.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are so thankful that You have written to us in Your word what Your will is. And Father we're thankful that You've given us many reasons to believe in You. And Father through our faith and our love for You help us to be obedient to Your will. To do what is good and right. To stay away from things that are evil and wrong. Father we pray that You will help us every day to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus name, Amen.

As we have seen faith obeys, and obedient faith is what God desires. Let me challenge you to read through Hebrews chapter 11, which reveals the men of old who gained the approval and commendation of God. Faith is absolutely necessary according to Hebrews 11 and verse 6, but the faith described in Hebrews 11 is not a dead faith. By faith Noah built an ark; by faith Abraham obeyed by going into a land of promise; by faith Abraham offered up Isaac; and by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith the people crossed the Red Sea on dry ground; by faith the walls of Jericho fell down; and many other acts of faith are mentioned. Never was the idea of an inactive faith considered. All this tells us to look to Jesus to run the race.

The doctrine of faith alone, a faith that doesn't act, is not wholesome. It is useless and dead. Believers in Christ always did more than merely believe. They repented of their sins, which is not an easy thing but requires discipline. They also confessed their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God. They didn't simply believe; they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Now the New Testament never speaks of a believing Christian who has not been baptized.

Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Now those who became sons of God were not people who believed in faith alone; they obeyed by repenting and being baptized into Christ and clothing themselves with Christ. Do what they did in Acts 2:38. Do what they did. Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.



Date: _____

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How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?

How Jesus Endured

Life is filled with struggles: job stress, financial burdens, family struggles, illness, and age. We face the struggles of temptation, self-control, sin, and guilt. Jesus faced tremendous struggles at Gethsemane and the cross. How did He keep calm on the cross, when people were mocking and abusing Him? How did he keep from calling twelve legions of angels?

The word "struggle" means something is hard or demanding. Some struggles tempt us to lose heart and to quit. When life gets hard, we all wish we had more ability to fight, to discipline ourselves to do the right thing. We don't want to give up on our faith but to have a greater devotion to the Lord. We love the Lord.

Have you considered how Jesus bore the last hours before his death. When Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, he knew what sufferings he faced. He knew Judas would betray Him and Peter would deny Him. He knew that He faced false accusations, and blasphemies, and scourging. He heard the crowd call for Barrabas to be released and for him to be crucified! Jesus saw Pilate wash his hands of the situation and turn him over to the Jews. He felt the weight of the cross upon his bloodied back and the crown of thorns upon his head. There never was a day when one so good was treated so cruelly and hatefully. Mankind did their very worst to Jesus. How did He persevere?

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 24. And there Jesus is calling us to follow His example.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (to) for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that Jesus was willing to suffer. To suffer greatly for our sins. And Father help us to die to sin and to live to righteousness. Help us to be the people You want us to be. And Father help us to endure whatever problems come our way. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus chose to face the struggle. Oh, He could have stopped it. Remember when the soldiers and Judas came for Jesus in the garden. Matthew 26:51 to 54 say, "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

Well what were the inner sources of Jesus' strength? Where did he get the nerve? Where did He find His courage, His fortitude, and His power to endure? Now if we can understand his sources of strength and if those sources are available to us, you know what, we can endure our struggles as well. I realize that Jesus had miraculous powers as the Son of God, but Jesus didn't use miraculous powers to overcome the agony of the cross. He used inner strength. Well can we find that strength?

Now Jesus drew upon some wonderful, non-miraculous resources of strength in the midst of his struggle. By His grace, He makes these resources available to us. And we can enjoy His strength in our

lives. Ephesians 6 and verse 10 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." We need the strength of Christ.

First, Jesus lived with the assurance that He was not alone. In John 16:32 Jesus said, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Jesus maintained a close relationship with His Father in heaven. Jesus frequently took time to pray to the Father. His prayers were built on love and oneness of purpose. Jesus loved the Father and was devoted to His will.

This is why Peter urges us in 1 Peter 2:21 to 24, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but (He) kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

You see Jesus kept entrusting Himself, putting Himself into His Father's hands. Jesus prayed four times in his struggle. First, in the garden, Jesus prayed in Luke 22:42, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." As they nailed his hands and feet, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). In anguish Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, but is quoting Psalm 22 verse 1). And as He breathed His last and died, He said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus stayed close to the Father. We can do that too, when have rough days we can be close. Hand your troubles over to God—even Jesus did this!

At the hardest times, we too can entrust ourselves to the hands of God. 1 Peter 4:19 says, "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." Sometimes all we can do is put ourselves into His hands. I love this poem: Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I commit my spirit into Your hands. All I am and have I yield to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what's best and what I should do, So I leave my soul within Your hands.

A second source of strength for Jesus was His passion for His mission. Jesus came into this world to save people from their sins. And He never forgot that. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." He cared about every person deeply. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. (and then he says) And yet for this reason (Paul says) I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."

Jesus focused more on saving us than saving himself. In Matthew 20:27 to 28 Jesus said that, "whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus on the cross was concerned about people. As they were nailing His hands and feet, He was praying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Such love, I confess to you, is beyond my comprehension.

Could Jesus, while on the cross, see the multitudes of people who would follow Him in the future? I mean His people of all time, in all places—every person who would believe in Him, love Him, and obey the gospel. I wonder if Jesus could see all the people in every country and century in the churches worshipping the Father. Perhaps He was thinking also of you, my friend, wondering if you would serve

Him. Jesus died to transfer people out of the domain of darkness and bring them into His kingdom, where there is forgiveness of sin. He wanted His people to be with Him in heaven.

Hebrews 12:1 to 2 reminds us to be faithful, “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 race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy, the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The cross was not joyful, but knowing His loved ones would one day enjoy heaven forever kept him motivated to endure the cross.

The third source of Jesus' strength was His undying and unfailing love for His Father and for people. John tells us of Jesus' meeting with his disciples on the night before He went to the cross. John 13:1 says, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” Jesus was willing to take the worst men could give to Him because of this overwhelming love within Him. It's truly hard to envision such love.

It's almost as if Jesus said, “Do your worst to me, I will still love you. Scatter, deny me, betray me, curse me, and I will still love you!” Jesus loved the people who crucified Him and hurled abuse at him. Remember, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Jesus loved people in spite of the fact that He hated the sin that separated them from His Father.

I can hardly understand or explain such love. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost to the people who crucified Jesus, they were pierced to the heart and cried out “What shall we do?” And the Lord opened His heart and offered them the forgiveness of their sins if they would repent and be baptized in His name. He didn't hold back his love from anyone who was willing to come to Him in faith, and obedience and love.

While He was on the cross, the love of Jesus never failed; real love never fails (1 Corinthians 13 verse 8). Love means doing what is best for others at all costs—and that's what Jesus did. Paul said in Ephesians 2:4 to 5, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price for your forgiveness, for your hope, and for you to have a home in heaven.

It's that love that creates in our hearts such a marvelous gratitude and thanksgiving. The word for grace in Greek is *charis*. The word for thanks in Greek is *charis*, the same word. This word basically means favor. When God gives us His favor, this is grace. He forgives us out of His love and mercy. And grace is His unmerited gift to us. When we give our favor to God, it's found in the form of thanksgiving and appreciation. God doesn't need our mercy or forgiveness; we need His. Our task is to be thankful enough to give ourselves to Him.

Now think with me of what Jesus did for us. Matthew 16:21 to 23 says, “From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must [yes, He must] go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’ But He turned and (He) said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.’” Jesus never set His mind on anything but on God's will and saving you and me. He focused on delivering us; His suffering and death must take place.

And our response to Him should be one of deep love and commitment. We should say with the apostle Paul in Galatians 2 and verse 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,

but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." Do you live and breathe Jesus Christ? Is He the first and most important thing in your life? Is He what you think about first thing in the morning and the last thing in the evening? Do you live by faith in the Son of God? And would you die for Him?

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." That love He showed for you and me ought to make a difference in our lives and whether or not we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for Him. It ought to make a difference in our moral lives, whether we go to church, how we treat others, and whether we tell others of Jesus Christ.

Our spiritual strength comes from loving the Lord with all our hearts. And we're able to bear the burdens of life because our Father is with us, because we're focused on the will of God in our lives, and because our love for God and others moves us to live for a cause that's bigger than ourselves.

Yes we can have those resources. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that You gave Your son Jesus. And that He was willing to sacrifice it all for our sakes. Father help us to be lovers of You and of our Lord Jesus. Help us to give ourselves completely and fully. In Jesus name, Amen.

Everybody faces struggles, but your struggles don't have to overcome you. Struggles actually are blessings to us as Christians. James 1:2 to 4 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (or patience). And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." God actually builds our strength through the struggles that we face.

Many people, unfortunately, play and pretend at Christianity. They don't change their lives, they don't fight temptation, and they don't serve the Lord. Many claim to be Christians but rarely worship with the church, rarely pray, rarely open their Bibles, and rarely say no to temptation and sin. They want help with their problems but are not willing to draw close to Christ to get it.

God wants us to draw close. And you have to draw close to Him to find that strength. James 4 and verse 8 says, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." If you let Him, God can transform your life; but you have to let Him. You have to take time to draw close to Him.

We can trust the Lord, who loves us. We can believe every word He says and we can commit ourselves to follow the Lord. We can forsake our sins completely and turn our hearts to the Lord. We can confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And we can be united with Christ by being baptized into Christ and rising to walk in newness of life according to Romans 6 verses 4 and 5. Now in baptism we're crucified with Christ, set free from our sins and born again as God's children. We can serve the Lord by serving others, showing our love for God. Now closeness to God, is a sense of mission, it's an undying love. All of these things can make a difference in our lives.



Date: _____

What is the title and main subject of this lesson?

What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?

If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?

Why is this message important?

Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?

How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?

Do Not Grow Weary

Today we're asking the question, "How can I keep my zeal for Christ and renew my passion for God?" I don't want a bored and dull faith. I don't ever want to forget what the Lord has done for me. The Lord created me, loved me, protected me, provided for me, taught me, disciplined me, and is preparing a home for me in heaven. How could I become apathetic toward the one who has heard my prayers and opened doors for me? David expressed my heart in Psalm 42:1 to 2, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" God is our hope, our joy, and our Savior. And staying close to Him will keep our passion alive. We need the Lord in our lives.

Our reading today comes from 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 5 to 11.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 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 lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice 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.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful that we can be Your children and Father help us to grow spiritually, to love You with all our heart and to love others. In Jesus name, Amen.

Have you ever been thirsty, I mean so thirsty that you must have some water? Israel knew what it was like to need water. Israel had rainy seasons but then they had seasons without rain. And their streams would flow in those rainy seasons but they would dry up at other times. They could collect water in their cisterns, hoping to have enough water to last until the rains return.

In the seventh century BC, Israel turned its back on God and followed after the vain idols of nations that were surrounding them. And God said about Israel in Jeremiah 2 verse 13, "for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." By forsaking God, they had forsaken their source of life. Don't imagine that something else can take the place of God. Nothing and no one can.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." When was the last time that you were thirsty for righteousness or for God? When did you last feel being close to Him, or needing to worshiping Him, or needing to listening to Him, and how that would be an immediate demand? You know it's easy to forget God or to take God for granted. God knows when people ignore Him, yes. He knows when forget Him, and forsake Him. Do you imagine that God will run to your side when you have neglected Him for many years?

Good relationships demand time and effort. Just like a marriage or any relationship it can grow stale, if we neglect each other, and so it is about our love for God can grow dull over time. If we want to strengthen our relationship, then we must take the time to make it grow and develop. We must first start paying close attention, paying close, close attention to what God says. Hebrews 2:1 to 3 says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just

retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" If we neglect to listen to God's word, we'll fail to please Him and risk the salvation of our souls. Yes.

Some people ignore God until they need Him. They focus their minds on the things of this world while they slowly drift away from God to pursue their own interests. They stop going to worship at church, they stop studying the Scriptures, they stop praying, and they begin talking and acting like the world. When some disaster comes along, they feel God then is distant. Well, God doesn't forget His people, but His people frequently forget Him.

If you want God in your heart, take a look at what the Lord endured on the cross. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." The Lord Jesus loves you beyond measure. He opened His heart to reach out to everyone. He bore the cross to die for the sins of the world, not just yours but every ones. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now He didn't rule you out because you were imperfect. You see the only people Jesus died for were sinners.

Look at the crown of thorns on His head, see the nails through His hands and feet, see His back bloodied by the scourge, see His side pierced by the soldier, and see His blood offered for you. He suffered the shame of people mocking Him. He sacrificed Himself, "and with his stripes we are healed." "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 5 verse 6). Now if the reality of what happened on the cross doesn't touch you like it once did, perhaps it's because you've let other things cause your heart to harden. Worldliness and sin cause people's hearts to grow cold toward God.

Jesus didn't die on the cross to proclaim a health and wealth gospel that puts you in the center of the universe. He didn't die on the cross to help you become a millionaire, or lose weight or overcome your fears and anxieties. He sacrificed Himself to redeem your soul from sin and to give you eternal life. His blood washes away your sins and causes you to be born again, so you'll be created in His image and become like Him. The Lord is interested in your inner man; and one day He will judge your soul on whether you gave of yourself as a humble servant.

Now in times of great prosperity, people tend to take their minds off God and put them on their personal pleasures. Just as Israel was about to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land, Moses, you remember, warned them in Deuteronomy 8 verses 11 to 14, "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Don't let your blessings keep you from remembering the One who gave you those blessings. James 1 verse 17 says that, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Now apart from God we would have nothing. God is the One who gives us the ability to think, to work, and to make money. Moses said in Deuteronomy 8:17 to 18, "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth." The world wants you to be proud of all your accomplishments. The Lord wants you to remember that every blessing you have comes from what God provides in you and for you.

Now some people turn away from God because they have faced a trying circumstance. Rather than pull away from God, that's when we need to draw close to God, that's when we face a struggle or a heartache. We should turn to God for strength, for help, for encouragement, and for assurance.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." In hard times let's remember God can do things men cannot do.

We draw close to God by making Him a priority in our lives every day. We study the Bible because it reveals God's thinking and His will for our lives. To know God we have to listen to His words. We pray, because we want God to know our hearts. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 teaches us to "pray without ceasing." God doesn't want us to quit praying. James 5:13 says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise." If you want to be zealous for God, then make being with God a daily exercise. You build good relationships that way; they don't just happen.

To draw close to God, remember that He, all the things that He has done for you. David said in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." God is ever good to you. Consider how God has answered your prayers, given you Scriptures of hope and comfort, and strengthened you through the years.

To draw close to God, keep your eyes on eternity. Colossians 3:1 to 4 says, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

To draw close to God, focus on the good. Philippians 4 verse 8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." When we concentrate on the negative, we lose sight of God; but when we concentrate on the positive, we grow more thankful to God.

Now if you wish to be close to God, give Him room in your life. You must uproot the weeds out of your heart and soul. You know just as weeds can take over a garden, so spiritual weeds can take over your heart. Weeds rob plants of the space and nourishment that they need to grow and produce. Likewise, distractions of life can rob us of our time and our energy for God. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 8 and verse 14, "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature." Many Christians fail to grow in their faith and in their relationship with God, because they devote themselves to things that push God out of their lives. We must not let the things of this world come between God and us.

Sin destroys our desire to serve God, because it replaces God and enslaves us. Yes sin enslaves. Ephesians 4 verse 27 says, "do not give the devil an opportunity." If you let sin into your life, it will dominate your heart. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Now to overcome sin, you must put it to death. Romans 6:11 says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." You can't cut down a weed and expect to kill it; you must uproot it. If you simply cut it down, you'll see it grow back. And sin's like that. You can't just cut back on sin and expect that sin will go away. You must remove it altogether. And unless it's completely stopped, it'll keep growing and crowding out what is good and productive in your life.

You can't grow as a productive and authentic Christian, if you crowd God out by your whims and desires. You must give Him room in your life to grow. Many people let their jobs, their hobbies, or their recreation come between God and themselves. None of these things are wrong in and of itself; but if you let something, anything else, take you away from God, yes you can lose your soul. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Now all of this matters because it affects our relationship and our zeal for God. When our relationship is strong, then our hearts want to serve God; but when our relationship is weak, we let other things dominate our lives. If you wish to be zealous for God, then set your heart upon the Lord Jesus and upon all the blessings He has in store for you in eternity!

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You have loved us and given us so many good things in our lives. Father help always to appreciate what You have done. To look to You for strength and encouragement. To always draw close You in every way. this is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Is there anything in your life that's keeping you from being close to God? You know some people never pick up a Bible, never utter a prayer, and never go to church. Is it any wonder they feel far from God? They've shut the Lord out of their lives. People grieve God when they shut Him out, yes. He hasn't quit loving or caring for us, but it tears at God's heart to be abandoned by His people. If you're letting sin have a place in your heart, then it's time to put an end to that sin. You can't love sin and love God at the same time. It just won't work. James 4 and verse 4 says, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Now to be rid of sin, you must repent. Repentance is an act of the heart that says, "I will no longer do what offends God but will please Him." In repentance we put a stop to sin, but we must also be forgiven. Yes. The Lord forgives us when by faith and repentance we're willing to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized. Now in baptism we're crucified with Christ, "in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6 and verse 6). Now baptism is time that God saves us from sin.

Don't let your love for Christ grow cold. Don't grow weary of your faith and lose heart. Renew your faith. Restore your heart. Revive your spirit. Demonstrate your faith and love. Listen to God, love Him, pray to God, grow a desire for God, and tell everyone about His goodness and kindness in Christ Jesus. Get involved.



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