



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
February 2015**

Finding the Truth John 14:1-6

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

Where do you find the truth about _____ life? Remember you're investing your _____. Today we're going to talk about the sure _____ of religious truth. God urges us, "Buy the truth, and do not _____ it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). Your most important _____ comes in buying the truth about God and about your salvation. Where will you _____ the truth? A thousand _____ are confusing us with contradictory ideas and fanciful notions. Is there a _____? Is there a _____ and undeniable source of truth? Yes, there is!

You've probably heard: "No one really knows what the truth is," or "There are no absolute truths," or maybe you've heard "There is no right or wrong, only what people _____." Do you remember the exchange between Pontius Pilate and Jesus just before His crucifixion. Pilate said to Him, "'So You are a _____?' and Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been _____, and for this I have _____ into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth _____ My voice.' Then Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?'" (John 18:37). That question has _____ in the hearts of many people: "What is truth?"

Webster defines truth as, "the true or _____ state of a matter." Truth conforms to _____ or to fact. Truth stands against what is _____. Courts seek _____ to determine innocence or guilt. Doctors test to find out the truth about our _____. Where do we find _____ truth? We want to know _____ we are, where we come from, _____ we're here, and _____ will happen to us when we die. Humans cannot _____ these questions on their own. We must _____ answers from above and hear from God.

Our reading comes from the words of Jesus in The Gospel According to John 14:1-6.

People search for truth, but some of their _____ aren't trustworthy. In fact, some of those sources are downright _____. Let's look at some harmful sources: First, some people look to their _____ for truth. Joseph's brothers got _____ with him; they sold him into slavery; but they _____ their father a wild beast had devoured him. Jacob _____ his ten sons and thought Joseph was dead. He mourned for years, even though Joseph wasn't _____ dead. The feelings were _____, but they were based on a _____. People often _____ their feelings. They want something to be true so badly they're _____ to believe a lie. What we feel often _____ from the truth. The Jews had a _____ for God, but it was not in accordance to _____ (Romans 10:2).

Second, some look to popular _____ or consensus for truth. They reason that if the majority believes it, it must be _____; but the majority isn't always _____. Opinion _____ are not always trustworthy. **Read the story in Acts 28:3-6.** Opinions and beliefs are as _____ and as

changeable as night and day. Spiritual truth is not like popular opinions; spiritual truths don't _____. You can _____ on spiritual truth from the Word of God that does not change. But you can't _____ on popular opinion.

Third, some go to _____. Authorities are a blessing, but they aren't always _____. Compare any history book, science book, or psychology textbook from 50 years ago to today, or even 25 years ago, to the present. Even your dictionary has more than _____ words in it that were not even in existence a century ago. People go to doctors and then they go to get a _____ opinion because they want to be sure that what the doctors told them is right. We have appeals courts because sometimes a court makes a _____ decision. Authorities disagree. We hear contradictory _____ about the foods we eat and the medicines we take. What is _____ for you in one report is _____ for you in another. We're often left confused and wishing for _____. The fact is, even authorities are human and make _____. Their knowledge and their judgments are imperfect and limited.

Some look inside their consciences for their moral _____. The conscience, if trained properly, can be a marvelous motivator to do what's right and to avoid what's wrong; but the conscience can believe a _____, and it can be _____. Paul said, "Brethren, I've lived my life with a perfectly _____ conscience before God up to this day" (Acts 23:1). He thought _____ Christians was the right thing to do at one point, it was already free in his conscience, but later on he found out that he was wrong! He admitted, "It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am _____ of all" (1 Timothy 1:15). He acted according to what his conscience thought was _____; but Paul's conscience was as wrong as wrong could be.

Some people's consciences harden to the point that they can't _____ anything. **Read 1 Timothy 4:1-2.** When a branding iron affects the skin, it destroys the nerve cells too, so the person can no longer _____. You might know people who get _____ feeling any remorse, who no longer have a conscience. If we're only looking within our consciences, within ourselves, for truth; we may not find that _____ of truth that is indisputable.

Where, then, do we _____ the truth? It is obvious that truth isn't in _____ (Jeremiah 10:23). Man, left to his own ingenuity, will _____ up what he wants but will _____ what he needs. Solomon said, "There is a way that _____ right to a man, but its end is the way of _____" (Proverbs 14:12). When people walk their own ways, never giving God a thought, they manufacture a false _____ for God. When people empty themselves of God they fill their lives with false gods, and false hope, and fairy tales. Without God, people lose their _____ of justice and morality.

Truth is essential to _____. Solomon urges us, as we've mentioned, "Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). Truth is _____ and it's _____. Telling the truth cost _____ His life. The apostles died because they wouldn't

_____ the Lord or His truth. One must _____ to get truth. Buying the truth may mean discovering what you believed before is _____. Truth requires you to leave an _____ error and start a _____ direction; it requires you to be _____. Buying the truth will lead you to _____ your ways. Confessing the truth means that we may have to _____. One reason people _____ to believe the truth is they don't want to change their lives even if that old life is destructive.

Once a person has the truth, he must _____ it and never sell out for shoddy thinking or worldly ways. It's tragic that some sell the truth to _____ some personal advantage. **Read how Paul challenged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4.**

We must find the truth because truth sets us _____. Jesus promised those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly _____ of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). Whether we know the truth matters because truth sets us _____. Free from what? Free from the _____ that deceive, enslave, and destroy us. When we know the truth, we can _____ the lies. Then lies won't have the _____ to hurt us or to lead us astray.

Many preachers today tell people what they _____ to hear rather than what they _____ to hear. I fear many are sold on false _____ found in the teachings of men. Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be _____" (Matthew 15:13). The religions of men, because they _____ with the teaching of Christ, will not stand and cannot save you. When people push their own ideas and _____ to hear Jesus, they are planting something that will be uprooted. By forgetting God, people _____ themselves and the lives of their loved ones. Foolishness will never grant us _____ freedom. Freedom doesn't come from falsehood or deception, but from the truth; it's the truth found in the words of Jesus that will _____ us. That's what makes the truth of God's Word so _____ to our lives. Nothing can _____ it.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the _____, and the _____, and the _____; and no one (no one, no one) comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus personalizes what truth is all about. He's so real, so genuine, so authentic as the Son of God, that He is the truth _____. He is the _____ of right and wrong. Every concept, every belief, and every religious doctrine must be _____ against the life and the words of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the _____ I spoke is what will judge him at the last day" (John 12:48). We won't be _____ by our feelings, by opinions, by human authorities, or by our consciences. We'll be judged by what Jesus _____. Doesn't it make sense then that we know as much as possible about what His _____ is for our lives?

Read what the Lord Jesus said to the apostles in John 16:12-13. Jesus promised _____ truth would come to His disciples. The Holy Spirit would _____ from God and would tell them what God said. He would _____ the apostles and prophets of the first century into all the Truth. "All the truth." That means the Spirit _____ through the apostles in the first century every religious truth. God wanted us to _____ that truth. If it's true, then there are no _____ truths being revealed today since the apostles revealed all truth.

Jude, in his brief letter, confirms this understanding when he says, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was _____ for _____ handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). The faith that Jesus wanted us to know has been revealed _____ for all time within the pages of the New Testament—the Word of truth. We don’t need to search the literature of the _____ for truth. The truth that leads to heaven is found in the _____. We need to read it, love it, meditate on it, memorize it, obey it, and share it with others, so that they too can understand the truth.

Read what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:22-25. The Lord purifies our souls when we _____ the Truth! That is when we _____ Christians, children of God, washed in the blood.

Truth is one of God’s great _____. While such gifts are free, they aren’t _____. The truth can _____ your life, but only if you open your heart and _____. Truth is like a medicine, it only works when you are _____ to swallow it. It won’t do you any _____ if you merely look at it, play with it, judge it, or throw it away. It only works when you _____ it and _____ it. The truth can _____ you free from sin, free from the heartache and destruction that sin brings. Without the truth we’re all left in _____, trying things that won’t last or won’t give us life. The truth is where it’s always been, in the Word of God! Many Christians find little satisfaction because they seek to hold onto _____ with one hand and hold onto the _____ with the other. They’re never really happy in their Christianity and never really happy in the _____. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will _____ the one and _____ the other, or he’ll be _____ to one and _____ the other” (Matthew 6:24). Why not give God a _____ hearing. Decide to _____ to God, who created you and loves you, and will change your life for the best. God ought to have the _____ voice in your life. The world wants to _____ God because they would rather live on their own terms. They forget that they’ll have to _____ the consequences of their actions one day. When we shut God out, we destroy what is _____ and we throw away our _____.

We all need a good long look at the _____. Once we see the _____ of God, we’ll listen to Him. You can be _____ of Jesus Christ and His love. You can _____ your life on Him and what He teaches. You can find _____ because of His promises. The God who loves you will always keep His _____; He will never _____ to you. Put your loving _____ in the Lord. Believe the gospel _____. Jesus _____ on the cross for you; He was _____, and on the third day _____ from the dead. Trust Him with all your heart, turn from every sin in _____, _____ to all the name of Jesus, and be _____ (immersed) in water so that your sins will be forgiven. When you’re baptized the Lord will _____ you to His church and _____ you as His child. He will _____ your life in ways you’ve never imagined. Don’t be _____ by popular religion, or feelings, or the notions of men. Look to Jesus for every _____ to the questions of your life. You’ll never regret it!

What Love Means 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

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

The highest _____ of life is to love God and other people, but what does it mean to love? The God of the _____ is the God of love, who loves us in _____ of all our weaknesses. How thankful we should be for the Bible because the Bible _____ all that God has done to _____ us now in this life and in the life to come. God's Word records His _____ for us and His _____. The more we _____ about God, the more we'll love Him. By studying God's word, we'll _____ in our faith and our devotion to Him.

Read what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Love is the very _____ of our relationship with God. Without love, we _____ nothing and we _____ nothing. Imagine waking up in a _____ without love, a world where people don't care—and they don't care that they don't care. Small offenses would start fights and wars because no one loved enough to _____. People would _____ selfish and ambitious, stepping on others to better themselves. A world without love is a world where the life of the unwanted would be _____, where children and the aged are forgotten, and where people sit silent while _____ takes place. A world without love is without _____ and filled with all the ugly substitutions that people find to take love's place.

Our scripture reading comes from Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

What does it mean to love? The love that we're talking about isn't the same thing as physical _____, though many call that love. No, "love," as it is used in the Bible, is the _____ of the self for the best interests of others. Love takes place when people put other's _____ above their own. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his _____ for his friends" (John 15:13).

Love is _____ than mere feelings, though love involves feeling. Love is an intentional _____ of the will; love determines to put self aside and _____ the object of its love. Love pays whatever _____, gives whatever _____, and runs whatever _____ to do what is _____ for another. It gladly _____ without complaint. Love will act even when _____ things are required. Love will _____ the harsh and the demanding _____.

Sometimes love is _____ others. At other times, love means allowing the _____ will of someone else to act in our lives. Love knows how to _____, but love also knows how to

_____ the love others graciously give. Peter didn't want the Lord to wash his feet (John 13:8), but his objection to allowing the kindness of Jesus meant that he had no _____ with the Lord. Love requires us to _____ others to enter into our lives to be kind to us.

Living without love means that our _____ will be empty and indifferent. We won't care about anything but _____. We will be like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan; we'll just pass by on the other side of the road and leave others to _____. A life without love means we'll turn _____ in selfishness, wanting only to fulfill our own lusts and desires. We'll be like the _____, rich farmer whose land provided abundantly but all he could think about was hoarding it up for himself. Living without love means we'll forget how to be _____ for what we have or how others sacrificed to bless us.

Living without love means that we won't have a relationship with _____. **Read what the Bible says in 1 John 4:7-8.** Living without love means living with _____. Without love, we grow angry at every _____ and we plot to get even. Without love, _____ flourishes. **Read 1 John 2:10-11.** Hate _____ everything with darkness, and fear, and violence. A world without love is a _____ place.

On the other hand, living with love means living with _____ and compassion. We see a _____ and we fill it; we see a _____ and we comfort it; we see an opportunity to _____ and we seize it. God is the great _____ of love. So, what we want to do is see how God loves.

First, God's love is _____. **Read John 3:16-17.** The entire gospel comes to _____ in this verse. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and it _____ others in. Here God sets the _____ of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love somebody dearly, you're willing to pay the price dearly for that person's responsive love. God paid dearly with the _____ of his Son, the highest price He could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our _____, and then offered us the _____ life that he had bought for us. When we share the _____ with others, our love must be like Jesus. We must be _____ to give up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

Second, God's love is _____. **Read Psalm 103:8-12.** We can understand a God who would forgive _____ who ask for mercy. But we have a God who tenderly searches for _____ and then joyfully forgives them. He must _____ an extraordinary love to do that! It is the kind of love that prompted _____ to come to earth to search for lost people and save them. This is the kind of extraordinary love that God has for you. If you feel _____ from God, don't despair because God is searching for you.

Third, God's love is _____ and beyond _____. **Read Romans 8:38-39.** These verses contain comforting _____. Believers have always had to face _____ in many forms: persecution, illness, imprisonment, even death. These problems could cause them to _____ abandoned by Christ, but Paul explains that these things cannot _____ us from Christ and His love. God profoundly loves His people.

Paul bowed his knees before the Father and he prayed "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19). If we could grasp—even a little—the immeasurable love of God for us, we would love Him and love others so _____.

How then should we love others? People are not "_____ _____" any more than people are born chefs. They have to learn how to _____ and they also have to learn how to _____. You may have the deepest of feelings, but love is a _____; it's an act of the heart and soul. Loving somebody means that you've paid enough _____ to their needs and their desires, that their needs and their desires become more _____ than your own. The Scriptures teach us _____ to love and _____ to love.

Many people want to be loved, but they don't understand the _____ calling of loving others. Love isn't merely affection that we receive from other people; it's our determination to sacrifice ourselves for the _____ interests of others. We love because we _____ to love. We love because we see the _____ of serving God and serving others.

Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 13:34-35. We show that we are the Lord's _____ when we love like He loves. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his _____" (John 15:13). True Christianity calls us to _____ ourselves for others. If we become distracted with _____ people treat us, we'll _____ how we treat others. Love means setting ourselves and our wills _____ so that we can bless other people. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:31-32.**

The devil _____ people to be arrogant, to be offended easily, to take revenge, to slander, and to grow bitter inside. The Lord Jesus leads us to be _____, even when no one else is kind; to be tenderhearted, even when everyone else is apathetic; and to forgive, even when the world hates us. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-48.**

God calls us to be His _____ and He expects us to grow beyond a purely selfish mindset. The Lord God sacrificed Jesus on His own. We didn't _____ _____ for Him to send His Son. No! He gave Jesus because He _____ loved us. **Read 1 John 4:9-11.** The Lord God

forgave us, not because we _____ it but because He is so loving. He calls us to forgive—even when people don't deserve it, because we are His _____. He calls us to love our _____ rather than hate them, to pray for those who persecute us, and to love those who don't love us. Why? Because we are God's children and that is the way God is.

Read Colossians 3:12-14. Have you _____ love? Can people _____ the love of God in your heart and in your behavior? Do you care enough to take up a brother's _____ as your own? Do you care enough to sacrifice yourself for a _____ cause?

Love means _____ our selfish, self-centered ways so we can sacrifice ourselves to serve God and to serve others. Life without love is empty and useless; it is sad and lonely. People who turn away from the love of God may not realize how much they've _____ themselves or what a precious thing they have _____ when they lose love. When people lose love, God's love, they also lose His _____; they lose His _____ in prayer; they lose a _____ in His eternal house. Will you love God? Will you give yourself fully to Him?

After the wonderful chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, comes the command of 1 Corinthians 14:1, which simply says, "Pursue love." To "pursue" means to _____ something until you seize it. Paul isn't speaking here about finding someone to love you; he's urging us to pursue the _____ of loving someone else. Pursuing means regularly giving of ourselves in _____ and _____ to do what is best for others. First John 3:18 says, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in _____ and _____."

Love means caring enough for others to _____ them about Jesus and about His love. We _____ Christ each week because we love you. When people get to know Christ, they _____ to love in the fullest sense of the word. They truly put other people _____ themselves. They won't _____ God or others by living sinful lives when they love God. God's love and His kindness moves us, motivates us to _____ of our sins and to live moral lives. Love won't let us _____ sinning against God or sinning against other people. God loves you, and He greatly wants you to be His _____. So, if you open up your heart, and you begin to love God the way that He loves you, you'll _____ your life. You'll draw close to God and become a _____. Because He loved you, Jesus died upon the cross to make atonement for your sins. Don't reject His marvelous gift of salvation.

Believe in Jesus, turn away from everything sinful, _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ. When you're baptized, you'll enter into a relationship with God that can last eternally. In baptism, God washes away your _____ (Acts 22:16) and He makes you His child (Galatians 3:26-27). As God's child, He will _____ your prayers; He'll _____ you an inheritance in heaven. If God loved you enough to send His Son to die on the cross for your sins, will you love Him enough to commit your heart and life to Him?

A Clear Conscience Romans 7:21-25

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

Many people carry around the _____ of sin and a guilty conscience when they don't have to. Today we're going to find out _____ to have a good conscience. God wants to _____ us and _____ us. He teaches us how to _____ and how to _____ Him in His Word, the Bible. The Bible is _____ of God's grace and wisdom. The gospel contains the _____ of God unto salvation, and that is why we must keep _____ His Word.

A Christian lady described an incident when she was only five years old. She was at her grandfather's house all dressed up in a white dress and new gloves; she was proud as she could be. Her granddaddy told her she could go into the kitchen and get herself a special cookie. Next to the cookies was a stack of quarters. Sure that no one was looking, she took a quarter. When she returned with her cookie, her grandfather asked her to show him her gloves. She held out only her left hand and he said, "Well, show me the other hand." When she reluctantly did so and revealed the quarter, she immediately saw disappointment in her grandpa's eyes. He paused a moment and then he "hugged me up" she said, and said "Darlin', you can have anything in the world that I have, but it breaks my heart that you would ever steal it." The woman said that even fifty years later this story of how her grandfather gave her the gift of conscience still brought tears to her eyes.

Few things can _____ the values and morals of a child more than the sting of lovingly administered _____. It helps _____ right from wrong and gives a powerful emotional dimension to issues of ethics and character. God Himself gave us our consciences.

Our reading today comes from the book of Romans 7:21-25.

The concepts of guilt and shame are often _____. Guilt takes place when a person feels responsibility and _____ for some offense, crime, or sin that he or she commits. Shame, on the other hand, takes place when someone has the painful feeling that arises from the consciousness that he or she could be the _____ of person who would commit a crime, offense, or sin. We feel guilt for what we _____; we feel ashamed of ourselves for having _____ it. The young girl felt _____ for having stolen the coin, but she felt _____ for having disappointed her grandfather. Shame follows guilt when people realize that they could do such a thing.

So, many people speak as if guilt or shame should _____ happen. It's an unfortunate thing that people think that. Oh, I understand that there are some cults and some parents who have _____ others with shame, and I'm not supporting that. Instead, that we should feel guilt and shame for truly sinful acts is _____ and actually _____ to our spiritual lives. I

worry far more about someone who sins against God or his neighbor and _____ no guilt and no shame than I do for the person who feels shame when he's really _____.

Some folks don't feel guilt when they _____. Many _____ the seriousness of sin. Rather than call sin evil some people _____ sin as a "mistake," or "a poor judgment," or "the result of wrong influences," or even "an alternative." By relabeling sin, they have attempted to _____ away man's responsibility to God. Many consider words like "sin", "judgment", and "hell" as _____ concepts. They would _____ them from our vocabulary altogether if they could. Sin, however, is not imaginary. It's _____. Its consequences are so great that Christ had to come and die to _____ us from them. We cannot wish away the _____ of "sin." Our consciences won't let us.

Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked _____ when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Why do the wicked flee? They know they've done something _____. After Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit, they _____ themselves from the presence of the Lord. They hid because they were guilty and ashamed to _____ the Lord for what they'd done. They had a conscience, and so does everyone, so do you. The conscience is a God-given faculty of the _____ by which we know about ourselves. We _____ when we do right and when we do wrong. **Read what Romans 2:14-16 says.**

Our consciences _____ us when we know we've done something wrong and _____ us when we know that we're innocent. Our conscience is our _____ sense. It warns us, nags us, and rebukes us when we are at _____, and then it assures us when we've done the _____ thing. The conscience serves as a moral monitor, and we should be _____ to God for this gift. When we sin, this moral monitor causes us to have _____ and urges us to _____. Why do we have sorrow? Because we know that when we sin, we have _____ the God who created us.

The very folks who think there's no such thing as sin still pass _____ on the wrongs of others. **Read Romans 2:1-4.** When we consider how God _____ us and how we have _____ Him by our sins, it makes us want to _____ our hearts and our behavior.

The apostle Paul once had to _____ the Corinthians because they tolerated sin. This made the Corinthians _____ over their wrong behavior. **Read what Paul said to them in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10.** When people feel grief over their sins, they don't want to _____ in that sin. They have to _____ that sin behind and they have to do what's right.

Sadly, some people ignore their guilt and allow their consciences to become _____. They pursue their wicked ways with such determination that they don't _____ what God or anybody else thinks. The idolatrous Jews in Jeremiah's day reached the point that they didn't feel _____ about their sinfulness or their idolatry. Jeremiah said, "Were they ashamed when

they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they didn't know how to _____" (Jeremiah 6:15). When we lose our moral sense of right and wrong, we are destined to _____ ourselves and everyone around us. When people feel no guilt, they'll feel _____ to do anything. The Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, had one of his characters in the book Brothers Karamazov say, "Well, if there is no God, then everything is _____." When people _____ God out of their lives and they _____ their hearts and their consciences, they too will feel that they can do anything they _____. The greatest problems of America today are not social or political; they are _____ and _____. You cannot throw God away and expect the quality and beauty of life to _____!

Sadly, some people today will say or do any shameful thing and never _____. Many have become so desensitized to _____ they will not blush about anything. It seems no _____ behavior is off-limits on television these days. Viewers seem to _____ more and more programs with sex and violence. One author asked years ago, "Whatever Became of Sin?", and another spoke of The Vanishing Conscience. Things have only gotten morally _____ since then. **Read the warning in Hebrews 3:12-13.**

Instead, we should be more like the apostle Paul who said, "I also do my best to maintain always a _____ conscience before God and man" (Acts 24:16). To have a clear conscience toward God means that you know what God _____. To know what God teaches you must _____ the Scriptures. Many people trust their _____ thinking rather than _____ to God's Word, and that gets them into _____. If your conscience isn't in line with Scripture, you can sin against God and not even _____ it, and you certainly won't _____ guilt. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems _____ to a man, but its end is the way to _____." Again Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, it's not in man who walks to _____ his own steps." This is why we must study God's word diligently. If I permit something in my life that is wrong in God's eyes, it is wrong regardless of how I _____ about it. Remember, in moral matters that affect our souls God has the _____ say and the _____ say.

We need to make it our _____ not to sin at all. Many people make it their aim not to sin so much, but God asks us to repent and to correct _____ sin. Pollution of the heart and soul is man's greatest _____. Many people allow _____ sins to grow into _____ ones because they permit little compromises in their lives. No one sets out to be a drunk, but only people who drink become drunks. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little thing is also dishonest in much." Little compromises _____ to devastating problems.

You may have read sometime back about two high school boys in Florida. They drew suspensions for eating so much garlic that no one could stand to have them around. The boys said that their garlic

binge began when they read garlic helps cleanse the blood and lowers blood pressure. At that point, each of them ate half a garlic head. For breakfast the next morning both students consumed three or four more heads of garlic apiece. When the teachers and the students complained about their odor, the boys simply laughed and they went on eating garlic. When confronted by school officials, one of the boys protested that the smell couldn't be all that bad. "After all," he pointed out, "we were blowing in each other's face, and we couldn't sense a garlic smell."

That's how sin works; with time it _____ our sense of morality. At first people experiment, then they _____ sin regularly, and eventually that sin captivates and enslaves them. People enslaved to sin will _____ and _____ about it. They cause their consciences to grow callous by wallowing in the sin until it no longer smells bad to them. They are offensive to others, but act indignant when anyone _____. Since they don't think what they're doing is wrong, they don't _____ why God or godly people are offended.

Sin warps our _____ about everything. **Read Titus 1:15-16.** Perhaps you know of someone who has a filthy _____ and a filthy _____. They can take the most _____ things and defile them because they're defiled in conscience and soul. It's hypocrisy to _____ like you know God while you _____ an ungodly life. You not only _____ yourself, but you also _____ others to blaspheme God.

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the _____ in heart, for they shall _____ God" (Matthew 5:8). A person who is pure in heart seeks to _____ God and _____ Him. He doesn't want any sin or moral stain to come _____ God and himself. He knows sin will _____ him from God. **Read Isaiah 59:1-2.** When people let wickedness and sin into their lives, it _____ a barrier between God and themselves. God will turn His _____ away from them and will no longer hear their _____. Do you have a _____ conscience? You don't have to _____ with guilt or shame. God can help you.

I've spoken plainly today because I care about your soul. Paul told Timothy, "But the _____ of our instruction is _____ from a pure heart and a _____ conscience and a _____ faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). That's our goal too. We want you to be right with God and to live with Him eternally in _____. The blood of Jesus can _____ us from sin, but God expects us to clean up our lives. **Read Galatians 6:7-8.** When we _____ in Christ, we purify our hearts and our lives. **Read 1 John 3:2-3.** What about you? Can you say with Paul, "I also do my best to _____ always a blameless conscience before God and before men?"

To have a clear conscience, _____ in Jesus and in His Word, _____ of every sin and follow the Lord, _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism we _____ to God for a good conscience. First Peter 3:21 says, "Baptism... now saves you, not as a removal of _____ from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Won't you get right with God and become a Christian today? I hope you will.

“Rejoice in the Lord”

Philippians 4:4-7

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

Many want happiness, but there's something _____ than happiness! What's better? Joy! Today we will explore the joy we have in _____. We know God is wise and good. He will always lead us into the _____ that brings us joy and peace, so we turn to His Word, the Bible.

If you ask people what makes them happy, they'll usually speak about all the things they _____ and _____ in their lives. They might speak of ideal houses, cars, or jobs, thinking they can _____ happiness in possessions or position. They might consider the satisfaction of their fleshly _____ or the accomplishment of some _____ in life that will bring them happiness. Many discipline themselves to _____ riches, fame, education, or maybe to set a record. These things, however, belong to this life; they're only _____. Solomon said, “behold, all is _____ and a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). What really matters? What _____ beyond this life?

Read the parable the Lord Jesus told in Luke 12:16-21. Have you laid up treasures in _____? Is God an _____ part of your life?

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Philippians 4:4-7.

Every person you meet is _____ for joy. Joy is _____ pleasure and satisfaction over a blessing or a positive relationship. The joy that we have in Christ is a mindset of delight and well being that comes from _____ and _____ God. This joy arises from _____ the blessings and promises that are grounded in what God has _____ for us in Christ. It comes from _____ God is our Father, that Jesus is our Savior and Lord. We can have no greater _____ than a personal relationship with the God who created us and can give us an abundant life here on earth and eternal life with Him in heaven. It's no wonder that Scripture urges us to “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Joy and our relationship with God are unchangeably _____. When we are _____ with the One who created us, who loves us, who sustains us daily, and who sent His Son Jesus to give us eternal life, our joy is multiplied with peace, hope and gratitude. Day by day God is _____ and He takes _____ of us. Every blessing, the answer to every prayer, the forgiveness of all our sins, and the love of brethren are good _____ to rejoice in the Lord always!

Christianity is _____ than a faith or a religion; it's a relationship with our Father in heaven. The Lord taught us to _____ to Him and to be _____ to Him. In prayer we can _____ out our hearts and our requests. God has given us His Scriptures, the Bible, to guide us and to lead us in the _____. Both prayer and following God's teachings are matters of _____ and _____. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 15:9-11.** When people _____ each other and maintain a right relationship, joy just grows and grows.

From the time that Jesus entered this world, He has _____ joy and hope to mankind. Everything about Him speaks of an abundant life _____ with joy, peace, and promise! When Jesus was _____, an angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds out in the field as they were watching over their sheep. The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with _____. **Read Luke 2:10-11.** Truly the beginning of the _____ joy in all history was the day that Jesus Christ came into the world.

Can you imagine all the joy that Jesus brought to people as He _____ sinners, as He _____ the gospel of the kingdom, as He _____ everyone who came to Him? The blind could _____; the deaf could _____; the lame could _____; the lepers were cleansed; and those who were maimed were made whole. Jesus fed the multitudes, cast out _____, stilled the terrifying _____, and raised the _____ and welcomed tax collectors and sinners. People's lives were _____ for the better for having known Jesus. He brought _____ joy everywhere He went.

Luke 15 contains three stories of joy, where something is _____ and then _____. A shepherd who'd lost one of his _____ searched until he found it. With joy he calls together his neighbors and friends and asks them to _____ with him. The Lord Jesus said, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in _____ over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Repentance is a _____ to rejoice. In the second story, a woman lost a _____. Searching diligently, she finds it and calls her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.

In the third story there is a younger son who causes _____ to be lost in sin by wandering off to a far country and wasting his inheritance. A famine caused him to be destitute and hungry. When he came to his senses, he came _____ acknowledging his sin, but the father rejoiced over his repentant son. With hugs and kisses, the father put the best robe on him, shoes on his feet, a ring on his finger. He said, "bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." And they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:23-24). God loves to _____ people; He rejoices when people _____ and turn their lives around. We too should rejoice when we see people turn their hearts toward God to follow and serve Him.

Jesus knew that He would die on the cross, and it caused Him great _____, to the point of death. Even those who went to the _____ with Him sorrowed; Luke 22:45 says Jesus found them “sleeping from sorrow.” When He was speaking of His resurrection, Jesus said, “Therefore you too have _____ now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your _____ away from you” (John 16:22). Though Jesus suffered through a painful trial and bore an agonizing cross, He could _____ joy even in His suffering (Hebrews 12:2). What could possibly be joyful in the cross?

The joy of the cross was not in the _____ or the suffering or the _____ that the Jews heaped upon Him as they mocked Him. No! The “joy set before Jesus” that allowed Him to _____ the cross came from what He was dying for. He died to _____ people, people who would follow Him in this life and live with Him forever. Acts 20:28 says He purchased the _____ with His own blood. He was _____ to sacrifice Himself on the cross because He _____ us. He knew that in dying, we would come to understand just how _____ He was willing to go to demonstrate His love and to save us from our sins. He knew that His death would make a _____ in our lives. So He rejoices every time a sinner _____ and comes to Him. That’s the joy that’s set before Him.

When the women came to the _____ after the resurrection, they came wanting to anoint the body of Jesus early on the first day of the week, and they saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. An angel had rolled away the _____. The guards shook for _____ of Him and became like dead men. **Read Matthew 28:5-8.** They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and they _____ to report it to His disciples. Jesus conquered the grave, and we can rejoice in the _____ that He gives to us that one day we will rise from the dead.

You may be going through a _____ time right now. You might not have _____ to rejoice about or to be thankful for. But even in our heartache, the Lord Jesus can _____ us. **Read James 1:2-4.** Your struggles may be the very thing that allows you to _____ and become the person that God wants you to be. So rejoice even in your _____. Like Paul, we can say, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the _____ that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). If all we see is the suffering, we may _____ what great things God has in store for us.

Christians find their joy not only in what the Lord has done in the _____ by forgiving their sins but also in the _____. Paul spoke of “Rejoicing in _____” (Romans 12:12). We have a _____ hope in Christ that cannot be taken from us. **Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.** Salvation and a home in heaven are certainly great _____ for joy. **Read 1 Peter 1:6-9.**

Christians will _____ various trials and tests; but when Christians face trials, their _____ sustains them. God sees the _____ of their faith and blesses them for it. Though

we've never _____ Jesus, we love Him. Though we do not see Him now, we _____ to see Him when He comes again. So, we rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible because we _____ that we have a place reserved in heaven just for us. Nothing can take the joy that comes with a _____ hope.

God proved His love for us by _____ Jesus to us, and Jesus proved His love for us by _____ upon the cross. When we demonstrate our faith and love for Him, our faith becomes more precious than _____. Our faith will _____ in praise and glory and honor from the Father. One day the Lord will _____ those who remain faithful. **Read what Paul proclaimed in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.** Do you love His appearing? Do you love the Lord? Do you rejoice in all that He has _____ for you? Do you have that _____ and that _____ deeply in your heart and soul? If not, I hope you'll consider the things we've talked about.

The joy that we want and need is _____ than a temporary happiness that perishes. We want a joy that can never _____, a joy that lasts forever. There can be no _____ joy than this, to know that we are forgiven, to know that we are walking in the truth, to know that we're right with the living God, to know that He hears our prayers, to know that He watches over us, and to know that He has prepared an eternal home in heaven for us. Lasting joy, which is so much better than a temporary happiness, comes only from Christ!

The wonderful thing about the joy of Christ is that the more we _____ it, the more we _____. Paul wished that everyone were a Christian, and so do we. We rejoice when we hear of people _____; we rejoice when we hear of souls forgiven by the Lord; or our fervent prayers being answered causes great joy. We rejoice when people are baptized into Christ Jesus so that they may become children of God; and we rejoice when saints are called _____ to be with Jesus. Indeed, the joy of the Lord is our _____ as Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 8:10.

I'm, asking you, do you have the joy of the Lord in your _____? Do you have the joy of your salvation? Are you at _____ with God, knowing that God has forgiven your sins? If you have unresolved sin in your life; if you have strayed from the straight and narrow road; or if you're a prodigal son or daughter; you're _____ the joy that God wants for you. Give your heart and your life to God.

To become a Christian, _____ in the Lord Jesus and His words with all your heart, then _____ of your sins, _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). When you're baptized, God will _____ away your sins (Acts 22:16). After the Eunuch was baptized, the Bible says that he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38-39). You can too, when you are obedient to the will of God.