



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

For

November 2015

What Are You Becoming?

Titus 3:3-7

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

What will your _____ be like in ten years? What will your character _____ about you? Today we're thinking about the _____. We know the Bible is God's _____ for us today. It has promises and blessings for those who take time to _____ it. It tells us of the glory and beauty of being in _____ with God. We want you to have those blessings and enjoy those _____. We can do _____ more important, more needed, or more valuable than studying the Scriptures.

Thirty years ago I _____ a remarkable man named Claire Annis. In our first visit he sparked my interest in a _____ he had heard, but he kept me waiting anxiously for thirty minutes before he revealed what that question was. It's a question that still, after all of these years, _____ me. Claire was a very driven man for the Lord, mailing out more than ten million gospel tracts or brochures all over the world to anyone who asked, and he did it at his own _____. These brochures reached thousands of _____ and helped establish many churches. He wrote them and printed them himself out of his garage. He was a man who put the Lord _____ and sacrificed.

Before he told me the question, he said that this question had burned in his _____ for days. I really wanted to know what that question was and I nearly _____ him to tell me. He said it had only _____ words: "What are you becoming?" The fact is that we're _____ in the state of becoming something.

We can easily lose _____ of what our lives are becoming. Some grow _____, while others grow _____. Some grow more _____, and some grow more _____. What are you becoming?

Our reading today is about the mighty man Sampson who had a weakness. It comes from Judges 16:18-21. That is a story of a good man who became something he didn't want to be.

Life is full of _____. Some _____ us, while others challenge us. Some _____ us become better people, while others _____ down our resistance to evil. Things rarely stay the _____ for long periods of time, even when there's a conscious effort to keep them the same. Changes in the things around us can and do bring changes in our hearts and sometimes our _____. Some of these changes are for our good, while others not so good. Because changes take place _____, they aren't easily perceived. People can mindlessly _____ to lifestyles that they would never have chosen earlier. They slowly become what they never _____ to be.

In this study, we'll look into the life of Samson, a man who underwent some _____ changes and became what he didn't _____ to be. Judges 16:4-19 tells the story: "After this he (Samson)

_____ a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may _____ him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we'll each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.' So Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great _____ lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.' Samson said to her, 'If they bind me with seven fresh _____ that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she _____ him with them. Now she had men lying in _____ in an inner chamber. And she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he _____ the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the _____ of his strength was not known.

"Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Behold, you've mocked me and told me _____. Please tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'If they bind me with new _____ that have not been used, then I shall become _____ like any other man.' So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

"Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you've mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'If you weave the seven _____ of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and _____ them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

"And she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I _____ you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these _____ times, and you've not told me where your great strength lies.' And when she pressed him _____ with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and he said to her, 'A _____ has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.' When Delilah saw that he had _____ her all his heart, she sent and she called the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the _____ in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him _____ off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to _____ him, and his strength left him."

God gave Samson the _____ of strength and up until this time Samson had served God and judged Israel for twenty years. His desire for the ladies though got him into _____. He loved Delilah, who _____ him out to his enemies. She doggedly searched for the secret of his great strength to _____ him. She used her _____ and whined until Samson revealed his secret. You'd think Samson would get _____ to her tricks. You'd think he'd send her away and tell her _____. Three times she said, "The Philistines are upon you"; but he didn't pay _____. Her persistence was greater than his common sense or his moral strength; she _____ him.

After his strength left him, Judges 16:20-21 says: “And she said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson!’ And he awoke from his sleep and said, ‘I’ll go out as at other times and shake myself _____.’ But he didn’t know that the Lord had _____ him. And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his _____ and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the _____.”

Samson lost _____ than his hair. Samson _____ what he never intended to be or wanted to be. He was now blind, a prisoner, and out of _____ with God. How did this happen? Sensuality had gradually _____ his resistance to Delilah’s charms, so he told her the secret. The pleasure of _____ dulls our commitment to righteousness and causes us to forget God.

Samson was not like Joseph. Joseph was constantly pressed by Potiphar’s wife to _____. **Read Genesis 39:8-10.** Joseph _____ temptation.

Like Delilah, the devil looks for our _____ spots. We must be alert and strong. **Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.** We can overcome the devil if we stay _____ to God like Joseph did. James 4:7-8 says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will _____ from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

Samson had a cavalier _____. He took for granted his physical strength and that it would always save him; but he _____ himself. God was the true _____ of Samson’s strength. First Corinthians 10:12 reminds us, “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he _____.” Samson fell to sin, and it can happen to you or to me. A thought can become an act; an act can develop into a habit; a habit can shape a character; and our character determines our _____.

Change may come about so gradually one may not _____ what’s happening. An alcoholic will hardly _____ he’s an alcoholic. He thinks he’s in _____, when he isn’t. A Christian who’s overcome by moral error will think he’s all _____. He doesn’t know the Lord has departed from him. **Read how Hebrews 3:12-13 warns Christians.**

People can _____ from the spiritual to the fleshly, from loving to selfishness, from being careful to being careless, from being committed to being indifferent, from being holy to being ungodly, from being involved to getting distracted, from being wise to being foolish, from having faith to having doubts, and then losing all faith, and from being responsible to being irresponsible.

What are you becoming? Because of Delilah, Samson became spiritually _____, unfit to judge Israel, and he disgraced himself. **Read Hebrews 2:1-3.**

If Samson’s story ended here, it would really be _____; but something happened to Samson to bring him back to God. Stories don’t have to end without _____! Judges 16:22 says, “But the hair of his head began to _____ again after it had been shaved.” Samson came back to God and learned to _____ on Him! Hebrews 11:32 lists Samson as a _____ of faith. What Samson became in the end is the reason why!

Judges 16:23-30 says “Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great _____ to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, ‘Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.’ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, ‘Our god has given our _____ into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.’ And when their hearts were merry, they said, ‘Call Samson, that he may _____ us.’ So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, ‘Let me feel the pillars on which the house _____, that I may lean against them.’ Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. Then Samson _____ to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, please _____ me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ And Samson _____ the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, ‘Let me _____ with the Philistines.’ Then he bowed with all of his _____, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.”

Samson prayed for strength while listening to the blasphemies of the Philistines praising Dagon and mocking the Lord God. God _____ his prayer. Samson _____ his sight, his freedom, his relationship with God, and his dignity. But it was at the bottom where he learned to _____ on and trust in God. Sometimes it takes hard things to _____ us back to God! To grow closer to God takes conscious, meaningful _____ on our part! It takes courage and discipline.

The most successful people frequently don't _____ they're successful; they simply keep on doing what they have always been doing and make a powerful impact on the lives around them. Some people who find success easily don't realize how vulnerable they are to the influences of the _____. To be a great servant of Christ takes _____ and effort! What are you doing with your life? What are you becoming?

The question my friend asked me is the simplest of questions, found in the _____ of every person from a little child to the wisest elder. “What will _____ of what I am doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole _____?” **Read how the Bible answers this question in Romans 2:6-11.**

So, I ask you, “What are you becoming?” What will God _____ to you when this life is over? If you _____ going the spiritual direction that you're going right now, where will you be in five, ten, or twenty years? Will you be _____ to God or _____ away? Will you be _____ to His will, or will you ignore Him, or will you rebel against Him? What are you becoming? Your direction will not change until you _____ to change. If you let _____ influence you in the wrong direction, you may end up sliding down a path that you'll regret. How sad it would be to wake up lost and not know the Lord had _____ you! Do you need to get right with God?

If you wish to become a Christian, _____ with all your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turn from your sins in _____ and turn to the Lord, _____ that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today!

Jesus Understands **Hebrews 4:14-16**

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

Have you ever felt _____, believed that no one knows what you're going through? Today, we're going to think about the One who _____. God has spoken to us in the Bible, and we want to _____ what He says.

A farmer had just relaxed on the front porch when a newsboy delivered the evening paper. The boy saw the sign, "Puppies for Sale." He got off his bicycle and said to the farmer, "How much for a puppy, mister?" "Twenty-five dollars, son." The boy's face dropped. "Sir, could I at least see them?" The farmer whistled, and in a moment the mother dog came bounding around the corner of the house followed by four cute puppies, wagging their tails and yipping with joy. A little later another puppy came straggling around the house, dragging a hind leg. "What's the matter with that puppy, mister?" the boy asked. "Son, that puppy is crippled. We took her to the vet and the doctor took an X-ray. She doesn't have a hip joint and that leg will never be right."

The boy dropped his bike, reached for his collection bag, and took out a fifty-cent piece. "Mister," the boy said, "Please, I want to buy that puppy. I'll pay you fifty cents every week until the 25 dollars is paid. Honest I will, mister." The farmer replied, "But Son, you don't seem to understand. That puppy will never, never be able to run or jump. That puppy is going to be a cripple forever. Why in the world would you want a puppy like that?" The boy paused, and then he pulled up his pant leg, exposing that all too familiar iron brace and leather knee strap, holding a poor, twisted leg caused by polio. The boy said, "Mister, this puppy's going to need someone who understands and loves him." My friend, we all need _____ too.

Our reading today comes from The Letter To The Hebrews 4:14-16.

Have there been times when you _____ someone, just anyone, would understand and love you with all your faults and troubles? There is someone who _____! He understands you and _____ you. You may be _____ inside or outside; He understands. You may be _____, but He understands. Your life may be _____; you may feel like quitting. He understands. You may have been offended and have reason to be _____. He understands. He _____ all about you. He knows what you've been through. He knows how you _____. He knows what you've _____. He understands and loves you in _____ of it all.

The Bible describes Jesus as one who understands all our _____. **Read the text, Hebrews 4:14-16, again.** Jesus experienced in his short life all the struggles and temptations that we _____. He knows what it is to be _____; and He also knows what it is to be _____.

_____. He knows what it is to _____ and to be _____. He knows how _____ it is to do what is right when things are difficult. He knew the _____ of the world turning against Him.

The Bible says that Jesus “knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He himself _____ what was in man” (John 2:24-25). As a human, Jesus understood hunger and thirst. Matthew 4:2 says, “And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was _____.” While hanging on the cross, Jesus, “knowing all that was now finished, He said to fulfill the Scriptures, ‘I _____.’” We also know Jesus got _____ at times. **Read John 4:5-6.** Yes, Jesus understood what it’s like to have the basic _____ of life.

Jesus never had a _____ or any children. No doubt He understood what it was like to be _____. His father probably died before his ministry began, leaving Him with a mother and several siblings to _____. Isaiah 53:3 says, “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of _____, and acquainted with _____; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

He had a hard life as an itinerant _____. He was _____ by some and _____ by others. He never owned a home, walked everywhere He went, and knew what it was like to be _____. Can you imagine from the time of your birth people _____ that you were illegitimate? Can you imagine the soldiers of King Herod the Great hunting you to take your _____? **Read Matthew 2:16.**

Can you imagine your family thinking that you were _____? The Bible says, “And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, ‘He is out of his mind’” (Mark 3:21). The people who were supposed to know Him, and know Him _____, didn’t understand how He could work miracles and teach such great things?

Can you imagine your own family and friends that you grew up with refusing to _____ you? John 1:11 says, “He came to his own, and his own people did not _____ him.” The people of his home town, Nazareth, rejected him and even tried to _____ Him. **Read Mark 6:2-6.**

Can you imagine your disciple and friend betraying you for _____? **Read Matthew 26:14-16.** Thirty pieces of silver? Exodus 21:32 says that this is the price of a _____. What treachery! Beyond that, can you imagine being betrayed with a _____? That happened to Jesus. Can you imagine being asked by your _____ to be crucified? The Father sent his Son into this world to _____ Himself as an act of love and to deliver us from our _____. It was most difficult for Jesus to face the _____. He understood how utterly _____ and humiliating crucifixion was in the first century. In Matthew 26:38 Jesus said, “My soul is very _____, even to the point of death.” Have you ever been so sorrowful, that you wished you could just _____ that very moment? The Bible describes His prayer in the garden in Luke

22:42 this way: “And being in agony he _____ more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.”

Can you imagine your close _____ and disciple lying three times about knowing you? **Read the boast of Peter in Matthew 26:33-35.** But when the pressure came upon him, he buckled under the pressure as Jesus said he would. Peter denied Him not once, not twice, but three times; and the last time in the very presence of _____.

Can you imagine having been bound and brought into _____ where people falsely accused you with lies? Can you imagine people purposefully twisting your _____ to condemn you? Can you imagine _____ on the cross, bruised and bleeding, while the people around you were mocking you? **Read Matthew 27:41-43.** Can you imagine remaining _____ during all their ugly mockery? Can you imagine being in excruciating _____ at the hands of very wicked men and never striking back?

Jesus understands the good and the bad, the easy and the hard, and the fair and the unfair. He knows everything about His people and His _____. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 Jesus _____ to each of the seven churches of Asia. To each of the seven he said, “I know your _____.” He knew the _____ and the _____. He praised them for the _____ and rebuked them for the _____. He praised them for their toil, their perseverance, their sound doctrine, their faithfulness in tribulation, their willingness to suffer poverty and even blasphemy for the name of Christ, and for how they lived, and how they showed love, their faith; He loved that about them, and their _____ to the Lord. But He rebuked them when they left their first love, when they compromised, when they supposedly were alive but had died, when they were distastefully lukewarm. Jesus knows about your _____ life too, whether you’re growing or dying or lukewarm. He knew churches sometimes _____ to be what they should be; and He rebuked and warned them because He _____ them.

He knows when you’re _____. I love God’s faithful promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13. The Bible says: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation also will provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” God understands your _____ and He will not let temptation and trials so overwhelm you that you can’t _____ them. When you can’t stand the temptation, the Lord will make a way of _____ so that you don’t fall into sin. He’ll bless you and be there for you. He promises, “I will never _____ you nor _____ you” (Hebrews 13:5). The God who understands is also the God who stands by us to _____ us through all the struggles that we face.

Jesus knows when life has _____ you with fear or heartache. He knows life can be overwhelming, but not one cause of your _____ escapes His attention. **Read 1 Peter 5:6-11.**

Jesus knows your victories and your _____. He knows your _____. If you _____ Him, He knows it. If you have _____ or forgotten him, He knows it too. If you've let _____ come into your life, He knows it; and if you're overcome by that sin, He knows it and He grieves. In spite of all He loves us anyway and wants us to _____ and to come to Him. He loves us _____ in our sins and weaknesses. To the lukewarm church at Laodicea, that He was ready to spit out of His mouth, the Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and I knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens that door, I will come in to him and I'll eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Though Laodicea was lukewarm and so offensive that Jesus would _____ them out of His mouth, still Jesus took the initiative to _____ a relationship with them. He knocked at the door and He told them they needed to _____. The Lord wants a relationship with you. He wants to be your _____. He took the first _____ in building that relationship by offering Himself on the cross to atone for your sins, our sins. Won't you respond to His love and His _____? Won't you let Him into your life? Put your trust in Him and obey Him today!

No matter who you are or what you've done in the past, the Lord's heart is big enough and open enough to _____ you and welcome you into his family if you're willing to come to him humbly and penitently. Saul of Tarsus was the _____ of sinners, but God forgave him. The apostle Paul said, "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received _____ because I acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to _____ sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an _____ to those who were to believe in him for eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:12-16). If God could forgive Saul of Tarsus, he can forgive you, too!

Won't you humbly come to Jesus? Come in love and faith by _____ of your sins, _____ Him to be the Lord and Christ, and by being _____ in water? The Lord is longing for you to come to Him in love and _____. "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). When you're baptized, He'll add you to His church. You'll be His child.

Sometimes Christians _____ away from the Lord. If you've forgotten Jesus, you've built a spiritual _____ between the Lord and yourself. Come back to the Lord today by repenting. Get back to church. Just as the Lord forgave Peter, He'll forgive you.

November 15, 2015

Judging Matthew 7:1-5

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

The Lord Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” What does that _____ and is all judging _____? Today we’re going to explore what the _____ says about judging. Stay with us. We can’t do anything nobler than searching for God’s _____.

Raymond Kelcy, one of my Bible professors, used to quip that the two _____ known verses of the Bible were 1 Timothy 5:23 and Matthew 7:1. He said the _____ reprobate in society, a person who never went to church, would know these verses: “Drink a little _____ for your stomach’s sake” and “Judge ye not, that ye be not judged.” Of course, people who use these verses to justify their questionable lifestyles frequently haven’t taken time to find out what _____ the Bible says. Our world especially likes to quote “Judge ye not” and then make an absolute _____ against all judging. So opposed are they to judging, they themselves will condemn anyone who judges. They think it’s okay to condemn people who judge, not realizing that they’ve just _____ judges themselves.

Sin, however, is a _____; it’s evil and destructive. Failure to _____ against sin allows sin to grow and destroy lives, families, churches, and even whole societies. People who practice evil never want anyone to condemn them; they want complete _____. Some use this rule against judging to protect themselves from being _____. John 3:19-20 says, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people _____ the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things _____ the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” How do we _____ with this dilemma? Do we remain _____ about evil or do we _____ out against it? What did Jesus mean when He told us not to judge?

Today, we’re reading from the Words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:1-5.

When we study a passage, let’s consider the _____ problems that the Lord Jesus faced. When Jesus spoke these words, judging others had become _____. People were condemning others not only because they failed to keep the _____ but also because they failed to keep the oral traditions of the Pharisees. They were assuming the place of God by making their _____ laws and then condemning others for not keeping them.

The Pharisees and the scribes were famous for hanging a mountain by a thread—that is, building a large set of rules out of a simple _____. Many of these laws had nothing to do with the _____ of the passage. For instance, Exodus 23:19 says, “You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother.” The Jews developed an entire _____ of what was and was not “kosher” from this passage and determined never to mix any meat with dairy products. The original law came because _____ Canaanites were boiling goat kids in their mothers’ milk. The Israelites of Moses’ day knew what it meant, but later generations out of misguided _____ took it to an extreme. They went beyond the _____ intent of the law and “hung a mountain on a thread.”

The Pharisees who held to these _____ traditions began to judge people not on the basis of the original law but on their _____-_____ applications of that law. They developed a system of self-righteousness and self-justification. In their _____ the Pharisees became judgmental of anyone who didn't live up to their high standards. They bullied the common people with their self-righteous attitudes and condemned anyone who didn't _____ their traditions. Jesus wasn't arguing against making any judgments at all but against making _____ judgments on the basis of human traditions. They wanted to _____ the speck out of others' eyes and didn't realize the log that was in their own eye.

The Pharisees showed _____ compassion or mercy on anyone who wasn't one of them. When it came to _____ your neighbor as yourself, the Pharisees thought only of other Pharisees, only they were their neighbors. James 2:12-13 says, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." **Read James 4:11-12.**

In judging others, we may not know all the _____. Just because we think some act is all _____ doesn't mean God approves of it, and just because we think some act is _____ doesn't mean that God disapproves of it. God sees and knows the _____, something we may not see. **Read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:4-5.** Many things are _____ left in God's hands. "The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9).

The apostle Paul dealt with a similar type of _____ judging in Romans 14. Some weaker brothers, whose consciences were tender but untaught, were judging others who felt the _____ to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Those who were eating that meat felt _____ for those who wouldn't eat. Paul instructs both groups to _____ judging the other. "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). Christians must be _____, in such matters of opinion, not to judge. He said in verse thirteen, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this – not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way."

Some think that making any _____ judgment is arrogant and intolerant. Many people today want to _____ moral judgments altogether and permit people to do whatever they _____. Many are asking, "Who's to say what is right or wrong?" When they say this, they show that they're ignoring both God and the _____ that evil does in this world. So, we ask, "Is it ever right to judge?"

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged" (Matthew 7:1). Some quote this passage thinking this is _____ that Jesus said on the matter. They don't want anyone to judge anyone for any _____. But there's more to _____. Consider Matthew 7:6: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." Who are the dogs and the swine? We must use our discretion to _____ who the dogs and the swine are. Jesus teaches us to watch out for temptation and to know _____ when we see it. He also said, "Beware of the _____ prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-16). We have to judge who is a _____. Life _____ making some judgments; and frankly, we cannot escape them.

Even those who say, “don’t judge” are not consistent. The _____ to be non-judgmental, the condemnation of judging, is itself a moral judgment. One can hardly keep from judging if one becomes a _____. People tend to downplay the sins that they commit, but they have a very _____ perspective when they have been sinned against. “My” harmless _____ about you is no big deal, but “your” cruel _____ about me is unforgiveable. People think that way. Drugs are a victimless _____ until one of “my” loved ones overdoses. I may support the sexual revolution until someone else sleeps with “my” wife. People’s attitudes change greatly when they become the offended rather than making _____ as an offender. Reality _____ us up.

It’s naïve to think right and wrong don’t _____. Children can’t always distinguish right from wrong. The Hebrew writer worried about Christians who weren’t maturing in their _____ as they should, people who didn’t know God’s Word. **Read Hebrews 5:12-14.** They were in _____ because they didn’t know good from evil.

Any parent struggling to rear his children knows the _____ judgments he must make for the sake of the children. He knows too that his task is to _____ the children to make right decisions. Making judgments is a _____ part of growing up. Fools resist ever making moral judgments. The wise realize that moral judgments keep them _____ from evil and harm. Proverbs 22:3 says, “The prudent sees the evil and he hides himself, But the naive go on, and are _____ for it.” Right and wrong matter because they _____ in different directions. Doing good will _____, while doing evil _____ lives. Everyone should know that.

If we listen to the _____ instead of listening to God, we’ll find that our morals today seem to be turned upside down. We _____ in moral chaos and confusion. **Read Isaiah 5:20-21.** Our culture has _____ God and His morality, and they have rewritten the moral laws to suit themselves. It’s made good into evil and evil into good. All this confusion has _____ our society’s moral strength and moral courage; and it will destroy the fabric of our society and lead future generations into misery and loneliness. God grieves over those who are unwilling to make judgments about good and bad because they _____ a permissiveness that infects the young and the weak with diseased values and morals.

Jesus described how we are to judge, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Jesus knew appearances could deceive, and so he cautioned people to make righteous judgments based upon the Scriptures and based upon the _____. The Scriptures are the basis for what is right and wrong, and facts tell us whether or not God’s laws are transgressed. Some people say Jesus _____ judged anyone; but Jesus passed judgment on Judas, calling him the son of perdition (John 17:12) and stating that it would have been _____ for him not to have been born (Mark 14:21). Jesus took a whip, poured out the coins, and overturned the tables, and drove the money changers out of the temple in John 2:14-16. In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced eight _____ upon the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites. Jesus also condemned Jezebel of Thyatira and her followers in Revelation 2:20-23, and He rebuked the others in that church for _____ her. Second Timothy 4:8 calls Jesus the “righteous judge.”

Jesus didn’t judge with a _____ spirit, for in spite of it all he loved Judas and even washed his feet with the other apostles. Jesus judged him on the basis of the _____. Judas was a _____ (John

12:6), and for thirty pieces of silver he gave a betrayal kiss to his Master. Unfortunately, some people, unlike Jesus, jump too _____ to mistaken judgments. They judge unfairly or unrighteously _____ the Scriptures are examined or the facts are known. Nevertheless, when the Scriptures are clear and the facts are known we _____ make judgments.

Paul led the way in judging the man who was _____ with his father's wife. He even rebuked the church at Corinth for _____ to deal with the wicked man. He said, "You have become arrogant, and have not _____ instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst" (1 Corinthians 5:2). He made it clear, "I . . . have already _____ him who has so committed this, as though I were present." When the church was assembled, Paul commanded them "to deliver such a one to Satan." He knew that if he allowed this man's sin to go on that a "little leaven leavens the _____ lump of dough" (1 Corinthians 5:6). So, his counsel was "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (verse 13). Judging is necessary when the sin threatens the _____ of the church.

The judgments of God are not my judgments or yours; they're God's judgments. God is God, and we aren't. If we desire to _____ Him, we ought to honor His commandments and judgments. Jesus said, "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I _____?" (Luke 6:46). The Lord Jesus will judge us righteously and fairly, but we must also commit ourselves to Him strongly enough to accept that what He teaches is _____. God is more holy, more wise, and more understanding than we are. His judgments are _____ and righteous altogether. Let's trust His _____ and follow Him. When we _____ Jesus, we know we're going in the right direction

Many people, even some preachers, have chosen non-judgmentalism as their _____ and they've remained silent about sin and remained silent about our _____ for salvation. When Christians remain silent, they can be sure the _____ will speak out. When Christians remain silent, _____ does as it pleases. When we ignore evil and immorality, we provide little _____ to the weak, the naïve, and the young. We need bold watchmen who will _____ the walls from the encroaching enemy and who will sound the alarm. We can't afford silence about sin. Is it ever _____ to judge? Yes, it's right; and sometimes it's mandatory.

The world loves for Christianity to _____ nothing and to _____ nothing. The world welcomes a _____ that's emptied of theological content and morality. But a gospel without teaching and morality isn't really _____. The gospel found in the New Testament emphasizes sin, judgment, repentance, and the cross. If God doesn't condemn sin, then we wouldn't _____ a Savior; but the ugliness and the horror of sin calls out for our Savior. We'll never see the beauty of _____ until we see the ugliness of sin, and we'll never see the enormity of God's _____ until we see sin as our enemy.

Come to the Lord Jesus to find the truth, to find what is moral and holy, and to find the love that saves us from the perils of sin. Hell is real; and if we don't _____ to God's grace for freedom from sin and from the perils of this life, then we'll bear the everlasting penalty for that sin in the life to come. Place your trust in the Lord. Out of love turn from everything evil. Yes, _____ demands that we leave the wrong and turn to what is right. Then be _____ into Christ upon the _____ of your faith. Baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. It unites us with Christ and causes us to be born again free from our sin. Oh my friend, why not come to the Lord today and be baptized?



Be Thankful Colossians 3:12-17

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

How long has it been since you _____ your blessings? How long has it been since you gave _____ a second thought? Today we're going to explore the _____ of giving thanks to God. We turn to the Bible to _____ about the power and the wisdom of God. We know "Every good thing and every perfect _____ is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). God is the _____ of life, of love, and of every blessing we enjoy. For that _____, we should come to know and to love Him. The best way to do that is through a diligent _____ of the Word of God.

Each year America sets aside a day to _____ God for our blessings and to consider our relationship with Him. God has truly given us _____ to be thankful. Let's never let it be said that we were ungrateful or forgetful for what God has _____. William Law in his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, said, "Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It's not he who prays most or fasts most; it's not he who gives most the alms, or is more eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but it's he who is always _____ to God who wills everything that God wills, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a _____ always ready to praise God for it." In the old Anglo-Saxon, thankfulness means "thankfulness." Thinking of all God's blessings and goodness makes us grateful.

Let's set aside this week for _____ than turkey and ball games. Let's genuinely thank God for _____ that He's done for us today and every day! Let's consider our relationship to the One who gave us life and _____ blessing.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossians 3:12-17.

David said in Psalm 100:4, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with _____. Give _____ to Him, bless His name." A thankful heart is a _____ heart and one ready to give praise to God. It counts its blessings and knows how _____ God has been to every one of us. David again urges us, "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" (Psalm 103:1-5).

The Bible says, "Through Him (that is Jesus) then, let us continually offer up a _____ of praise to God, that is, the _____ of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). Thanksgiving is not just a holiday for once a year; it should be a _____ of life. The Bible says that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from _____, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). Your food, your water, your

clothing, and your house—all of them come from His _____ hand. He does indeed crown us with lovingkindness and compassion. Some people grumble and complain about every little thing, not realizing _____ that God has done for us, and He does it every day.

God gives us many _____ blessings. He gives us peace, He gives us His Word, the Bible, to teach and admonish us; He gives us a song to build us up; and He gives us a purpose in life. The goodness of God makes us _____ people. His love makes us _____ to love all the more.

It's not always _____ to be thankful. Life is not always _____; and things don't always go smoothly. But, God said, "Rejoice _____; pray without ceasing; and in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). The test of a Christian is not will he give thanks when things are easy, but will he give thanks and praise God when life is _____? Christians rejoice always for Christ and His cross, even when the world _____ them. They don't _____ praying because life is rough. They pray even more. They give thanks "in" everything and in every circumstance. They know everything is not good or pleasant; but they also know Romans 8:28 that says: "And we know that God _____ all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." Not everything is good, but God can cause it to _____ for good. So we give thanks in everything.

The Pilgrims who came to America thought it _____ to thank God for their food and their lives. The Congress, in the earliest days of the United States, also thought it good to thank God for all His provisions of freedom and prosperity. On November 1, 1777, the United States Congress issued this proclamation to the whole _____:

"It is therefore recommended to the legislative or executive powers of these United States, to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise; that with one _____ and one _____ the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts, and consecrate themselves to the _____ of their divine benefactor; and that together with their sincere acknowledgments and offerings, they may join the penitent confession of their manifold sins, whereby they had forfeited every favor, and their humble and earnest supplication that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance; that it may _____ him graciously to afford his blessings on these governments of these states respectively, and prosper the public council of the whole; to inspire our commanders both by land and sea, and all that are under them, with that wisdom and fortitude which may render them fit instruments, under the providence of Almighty God, to secure for these United States the greatest of all blessings, independence and peace."

This early Congressional proclamation asked America to _____ their manifold sins and ask God to _____ them so that the government and the military may be fit instruments under the providence of Almighty God. The early Americans knew God was the _____ of their liberties. They also knew that if they abandoned the will of God that's found in the Bible they would _____ the favor of God and their liberties. **Read what they knew what God said in Jeremiah 18:7-10.**

Nations do not stand or fall on the basis of their _____ or their _____. No! Many nations have been very wealthy and powerful, yet they _____. We must understand that a nation stands or

falls on the basis of its willingness to _____ by the principles found in God's Holy Word. The God of Heaven, the God of the Bible, is the true King of our country and of every country. He is a greater _____ than all our weapons.

The people who began this country understood God's _____ in its establishment. Did you know the very first act on the very first day of the very first Continental Congress on September 7, 1774, that their first act was to _____ Psalm 35 and _____? Did you know the representatives of that congress when they _____ were kneeling, bowed with reverence, and praying in the name of Jesus Christ? Who was kneeling? Patriots like George Washington, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay. Did you know that they began every day with prayer at 9 o'clock?

The Continental Congress on May 16, 1776 appointed a day of fasting and prayer for the colonies. They said, "The Congress.... Desirous... to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely... on his aid and direction... Do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease God's righteous displeasure, and do this through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain this pardon and forgiveness."

Benjamin Franklin said in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, "God governs in the _____ of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His _____? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in _____ that build it (that's a quotation of Psalm 127:1). (Franklin said) I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, that we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

After the first battle of Bull Run, Abraham Lincoln declared September 26, 1861 as a National Day of Prayer and Fasting. He said, "It is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the Supreme Government of God; to _____ in humble submission to His chastisement; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to pray, with all fervency and contrition, for the pardon of their past offenses, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action."

When Solomon became _____ over Israel, he asked God's blessing on the nation. God answered Solomon's prayer with the words found in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. God said "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name _____ themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." Solomon knew being right with God makes a difference. By inspiration he said, "Righteousness _____ a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). One must wonder how long God will _____ the sins of this or any nation.

We cannot take God's grace and blessing for _____, that He will always favor us regardless of how we live. Israel made that _____, and Babylon destroyed them. When we

allow taking the lives of the unborn and selling their organs, when two of every five children are born out of wedlock, when we're mixed up about morals and marriage, and when some have ousted God from public life, do you think God will remain _____? Isn't it time that we all took stock of our spiritual lives? Isn't it time that we _____ of our sins and made changes in our lives? How can we _____ God one day and act like He doesn't _____ the next day? We should thank God and _____ what He's done for us every day.

Let's say "thank you" to God for His mercy and blessing. Let's never become like the nine lepers that Jesus healed. In Luke 17, they raised their voices, saying, "'Jesus, Master, have _____ on us!' And when He saw them, He said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving _____ to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And then Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine— _____ are they? Was no one found who returned to give _____ to God, except this foreigner?'"

Merely saying thank You to God is a good beginning, but God wants _____ than mere appreciation. He wants our _____, our _____, and our _____. The people of Haggai's day had grown so _____ with their lives they forgot the task that God had given them to do in rebuilding the temple. God said, "Consider your ways! You've sown much but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied;...you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns ways to put into a purse with holes" (Haggai 1:5-6). Could it be that we today are facing so many _____ because we too have forgotten our God? Could it be that we need to consider our _____ and be thankful for what God has done?

We cannot expect to _____ in sin or apathy and still _____ God. Galatians 6:7-8 teaches, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Isn't it time that we humbled ourselves and began _____ the Lord? There's always a point at which God's patience comes to an _____, when God sees that people have embraced evil and do not wish to _____. **Read 2 Peter 2:4-10.** We can't continue in _____ and expect God to continue to _____ us. Do you have sins in your life? Do you need to repent?

To become a Christian, put your _____ wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ and in His Words in the Bible, turn your heart from sin to the Lord, and cease from sin and live for Jesus, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Acts 2:38 still says, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That promise is for all _____ for all _____. When we're baptized, the Lord washes away our sins (Acts 22:16) and He makes us His children (Galatians 3:26-27). Oh, won't you become a Christian today?

November 29, 2015

“Come Back to Church”

Hebrews 10:22-25

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

The Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own _____ because He loves people. But many today think church is _____. Join us In Search of the Lord’s Way to find out what _____ says about worshipping with the church.

The Pew Forum researchers say 55 million adults in America identify themselves as having _____ affiliation with religion. There are nearly 100 million Americans who are “unchurched,” that is, they haven’t _____ to church in quite a while. Even though they’re not going now, most of the unchurched _____ to go to church. Many folks feel that you can be a _____ Christian and not attend any congregation. The Bible, however, places a high priority on _____ membership in church.

In Psalm 122 David sang, “I was _____ when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” David and others would sing this song as they were walking up to Jerusalem to the _____ to observe the feast. It was a psalm of ascent. Many people would _____ for days to worship God. They had no car or chariot, but they _____ to be in the temple in the presence of God.

When brothers and sisters in Christ meet together for worship, they are meeting with God and with Christ. The church belongs to them; it’s their family. Of course, the Lord wants to meet with every member of his family regularly. He loves each of you. When you stop going to church, the Lord and His people miss you. We’re here to encourage you to live the Lord’s way.

Our scripture reading today comes from The Letter to the Hebrews 10:22-25. That’s a great encouragement from Scripture to attend worship _____ at church. Recent studies say that large numbers of young adults have _____ attending church. Some find church _____ or irrelevant. Some say the church is _____ of hypocrites or is so judgmental. Some don’t feel as connected as they would like, and others say that they’re just too _____ to go to church. Life can certainly become difficult, but attending and participating in church offers an amazing opportunity to find spiritual _____ and help with the most difficult tasks of life. I want to _____ to some of the objections that people give for not going to church.

First, *there are hypocrites at church.* A hypocrite is someone who _____ to be something he doesn’t intend to be. Yes, there are some pretenders at church, but most people come to church because they genuinely _____ God and want to _____ good lives. Everyone is _____, and everyone _____, but that doesn’t mean that they’re pretenders or actors. It means that they’re _____. Jesus told the apostles at the Garden of Gethsemane, “the spirit is indeed willing but the _____ is weak” (Matthew 26:41), and that’s still true of people today.

Before we start _____ fingers at others, perhaps we should look at our _____ lives. Do you really want to let someone else’s bad behavior _____ you from God? It seems much wiser to let

God _____ with the hypocrites and to make _____ that we remain right with God. The Lord Jesus had to deal with hypocritical Pharisees during His entire _____, but He never let their hypocrisy keep Him from doing what was right! He kept right on _____ and _____ in the synagogues and loving people. Don't let someone else's _____ infect your heart and turn you away from God.

Second, some say *church is _____ or it's irrelevant*. When people use the word "boring," they're really describing their perspective or _____. Any activity can be boring or exciting _____ on the attitude of the person speaking. People usually get _____ of a worship service what they _____ into it. Give me the Word of God to _____ my soul.

David describes the "law of the Lord" in Psalm 19:10 as, "More to be desired are they than _____, even much fine gold; sweeter also than _____ and drippings of the honeycomb." This inspired psalmist was speaking about the Law of the Old Testament, which can be found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He found them desirable, valuable, and sweeter than honey. He found them so because they were _____ to him.

The Word of God is also meaningful, and it can be meaningful to you. It will _____ you where you came from, why you're here, and where you're going after this life is over. The Bible has the words of _____ life (John 12:50) and it has the truth that sets people _____ (John 8:32). The gospel is a message of grace and hope, peace and love; it's _____. It will _____ you how to live victoriously in this life and how to _____ God on the Day of Judgment with confidence. The Bible is God's message of _____ and a message of _____. It will teach you how to _____ the pitfalls of life and it will give you purpose and direction. As the Divine book, the Bible will _____ the Lord's will for your life. A sincere study of God's Word can never be boring to one who wants to _____ and to _____ God.

Third, *some people say that people at church are judgmental*. It may _____ that way. Actually, people _____ are "judgmental." Have you ever been to a ball game where an _____ made a controversial call? Everybody gets _____ about the call. Was he "in" or was he "out"? One group thinks the referee is _____, while the other group _____ him. Conservatives judge liberals, and liberals judge them right back. Everyone makes judgments. One of the greatest ironies of our time is the way people view judging. It goes like this: Well, I can judge you, but don't you judge me!

As for judging, the real _____ for making judgments about right and wrong is God's Holy Word. The Lord Jesus said, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment" (John 7:24). If God calls something sin, it is sin whether we _____ with God or not. God knows His will, and He only calls things sinful because they are _____ or hurtful. God said, through the prophet Isaiah, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

The people at church love others _____ to tell them the truth about sin. Sin will cause a person to lose his _____. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is _____." If I care about your soul, I'll talk about _____ and I'll also talk about _____. I don't say this to be _____, but because I know how dangerous sin is to your soul. If I didn't care about you I'd simply _____ the subject of sin and let you bear your consequences. I'd tell you sin is "no big deal"; or "there's nothing to

worry about!” To remain silent about sin or to lie about sin is _____ and it’s uncaring. Telling people the truth about sin is _____. Don’t be so quick to _____ your neighbor at church.

Fourth, people say, *Well, I’m so _____ I don’t have time for church.* When I hear this I find it’s usually an _____. Most people can determine their priorities and their schedules. If you’re too busy to _____ God to your schedule, just remember one day time will be no more, and you won’t have any more time. God will require your soul of you, and you’ll wish you could go back in time and _____ things.

The Lord Jesus _____ that people would be busy making a living and needing food and clothes and shelter. The Lord said, “But seek _____ His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Putting the Lord first means spending _____ with Him and His family, the church, in worship and in service. **Read James 4:13-17.** The right thing to do is to attend worship; to not attend could be _____.

Fifth, some people say, *Well, I don’t feel connected at church.* Some folks find it hard to make _____ at church the way they would like. The best way to _____ friends is to _____ a friend. Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man *that has* friends must show himself friendly.” That is, if you come to church late and you leave as soon as the final “amen” is said, you’ll probably _____ make many friends at church. Instead of _____ until everyone comes to you, reach out to other people. Get involved at church; get involved in some good work. Learn people’s names. Attend Bible classes. Volunteer.

People say they aren’t as _____ to God as they used to be. We ask the question, “Who _____?” Did God leave you or did you leave God? People can easily _____ away from God and the church. The Bible says, “we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*” (Hebrews 2:1). It’s easy to allow the _____ and its ways to cause our love for God and His church to grow weak. I hope that you haven’t done that.

Through the years, I’ve grown close to a number of people who came back to church after being _____ for a time. They were always so glad that they came back. From the time they left they felt _____ and distant from God. They were miserable and spiritually unfulfilled without Him and needed to _____ their way home.

When people return to church, *they find that they grow closer to God.* The Lord wishes all people “might grope for Him and find Him, though He’s not _____ from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:27-28). God is the Father of your spirit (Hebrews 12:9). He created you and has heard your _____ all your life. God gave His only Son, His only begotten Son, Jesus, for your sins because He _____ about you. He gave you the Bible so that you might know Him and love Him. Church will _____ you know Him even better.

When people return to church, they find that they _____ their personal understanding of what the Bible teaches. The Word of God is an _____ book filled with hope and truth. A lifetime is not enough to know everything the Bible teaches, but many people _____ their minds on everything but this great treasure of spiritual knowledge. The Bible says, “Be _____ to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word

of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). If you want to know God’s Word better, then _____ Bible classes and worship at church.

When people return to church, they find *help in the religious _____ of their children*. Raising children in our nearly pagan society is tough enough, and parents need all the _____ that they can get. The church provides an environment where people _____ to serve the Lord and to live righteous lives. Churches provide moral and spiritual _____ and make a lasting impact on young lives. Churches provide Bible classes, camps, retreats, and youth gatherings with opportunities to be around other Christian young people.

When people return to church, they *discover ways of handling _____ challenges*. The Bible says, “casting all your anxieties on him, because he _____ for you” (1 Peter 5:7). At church, you can _____ with brothers and sisters in Christ and _____ from the Bible how the faithful people of the Bible dealt with their problems in life. I’ve found people at church are “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another” (Romans 15:14).

Christians everywhere _____ struggles, yes! They’ve found the _____ of God and are finding that they’re able to comfort others and _____ them through their struggles. **Read that the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.**

The church is a _____ to us all. **Read what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.** The church can keep you spiritually _____, able to resist all the temptations and pitfalls of life. You _____ the church. If you’ve wandered away, come home.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Church is where people _____ each other up spiritually. We all need that strength and encouragement that comes from being around the people of God.

Occasionally I hear of someone who’s had a _____ experience at church. Someone has offended them or overlooked them. They react to this disappointment by _____ the church. If someone wrongs you, rather than quitting the Lord or the church, why not try a different approach. The Lord said, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. And if he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15). This is the Lord’s way.

When you quit church for these reasons, you’re actually letting someone come _____ you and God. Or when you _____ Christ out of your life, you also are putting your _____ in jeopardy. Listen again to Hebrews 10:25 and include verse 26, “not forsaking our own assembling together, as the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” Don’t push the Savior out of your life. Who else will shed his blood to save you?

God wants to bless you. If you’re not yet a Christian, you can come to the Lord in faith and love by _____ of your sins, _____ the name of the Lord, and by being _____. In baptism the Lord _____ away your sins and He adds you to the church, His church. It could be that as a Christian you’ve become one of the unchurched. Come back to the Lord and don’t let anything keep you from the church. Don’t let anything make your heart grow hard. Come back and find the love of God.