



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
September 2016**

The Heart of Jesus Philippians 2:5-8

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

If you want to _____ someone, look into his heart. We search God's Word for the Lord's Way. The Bible _____ that way for us so that we can know the Lord. We don't rely on opinions, or polls, or hunches. We know the Bible teaches the truth, so we _____ on God's Holy Word.

Jesus _____ people. God sent Him into this world because the world _____ Him so very badly. Jesus _____ about people and fed the hungry, healed the sick. He invited people to cast their cares upon Him. But, more than anything, He cared about their _____. He preached repentance, because He wanted everyone to be _____ with God.

The Bible _____ the heart of Jesus. It says, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Matthew 9:36-38). Jesus _____ what we needed, and that we needed His protection and guidance.

Galatians 1:4 says Jesus "gave Himself for our sins so that He might _____ us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Jesus lovingly died for us so that we might be _____. No one loves you _____ than Jesus.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:5-8.

Jesus has _____ existed in the form of God. He is indeed Divine. Some think of Jesus as a man and _____ His Deity. Some think of Him as a great _____ and only the son of Mary. Still others think that He was a great, moral _____. The Scriptures, however, present Jesus as truly Divine. They argue that He's always existed.

John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." In this passage "the Word" is a reference to Jesus Christ. He was in the beginning; He was with God; He was and is God; and _____ took place through Him. John 1:15 says, "John bore witness about Jesus, and cried out, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.'"

In His prayer to His Father, Jesus _____ of His existence before creation. He said, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you _____ the world existed" (John 17:5). Later, in verse 24, Jesus prayed, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My _____ that you have given Me because you loved Me before the foundation of the world." The Lord Jesus has always existed.

Jesus was truly God before He became a _____ person. Then, without ceasing to be God, he was willing to lay aside the glory of being _____ with God. He emptied Himself of divine

privileges by becoming human. Philippians says that Jesus Christ was made in the _____ of men and found in appearance as a man. He became something _____ than what He was before. He left His place in Heaven and took on _____.

John 1:14 says, “And the Word became _____ and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only (begotten) Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus Christ was quite unique. John saw His glory, but that glory didn’t come during His _____ ministry. It didn’t come until He _____ on the cross and was _____ from the dead. Jesus was God, yet became flesh. One might ask why.

Hebrews 2:14-15 answers that question. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might _____ the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” The devil possesses the power of _____ in that he tempts people to sin and to come under sin’s penalty, which is spiritual death.

Jesus took on flesh so that through dying He could take _____ of death. He shed his blood on the cross to set men _____ from sin and from the consequences of sin. He conquered death when He _____ from the dead. The Christian, then, who faithfully follows the Lord, does not have to _____ death or the judgment. He knows there is the _____ of heaven awaiting him.

By leaving heaven and coming to earth, the Lord Jesus _____ Himself, taking the form of a servant, literally a slave. Jesus didn’t empty Himself of His Deity, but of His _____. His focus was not on being equal with God but of taking the form of God’s _____ or slave on earth. The Lord Jesus said, “the Son of Man didn’t come to be served, but to _____, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Jesus was and is the Lord of Glory, but He walked upon this earth like a common man.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the place where the animals stayed, “because there was no _____ for them in the inn.” He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a _____. He worked most of his life in Nazareth in a carpenter’s _____. While Joseph and Mary knew of his miraculous birth, his neighbors in Nazareth took offense at His _____ to be the Messiah and sought to kill Him. To them, Jesus was _____ the carpenter’s son.

Jesus never did any of the worldly things that people associate with earthly greatness. He never led an _____, never ruled an earthly _____, never owned any land or built a great _____, never possessed great wealth, never wrote a _____, and never traveled far and wide. He never _____ or raised a family. He didn’t come to glorify Himself; He came to glorify the Father and to do His _____.

The Lord Jesus left everything holy and good to come and _____ sinful mankind from this present evil age. Second Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was _____, yet for your sake He became _____, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Paul used the example of Jesus’ servant attitude to speak to the _____. The Bible says, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let

each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Jesus never taught anyone to think of himself as _____ than others, or to be selfish, or to be conceited. Paul once asked, “What do you have that you did not _____?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Everything we have, everything we are, everything we hope to be comes by God’s providence. When we consider the grace and the providence of God, we have no _____ to be arrogant.

The Lord Jesus practiced and taught _____. Jesus taught his disciples, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and _____ of all” (Mark 9:35). He was saying, “You don’t become great by putting yourself before everyone else. You become great by putting yourself _____, by serving other people.” God doesn’t want arrogant people; He wants people who greatly humble themselves. Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient. Servants and slaves _____.

A humble person has no arrogance and realizes His dependence on God. Humble people aren’t concerned with prestige. Jesus was Divine, but He stooped _____ in humility for our sake. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “Although he was a son, he _____ obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who _____ him.” The humble obedience of Jesus opened the _____ for your obedience and opportunity for eternal life.

The Lord described His humility in Matthew 11:28-29. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in _____, and you will find rest for your souls.” Jesus Christ was approachable by the common Jew, even by those who felt weary and burdened. The downtrodden and the sinner could find a _____ in Jesus. They found _____ for their souls in Jesus. The Lord Jesus never sinned, but He was not afraid to stoop down and lift up the fallen, broken people.

Read what Hebrews 4:14-16 says.

Many people shy away from God when they sin, but we have a high priest who understands _____ our weaknesses and knows what it is to be tempted. Rather than shy away from God when we’re tempted, we should draw close and pray for _____. The Father understands and will help us through temptations and struggles. We can receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus was obedient, and He did it to the point of death on a _____, not an easy thing. Many have been crucified, but none compares to His: there He bore our sins, taking our _____ and enduring the wrath of God that we should have received. The death of Christ was nothing less than Christ experiencing _____ for sin, so we would not have to bear it ourselves.

The Bible speaks of how personal this death was for Jesus. First Peter 2:24 says, “He himself bore _____ sins in his body on the tree, that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness, for by his wounds you have been healed.” Jesus’ death was a deeply passionate and personal, personal sacrifice for our sins, so that we could _____ forgiveness and spiritual healing. Second Corinthians 5:21 says God made Jesus “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might _____ the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus was entirely selfless in dying on the cross, so we might be blessed.

Jesus didn’t merely die for us and _____ us. People ask what is Jesus doing _____. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus is still _____ us today. Jesus is interceding for God’s children.

Hebrews 7:25 says, “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw _____ to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” He’s pleading the case for your _____ before the Father who is in Heaven. The Bible says, “My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an _____ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. And He is the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).

The One who prayed for the forgiveness for those who nailed His hands and feet is also interceding with the Father today on your behalf, if you’re a _____ Christian. Jesus never stops loving us as long as we _____ to follow Him. He’s constantly taking up our _____ with the Father in Heaven. The One who died for us is now pleading for our _____ forgiveness. Even when Christians _____ the Lord, He’s willing to go to the Father on our behalf. When I consider the cross of Jesus and His constant loyal defense before the Father, I cannot fully grasp such great, great love.

My prayer is like Paul’s in Ephesians 3. Paul wanted the church to comprehend the love of God, which is to some extent _____ our ability to comprehend. He prayed that they “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 _____, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Can you imagine the changes that you’d make if you really grasped how deep and wide the love of God is for you? We often take the love and the blessing of God for _____. We forget all He has done and all that He’s doing for us. We get so caught up in our own little world and our desires, that we lose _____ of the heart of Christ and His devotion to us. We desperately need the heart of Christ to be in our own hearts. It’ll make a difference. Do you have the heart of Christ?

Because Jesus humbled Himself, God has exalted Him. **Read Philippians 2:9-11.** God blesses those who humbly _____ Him.

We need hearts like the Lord’s heart. “Have this mind in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). We too must humbly obey God and sacrifice ourselves out of _____. Instead of challenging the Lord with our beliefs and our opinions, we need to humbly step back and _____ what God has to say, and _____ the Lord. Love and grace do not _____ us from the need for repentance or the need for obedience. Love moves us to do whatever He asks and to live every single day in His _____.

Love for God moves us to trust Him; to _____ to the whole world that we believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. So, we gladly acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and we belong to Him. Love also moves us to think of _____ differently. We realize that sin will ruin our lives and so we _____ of sin and we turn to the Lord. Put on Christ in _____. Baptism is when we go into the death of Christ; we’re baptized into His death according to Romans 6:3. It’s where Christ shed His _____. In baptism God then washes away our sins and gives us newness of life (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4-7). That’s why we need to take the necessary step of being baptized into Christ. That’s when you’ll receive the forgiveness of sins.



How God Speaks Today
Matthew 7:24-27

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

Where do you turn for spiritual _____? Many people think that God _____ to them through their thoughts and feelings. Can you _____ your feelings or is there something more certain? Today, we're going to _____ how God speaks to us today. We go to the Holy Scriptures because we know that they are from God and are utterly _____.

If you listen to religious radio or TV, you've probably heard someone say, "The Lord spoke to me and said...." or they'll say "let God speak to your heart....," suggesting that God speaks _____ to people today. Other people feel that the _____ they possess are evidence of God's will for their lives.

We're asking, how does God speak to us today? Is it through _____, or through feelings, or through councils and creeds, or maybe through the living _____? We believe the Bible is God's _____ of truth to us today. The Word of God says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2). God gave all _____ to Christ, who promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets to _____ them into all the truth. They _____ this truth into the pages of the New Testament. If we want to know the truth that sets us _____, we must go to the Word of God found in the New Testament.

Our reading comes from Jesus' lips in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27.

Those are Words of Jesus, Words to be listened to.

Because God speaks through His Son, we need to recognize the Lord Jesus as the _____ and _____ authority in religious matters. He has more authority than anyone, any group, or any church. He is the Son of God. Paul said God "raised Him (that is, Jesus) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). The church is _____ to Jesus, not to any man or any council.

Jesus said before He ascended into heaven, "All authority has been given to me in _____ and on _____" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus doesn't need a representative on earth, because He himself is the one and only _____ of His church on this earth. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "The Father loves the Son and has given _____ things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not _____ the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:35-36). There's no person in all the earth that's not _____ to Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord of all, and we need to listen to Him very closely.

We shall be _____ one day by the Words of Jesus. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak” (John 12:48-49).

We’re not going to be judged by opinion _____, by the _____ of men, or by some denomination’s beliefs. We will be judged by the Words of Jesus found in the New Testament, so we truly _____ to know what the Bible says; don’t we?

Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gave His _____ the Word that His Father had given to Him. In John 14:25-26, Jesus told the apostles, “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you (that is, the apostles) all things, and bring to your remembrance (that is, you apostles) all that I said to you.” God determined that the Words that He had given Jesus would be _____ by the Spirit to the apostles for their time and for all time. The Words of Jesus were not merely for the first century, oh no; but for _____ century as long as this world stands! God “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” God is speaking to us in the _____!

Read what Jesus promised His apostles in John 16:12-15. The apostles knew the truth of God—the whole truth of God. They were the spokesmen for God in their own day and really for _____ time.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote, “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 _____ which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). Jude, who wrote sometime between 65 and 80 AD, was already speaking of “the faith,” that is, that body of doctrine, which was “once for all time” handed down to the saints. What the Word said in the first century, it also says and _____ today in the 21st century. Jude wanted Christians not only to believe that faith but also to “contend” for it, to _____ it and to keep handing it down.

Paul told Timothy, his true son in the faith, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, you entrust these to faithful men who will be able to _____ others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul wanted the truth to be passed down from generation to generation. This is why Paul said, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). There is indeed just one _____, and we are to contend for it. When people get away from the one faith, they abandon the revealed will of God.

The writers of the New Testament _____ with the authority of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul said, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” Paul said what he taught didn’t come from _____ but from the Holy Spirit. God was _____ his teachings and his writings. That’s why we can say whatever Paul said, we can also say God said it, because both statements are true. God moved Paul to say the things he

_____.

Later in his epistle, Paul deals with women speaking out in the church. **Read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:34-38.** Paul would not be ignored; he had spoken the _____ commandment.

On another occasion, Paul defends himself by explaining where he got his gospel. Paul said, “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12). It was because of this that he could be so _____ about his gospel—that his gospel was true and right! It was actually the gospel of _____! In fact, the apostle Paul warns everyone to stay with his gospel and not _____ it. Anyone who changes his gospel risks _____ his soul and the souls of those he teaches.

Read Galatians 1:6-10. God’s written Word is _____ and unchangeable. When you get away from the Bible, you also _____ God! Paul spoke well of the Thessalonians because of their faith and obedience. He said, “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). God’s Word can work in our lives, when we are willing to _____ to it and _____ it to our lives. Unless we humbly _____ God’s message, we cannot receive its blessings.

God said, “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). God has always _____ his people to stay with what they have learned from Jesus and his apostles, not moving from those things or getting involved in human traditions or human ideas. There truly is but one gospel, so please, please hold to it!

With so many _____, so many denominations, so many non-denominational community churches saying so many different things, do they all speak for God when they contradict each other? When they contradict themselves and argue with each other, are they really from God?

The Lord Jesus Himself distinguishes people, and here’s how He does it. He does it by how they _____ and _____ His Word. He said to the Jews, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you _____” (John 8:31-32). To continue in Jesus’ Word means to _____, abide, or stay there. Jesus said “_____” disciples do that. Some people say that they’re disciples, but they go _____ to other sources of information. Some believe they hear from God _____; some trust in their _____; some merely look to whatever is _____ and “happening.” The unfortunate thing is that when they get away from the Word, they _____ God, too.

Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23. It’s not speaking religious language or doing religious things that make us _____ with God, no! A true Christian is one who _____ and one who _____ the will of the Father who is in heaven.

These people talked and acted like good, religious people, but Jesus rejected them because they did not _____ what God wanted and commanded. They stepped outside the will of God; and

they were _____. They did what they wanted to do; they did what they thought was _____. God was not subject to the cultural whims of anyone, and He's not subject to the cultural whims of people _____. A thousand people can say something different than what God says, but what God says is _____, and they will find themselves building their house upon sand if they make up stuff, and change or try to change the will of God. God hasn't changed, and you can't change Him.

If the "true" disciples remain in the Word, how do you _____ the church that you attend? Let me ask you, does your church _____ with the Bible or does it _____ from the Bible? There are an awful lot of _____ this day and time that tell an awful lot of stories and do all kinds of things, and maybe throw in one verse at the end. Let me tell you, if you've got a preacher like that, he's not a preacher! There are a lot of churches today that have preachers that will not preach against _____. Let me tell you something, if you've got a preacher like that, he's not a preacher of the _____, because the gospel speaks about sin and the answer to sin. You and I, one of these days are going to be _____ by the Words of Jesus, not by how we feel about things. The only _____ we have is the Word, the written Word of God, found in this book, the Bible. So let's stay with what we know to be _____ and _____. We have no _____, no blessing when we substitute our own ways for the Word of God. We truly become "lawless" because we aren't listening to God but to our own _____. The very best thing we can do is to _____ God's Word every single day and see whether or not the things we're hearing are so. Don't be fooled by religious people who are not giving you God's Word, but their own _____. Stay with the Bible, and stay with God!

The Bible taught in the first century some things we too need to _____. Hebrews 2:1-3 says, "For this reason we must pay much _____ attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It's very easy for us to become neglectful and _____ away from the things we have heard from the Scriptures. That's where the truth is! Not in our feelings, not in what makes us happy, not in some council or creed or human tradition. Go to the Word for the Truth!

Feelings can deceive and men can be _____, but God's Word has stood _____ for centuries. It says today what it said from the beginning. You can _____ it. Why not trust it and become a Christian? You do that by trusting and loving the Lord; by turning away from sin in _____; by confessing your _____ in Jesus as the Son of God before all; and by being _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you're baptized in water, God will _____ away your sins; He'll add you to His _____. So keep studying and growing in the Word every day of your life. My friend, do you have a close, peaceful, loving relationship with God? The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

People Can Change Luke 15:17-24

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

When you look in the _____ spiritually, do you like what you see? Today, we're wondering if we can change our hearts and lives, or are we _____ with what we have? We want you to know the Lord and to live with Him forever. Your friends, members of some churches of Christ in the area served by this station, sponsor this program; and they would love to have you attend Bible study and worship with them. When you walk through the door, you'll feel welcome and wanted.

The best _____ of life come from God's Word, the Bible. I don't know about you, but I need a lesson now and then. Lessons teach us, so we might not make the same _____ that we've made in the past. Lessons open an opportunity for us to change our lives and to do _____. Because they point to something better, we have _____ for the future. I thank God for the lessons of the Bible; they _____ me and help me to go in the right direction and avoid the hazards of life. Some people think that people cannot change. Have you ever heard someone say, "Well, that's just the way I am"; or "I can't change"; or "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." Or maybe, "Well it's genetic; and I was born that way."

When I hear people say such things, I have to ask, "Is that really true?" Are we _____ with no ability to make changes in our spiritual or moral lives? Are we unable to repent? I have to admit that that concept really doesn't square with what I've _____ in people or with what I _____ in the Bible. Through the years, I've seen all kinds of people make _____ changes in their thinking and in their lives. I believe you can too!

Our reading today comes from the most famous story ever told, the story of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:17-24. What a marvelous story.

Making changes in our lives is challenging, because the _____ to continue doing what we used to do remains strong. An alcoholic may stop drinking, but the temptation to drink will _____ over and over. The alcoholic must keep his _____ strong and remind himself why he won't drink. He has to fight the _____ over and over, but he can _____. There are thousands, thousands who have _____ the temptation. An alcoholic will always be challenged, but he can break the habit of drunkenness. Can people change? Of course, they can!

Many times, it's not so much a question of whether a person _____ change as it is "do they _____ to change?" Many people make the _____ they cannot change, when the truth is they don't want to change. People start sinful practices and become _____. They don't plan to be controlled by their appetites, but they become _____. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). That's a _____ reality. No one likes to be controlled. But because of Christ, it is not the _____ of the story. My friend, I tell you, there is hope for you! There is a way to overcome the past.

Two verses later, in verse 36, the Lord promised, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Jesus can set us free from sin and its _____ over our lives. Jesus helps the Christian to _____ above the failures and moral stains of the past. God can help us become a _____ person, freed from the old and born again. The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation—or creature. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The apostle Paul explains this in God’s Word. He says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the _____ of God is coming. And in these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you’ve put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:5-10). If people cannot change, why would God _____ it? God’s not cruel. He doesn’t expect us to do what we _____ do! But God knows what we can do, and He knows that we can change our thinking, our behavior, and our lives.

Read the story the Lord told about a young man who changed in Luke 15:11-24. This touching story reminds us of the _____ that people can wake up to the life that they’ve been living, and can come home to the Father. God meets every one of his children just like He did the prodigal son. He runs to them with open arms and He celebrates their _____. The lost can be saved, and the dead can become _____ spiritually. Change can and does take place! People don’t have to _____ the way that they’ve always been. They can change their lives. Repentance is a change of _____ that leads to a change of _____. God made us people who can change our thinking. We can control our _____, and we can control the focus of our lives.

The Bible says: “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and he keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done, for that he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?” (Ezekiel 18:20-23). God wants everyone to _____ to Him, to change and do what is right that they may _____ with him eternally. Regretfully not everyone will change, and that brings us a heartache.

I want to tell a _____ story of forgiveness and freedom. In 1935, a family in Oklahoma with eight children lost their father. The mother went to work as a nurse to _____ the family, and the children had to spend much time raising themselves. The youngest boy, as time went by, got into the wrong crowd and began to do all the _____ things that rebellious teens do. He often drank and committed crimes. He would rather _____ than pay for anything, even when he had money in his pocket. As a young adult, he spent many nights in _____. He was a strong, young man; and if he had been drinking, he would tear up his jail cell. He was wanted for theft and burglary in

several states. Once, when he came home to visit family in the 1950s, he stole a check-writing machine; he was caught and went to _____ for four years. This got his attention. While he was there in prison, his oldest sister and her husband came to visit him and talk about the Bible and his _____. Some fellow prisoners were also Christians, and they taught him what he should do to be saved. He learned he had _____ been baptized according to the teaching of the Scriptures and he _____ to be baptized.

He served his time and came out of jail in 1962 shortly before his mother died. At first, he was humble and spiritually motivated, but before long, he _____ to a rough life out in the oil fields of Oklahoma. He was often drunk and took illegal drugs. His mouth was foul and his behavior very obnoxious. For more than twenty years, he forgot the _____ he made to God while he was back in prison. In 1985, he attended my father's funeral and was very obnoxious; I said in my heart that I didn't care if I ever saw him again. I regret saying that now.

But the Lord had something more in store for him. In 1987, he had gained a lot of weight and the doctors told him that his heart was enlarged, like a cow's heart. They said he would soon _____ if he didn't change his ways. Many nights he would hunt raccoons and get drunk. He sometimes woke up in a _____, not really knowing where he was. The doctor's words, though, hit home. He remembered all the promises he had made to God and to his older sister while he was in prison. Frantically he approached every preacher in town to find spiritual help. But none of them had time for him. One even threatened to call the law.

Then he remembered the two family members who taught him in prison. He called me one Friday night and asked me to come to his house and _____ him about baptism. The next morning, I was there and I had my Bible. He knew that he hadn't been baptized according to the Scriptures and he wanted to know the _____. So I began with Matthew 3 and told him how Jesus fulfilled all righteousness and was baptized by John. I showed him that the one who believes and is baptized will be _____ (Mark 16:16). We learned that the baptism of Christ was the _____ birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5); and a person must be _____ again (verse 7). We also learned that we needed to _____ and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38). In baptism, we also learned that you go _____ into the water and you come _____ out of the water (Acts 8:38-39); and that baptism is an immersion; it's a dipping or plunging in the water. We also learned that when we're baptized it is at that time that our sins are _____ away (Acts 22:16). We learned that baptism is into Christ; that's how you get into Christ, and it's also how you get into the death of Christ; that we're baptized into His death, that we're _____ with Him in baptism, and raised with him in baptism to walk in newness of life (Romans chapter 6). We also saw that our old man of sin was crucified with Him in baptism so that we can be _____ from sin (Romans 6:3-7). We learned many other things about baptism that day, that is that baptism doth also now save us (1 Peter 3:21). And that He saved us by the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy (Titus 3:5). After we had finished about three hours of study, five precious souls went down into that large pond behind their house, and they were baptized.

From that very day, my uncle never _____ again. He began attending _____ every time

the doors were open. His language was godly and his attitude was one of love and faith. He opened his big old heart to everybody, _____ everyone, and _____ many, many prisoners. He began reaching out to the prisoners at the county courthouse, and soon many of them were being baptized. Then he went to other county jails, and it wasn't long until people there were being baptized as well. Soon he went to the Oklahoma state prisons where he taught young men who had fallen into the same sinful _____ he himself had known in times past. He would speak straight to them about sin but with lots of love, and they responded to it. From 1987 onward, he baptized more than a _____ souls into Christ with his own hands. My friends, I have to tell you, never, never had I seen such a great change in a man.

That kind of change is not so unusual for people who come to Christ. The Bible says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you (that is, in the Corinthian church). But you were washed (God cleaned you up), you were sanctified (God made you holy), and you were justified (God declared you innocent) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). God _____ them change from sinners to saints, and they made that change.

You probably know people who've left a sinful lifestyle and have come to Christ. They made _____ changes in their moral and spiritual lives. When you come to Christ, you become a _____ person. You have a new start! You're born again! If God could make a difference in the life of my dear uncle, He can make a difference in people that you know too. If He could make a difference in those Corinthians, He can make a difference in your life if you let Him. He can help you overcome every sin and become the kind of person that you want to be.

My favorite saying is, "I'm not all I ought to be; I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I'm going to be; but, thank God by His mercy and grace, I'm not what I used to be." God can help each of us become the _____ person that He intended for us to be. You can _____ over sin by giving yourself to the Lord. He'll help you overcome every sin and struggle that you face. Faith truly is the _____ that we have in Christ our Lord. So are you willing to come to Him?

To become a Christian, _____ with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And out of faith and love, love for Christ, then turn away from what the Bible calls sin, take up your _____ and follow the Lord Jesus. That change of heart, that change of life is what _____ is all about. The Bible everywhere teaches that people can repent. And after repenting, _____ your faith and be _____ into Christ. Yes, baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins can be _____ away. And when you're baptized, the Lord will cause you to be born again, a new creature. God will add you to His family, the church of Jesus Christ, the church of Christ; and you'll be His child, an heir of heaven. Won't you make that change and become a Christian?



Get More from God's Word

Psalms 19:7-11

We need to make every effort to be the kind of Christian worker that God accepts rather than one who is _____ when God inspects his work (2 Timothy 2:15). What people believe and teach matters to _____ and it matters to your _____ (1 Timothy 4:16). Only sound and healthy teaching can help us _____ strong in our faith. Paul warned Timothy to _____ out for religious teachers who did more harm than good (2 Timothy 2:16-18). If you do not know the truth, you can easily be deceived and fall into _____. God's Word provides us an unfailing _____ of truth by which we can test what is right and what is wrong. Because God's Word is utterly _____, we can place our faith and rest our souls on it (Romans 10:17). If you want a deeper _____ then go to the Word, the Bible. If you want to _____ the truth, then go to the Word, the Bible. If you want to _____ sin and error out of your life, then go to the Word, the Bible.

The Bible is a _____, but the Bible will do you no good if you leave it on the _____. If you yearn to get _____ out of your Bible, then read it over and over. Each _____ holds a vast treasure, and you'll not get it all at one reading. Read it _____ times. Get so familiar with its words and ideas that its message cannot fail to just saturate your _____. God wants His Word to be _____ on your heart (Hebrews 8:10).

If you are _____ of the corruption in our society, set your heart on the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:13-15). God's Word is _____ and it is all-sufficient for our spiritual needs. It will _____ us what is right and wrong; it will _____ us when we go astray; it will correct our _____; and it will train us in righteousness. The Word of God fully _____ us for every good work. That's why we should be "like newborn _____, (who) long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may _____ in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

Let's take some time to _____ at this book, the Bible. No book in the _____ of the world has been more loved and studied than the Bible, and it remains the all-time _____ seller. The Bible is unique. It's actually a library of 66 _____, written by about 40 men over a space of 1500 years.

Correctly understanding the Scriptures means that there are certain basic _____ that must be followed. The Bible must _____ for itself and should never be made to say things that were never intended by the writers (Proverbs 23:23).

First, familiarize yourself with the _____ - _____ books of the Bible. Each book is a treasure of itself, written in its own time and for its own _____. The books of the Bible are written in _____ styles of literature; some are history, some narratives, some are poetry, some are wisdom literature, some are prophetic, some are letters and some are apocalyptic. A good Bible _____ notices what kind of literature is found in each book and reads those passages accordingly.

Second, select some good Bible study _____; a Bible dictionary, a Bible atlas, a Bible handbook, and a concordance. The Bible was written many centuries ago in a foreign land; and these _____ will help you comprehend the people, places and customs that may be unfamiliar to you. The concordance will help you to _____ the passages which have the key terms that you're studying. A good study Bible will often have a lot of these helps all in _____ book.



Third, read each _____ in its context. Many people misunderstand the Bible because they have never taken the _____ to investigate the background of these verses that they read. Ask these questions of the passage: Who's _____ the passage? To _____ is the author writing? Not everything in the Bible is written to every _____. The Old Testament was written to the _____, the New Testament to _____. When was the passage written? What was the author's _____ in writing? What circumstances _____ the writer to say these things? What would this message _____ to those to whom it's written? To interpret a passage and not _____ the context is to misinterpret it; to interpret it contrary to its context is to _____ falsehood for truth. The _____ of a word or phrase is best defined by its immediate context. Read the verses _____ and _____ the one that you're studying.

Fourth, learn to draw out the _____ of the passage; don't read into the passage something that wasn't originally there. Be _____ not to read into a passage your own personal prejudices or concepts that you think ought to be in the Bible. You have to read God's Word with a _____ mind, open to learn what God says, and to understand that Bible for what it says for itself. The Bible is always its own _____ interpreter.

Fifth, let the Bible _____ itself. For instance, in Ephesians 4:4 Paul says that there is "one body" and this body is defined as the _____ in Ephesians 1:22-23. A plain, clear passage should _____ be used to make the difficult passages clear. A difficult passage never denies or contradicts plain _____ of the Scripture.

Number six: the Scriptures _____ us not to add or take away from what's revealed (Deuteronomy 12:32; John 8:31-32).

Number seven: take _____ that the Scriptures teach on any one subject. All the truth on any one _____ is not usually found in the same passage. Something may be true but not the _____ truth. It's true that we're saved by faith (John 5:24), but there's more to be _____. Faith apart from love and faith apart from obedience will _____ save. Faith apart from repentance or baptism will not save (Luke 13:3; Acts 22:16).

Number eight: when you come to the Word of God come with the right _____. A love for God and humility are essential to good Bible _____. The seed, which is God's Word, must be _____ in a good and honest heart if it is to bring forth fruit. When you approach the Bible do it as you approach _____, because the Bible is God's Word.

Number nine: apply the message of the Bible to your _____. Respond to what you read with an _____ heart and be willing to live it out. When you're reading the Word of God, ask yourself, does this passage _____ something that I'm not doing? Does it suggest a _____ in my behavior? Does it tell about a new spirit or attitude that I _____ to show? Does this passage _____ a belief that I already hold? Or does this verse challenge my _____? How would it change matters if I _____ this command? What would Jesus do if He were in your _____?

Get more out of your Bible by _____ more in your study, and it will bless you.