



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

For

November 2016

Citizenship as Christians**1 Peter 2:13-17**

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

When it's time to _____ government officials, should Christians get involved? Does the Bible have anything to say to the Christian _____? God reveals Himself and His will for our _____ through His written Word. The Bible tells us of God's _____ and His _____ for redeeming man. It reveals what's _____ and what's _____. God's Word reveals what will _____ us and what will _____ us. The Bible teaches us the truth, and that truth gives us _____ and purpose. The Bible is more than an ancient book; it lives and it _____ to every aspect of our lives. We need the Bible, because we need God's _____ and His guidance. That's why we study.

The founding fathers of the United States recognized God's _____ in establishing and providing for the prosperity of this country, America. George Washington, said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible _____ which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the _____ of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency."

Can we suppose this nation with all its struggles has outgrown the _____ for God's help? Can we have peace and security while we reject the _____ of the Lord? Do we imagine that we can prosper while we ignore the Source of all blessings? Can we assume that we have justice while we reject the _____ of the God of all righteousness? When nations _____ the Lord and live by human standards, they deprive themselves of the blessing and the righteousness that the Lord's way provides. Pushing God out of our lives is a disastrous decision. William Penn wrote in 1681, "If you are not governed by God, you will be _____ by tyrants."

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter 2:13-17.

Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked _____, the people groan." We shouldn't imagine that all people are _____. There's an important difference between one who sets his heart to live _____ but sometimes does evil and one who sets his heart on _____ but sometimes does what is right. Wicked rulers _____ cities and nations, while righteous rulers _____ them. Wicked people are not content simply to be wicked; they want everyone else to _____ them in their wickedness. Psalm 125:3 says, "For the wicked shall not rule the godly, lest the godly be _____ to do wrong."

When wicked people rule, they open the _____ for all kinds of evil. Corrupt rulers abuse their _____ by making laws that oppress the righteous and use public funds to do things that no righteous person could approve. How can anyone who loves what is good _____ rulers who make laws promoting evil? If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I will not _____ legalizing that practice. If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I won't _____ for or use my influence to support a candidate that will do what God says is evil. If I support an ungodly candidate, I'm giving my _____ to his ungodly ways. How can I _____ God and support what is sinful? How can I _____ for righteousness and then support wickedness?

True Christians _____ to the Lord. They belong to Him in _____ aspect of their lives. It's inconceivable that a Christian citizen could vote for someone who supports a platform that contradicts the moral _____ that they hold. If we elect people who have no regard for God, we'll have to live with their ungodly decisions and ways. Tertullian encouraged the Christian minority in the pagan Roman Empire of the second century to be the "soul" of their culture. God _____ Christians today to be the soul and conscience of our culture. We can bring about moral _____ if we're willing to speak out against evil. The best way to defeat the devil is to expose his wickedness. Christians have too often retreated into silence and let evil go unchallenged.

Edmund Burke, the 18th century politician said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do _____." Many Christians have so silenced their voices that all one can _____ is the ungodly calling for more ungodliness. We are fast destroying ourselves by letting the ungodly go unchallenged. We don't speak this way out of hate for anyone but out of love for God, love for our children, and love for our neighbors. It's not bigoted to _____ for righteousness; it's not bigoted to love the truth. It's _____ to want what is right and good.

Have we forgotten God is the _____ of all nations? Every nation is accountable to Him. **Read what the Lord said in Jeremiah 18:6-10.**

The Lord has witnessed our country's ungodly disrespect for the sanctity of _____, for the sanctity of _____, and the sanctity of moral _____. Our language has become profane, and our nation is _____ with the children of unmarried parents. The more we push God and His way _____, the more empty, and hopeless, and depraved we become. God's Word still says, "Righteousness _____ a nation, but sin is a _____ to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Our national sins are disgraceful, and we have no _____. We've forgotten how to blush, and our consciences have become _____.

God's grace should _____ us to live godly and righteous lives, not remove all standards of Christian morality. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." Should we not be so _____ for what Jesus did on the cross for us that we would turn from sin?

Today, our laws _____ some evil practices to fill this land. We no longer _____ the sanctity of life or the sanctity of marriage, as defined in God's Holy Word. We've replaced these with _____ values that are destined to corrupt the morality of our homes. We've made being tolerant of everything, whether it's good or evil, into some form of _____. In tolerating evil, our society has simply become more evil, and it's become more intolerant of God and what He teaches. Many have become intolerant of God's values found in the Word of God. They won't tolerate God's regard for the unborn as viable persons. God speaks of the unborn as people in Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1; and Galatians 1. Nor will they tolerate 1 Corinthians 7:2 that says every man should have his own female wife, and every woman should have her own male husband.

Many live today as they did in the days of the Judges of Israel. Judges 21:25 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own _____." Today, people have pushed God out of their thinking and _____ by their own standards. Believing we can live by our own rules is _____, but it's also destructive morally and spiritually. If what people think determines

right and wrong, then truth, peace, and morality are _____ in confusion.

Human _____, left to follow its own path, leads society to do unspeakably horrible things. Wicked men will find ways to _____ and justify themselves with every evil desire and every sin. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” Some people demand the _____ to do as they please, and they don’t care who they _____. When evil men with no conscience or fear of God _____ in society, they will lead people away from hope and from righteousness.

Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems _____ to a man, but its end is the way to _____.” God’s prophet Jeremiah wrote, “I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it’s not in man who walks to _____ his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). We need God’s wisdom and guidance. People may think they’re _____ enough to choose their own way; but any path without God will inevitably end in _____. People who _____ God’s wisdom hurt themselves and they hurt their children.

God said through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed for _____ of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). When we turn against God, we _____ our children of the opportunity to know God, to know His holiness, and His righteousness. We leave them in spiritual _____.

The books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament provide a commentary on the spiritual lives of the kings of Israel and Judah for hundreds of years. God tied the prosperity of that nation directly to the _____ of the king and the people. When the king and the people _____ God, God prospered them. When the king and the people _____ God, they brought hardships and captivity upon themselves. If we, today, push God out of our lives, how can we think God will _____ us? How can we imagine that God will _____ us?

Character and devotion to God matter in our _____. Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, and priest of Midian, gave Moses some valuable _____. Moses was wearing himself out with his duties and needed _____ to govern the people. Jethro instructed him to “look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens” (Exodus 18:21). Jethro knew that Moses would need men of good _____ to govern the people. These men had to be people that _____ would respect and follow. They must “fear God.” Fearing God meant that they took God and His laws _____. They drew their _____ of right and wrong from God, not from opinion polls. These men of integrity refused to be bought with bribes. Moses needed such men to help him _____ the people justly and honestly. We still need capable officials today who _____ God and have integrity.

Proverbs 25:19 says, “Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of _____.” We’ve all been disappointed by _____ officials who’ve brought shame to our cities, states, and nation. You can’t count on a man of _____ character. A man who shows low character in _____ will have low character in _____. The Lord Jesus said, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Some say a godly man or a Christian should never serve in the government. Joseph served as second

to Pharaoh, and David served as King of Israel. God used Moses to lead His people out of bondage and to build a new nation. The Ten Commandments are both religious and social laws on which the nation of Israel was founded. Ezra was a Jew in the Persian government and Nehemiah served as an authority for the king to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel as a ruler over the whole province of Babylon and a chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel also served as a commissioner to King Darius for all of Persia. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius were pagan kings, but Daniel lived a righteous life and was respected for his faith. Queen Esther laid her life on the line to influence King Ahasuerus of Persia, who reigned from India to Ethiopia. Paul mentions Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth, in Romans 16:23. Godly people through the years have served as public officials.

The Old Testament prophets called nations and cities to _____ of their wickedness. When people refused God and abused their fellow-citizens, God noticed and He _____ the wicked. God said through Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). Oh, we need to turn away from evil and turn to righteousness!

Why does all this matter? When people _____ and support the wicked, they’re actually taking a stand against God. Second Chronicles 18 tells how a good king, Jehoshaphat, made an alliance with a wicked king, Ahab, in fighting an enemy. God sent a prophet who said, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD?” (2 Chronicles 19:2).

If I vote and support an evil person who won’t stand against sin, haven’t I also said by my _____ that I won’t stand against sin? If I don’t cast my _____ for god-fearing people, wicked ones will take office. My failure to vote for what is right may _____ a wicked person to rule. “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do _____.”

Some Christians don’t vote because they believe their vote won’t make any _____. But, in 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts. In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote gave Adolph Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party. I tell you, one vote _____ matter greatly. We must exercise our privileges wisely to _____ what is right and good. We must let our lights shine through wise and godly _____. We have the privilege to choose godly leaders. Let’s use that privilege.

Christians are first and foremost _____ of heaven. We owe our allegiance to the Lord Jesus. Philippians 3:20-21 says, “But our citizenship is in _____, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” Citizenship in heaven is a privilege and a blessing; we must not take it _____. The best decision that you’ll ever make is to follow Jesus Christ. Do it today!

To become a citizen of heaven, _____ in Jesus Christ with all your heart. Repent of your sins; you can’t _____ with God and the devil at the same time. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Confession is a public declaration of your decision to _____ Jesus. Be baptized for the forgiveness of your _____. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in _____. It’s the time that we have our sins _____ away and become a Christian. When we’re baptized, the Lord adds us to His _____; He makes us His child. Everyone needs to be a citizen of heaven. Don’t wait another day! Come to the Lord!

November 13, 2016

Strong Faith Hebrews 11:1-6

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

Without faith, it's impossible to _____ God. What kind of faith does God _____ from His people? What does a strong faith _____ like when it's challenged? The Word of God gives us the answer. Paul said, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The more we read and study God's Word, the _____ our faith will become. The more we _____ God's Word, the better we'll know God and His will for our lives. Nothing can replace a serious study of Scripture to help you _____ in faith. Paul commended the elders of the church at Ephesus "to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). We need God's Word to build us up spiritually and to _____ us go to heaven.

To say, "I believe," means placing your complete _____ in the Lord Jesus. It means trusting in God when you may not fully _____ what lies ahead. Faith stands firm in your trust of God's _____ even when life is filled with unsettling circumstances. Faith means taking God at His Word, regardless of what _____ say. Faith means being willing to act in _____ out of trust in the character and the authority of God Himself. We trust His Word, because we trust Him.

What we know about God, how He's dealt with people in the past, should speak to what we see for the _____. It should tell us what God will do. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone is willing to _____ His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it's of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). Are you willing to do His will? Do you trust God?

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews 11:1-6.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to _____ Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who _____ Him." Faith is essential to our _____ and to living the Christian life. Faith makes a remarkable difference in how we _____, how we _____, and how we _____ others.

There's a _____ difference between those who believe in Christ and those who don't know Him or believe in Him. When people really believe and put their faith into _____, they make the world brighter, more loving, more positive, more joyful, more hopeful, and closer to God. When people don't know God or have no faith in Him, they lack the _____ that comes from God; they lack the _____ of God, and the _____ of God. Without faith, they often _____ to fairy tales and myths. They build for themselves _____ that cannot talk, cannot hear their prayers, and cannot help them in a time of trouble. They live futile lives.

The Scriptures teach us of people who put their faith into practice and found the _____ of God. Hebrews 11:2 says, "For by it (that is, by faith) the men of God gained _____." God blesses true believers. Hebrews 11 gives many _____ of faith in action.

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Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence _____ an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Noah took what God told him to heart. He built an ark to the _____ of his family. Genesis 6:22 says, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.” Real faith is not _____; it is active and living. It reveals itself by _____ what God commands.

Hebrews 11: 8 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, _____ by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” God made a covenant with Abraham and made him a _____ that he would make of him a great nation. God called Abraham at the age of seventy-five, when he lived in Haran and told him to go to the land of Canaan. Abraham obeyed, even though he didn’t _____ how God would accomplish all these things or when. Faith obeys even when it doesn’t understand all the _____ why, or the ways how, or even when.

Faith _____ us to trust God and to be obedient to His Word. Do you believe the Bible is God’s Word? Do you believe that God created the world in six days and created you? Do you believe in heaven and in hell? Believing God means believing what we’ve been _____. If we don’t believe what God says in His inspired Word, we really don’t believe God.

Do you believe the Bible is _____? Do you believe God has _____ authority? Do you _____ the Lord in all that He instructs? He tells us what to believe and what to do. Are you willing to _____ God’s Word, even when it disagrees with your friends, and family, and neighbors? Are you willing to _____ your thinking on every subject to what the Bible says? Are you willing to do what the Bible says, even if you don’t _____ to? Do you believe God’s promises will _____ true?

To claim “I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Lord” means that I’ve given myself to Him and will believe what He _____. Faith is not _____ in what it believes. It doesn’t say that it believes _____ things that Jesus teaches while _____ other things. If one believes Jesus is truly God’s Son, risen from the dead and knows all things, one believes Him completely. He will stand with Jesus even when the whole _____ disagrees.

Great faith is the answer to _____. To believe in God’s promises helps us to _____ in the best way with the challenges of life. When we believe, we know God will take _____ of us. Even if we should _____ for our faith, we lose the love of God when we don’t believe. When the disciples thought the storm on the Sea of Galilee would overtake them, Jesus said to them, “Why are you _____? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). We all face frightening storms, but when the Lord is with us, we must not abandon all _____. The apostle Peter, inspired of God, _____ the church for the Roman persecution. **Read 1 Peter 3:13-17.**

Strong faith in Christ will determine _____ we will live. There’s a significant difference between those who truly believe and those who _____. Our faith in God’s teaching will determine our _____ and our _____. Since God’s Word is final and authoritative, we

reject the notion that morals are relative and dependent on circumstances. God's morality matters. Since we believe the Lord will _____ us on the last day by His Word and by our deeds, there are firm reasons to be moral beings, to love and respect others, and to live with integrity and honesty.

Only faith in a God to whom we must _____ provides the constant motivation for right living. **Read how Paul warned the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17:30-31.** If I believe, I cannot keep on doing the things that are _____. If I believe, I can't keep on lying, I can't keep on stealing, using foul language, gossiping, getting drunk, coveting other men's possessions; I can't keep on committing acts of fornication, or taking vengeance, and many other sins. I must regard myself as _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness. Faith doesn't _____ some sins as wrong and some as insignificant. To believe God means to believe _____ sin is hurtful, destructive, and wrong. Are you willing to sacrifice friendship with the world to be a Christian?

It should never _____ us that the world is worldly, filled with selfish ambition, lusts, and the desire to overthrow the _____ God placed upon us. Many have cast off the teaching of God in Scripture for their _____ opinions, morals, and desires. This rejection of faith in God shows _____ our society is in a moral mess and full of chaos. **Read how the apostle Paul described the pagan world of the first century in Ephesians 4:17-19.** When people _____ to give themselves to God, they start giving themselves to sin.

One talk show recently suggested that we _____ in a post-fact world. That is, people don't want the _____ if they disagree with their preconceived ideas or agendas. Some in our culture are driven more by their _____ than by their _____. They follow their passions and follow their friends rather than _____ the truth. They do what they _____ to do rather than what they _____ to do. When our desires rule over our duties, when our lusts overrule our morals, when our emotions overrule the facts, we are indeed living a _____ headed for ruin. Like the prodigal, we'll one day find total permissiveness _____ us to a pig pen.

How badly we _____ faith, a confident trust in what God says to be _____! When we leave the Truth, the way things really are as God _____ them, we're left with chaos and confusion. Without God's revealed will, we don't _____ where we came from, why we're here, or what will happen to us once this life is over. Without God's instructions, we're on a _____ to destruction. We need God's teaching, God's salvation, God's providence, and God's instructions. The Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by _____ that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Without God's teaching there is no real nourishment for the _____.

Many people have bought into the idea that they should never express their faith to others, but should keep it _____. They believe we should _____ anything "Christian" from the public square. They would _____ Christianity from every aspect of life. When you _____ faith in Christ, you're promoting faith in something futile, something that cannot save you or give you eternal life. You're advocating a faith _____ on things less than God, less

than moral, and less than true. When faith in Christ is _____, people place their faith in a fantasy!

Belief in the God of the Bible is not like believing in an _____ or in some humanly manufactured religion. Belief in God is not some _____ leap of faith. Belief in God is built upon _____ evidence found in our created world, found in Scripture, found in history, found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and found in our very nature as moral beings. The DNA in every cell of your body and mine could _____ come from a great intelligence. The universe with stars, and planets, and moons could only come from a great _____. The moral conscientiousness that's inside your _____ could only come from a moral governor. The moral and spiritual _____ found in Scripture could only come from a Divine source. Yes, there is a God in heaven, who made you, who loves you, who sent His Son to die for you, and who will one day _____ you by His Word.

Since God is _____, don't hesitate to come to Him, to know Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. Don't hesitate to give yourself _____ to Him. Coming to Christ means denying ourselves and taking up our crosses to _____ Him. True faith involves a _____ commitment. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by _____ in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). Have you made a full commitment to Christ or are you wavering in your faith? Jesus Christ fully committed Himself to you upon the _____ for your sins in the hope that you would respond to His love by fully trusting and _____ Him. Love Him, trust Him, and serve Him! If you believe, don't hesitate any longer.

People frequently tell themselves things that simply aren't true rather than having to deal with what God _____. They put off making any decision or commitment. They think somehow everything will be okay in the _____ regardless of what they believe or do. Oh, it would be _____ to face the Lord in judgment spiritually unprepared. I don't know of any promise of God to _____ the unbeliever or the disobedient.

We don't like to think that anyone would be _____; but we mustn't presume upon the grace of God. We have no _____ of salvation apart from grace, or apart from faith, or apart from repentance, or apart from obedience. We want the _____. We don't want any _____ on the day of judgment. We don't want to be _____, thinking that we're saved, and then finding out we're rejected.

God will save those who place their _____ in Him, those who _____ of their sins, and those who are willing to _____ His word. **Read James 1:22-25.** If you truly believe in Jesus Christ, if you repent of your sins, if you turn your heart to the teaching of Christ, if you confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and you're baptized into Christ and you do that for the forgiveness of your sins, God can save you and He will. Baptism is not for little children but for those who are old enough to really believe and to repent. When you're baptized, God will wash away all of your sins; He'll make you His child; and you'll have His blessing only if you remain faithful. Oh, will you be baptized, and will you remain faithful?

November 20, 2016

Time to Pray Matthew 7:7-11

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

This week and every week, let's take _____ to pray and to give thanks. Today we're going to look at the _____ of expressing our hearts to God. We search the Scriptures for God's will. We want to _____ God in every way, and so we take the time to _____ to what God has to say. Our Father in heaven _____ today through His written Word. He gives us a message that is _____ for all time and all people. We study God's Word, because it has God's wisdom. We need that wisdom!

Daniel chose to spend the night in the lions' den rather than go one day without _____. He believed praying to God was more important than his own _____. Prayer is how we personally _____ God all the things that are in our hearts. It's one means of adoring Him, thanking Him, and praising Him. Prayer time allows us to _____ our sins and to ask God's forgiveness. Prayer gives us an opportunity to ask God to _____ our needs or the needs of people that we love. God invites us to pray to Him as our _____. He loves us that much.

First Thessalonians 5:17 urges us to "Pray without _____." We should never give up on praying or lose heart. Acts 2:42 reminds us that the early _____ was "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Colossians 4:2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping _____ in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." Why does God want us to concentrate on praying day after day? Because God knows how much _____ a strong prayer life will be to your soul. If you wish to renew your zeal for God or merely draw closer to God, then take time each day to get _____ with God and pray fervently from your heart.

Our reading today comes from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:7-11.

Even though He was the Son of God, Jesus saw _____ in prayer. Mark 1:35 says, "And in the _____ morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there." Jesus needed time alone with the Father and He needed time to _____ His heart for the day's tasks. Luke 5:16 says, "He Himself would _____ slip away to the wilderness and pray." Before Jesus appointed the twelve disciples to be _____, He felt the need to pray. Luke 6:12 says, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the _____ night in prayer to God." Have you ever spent even a single _____ in prayer?

I can't imagine all that Jesus _____ on the night that He was betrayed. Jesus knew what struggles lay ahead of Him during the trials and on the _____. He knew that He would _____ a most painful death and He would bear the _____ of the whole world. He prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane for _____ hours. Luke 22:42 says He prayed, "Father, if You are willing, _____ this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." Again, He said to His Father,

“My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy _____ be done” (Matthew 26:42). Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price with His own _____.

The Lord Jesus began and ended His crucifixion and His death with _____. While they were _____ Him to the cross, Jesus was praying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Even while these hardened soldiers were putting nails through His hands and feet, He was _____ of their forgiveness. Such was His devotion to granting forgiveness to the _____. He wanted everyone to be saved. His last words after suffering for six hours, and as He was breathing his last were, “Father, into thy hands I commit my _____” (Luke 23:46). His heart and mind throughout this horrifying time was upon His relationship to the Father and _____ the Father’s will. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more so do we?

God not only wanted us to pray, He also wanted to hear our hearts, and He also knew the value of prayer to our _____ lives. Praying can _____ your life in a multitude of ways. I just want to mention a few:

First, prayer can _____ you in times of temptation. The Lord Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the Garden of Gethsemane. He wanted them to _____ and to _____ with Him. While He was pouring out His heart in prayer, they were falling _____. The Lord Jesus told them, “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is _____, but the flesh is _____” (Matthew 26:41). Prayer can help us to remain _____ to God in trying times. When Satan tempts us, prayer can strengthen our hearts and help us _____ the temptation. We don’t have to _____ temptation alone. **Read Hebrews 4:15-16.** God will _____ us.

We also need to understand that the devil means business when he _____ us. He wants us to _____ and break our relationship with the Lord. James 4:7-8 says, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will _____ from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” God will _____ and help us when we pray. Someone has said, “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”

Second, prayer can help you in times of _____ and struggle. First Peter 5:7 reminds us to cast “all your anxiety upon Him, because He _____ for you.” We all face worries and fears, but we can cast those anxieties on the _____. The Lord cares about you and your _____ life. No problem is too _____ or too _____ for the Lord. I love the promise in Philippians 4:6-7: “Be anxious for _____, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall _____ your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

God wants you to be at _____, to find security in Him. Instead of worrying about every _____ that comes along, tell God about it! While you’re asking, _____ Him for listening, for caring, and for helping you. What will happen, if you pray? God will give you a _____ peace of heart and mind that surpasses all understanding. He will place a _____ all around your heart and mind; He won’t let your worries overcome you. He won’t abandon you. He won’t forget you. In every difficult situation, prayer to God with faith will help you ride out the storm.

Third, prayer can help you grow _____ to God. When we pray regularly and truly _____ that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven, we build our devotion to Him. When we see our prayers answered, it makes us _____ Him all the more. Prayer helps us _____ things differently and to want what God wants. The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). How I wish _____ person in America, every person in the world hungered and thirsted for righteousness. This would change our country; it would change our world, and make it a better, more loving, more joyful, more hopeful, more honest, and more honorable society. Wouldn't you like to live in a _____ that had no crime, no drunkenness, no immorality, no hatred, and no prejudice? Wouldn't you like to live in a _____ where people helped each other, respected each other, and told the truth?

Prayer is the greatest precautionary measure that you can take against _____ away from the living God. The first step in falling away from God is when people _____ praying and become indifferent, and in time they _____ God altogether. Praying and being close to God will _____ you from growing complacent and apathetic. Praying _____ you of the most important matters of life. When you pray, you think of your soul and you think of the souls of those around you. In prayer, you thank God for His blessings, and this makes you appreciate and love Him all the more. Praying every day will _____ your life; taking time to talk with God will renew your spirit and keep your values and priorities straight. It will give you a _____ place to go from the world and all its temptations. Jesus needed time with His Father, and so do we.

Fourth, prayer can help you in your _____ for God. Prayer gives us the strength to carry on in our _____ for the Lord. In Ephesians 6:19, Paul asked the church at Ephesus to “pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the _____.” When we _____, God _____ the door. When we are weak, God gives us the _____ to bear our burdens. Sidlow Baxter said, “Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons – but they are helpless against our prayers.”

I think of Nehemiah, and how he heard, “The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.” Nehemiah 1:4 says, “When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and _____ before the God of heaven.” We too hear bad _____ now and then. What do you do? Nehemiah wept and mourned for days; he fasted and prayed. If you are hurting and in _____, pray for God to _____ you make a difference. God _____ Nehemiah's prayer and helped him rebuild Jerusalem.

We all find ourselves inadequate at times, unskilled, lacking wisdom, or unprepared for the challenge. At those times, we pray for God's _____! Paul said, “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). This is certainly true! God can work in and through us to do things that we couldn't do by _____. Never give up on the _____ of prayer! Never give up on God! If we're ever to recapture the _____ of the first century church, it will begin with prayer.

Paul praised God in Ephesians 3:20-21. He said, “Now to Him who is able to do _____ abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Fifth, praying can reassure you. Sometimes we just need to be _____ to the One we love. We need to tell Him we love Him, to thank Him, to praise Him, and to take our burdens to Him. Prayer is a great reminder that we have a “Father” in heaven. The Lord Jesus said, “your Father _____ what you need, before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:8). He knows all about everything, and He wants to _____ us. **Read what Jesus asked in Matthew 7:9-11.** God is _____ and He’s waiting for us to ask! Nothing is more reassuring than seeing prayer _____. God will answer our prayers. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 11:22-24.** Faith and willingness to do God’s will are vital to our prayers.

Read James 1:5-8. When I need God’s _____ to help me work through a problem, I pray and God _____. I know He has helped me in the past and will continue to help me. God isn’t offended by my asking. He’s generous and happy to help.

So, prayer is how we _____ with our Father in heaven. We can connect anytime, anyplace. We need God every _____ and every _____. How is your prayer life? Are you a man or woman of prayer?

Real prayer, heartfelt and fervent, blesses _____ God and man. Proverbs 15:8 says, “the prayer of the upright is His _____.” God wants to hear from you regularly. You don’t have to _____ God to be heard. He wants to hear your _____ prayers. It’s a joy to count my blessings and recall all the _____ that my God has done. It’s a great blessing to _____ my heart, my burdens, my fears, and my concerns with my Father in heaven, knowing He cares to listen and that He can do something about them.

When people tell me about some trouble they face, maybe it’s trouble at home, or trouble financially, trouble with their health, or trouble on the job, I ask them, “Have you prayed about it?” Don’t give up on God too _____. Don’t imagine that God is unaware of our troubles and cares. God may very well be working behind the scenes in ways that we cannot _____ and we don’t understand to answer those prayers. God doesn’t always give us what we ask for, but He always gives us what is _____ for our souls. Let’s trust in God when we pray.

Some folks think that salvation comes from simply _____ a “sinner’s prayer.” The New Testament, however, never speaks of a “sinner’s prayer.” Does that surprise you? Saying a “sinner’s prayer” is a _____ invention. To be saved, the Lord expects people to _____ in Him, to love Him, to _____ of their sins, to _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and to be _____ in His name for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 22:16, Saul of Tarsus was baptized to _____ away His sins, calling on His name. According to 1 Peter 3:21 baptism is how we _____ to God for a good conscience. We hope that you’ll follow the Lord’s teaching and be baptized today for the forgiveness of your sins. When you do, the Lord will add you to His church and make you His child.

Conversion Luke 13:1-5

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

About three fourths of the people in America claim to be Christians, but many who claim this don't _____ or _____ like Christians. Today, we're going to talk about conversion. Nothing in life is more important than a sincere _____ of the Word of God. God has spoken to us so that we can know His will and make the _____ to our attitudes and our behavior that pleases Him and blesses us. God gave His Word for our _____. It teaches us, guides us, protects us, rebukes us, and encourages us. The Bible is our only _____ for eternal life, and we must understand what it says.

Matthew 18:1-4 speaks of an encounter that Jesus had with his disciples. The Bible says: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who then is _____ in the kingdom of heaven?' And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are _____ and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then _____ himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'" Conversion is not a childish act, because only the _____ can choose to set aside their fleshly desires and become like children.

The Lord knows our _____. He knows that we need to make conscious _____ in our thinking in order to be the kind of people who can enter heaven. We must turn from what is _____ to what is _____. We must have the humility and the faith of a child, who looks to the Lord rather than _____ on his own ability. Being converted turns our hearts from our fleshly _____ to what God expects. Repentance is deeply involved in conversion. We must have a change of heart that leads to a change of _____.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Luke 13:1-5.

Occasionally I encounter people who are Christians in _____ only. They claim to be Christian, but you couldn't tell it from the _____ they think, or talk, or act. They say they're Christians, but they don't _____ the way a committed Christian behaves. They rarely pray, rarely go to church, rarely read their Bibles, and rarely talk about Christian beliefs. By listening to their language or watching their behavior, you might not be able to distinguish them from someone who _____ goes to church. Christians in name only are as likely to gamble, or drink alcohol, or watch sexually explicit movies, or use four-letter words as people who say they have no faith at all. In fact, many of these folks have _____ living for the Lord altogether.

If you ask them if they are Christians, they might be offended; but you couldn't tell it from the way they act or talk. For them Christianity is more inherited than _____, more assumed than embraced. They were told when they were young that their _____ was Christian.

They say they are, but one wonders if they were _____ converted to Jesus.

On other occasions, I've encountered folks who were once _____ church members but fell away from the truth of the _____ to follow popular religion, where worship is replaced by entertainment or the inspired gospel is replaced by man-centered doctrines or human traditions. One wonders how someone who was once strong in the faith could leave the _____ of the Scripture for a _____ or forget Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. One wonders how they could follow things that are _____ mentioned in Scripture but were innovations of men and then imagine that they're acceptable to God. Didn't Jesus say, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not _____ shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:13-14). How can they say they are converted to the Lord Jesus?

Conversion is a life-changing event, a transition from darkness into _____, from the fleshly to the _____, from the deceptions of men to the truth of God in Scripture. Like a child, we choose to trust what God says is true and right, trust how He wants us to live, and determine how we will do whatever He commands. This change of heart is enlightening; it opens our hearts to a _____ and _____ way than the sinful ways of the world. The Lord wanted Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles in order "to open their _____ so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).

To be converted means that you will change what you _____, change how you will live, and leave _____ to walk in righteousness. God doesn't save us merely to _____ our sins. He saves us to _____ our hearts so that we can pursue a holy and righteous life! **Read Titus 2:11-14.** Conversion means that I _____ die to myself, die to my desires, and die to my sin. I can't _____ to sin and still remain right with the Lord. Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who _____ to sin still _____ in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). We just can't do that! Becoming a Christian means that I die to sinful ways. I don't _____ sin; I don't think sinful thoughts, or at least whenever I'm tempted I don't stay there; I don't give in to my sinful feelings; or say sinful words anymore. I'm no longer what I _____ to be. When we're baptized into Christ, "our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6:6). Our attitudes and our behavior must change.

Paul concludes, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:12-13). Some people are baptized but _____ to repent, to stop their sins, and to serve the Lord in righteousness, they never get around to that. Again, Paul says, "So then, brethren, we're under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you're putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:12-13). Those who call themselves a Christian but live sinfully after the desires of the flesh will die spiritually and be _____.

Read the words of Colossians 3:5-11 that we need to follow. Oh, that, my friend, is conversion! It's a change of heart and life, turning from the _____ way of sin to a _____ and righteous way that follows in the steps of Jesus.

Even a _____ spoken in private matters is important. We may think we've spoken or acted in secret, but secrets don't always _____ secret. God always sees, hears, and knows. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good." The wicked person discounts God, ignores God, and assumes "God has forgotten; He's hidden His _____; He'll never see it" (Psalm 10:2-11). But God does see and hear. Words also matter, because they _____ our inner person. The Lord Jesus said, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matthew 12:34). Christians should speak words that edify and _____. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is _____ for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it'll give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).

This world is darkened, callous, ignorant, sensual, impure, and greedy. **Read Paul's explanation in Ephesians 4:17-24.** Oh, what a terrible situation. God certainly wants something _____ for us! What Jesus teaches is better than what the _____ offers. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). Jesus expects his converts to _____ His Word and believe God sent Him to be Savior, if they want eternal life.

Don't say, "I believe in Jesus," if you're not _____ to believe what He says. Jesus once asked, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). To call Jesus "Lord" and yet never be willing to do His will is _____. God distinguishes between a man who claims to believe and a man who actually _____ out what he believes. First John 2:4-6 explains: "The one who says, 'I've come to know Him,' (that is, I'm a Christian) and doesn't keep His commandments, that person is a _____, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the _____ of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we're in him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." We _____ our faith and our love for Jesus by keeping His commandments and abiding in His Word. Claiming to love Jesus while ignoring his Word is merely a delusion. Oh, my friend be real; be genuine.

We must recognize and treat Jesus as our _____ as well as our Savior. Only then do we have the kind of faith to be saved. Be doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. James said that in humility we're to "receive the word that's implanted, which is able to _____ your souls" (James 1:21). The faith that _____ the Lord is first humble,

realizing that God is God, who knows all, sees all, and is wiser than we are. Let's love and trust Him enough to _____ and to do all that He commands. Considering what Jesus did for us, that's the _____ that we can do.

Faith leads a person to _____ the Lord in every respect. If I believe in the Lord, I will love and trust Him. That means I want to be saved and live with Him _____. If I believe in Jesus, I'll _____ that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God and my Lord. If I call Him Lord, I'll change my _____ and I'll change my _____. I'll repent of every sin. I'll stop my rebellion and I'll honor Him by being obedient.

If I believe in Jesus, I'll be _____ in water for the forgiveness of my sins (Acts 2:38). I'll be _____ of water and the Spirit in baptism to enter into His kingdom (John 3:5). I will be baptized to have my sins _____ away (Acts 22:16). I want to be _____ with Him in baptism so that I can rise to _____ in newness of life (Romans 6:3-7). With humility I'll do what the Lord says without trying to _____ that I can be saved a different way. I'll trust Him to the point that whatever He says, I'll do.

When we're converted to Christ, we'll think like Jesus thinks, love like Jesus loves, act like Jesus acts, and obey like Jesus obeyed. We'll _____ pleasing the world and _____ pleasing God. Jesus said, "for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). When we're converted, we'll _____ what people teach with what the Bible says. There are a multitude of religious _____ in our world. Conversion to Christ means I'll stop listening to the human doctrines and start _____ everything by the Word. First Thessalonians 5:21-22 says, "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; and abstain from every form of evil." We must _____ religious teaching and it's practices to see if those things come from God or from man.

The Bible says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but _____ the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Don't believe everything that you _____ some preachers say. Be like the noble Bereans. "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures _____ to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

When we become servants of Christ, we cannot _____ every idea that comes along. We must _____ what we hear with a Scripture! If it doesn't agree with Scripture, don't follow it. True disciples _____ in the words of Christ (John 8:31). We want everyone to be a _____ disciple. So believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and out of love repent of your sins, confess Jesus, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Conversion doesn't end with a change of heart; it also changes the relationship with God. When you're baptized you become a child of God! The Lord adds you to His church! God unites you with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection so that you can walk in newness of life. Oh, my friend won't you be converted today?