



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY ®

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
December 2016**

December 4, 2016

Lifted Up John 12:27-32

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

The Lord Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up, will _____ all men unto me” (John 12:32). We would all do well today to take a long look at the _____. We know that the Scripture is what _____ us to God in heaven and His Son Jesus Christ. The Scripture teaches us what we know about the Lord Jesus. So, we _____ it again and again!

The story of the cross of Christ occupies a _____ portion of the New Testament. So important is the cross, the apostle Paul said, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him _____” (1 Corinthians 2:2). A sweet lady once said that she had difficulty thinking about the death of Jesus on the cross. She wondered why we talk about something so _____ as crucifixion. Of course, the cross is an instrument of _____; but it also has a message for each of us that is so _____ that none of us can afford to miss it.

To contemplate the death of Christ will have a definite effect on the _____. No one can think long and hard about the _____ of Jesus and not be moved by it. There may be many things about the death of Christ we may not understand in this life; still the Bible does _____ some things to us of great value. The New Testament mentions the death of Christ _____ times. So, it's helpful to _____ what we can about the death of Jesus and its connection with our salvation and our eternity. It's touching to know that Jesus was _____ to give his head to a crown of thorns, his back to a cruel scourging, his hands and feet to nails, and his side to a spear. Asking why Jesus would do this is very, very important.

Our reading today is from The Gospel According to John 12:27-32. Jesus here was predicting His _____ upon the cross. **Read James Coats' hymn, “Where Could I Go?”** At times going to the Lord is the only real option we have. Whether we know it or not, we all need God. We need His love, His peace, His joy, His hope, and His salvation.

Jesus is real and genuine. He has _____ Himself time and again to be everything that He claims. You can _____ His teaching and His promises. You can depend upon Him to _____ you through the toughest of times. Some think of Jesus as merely one among many religious _____, but Jesus is quite unique. Who else was born of a virgin? Who else fulfilled so many Old Testament prophecies? Who else arose from the dead? Who else could raise the dead, heal the sick, or walk upon water? If these are just myths, how do you account for so many disciples holding to them with their last breath?

How do you account for the _____ that Jesus fulfilled? He was _____ in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2. He was the seed of woman. He had his hands and his feet _____ as Psalm 22:16 says. He was betrayed for thirty pieces of _____ as

Zechariah 11:12 says. He was to die with the wicked, and be buried with the _____ as Isaiah 53 prophesies. Oh, there are dozens of prophecies in the Old Testament about the _____ of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled _____ one of those prophecies. No other person in all of _____ has done that or could do that. To fulfill so many specific prophecies shows that He is from _____. Centuries before he was born and centuries after, men still looked to Jesus as the _____ person of all history. This is still ‘AD 2016,’ “the year of our Lord, 2016.”

Unfortunately, many have _____ the Lord Jesus. I was shocked when I learned that the fastest _____ religious group in America describe themselves as unaffiliated. Nearly one in four Americans says that they have _____ religion. Many of these came from Christian _____, and for whatever reason they abandoned their faith in Jesus. They are the “un-churched” and place no allegiance in anything _____. Perhaps you’re a person choosing to be “without God and without hope in this present world.” When you abandon God, realize this! You also abandon God’s help and hope, His peace and joy, and His love and grace.

Where will you go, my friend, to find what _____ the Lord Jesus can give? No one else has what He has. No one can give you what He can give you. No one will ever love you the way the Lord loves you. You might have a thousand friends in your lifetime, but which of your friends has ever _____ for you? Which one ever felt the repeated _____ of a cruel whip on his back? Which one ever took _____ through his hands and feet? Which one ever _____ suspended between heaven and earth until he could breathe no more for you? Which of your friends ever took your _____ upon himself and died for them? You can search the world over and never find anyone who will love you like Jesus did.!

The apostle Paul said, “For while we were still _____, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the _____ man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet _____, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). The Lord Jesus died for us, not because we had befriended Him, but because He had come to _____ us. We were helpless, ungodly, and sinners; but Jesus died for us anyway. You can’t _____ that kind of love; it’s much deeper than a casual friendship. It’s the kind of love that we all long for, the kind of love that we cannot ignore or forget.

It’s hard for me to understand what _____ in the heart of a person who forgets what Jesus did for him. The Hebrew writer warns, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that _____ from the living God. But _____ one another day after day, as long as it’s still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13). Yes, sin can deceive our _____ and harden them. People can become enslaved to some favorite sin to the point that they’ll _____ the church and the Lord.

You may not be caught up in sin, but your sin can _____ you from God and His people. If you say _____ to Jesus, who then will love you like He did? Who will you find to

_____ for your sins? No one will, and no one can. You must _____ the consequences of your sin on your own. **Read 1 Timothy 2:3-6.** Jesus is the _____ one who could ransom you from sin.

If you reject Jesus, there is no other Savior who can _____ you from the consequences of sin. Peter said there is none other name under heaven, whereby we must be _____ (Acts 4:12). There is only one Savior, and that's Jesus Christ. If you choose sin over Him, you need to know what Paul said, "For the _____ of sin is death, but the free _____ of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The wages of sin have not changed in all these years—it's still death. I would hate to see you _____ your heart against God. If you do, realize that God will say no to you for the life hereafter. My friend, once this life is over, you can't turn back the _____. You can't wish your choices away. You will face the Lord!

Whether you face the Lord on that day, the Day of Judgment, with joy and peace or with dread and panic is up to you. You're actually choosing life or death by your choice of whether to _____ the Lord or not. If you reject the Lord, you will not find any _____ for the hereafter. You might find great success today; you might become rich and famous; you might have great power and influence, and have the pleasures of life at every turn; but if you don't have the Lord Jesus in your life, you're putting your _____ at risk of being lost eternally. Paul said, "she who gives herself to wanton _____ is dead even while she lives" (1 Timothy 5:6). I suspect today there are many, many people physically _____ but spiritually _____ in their trespasses and sins.

What should you do if you find that you are living without the _____ of the cross? Take a long, long look at the cross; _____ the love of Christ with the way that you're living your life. The cross has a way of humbling us and convicting us of sin. We've all grievously fallen short of the glory of God. We all deserve to be lost, but the Lord out of love paid the price to rescue us.

Perhaps you feel like David. King David _____ Bathsheba taking a bath, and apparently she was unclothed. Being tempted, he _____ for Bathsheba and the Bible said that he slept with her. When Bathsheba found that she was pregnant with David's child, David then _____ to bring Uriah the Hittite back to cover up his sin. He tried this and that, but all of them failed. He eventually had Uriah _____ in battle and then he married his widow to try and cover things up. David's sin, however, caught up with him. "Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and he said, 'There were two men in one city, the one _____ and the other _____. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except _____ little ewe lamb, which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would _____ of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And it was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him'" (2 Samuel 12:1-6).

“Then David’s _____ burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the LORD lives, surely this man who has done this deserves to _____. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and he had no compassion.’” If I were David and heard such a story, I too would be angry at this selfish and unjust behavior! David had felt the _____ of his sin but thought he had covered it up so no one else would know. What Nathan said next must have stunned David. Nathan then said to David (verses 7 to 9), “You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you _____ over Israel and it is I who _____ you from the hand of Saul. I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! Why have you despised the _____ of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?’”

The most important day of our lives comes when we _____ that we too have sinned and we need a Savior. We may not have been an adulterer or a killer like David, but our sins are still _____. They can deceive us; they can harden our hearts; they can _____ us our souls. We need a Savior! We need Someone who will step in to _____ us, who will pay the price for our sins. That’s what the _____ is all about. That is why He died upon the cross! First Peter 2:24 says, “He Himself _____ our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” If you need spiritual healing, look to the cross where Jesus is lifted up and come to Him, penitent and obedient!

We live in a confusing world with many competing voices, each crying out with a different _____. How can we know what is true? Today, some are like Pontius Pilate, who asked Jesus, “What is truth?” Jesus told Pilate, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to _____ to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth _____ My voice” (John 18:37). The way to the _____ is Jesus Christ. You can _____ Him! You will not be deceived or fooled.

Jesus’ actions shout that He is real and genuine. His empty tomb _____ out that He did indeed rise from the dead. If Jesus arose from the dead, then He truly is _____ and the Son of God. We can trust His words. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one _____ to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). He promised in John 8:31-32, “If you _____ in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you _____.” In our confused world, it’s reassuring to know the One who is the Truth! By His Word, we can _____ right and wrong. By His Word, we can know what’s true and what’s false!

If you believe in Jesus Christ and you love Him for dying on the cross, repent of every sin, confess Him as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. When you’re baptized, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16); He’ll add you to His church (Acts 2:47); He’ll make you His child (Galatians 3:27); and He’ll raise you up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). So, obey the Lord today!

Pleasing God 2 Corinthians 5:6-9

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

Each day we're choosing what is _____ to us. Who are you _____? Who is important to you? Today, we're going to explore the _____ to please God. The Scriptures teach us how to _____ God and to be _____ to our fellow man. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your _____, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." The Word of God is good. We should welcome the _____ it brings to our lives. If you want to be a better person, follow the _____ standard found in God's Word.

Each day we're choosing what _____ and the direction of our lives. Some choose a _____ path, while others choose the _____ way. The Lord Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). The broad way is _____ and easy. It attracts lots of people, but they may not know their _____. The things that seem attractive and popular may be destructive.

Jesus urges us to _____ the small gate and the narrow way that leads to life. The choice is whether to follow the _____ or to follow Jesus. Choose Jesus, because He alone can lead you to _____ life. The apostle Paul asked, "For am I now seeking the _____ of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). What are you choosing?

Our reading today comes from 2 Corinthians 5:6-9.

The Lord Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father _____ Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I _____ do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:28-29). Jesus lived to please His Father in heaven. He was entirely unselfish. He gave up everything to do the Father's will and to save mankind from sin.

Because our world _____ us often to be self-centered, we find it hard to understand how anybody could devote himself totally to the will and pleasure of someone else. Many think that the only way to happiness is to be their own _____ and to serve no one. They think selfish ambition will lead them to greatness. They may even suppose the _____ apply to everyone else, but not to them. The Lord Jesus, who has passed through the heavens, and the King of kings and Lord of lords, however, chose to be a _____.

The Lord explained to his disciples, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over

them, and their great men exercise _____ over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). The Lord Jesus saw greatness not in possessions or power, but in _____ and _____.

So, we must ask ourselves, “how do we _____ God?” The Scriptures give us the answer. First, we must place our _____ in God. Hebrews 11:1-2 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things _____ for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.” The blessing of God comes only to those who _____. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” You cannot expect to please God if you _____ to believe in Him or in what He teaches. Believing in God means believing what God says. You believe what He teaches and you’re willing to _____ His instructions.

Second, we cannot _____ sin and _____ sin and still please God. **Read 1 John 2:15-17.** Each day we’re choosing whether we’re going to follow our passions and the love of this _____ or whether we’re going to follow the _____ and love Him.

The world tells us that we may pursue whatever fleshly passion that we _____. But just because the world says something is okay doesn’t mean God is pleased by it. **Read Romans 8:5-8.** You can’t continue following the _____ of the flesh and think God won’t mind. He knows your heart, and a mind set on the flesh cannot please God.

So, Paul urges us, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (Galatians 5:16-17). When people follow the flesh and the world, they actually make themselves an _____ of God according to James 4:4. Following the world will do nothing but _____ your life and your soul. Galatians 5:24 says, “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” My friend, do you follow Christ or do you follow your passions?

Third, we must love God _____ than others. The Lord Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:37-39). The Lord expects us to put Him _____ in all things, even before our loved ones. We may have a family member who challenges our _____ to Christ. We cannot let our love for anyone in our family lead us _____ from God or from His teaching. If we let people come between God and ourselves, we’re not _____ of Christ. Though we are to love all people, even our enemies, we must love Christ even more.

John tells of some Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus but loved their friends more than they loved God. John 12:42-43 says, “Nevertheless many even of the _____ believed in

Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for _____ that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” They believed, but were unwilling to _____ it openly. They didn’t want to lose their status in the community. So, they feared the Pharisees more than God and loved their place in the community more than the approval of God.

Fourth, we must love Christ more than our _____. Paul is the perfect example of someone who gave up _____ in his past in order to follow Christ. **Read what he said in Philippians 3:4-8.**

Paul left his place in Judaism to become a Christian. He “was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Galatians 1:14). But, all that heritage, all of it couldn’t do what _____ could do for him. He wanted Christ! He wanted to be right with God! My friend, do you?

Fifth, we need to _____ the Lord in the way that pleases Him, not ourselves. Worship by its very _____ is a means of honoring, praising, and showing respect for the Person that we worship. We want God to be pleased with our sacrifices. Hebrews 13:15-16 says, “Through Him (that is, through Christ) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of _____ to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such _____ God is pleased.” God wants His people to _____ their hearts, their lips, and their lives in worship to Him.

God accepted the worship that Abel offered, but He refused to accept Cain or his sacrifices. Hebrews 11:4 explains, “By faith Abel offered to God a _____ sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.” Abel’s gift was by _____, while Cain’s gifts lacked that quality. We need faith in God when we worship. That means that we _____ to His instructions, His commandments, and do them.

Worshippers in Isaiah’s time thought they could live any way they pleased and God would accept their _____. We find these words in Isaiah 1:15-17: “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, (God says) I will _____ My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not _____. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.” Their immoral and wicked lives made their _____ unacceptable to God. Only when they repented would God _____ their prayers and accept their worship.

Sixth, we must not let other _____ interfere with our service to God. The apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy, “You therefore, my son, be _____ in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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 teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of

everyday life, so that he may _____ the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

We can get so _____ with our own lives that we _____ our commitment to God. The Lord Jesus described how some hearts were like seed sown on thorny soil. “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no _____ to maturity” (Luke 8:14). You can hardly serve the Lord when you allow every _____ that blows to come before Him, and His instructions, and the way He wants you to live, and going to church. Whenever you let other things interfere with your _____ God, then you really can’t please Him.

Seventh, God is pleased when His people _____ Him. God told Saul to go and utterly destroy all the Amalekites and all of their livestock, but Saul _____ to obey God. He brought back King Agag; and the best of the sheep and oxen to offer up as sacrifices. God regretted that He had made Saul king, because He _____ back from following Me and has not carried out My commandments. Saul feared the _____ and forgot about God. When he was confronted, the prophet Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much _____ in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in _____ the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than _____, And to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). Obeying God means doing His will, pleasing Him, and serving Him the _____ that He instructs. Look at your life, look at your attitudes! Are you, pleasing to God? Second Corinthians 5:6-9 says, “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we’re absent from the Lord—for we _____ by faith, not by sight—we’re of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be _____ to Him.” What is your ambition? How badly do you want to be _____ with God? How badly do you want to be _____ from sin? How badly do you want to be “at home with the Lord”?

God wants you to come home to Him and live with Him _____. He sent Jesus to the cross so you could be _____. God loves you and wants to _____ you. That love and grace of God calls you to _____ to Him in faith and love. Love for God means that you’ll see your sins differently than you did in years past. You’ll wish you had _____ committed them and don’t ever want to commit them again. It’s that penitent, contrite _____ that pleases God. David said about God, “For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You’re not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:16-17).

God wants to forgive you. Trust in Him, trust in His Word; repent of your sins and turn to the Lord; confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God; and be _____ into Christ. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. When you’re baptized, you can _____ God’s gift of forgiveness. You can be a child of God and an heir of heaven. Why wait even another day to get right with God? There’s no better day than today to make your calling and election sure!

Where is God? Proverbs 3:5-7

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

Some folks think God is _____ in our world today; others say that God is _____. Is God _____ and active in the world today and working for our _____? We want to know all we can about God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and the way to know God is through a _____ of His Word, the Bible. So, we go again and again to Scripture.

How we view God matters greatly in how we view _____ and how we understand our purpose and role in this world. An atheist does not believe God _____ at all. An agnostic says he doesn't know whether God exists, because he thinks God is unknowable. Some believe God got the world going and then abandoned it. Others hold that belief in God was relevant in ancient times, but God is now dead. We no longer _____ God in our lives today according to them.

Several years ago in graduate school, I spent a couple of semesters studying skeptics and atheists. One thing I found was that skepticism and atheism grew more out of an _____ than it did out of evidence. Atheists and skeptics tended to _____ on the disorder and the ugly in life. They seemed to _____ the order, the beauty, the grandeur, and the wisdom so evident in our universe. They were intelligent people, but they missed the intelligent _____ that's all around us. I'm amazed at how easily people can _____ into a very narrow view of life and of God. Some folks close their eyes and their minds to the _____ of God and see only the evil and the ugly. God is good and actively _____ us every day. Thankfully, we can know Him and what He's done for us to bless us and give us _____ life.

Our reading today comes from the book of Proverbs 3:5-7.

Paul said, "I pray that the _____ of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18-19). God wants our hearts to be open to His _____. God's power towards us who believe is _____ than we think!

Have you ever experienced an "aha!" moment—awakening to something that's a great _____ that had eluded you? That's what Paul wanted for the Ephesians. He wanted them to understand what God causes to happen—God is at _____! God has great power—and His power works in the _____ of His people.

You might ask how God is at work. He's working in a variety of ways. First, God works in the _____. As a prophet, King David said, "The heavens are telling of the _____ of God; and their expanse is declaring the _____ of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). One can hardly _____ at the beauty, the order, and the wisdom of the universe and not see how wise and

how powerful God is. The God who makes the sun shine and flowers bloom, the God who regulates times and seasons has such great power and wisdom that it's truly _____ our understanding. Paul proclaimed: "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without _____, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). All that we have, all our blessings _____ from God!

Jesus is not only our Creator, He's also the one who keeps this world together. Colossians 1:15-17 says, "And He (speaking of Jesus) is the _____ of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were _____, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things _____ together." God's power and wisdom cause our seasons, cause the earth to rotate every 24 hours making night and day, cause the moon to revolve around the earth every 28 days and control the tides of the ocean, and cause the earth to go around the sun every 365 and one fourth days determining our year and our seasons. This could not just happen on its own; God has been in _____.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this _____ our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). We're blessed to have food to eat each day, food that God _____. Have you ever thought about the _____ of one seed planted in the ground? One kernel of corn planted in the ground, watered, and fertilized can produce an ear of corn with sixteen rows and 800 kernels. Many cornstalks will have more than one ear! God created that kernel of corn with the information and the ability to reproduce itself that way. God is indeed powerful! **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 4:27-29.** God has been taking _____ of us in marvelous ways for a very long time.

Second, God is at work in your _____. God sent His Son to die upon the cross; God through the Holy Spirit inspired men to _____ the Bible including the gospel, which has the power to save; and Christ built His _____, who are the saved. From the very beginning, God has been _____ toward your salvation and mine. **Read what the apostle Paul said by inspiration in Ephesians 2:4-9.**

The salvation that we _____ through Christ was not easy. It's the _____ of God, and for that we are thankful. But great gifts are not cheap, and our redemption came at a _____ greater than silver or gold. God sacrificed his Son Jesus, and Jesus sacrificed His _____ on the cross for you and me. We must not take our salvation for granted or treat it _____ as if it were trivial. People who mock the Lord, people who ignore the cross, or criticize the church are usually unthankful for what God has done to _____ them. They don't realize what He sacrificed to give them _____ life. The Bible is the message of that life. Without the message of the Bible, we would all be in great peril—without hope and without God in this present world.

The Bible teaches us how to come to Christ, and how the _____ of Christ cleanses us, and how we can have _____ life with Christ. **Read what the Bible says in Colossians 2:12-13.** You may not realize it, but it is God who is "at work" in _____.

In baptism, God _____ us with Christ; God washes away our sins; God takes away that old man of sin; God _____ us with Christ; and God _____ us up from spiritual death to newness of life. In baptism, God adds us to the _____ and God makes us His children. Oh, God is very busy working on us in _____. For this reason, I cannot quite understand why anybody would say baptism is unnecessary for our salvation. Baptism is when God works on us.

God doesn't _____ us once we're saved. Every Christian _____, and that's unfortunate. Christians wish they could keep from sinning, because they love God and they _____ it when they sin and they want to stop it afterward. God knows that we're _____, but He's also provided for our weaknesses. The Bible says, "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw _____ to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). That's what Jesus is _____ right now for us. He's interceding with the Father on our behalf, asking the Father to _____ us and to continue blessing us, even when we have sinned. Oh, I am so thankful for the Lord who loves me enough to pray for me.

Third, God is at work answering _____. The Bible says, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will _____; and while they are still speaking, I will _____" (Isaiah 65:24). God wants to hear your prayers. In fact, He _____ you to pray to Him. The Bible says, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from _____, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). God loves us enough to hear our prayers and to help us when we _____ Him. The apostle Paul reminds us, "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding 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" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Fourth, God is busy shaping our _____. He works in us. The Bible says, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good _____ in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). Yes, God prepares His people to do His work, so that we may _____ for an eternity in heaven with Him. What God is doing in us now _____ us for the life to come. The Bible says, "So then, my beloved, just as you've always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). God is shaping our hearts, our attitudes, our will, and our lives to conform to His _____, so that we might live with Him always.

God also saved us so that we might be His _____, doing good works and impacting the world for love and righteousness. The Bible says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should _____ in them" (Ephesians 2:10). So much _____ is being done in the world because of the love of God and the teaching of the Bible: Christians feed the hungry, they take care of widows and orphans, they help unwed mothers; they provide help to the lonely and homeless; and they point sinners to righteousness.

I saw a book written by a skeptic, called *The God Problem*. His subtitle suggested that God never addresses the problem of _____ in the Bible. I wondered which Bible he was reading from because it's not the Bible that I've spent my life studying. God knows all about our _____, and the cross of Christ demonstrates God's willingness to suffer for us. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for _____ to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." God doesn't stop every event of suffering, but God does use even suffering to work for our _____. We don't always understand what God is doing or why; but we know that God _____ us and will use every circumstance in our lives, pleasing or painful, to work for good in some way. We can trust God!

Read what David, who was inspired of God, said in Psalm 103:1-5.

God has been working in our lives a very _____ time. He isn't hidden, but we do get distracted by life and sometimes we're unable to _____ what He's doing. The Bible reminds us of all the good that God is doing _____ us and _____ us. Paul said, "And now I commend you 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). Oh, God's Word is far from being _____. It's the source of love and life and good and righteousness. Oh, we need the Bible every day to help us grow and to live as God intended.

I join Paul in His prayer in Ephesians 1:18-19: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." God can work in your _____, IF you let Him. He won't twist your arm; He won't make you do anything. But if you out of love put your life into His hands, God can do _____ things.

It's not the _____ of God that is lacking. It's not the willingness of God to _____ in our lives that is lacking. What is lacking is our willingness to _____ God into our hearts and our lives.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." You've got to _____ Him and let Him work in you. God desires that we _____ in Jesus Christ enough to obey Him and to trust His promises.

That starts by trusting Him enough to _____ of your sins and _____ the name of Christ before others. Christ doesn't want a _____ disciple. He wants you to confess with your mouth that He is your Lord and that you believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. After you've repented and made that confession, God wants you to be _____ into Christ, where God cleanses you with the blood of Jesus and makes you into one of His own children. Won't you do that today? Won't you obey the gospel and put the Lord first? Will you let God work in your life?

December 25, 2016

Jesus Blesses Us

John 1:9-13

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

The Scriptures reveal several reasons why Jesus came into this world, and each of those reasons describes a _____ for mankind. The Lord's coming into the world touches each of our lives and opens up a wonderful way for us to _____ God. The Bible teaches us the truth that we _____ to know, the truth that we _____ know. That's why we keep studying this marvelous book. We work to _____ interested people to the Lord Jesus and to His Word, the Bible. God's Word has all the _____ for our spiritual lives. It teaches us where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going after we die. The Bible is God's marvelous _____ for us. It gives us all the information that we need to know for life and godliness. It brings us to Jesus and teaches us how to live so that we might _____ Him.

Of all our blessings, nothing could be more important than having a _____ relationship with Jesus Christ. Someday this _____ and all it possesses will be burned up and destroyed. What will matter on that day is your _____ relationship with God, the God who loves you and gave His Son, Jesus, to die for your sins. Jesus Christ is the perfect _____ of love, of righteousness, of service, and of obedience. Because of Jesus, we can _____ the truth, and the truth can set us free (John 8:32). Because of Jesus, we have hope and peace and a future.

We need Jesus Christ in this generation as much as any generation could. I cringe when I think of people mocking _____ or ignoring Him. How foolish to turn down an opportunity to know and follow the Son of God! Jesus came into this world to _____ us. I don't want you to miss out, and I don't want to miss out. I want you to have every blessing in Christ.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 1:9-13.

I'm deeply _____ that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. Our lives would be immeasurably _____ if Jesus had not come. We can know so many things that we wouldn't have known, because Jesus came. We can have a _____, loving relationship with the Father, because of Jesus. We have a living _____ beyond this grave because, of Jesus. We have a home in _____ forever and ever because, of Jesus. Today, we'll explore five reasons why Jesus came into the world. These are not the only reasons, but they are vitally important to our spiritual well-being.

First, Jesus came into the world so that we might _____ God. The Bible says, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:17-18). Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one _____ to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My

Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him” (John 14:6-7).

Second, Jesus came into the world so that we might know God’s will for our lives. **Read John 3:1-2.** Jesus was first and foremost a teacher; He wanted people not only to know God but to know the _____ of God. So, Jesus held this teaching to be essential to us. John 6:63 says, “the words that I have _____ to you are spirit and are life.” We must know and _____ the words of the Lord. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23.**

You cannot say no to the _____ of the Lord without saying no to the Lord Himself. Jesus wanted us to know His teaching because it will be the basis for our _____ on the Last Day. Jesus took special _____ to deliver the teaching accurately and faithfully. **Read what the Lord said in John 12:48-50.**

When the Bible teaches something, you can be _____ it’s what the Lord Jesus wants us to know. Don’t trust your feelings, or your assumptions, or the teachings of men, or anything but what you can _____ in your New Testament. The only way that you can know the will of the Father for _____ is by looking at the words of Jesus Christ.

Third, Jesus came into the world so that we might have a relationship with God. **Read what the Bible says in John 1:11-13.** God wants everybody to come to Him and to be His _____, but not everyone wants to do His will.

God will forgive anyone’s _____ who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of sin, and be baptized. The gospel is for _____, Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave or free. Anyone who loves the Lord and is willing to obey Him can be _____ and become a child of God. The apostle Peter said to the Roman Gentile, Cornelius, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who _____ Him and does what is _____ is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

People who _____ to be close to the Lord but are unwilling to do the will of God fool themselves. You can’t continue to live in rebellion to the will of God and then expect to have a _____ relationship with the Lord. The Lord wants to draw close to you; but if you reject His will, you’re rejecting Him, and His blessing.

Fourth, Jesus came into the world so that we might be _____. In Matthew 1:21, an angel of the Lord told Joseph about Mary: “she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will _____ His people from their sins.” In John 1:29, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the _____ of the world.”

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He _____ His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This passage has so much to say about God’s _____ for us. The Father loved us enough to _____ His Son, Jesus, on the cross so that we might have forgiveness of sins and become children of God; to me, this is amazing. God gave up His Son to a crucifixion, the worst and most shameful death that a man could _____. He did it because He truly loved us and truly _____ what sin

has done and would do to us. He gave Jesus as the only way to _____ for our sins.

In Luke 19, the New Testament tells the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, the wee little man who followed Jesus. When the people grumbled that Jesus had gone to be the _____ of a man who is a sinner, Jesus said, “Today _____ has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was _____” (Luke 19:9-10). The Lord Jesus has graced the _____ of so many sinners, people who thought they would forever be enslaved to a life for which they are ashamed. The Lord gives us hope that we can _____ and be freed from the guilt and the hold of sin over our lives.

On another occasion when Jesus was eating with tax-collectors and sinners, the Pharisees asked His disciples, “‘Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and _____?’” But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘It’s not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are _____. But you go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners’” (Matthew 9:11-13).

Jesus went where the need was greatest, to those who needed Him _____. He wasn’t like the Pharisees who thought they were _____ than others; He wanted to heal the spiritual diseases of people. He knew everyone had a _____, and so He didn’t pick and choose which people He liked and ignore the rest. He loved everybody and suffered on the _____ for every person.

Many believe the Lord predestined or arbitrarily chose which people He would _____ and which would be _____. Because of this false teaching, and it is false teaching, some believe that they can’t ever be _____ with the Lord, no matter what. I tell you, nothing could be farther from the _____. Jesus loves everybody and He died for the sins of _____ person.

Titus 2:11 says, “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men (all people).” Those who say Jesus shed His blood only for the _____, or the saved, contradict the Word of God. The inspired apostle John wrote to the elect in the church that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but also for the sins of the _____ world” (1 John 2:2). The Lord’s heart is not small; He has a place in His heart for you, my friend.

The apostle Paul, who described himself as the chief of sinners, realized that God’s _____ was greater than his sins. **Read what Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15-16.**

Jesus came to this earth to _____. He was born with a body, a body destined to _____ for the sins of the world. Hebrews 10:4-7 says: “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a _____ have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your _____, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

Jesus Christ gladly suffered and sacrificed His life so that we might _____ with Him for

eternity. The Lord said, “For this reason the Father _____ me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:17-18). Jesus Christ gave His body and His life as an _____ of great, personal love for you and for me.

Fifth, Jesus came into the world to give us an abundant _____. The Lord Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This promise of God has proven _____ on so many levels. The Lord Jesus has given us an abundant life here and will provide for us a _____ in heaven. Ephesians 1:3 reminds us that God “has blessed us with _____ spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Oh, God hears our _____; God grants us forgiveness and peace; God gives us living hope through the resurrection of Jesus; and God gives us His Word, the Bible, to instruct and guide us, and to encourage us each day.

Jesus blesses us so richly that I cannot imagine even one day _____ from the Lord. Spiritual death takes place when a person _____ against God. The word “death” describes a separation. Physical death, according to James 2:26, is the separation of the physical body from the _____. Spiritual death takes place when we sin against God and separate ourselves from God. Jesus died to reconcile us, to bring us back together with God. The blood of Jesus atones for our sins and allows us to come back into the grace and _____ of God our Father. His blood opens the _____ for us to live as children of God and to have hope in the hereafter. Don’t let a single day, not a single hour, pass without the blessing of Jesus Christ in Your life.

When I think about Jesus Christ coming into this world, I recall the time that my wife Jackie and I visited Israel. We saw much of the nation. We especially liked our trip to the northern town of Baniyas, what the Bible calls Caesarea Philippi. The New Testament records a heart-searching question, a question that we must also ask ourselves. **Read Matthew 16:13-15.**

Who is Jesus to you? How do you _____ Him? That may be the most important question you ever answer. Some today say that He was only a _____; others say that He was only a _____; and still others say that He was a great moral teacher. Peter answered Jesus by saying, “You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God.” Can you say that, too? Is He your Lord? Do you say that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God? If we _____ the Lord and commit our lives to Him, we can enjoy His blessings. If we turn Him down, we’ll lose the blessing that He came to give.

You can commit your life to Him by loving Him with all your heart, placing your _____ in Him as the Christ, turning away from all sin and then committing yourself to live as He wills, and by being _____ into Christ. Baptism is the immersion in water of a repentant believer. When you’re baptized God washes away your sins (Acts 22:16). He gives you newness of life (Romans 6:4). My friend, today is the best day for you to commit your life to God.