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*Program
Study Guides*

**For
March 2018**

March 4, 2018

Without God Ephesians 2:11-13

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

If you remove God from the picture, it _____ everything; and those changes are not good. We _____ need to know God, and we need to know what He has done, His will, and His plans for the future. His plans include you. One day we'll give an _____ to Him, even if we don't believe in Him. We can deny Him, but God _____ deny Himself.

In the nineteenth century Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher and cultural critic, said, "God is _____. God remains dead. And we have _____ him. Yet his _____ still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives; who will _____ this blood off us? What water is there to clean ourselves?"

Nietzsche was not so much saying God doesn't _____ as he was saying that society had treated Him as if He were dead. Nietzsche lost his _____. God isn't dead; Nietzsche merely banished him from his _____; and so have many. When society thinks that it can live without God, it ends up _____ His truth, His beauty, His morality, and His order with substitutes that cause confusion, disorder, emptiness, and immorality. There's good _____ to know, to love, and to serve God. First John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the _____ or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the _____ is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its _____, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 2:11-13, and it reminds the people to whom he was writing that they were once pagans without God, and how Jesus brought them near.

Without God people have nothing lasting, nothing pure, nothing holy, and nothing true. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do _____" (John 15:5). That was true in the first century, and it's true today!

We have good in life, because of God. If there were no God, we couldn't _____. James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from _____, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17). Every good thing that we possess finds its _____ in God who created this world with the design necessary to meet our needs – the air, the plants, the animals, water, sunlight, and the soil. Romans 1:20 says, "For His (God's) invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been _____."

Some reject God, because God is absolute and teaches absolute truth with concepts and morals that cannot _____. God's absolute nature provides _____ in our world. God's Word says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your _____, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16). That's God speaking. Without absolute truth, without the Word of God, we're left with _____ truth; and this causes confusion, uncertainty, and chaos.

The Scriptures point to an absolute God with absolute _____. **Read Romans 11:33-36.**

Many arrogantly think that they're _____ than God, but our society is filled with falsehoods and confusion. The Oxford Dictionary's 2016 Word of the Year was "post-truth." They explain, "objective facts are _____ influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." For many, emotions and assumptions manufacture what they believe _____ than reality or the Word of God. Some no longer believe that God revealed moral truth in Scripture so they manufacture their _____ moral logic and justifications. Have you noticed how morally _____ our society has become? Our society doesn't know when life begins, or what marriage is, or what makes people male and female.

When people stop _____ God, they feel free to lie and to follow something that's not true. We've been inundated with lies, and fake news, and false charges, misrepresentations, and exaggerations to the point that we're confused and questioning _____ from the news and politicians. Thankfully, we have a _____ of spiritual truth in God and in Christ that cannot be changed or stopped. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father _____ through me" (John 14:6). Titus 1:2 says the Father is the "God, who never _____." Hebrews 6:18 says that it is impossible for God to lie. God's honesty and integrity give us a reason to place our _____ in all that He says as true.

Without God, society is left in moral confusion. When we no longer think God matters, we can't _____ when life begins, or what marriage is, or whether a person is male or female. The theory of evolution is actually _____. Much of what Darwin supposed in his theory has been shown _____ by the fossil record and by DNA. We know far more today than Darwin knew in 1859. Evolutionists assumed but they never proved that non-living things gave rise to _____ matter in spontaneous generation. That's never been proved. They assumed but never proved that a one-celled animal _____ into multi-celled animals. They assumed but never proved invertebrates, that is animals without a spine, gave rise to vertebrates, that is animals with a spine. They assumed but never proved that fish gave rise to amphibians, and amphibians gave rise to reptiles, and reptiles gave rise to birds and mammals. They assumed _____ allowed these things to happen, but there is no proof among the fossils of one linking to another.

Without God people _____ that they are the result of unplanned and unintended events that have no reason or purpose. The difference between a person who sees God's design in this universe and believes God created him for a purpose, and a person who sees no design and has

no _____ for his existence is huge! One has a direction in life, while the other just _____.

When you disregard God, you must also disregard His moral _____. Without the moral teachings God provides, we would _____ in a tragic and disorderly world. According to the Pew Research Center, “virtually no atheists turn to _____ for guidance on questions of right and wrong.” In fact, atheists have great difficulty establishing a _____ for their moral lives. The Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, has one of his characters say in the book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, “If there is no God, _____ is permitted.” We pay attention to morals and our behavior because we _____ as Christians that we’re accountable to God. But what _____ when you’re not accountable? But they are accountable. Hebrews 4:13 says, “And no creature is _____ from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” When there is no accountability, there is no _____ to remain moral. We must remember, “For we must all _____ before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

God’s morality is wise and good _____. God is wise and good. He sees and knows everything about humanity, and He gave every commandment in the Word of God, in the Bible; and He did it for our _____. So we can’t thumb our nose at God’s ways and not pay an awful _____. Moses saw the superiority of God’s commandments. **Read Deuteronomy 4:6-8.**

Sadly, many _____ have abandoned God’s ways, thinking they have outgrown Him or know more than He does. Paul knew the condition of the _____ world when he was preaching the gospel in Ephesus. **Read what he wrote in Ephesians 4:17-24.** Without God, there is no _____ to holiness and righteousness; there’s only selfishness and impurity.

When people rid themselves of God, they also rid themselves of _____. **Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.** God wants to bless us for all eternity; and He gives us living hope through Christ’s resurrection.

The resurrection is no small matter. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:16-19.** But, of course, God did _____ Christ from the dead; and that fact gives us hope! We have assurance because of what God has _____ for us. Romans 8:11 says, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give _____ to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

More than that, God’s Word gives us hope that God will _____ His people. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our _____, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” With God’s help, Noah and his family survived the flood; Moses brought Israel out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea; Joshua conquered Palestine; David slew Goliath; Elijah raised the dead; Josiah restored the temple; Daniel revealed Nebuchadnezzar’s dream; the three Hebrews survived the fiery furnace; Daniel came out of the lion’s den; Ezra led the people back to Jerusalem; Nehemiah built the wall; and Jesus rose from the dead. You cannot _____ God’s power!

In Christ, we not only can live forever; we have the _____ life now. Paul said, “For to me to _____ is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). He realized that Jesus came to give us an _____ life! It’s a life filled with the _____ of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). The love and the teaching of God _____ us to be our best, our wisest, and our strongest. They have their minds and hearts, those who follow Christ, on something _____ than selfishness, greed, and lust. They love because Christ loves. They _____ because Christ served. They _____ others because Christ blessed them. In Christ, whatever is good and excellent just multiplies!

We should give _____ that we have a God who loves and cares for His people! The ancient pagan gods had little _____ for the people. Their followers never thought they could grow _____ to their gods; they offered sacrifices to keep the pagan gods from getting angry and sending evil upon them.

We often quote John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he _____ his only (or only begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be _____ through him.” God loved a world that couldn’t save itself, an ungodly world that never gave Him a second thought, and a world that sinned against Him and was His enemy. God, because of His great love and mercy, was willing to _____ His Son, Jesus, in spite of it all. No one will ever love you to the same extent that the Father and the Son love you!

In 1939, the submarine *Squalus* sank. Its crew sat helpless at the _____ of the Atlantic Ocean off the shore of New Hampshire. The *Squalus* was two hundred and forty feet below the surface. Nobody had ever attempted to _____ a submarine if it were more than 20 feet below the surface. The crew sent up smoke flares, hoping to be found. Rescuers lowered a ten-ton diving bell several times and brought the thirty-three surviving members of the crew to _____. Not one of those thirty-three men said to their rescuers, “I’ll think it over,” or “I’ll wait for a more convenient time,” or “I’m in good condition as I am,” or “Look, there’s too much to give up.” Each one of them instantly and gratefully accepted his opportunity to _____ the sunken submarine.

Sin puts your soul into a _____ condition; you cannot save yourself by your own doing. Without the Lord to _____ you from condemnation, you have no hope. This is why it doesn’t make sense to _____ or put off coming of the Lord Jesus for salvation. It also makes no sense to _____ the Lord Jesus and His teaching to live a sinful life.

To be saved, you must _____ and _____ Jesus Christ is the Son of God; you must _____ of your sins and turn to the Lord Jesus; and you must be _____ or immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Being saved means the Lord will remove the sins and make you His servant. The Lord will add you to His church, and make you His child. God wants to save you, but you must let Him by obeying His instructions. What’s preventing you from becoming a Christian or remaining faithful to Christ? Whatever it is, it’s not worth it!

Why Do We Suffer? Romans 8:37-39

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

Why would a loving, all-powerful God _____ us to suffer. A close look at Jesus Christ helps us to see another _____ to suffering. The Lord's way is the right way to _____ with every hurt, every problem, and every disappointment in life. The Bible is God's Word and has the spiritual answers that we need to deal with life's greatest _____. It opens for us God's heart and God's way.

The problem of suffering is _____. Everyone has either faced it, is facing it now, or will face it in the future. For some this is a real stumbling block to their _____, but it doesn't have to be. As a minister, I've spent time at hospitals, nursing homes, and funeral homes with _____ people. I know how _____ it is to suffer illness or to lose a loved one. It's natural to say in our hearts, "If there is an all-powerful God in heaven that loves me, why did He allow this to happen? Why couldn't He have stopped this and kept me from so much pain?"

The Lord _____ the deep pain that we feel and loves us. We may not know _____ this particular event has happened, but we do know that God has not forgotten or overlooked us. We often assume love means _____ anything that might hurt a loved one. We assume suffering cannot be compatible with love, but is that always _____? Could love and suffering coexist? Can suffering somehow be a _____ to us? If it can be shown that suffering is not all bad but can lead to a greater good, we might see our suffering as a building block rather than a stumbling block to our _____.

Our reading today comes from Romans 8:37-39. The Roman Christians were enduring terrible persecution and it would get worse. But, Paul wants to reassure them of God's love.

Suffering is _____. We hate to hear about cancer, heart disease, hurricanes, or fires. Sometimes people assume that the _____ way God can be "good" is to prevent what hurts us, but we question that. Isn't God's love and power seen just as clearly in how He _____ us through a struggle as in whether He prevents it? Paul said, "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" (Romans 8:28). Not everything that happens is good, but God is powerful enough to take the hurtful things in our lives and turn them into something that leads to good.

The rough bumps in life can give us the courage and determination to make life smoother for _____. You can't have lemonade without lemons. There are many things of _____ and good in this life because somebody had suffered and then felt the need to make things better. Good _____ out of hurt and disadvantage. When people are challenged, they _____ to rise above the challenges. I think of Joseph, whose brothers cruelly sold him into _____

in a foreign land. Later Joseph was falsely _____ by Potiphar's wife and spent many years in Pharaoh's prison. But through it all, "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2). You may be going through tough times, but God can _____ you, too.

Years later, Joseph's brothers moved to Egypt along with their father. When their father, Jacob, died, these guilt-ridden brothers were _____ and they begged for forgiveness. But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant _____ against me, *but* God meant it for _____ in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." (Genesis 50:19-21), He comforted them and spoke _____ to them. Joseph didn't take vengeance; he didn't blame God, he didn't lose faith, and he grew into a spiritual giant _____ of all of his suffering. Life going sour doesn't mean God has abandoned you.

In our pain, we often _____ only on what has happened to us, not knowing that God may have a greater plan. Joseph had dreams, but he didn't know _____ God would work out that dream. Becoming a slave and then a prisoner seemed to be exactly the _____ direction for a person who was to be exalted. The Lord did not exalt him until He was _____ and could do the job. Slavery and imprisonment actually _____ him for service to the Pharaoh. He suffered for years before God acted. He didn't know it at the time, but he _____ understood that God meant it for good—slavery and imprisonment. Yes, even slavery and imprisonment!

Joseph never grew _____ as some people do. He never got _____ at God but found the grace that he needed to forgive his guilty brothers. Rather than wonder why bad things happen to us, perhaps we should set our focus on what _____ this suffering has for us. Our suffering may be shaping and equipping us for some _____ purpose that we may not now understand. It's an assumption on our part that ease and happiness are the greatest good in life. Rather than doubt God's love, we should ask what God is shaping you and me to be and what He wants us to do in His _____. Suffering, though it's painful, may have a value to our lives and may be the very thing that _____ to life.

Some "good things" can only be brought about in our lives _____ suffering. The pearl, for instance, exists as a result of suffering. Suffering can actually _____ us. It can help a person know himself and _____ what is really important or valuable. It can build _____ by challenging one to stretch and to grow. It can also _____ him understand what he can do to bless others. Suffering teaches us to be _____ for our blessings and for others who helped us through a tough time. It teaches compassion. Walking the road of _____ helps a person guide another who may find himself forced down the same road.

Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. This passage encourages me. Paul is not bitter toward God, not angry for all his burdens, but maturely _____ that God's comfort in his affliction equips him to comfort others when they are afflicted. God's people help others when their lives are filled with pain.

Read Paul's description of his suffering in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

If anyone had a _____ to complain about his sufferings, Paul certainly did. Yet he didn't complain. He was suffering not for doing something _____, but for doing what was _____, for preaching the gospel! God wanted him to _____ the good news with the Gentile world, and all Paul found was insults, and persecution, and problems. Why didn't God _____ him from any suffering, so he could work? God didn't prevent the devil's hindrances. In fact, Paul faced just about every problem that anyone could face; but he never gave up; he never got angry at God; and never took it out on others. What did he do? He drew _____ to the Lord.

Paul knew this life is not _____ there is. Though he suffered much, he did not give much _____ to his suffering. In Romans 8:18, he said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the _____ that is to be revealed to us." When we get to heaven, we'll not be so concerned with all the aches and pains of this life. Our suffering will be _____. The glory of being a child of God, of being in heaven, and of the love of God will be so wonderful we'll say "it was worth" every _____. This life is brief, and eternity is forever and ever and ever. One simply cannot compare with the other. No one will feel _____ in heaven.

Someone says at this point, "Phil, you just don't understand. I'm hurting. If God really loved me, He wouldn't let me hurt like this." Are you sure? Is the only way God can love you is to _____ your struggles? Some lessons and advantages of life only come through _____. How can I _____ my children from disease painlessly? Do I love them the more by refusing to give them the vaccinations they need, just because I don't want them to _____ over a shot? The little pains we suffer today may keep us from the _____ pains we could suffer tomorrow. Is all pain really bad? Would the Marine Corps follow that _____ of preventing pain in order to make a better soldier?

One way that we grow stronger, more patient, more compassionate, and more steadfast is by going through struggles which _____ us. Paul found that even the worst pains could _____ him something. **Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

God used Paul as a great evangelist and apostle; but to keep him _____, God sent a messenger of Satan to be a thorn in his flesh. That thorn was sharp and painful. There was no aspirin in those days, no Tylenol, no Ibuprofen, and no relief. Three times Paul implored, entreated, asked God to take it away; and God said _____. Paul didn't get angry and quit on God. He learned God's _____ was sufficient. God's grace _____ us through our struggles, too. He didn't take Paul's thorn away, but God taught him to _____ on the strength and comfort of His power. Paul was _____ to become proud. He had to learn that the _____ to do his work was not in his keen wisdom or intellect, but in God. It was God's Word, not Paul's ability that _____ people to Christ and made the difference in people's lives. Paul needed to know that along with this thorn was also the power of God to continue in spite of it.

God won't allow Satan to "buffet" or beat us up _____ our ability. Paul said, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not

allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the _____ of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Our problems and sufferings aren’t _____ than God who stands beside us. He knows how much we can bear and He provides His grace to _____ us bear it. If it becomes stronger than we can stand, even our suffering as well as the temptations, God will provide a way of _____ so that we can endure. I’m really thankful for this _____ of help in hard times. Our loving God does indeed _____ beside us to help us.

To understand love and suffering, nothing is more valuable than recalling the _____. Jesus despised suffering and He _____ the Father to “let this cup pass from me” at Gethsemane. In the end, Jesus prayed that the Father’s _____ be done. Peter said that while He suffered, He _____ entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23). Trust gave Him the power to _____ what He suffered on the cross. His last prayer was, “Father, into your hands, I commit my _____” (Luke 23:46). Jesus never got angry with His Father for commanding Him go to the cross. Jesus _____ suffered to free us from sin.

Jesus had the confidence and the courage to _____ to His Father in times of suffering. He endured the _____ of the cross by entrusting Himself to the Father. We can also put ourselves into the Father’s hands with confidence. Peter said, “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their _____ to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19). Our souls are His, regardless of what may happen to our _____. The Lord will _____ us the endurance to bear any burden, to live with any affliction. Remember we belong to Him, and He will _____ our souls. God demonstrated His great love in the death of His Son, Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His amazing love by suffering an agonizing death on the cross for our _____. Suffering and love are not incompatible. Jesus himself said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his _____ for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:12-14). Giving love to others may _____ us dearly too, if we love as Jesus loved us. Taking up our cross and following Him will mean that we too will _____.

Jesus' death on the cross, however, teaches us that suffering doesn't last forever; and death is not the _____. When God's people suffer, the _____ is near them, sharing their pain, and holding them in His hands. Whether a Christian lives or dies, he never _____ the love of a caring Father in Heaven. He will always be with you. God will strengthen you for whatever _____ may come your way.

I hope that your soul is right with the living God. If you want God to take care of you, then devote yourself to Him. Believe Him and His Word, repent of all your sins, confess the name of Jesus before others, and be baptized (immersed in water) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins just as Acts 2:38 teaches. When you’re baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16); the Lord will make you His child (Galatians 3:26-27), and the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47). We hope that you’ll be obedient to Him today.

November 8, 2015

Jesus Understands Hebrews 4:14-16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

December 6, 2015

The Battle For Your Soul Ephesians 6:10-13

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

You may not realize it, but you—yes you—are in a serious _____ battle. Today we're going to talk about the battle for our _____. We pray that the Lord's will may be _____ on earth as it is in heaven. This means we must take the time to _____ the will of the Lord by a serious and sincere study of the Word of God, and we must _____ what it teaches. Psalm 119:1-3 says, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who _____ in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who _____ his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" We want God to bless us, and we know that we must _____ to God if we're to please Him.

We live in a chaotic world with many conflicting voices _____ us to believe this or to do that. The voice of God in Scripture will tell us the _____, while the world's many voices will try to lead us _____ from God. Some voices encourage us to leave our faith and follow the _____. Some will tell us "there is no God," or "the Bible isn't true," or "we're the products of evolution," or "Christians are mean." Others will tell us that our _____ don't matter. If we believe the _____ that the world tells, we can be led astray just as Eve was in Genesis 3. We're facing an ideological battle and a _____ battle for our souls. I hope this gets your _____! Whether we believe and follow Christ or believe a lie and follow the world will determine how God will deal with us in _____. Are you committed to Christ? Are you listening to His Word? Are you winning or losing the battle for your soul?

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 6:10-13.

We're at war with the _____; and he's a formidable opponent. He's had many centuries to exploit human weaknesses so that he can lead us into sin and _____ us. This battle is a _____ one, like hand-to-hand combat between two soldiers. At the end of such a fight in ancient times, one soldier was standing and the other was _____. This battle is like a wrestling match where two people are personally involved eye to eye. You cannot _____ this battle off to somebody else; you must _____ the devil yourself. He has watched you and he _____ your strengths and weaknesses. He'll use every _____ he knows to defeat you. He has no qualms about cheating, lying, or using dirty tricks to _____. He's serious about defeating you and he intends to _____.

This spiritual battle isn't just for your _____; it's for your soul and the souls of your loved ones. It's the most _____ conflict that you'll ever face. If you're not _____ that you're in a fight, you will surely lose. If you don't have the _____ to fight, you will most certainly lose. If you're not _____ to fight, you cannot win. If you fight but you don't give it _____ that you have, you can still lose your soul. Your enemy, the devil, will do anything,

anything, to _____ your soul. If that means trickery, he'll lie and he'll _____ God's Word to suit his purposes.

Read how the apostle Paul particularly warned Christians to hold to the truth in 2 Corinthians 4:2-4.

The devil _____ people to the truth, so they'll believe a lie and be lost. When people leave the Word, they leave the truth. So, the devil twists and tampers with the _____. To _____ with the Word of God is to distort it or make it appear false by deception. Satan tampers with the Word to make it _____ something that it doesn't actually say. The person who uses God's Word cunningly just to _____ his agenda is in Paul's eyes disgraceful and underhanded.

Scripture reveals how Satan's schemes follow a common _____. If we understand the way that he operates, we can _____ for Satan's challenges. Satan, first, loves to ask questions that create _____ in the Word of God. In the Garden of Eden, the devil asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Genesis 3:2). Satan knew what God had said; he wasn't asking the question to _____ the truth or to do the will of God. Rather he asked the question to _____ doubt in God! He wanted Eve to _____ God. Doubting the truth is the first step to _____. The devil will always give you all the _____ you should not do the will of God. He wants you to forget doing things God's way, and to think for yourself, and to do what you think is _____ for you. He wants you to think you know _____ than God.

Satan, second, _____ what God says. When Eve told Satan that she would die if she ate of that fruit or even touched it, the devil said, "you shall surely _____ die" (Genesis 3:4). The devil has no qualms about lying to achieve his _____. Satan always wants people to place their confidence in him, not God. Satan claims that God has _____ you, but he knows what is really true. This desire to know Satan's secrets and to be one of the _____ has led many unfortunate souls down the path to perdition. He appeals to the _____ in people: their flesh, their eyes, and their pride. He makes them feel God is holding them down and _____ them out of some pleasure or some knowledge.

The Lord Jesus told some Jews who followed Satan, "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth because there's no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). All you have to do to promote a lie is to tamper with the truth just a _____. Rat poison is 98 percent corn meal and only two percent poison. If it weren't mostly corn meal, the rats wouldn't eat it; but two percent of poison is enough to kill the rat. A little _____ can still keep you out of heaven. Buy the truth and do not sell it.

Satan appeals to what you want to _____ and he makes you feel so good. Eve was deceived by Satan's lie. The devil likes to turn things _____ down. He makes what is evil appear good and appealing, and he makes what's good appear evil and ugly. God said, "Woe to those who

call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Have you noticed how our world has _____ anything righteous as being wrong, while things that are evil are all of a sudden made attractive and enticing? That's the devil's scheme.

Satan, third, produces an _____ version of "truth." He enticed Eve with these words, "For God knows that when you eat of it (that is, of this fruit) that your eyes will be _____, and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). The devil's alternative _____ truth with error. There is enough truth to _____ persuasive, but his message is full of misrepresentations and distortions. Add it all up and the bottom line is that it's just a _____ lie. Satan wants everyone to believe he has a _____ way, that God is trying to fool you, and that God is not your friend but is cheating you out of something really _____. His strategy is to get people to rely on him for real "_____." His alternative ways sound appealing, but, in the end what they do is to _____ those who follow it.

Satan, fourth, despises and persecutes anyone who _____ him. **Read what Jesus explained in John 3:19-20.** Jesus knew that if the world hated Him, it would also hate his _____ too when they preach the truth about sin. The devil loves to put down the _____ and the truth of the Bible. Peter said, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, then you're blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (1 Peter 4:14). The devil is a _____, but God sees everything and rewards those who follow Him. If you hold to the truth and righteousness, be _____ the devil will despise you and speak evil about you.

Satan, fifth, pretends to be _____. Paul spoke about some deceivers who pretended to be men of God, but they actually served Satan. **Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.** In order to deceive Christians and lead them into his "alternative" churches, the devil _____ to be a Christian leader. There are religions today that pretend to follow the Lord Jesus, but the more you _____ them, the more you realize they're not God's people.

With high-sounding phrases, Satan tries to _____ people that Christianity is like a smorgasbord of ideas, from which you can pick and choose whatever doctrines you like, and throw away the others, of course. There are thousands of denominations in America, each teaching different _____ and wearing different names. It's become popular to follow some man's _____ rather than listen to the Word of God. This is the devil's work. He's the one who provides heresies. Heresies are divisive false teachings that lead people astray and _____ the church.

If you listen to the devil, you'll come to _____ that there's no such thing as heresy, that every view is equally good. When you believe that, you've fallen into the _____ of the devil. He tried to convince Eve to _____ listening to God and to _____ her own reasoning. When people ignore the Bible, the Word of God, and start listening to the beliefs of men, they fall _____ to the devil's schemes. Their eyes become _____ to the truth. God's ways and man's ways are not the _____. You can't ignore God's Word and build your house upon

_____, and expect everything to be all right between you and God. Eve was deceived; she lost sight of God and did what she _____ to do. If we're deceived and lose sight of God and do what we want to do, then we too will have to _____ the consequences of sin.

Number six, Satan _____ on the weak and the ignorant. **Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.** The devil is looking for _____ people who will fall prey to his immoral lifestyle and his disobedience to God. He uses false _____ and false _____ as alternatives to the truth. He whispers to our consciences that we can sin and not be _____ by it. He is deceptive!

No matter how appealing his message is, the devil's _____ is your spiritual death. So... resist him, _____ in your faith. Pay close _____ to the Word of God. Keep your eyes focused on the _____. God hasn't left us _____ to fight the devil. **Read what Paul said in Ephesians 6:13-17.**

These things will help you in your _____ for righteousness. Whenever you have this righteousness, the gospel of peace; when you have faith; when you have salvation; and when you have the Word of God, this _____ will protect you from the devil's weapons; the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, is a formidable weapon. It has the _____ that pierces hearts and souls. The best thing that you can do is to _____ Satan, and to do it you've got to know the Word of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by _____ word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Oh, how we need the Word of God and nothing else; nothing else will do.

When people follow their own desires rather than listen to and obey God, the devil _____ and they _____. My friend, what about you? Is the devil tricking you? If the Lord and His Word doesn't _____ in your life, you'll have a _____ who lies to you to take your soul away. If you follow the devil, he'll take you where you don't _____ to go. Let Jesus be Lord of your life. To get right with God and to overcome the devil, you need the Lord's _____. You can't win by your _____ strength. When Christ is in you and you are in Him, He'll give you the help and the strength that you need to overcome Satan. Ephesians 6:10-11 says, "Finally, be _____ in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to _____ firm against the schemes of the devil."

To become a Christian, _____ with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior and the risen Lord. Out of love, _____ of every sin and start living as God teaches. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Be _____ or immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Galatians 3:26-27 says, "For you are all sons of God through _____ in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were _____ into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Live the Christian life. Get involved at church. The closer you are to God, the easier it becomes to _____ the devil. Do it for yourself, and do it for those that you love. Your strong faith will lead others to place their faith in the Lord as well. Don't let another day go by till you have made your life right with the living God. Why not be obedient to Him today?