



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
July 2019**



A Nation Under God
First Timothy 2:1-6

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

What would America, or any nation, be like, if it _____ lived as a nation under God? What can we _____ to be the nation that God desires? This week our country has been celebrating the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the day we generally regard as the beginning of _____. Many of the founders of this country were dedicated _____ of the Bible and frequently quoted it and alluded to it. The Bible was important to them, and we hope the Bible's important to you.

When the Pledge of Allegiance was first written in 1892, it didn't contain the phrase "under God." The United States Congress _____ those words in 1954. They added those words because they realized this nation—as every nation—exists _____ the Almighty hand of God. President Dwight Eisenhower, on August 17, 1954, expressed how Americans _____ about that phrase "under God." He said, "These words will remind Americans that despite our great physical strength we must remain _____. They will help us to keep constantly in our minds and hearts the spiritual and moral principles which alone give _____ to man, and upon which our way of life is founded." In 1954, Congress and President Eisenhower understood the difference between living "under God" and living _____ God.

We _____ ourselves to "one nation under God." On every coin and dollar bill is the _____, "In God We Trust." When we sing the patriotic song, "America the Beautiful," we are asking God to "shed His _____ on thee." Our Declaration of Independence acknowledges that all men are "created equal and endowed by our _____ with certain inalienable rights." Yet, I wonder if we, today, are a nation "under God." Has our nation not _____ the moral and spiritual values found in the Scriptures? Are we a nation "under God"?

Our reading today comes from Paul's First Letter to Timothy 2:1-6.

Are we a "nation under God"? No thinking person would say America has the _____ mindset today that it had in 1954. Since then our country has _____ clearly that prayer and Bible reading cannot be done in public schools. Our courts have upheld the rights of women to _____ the lives of the unwanted in the womb. More than two of every five children born here are born to unmarried parents. Are we a "nation under God"?

Some states have redefined _____ in ways contradictory to the teaching of God. Nearly 40 percent of Americans say marriage is _____. Today the government _____ gambling. Freedom of speech permits taking the name of God in _____. Pornography fills the land. Are we a "nation under God"?

We can hardly build prisons _____ enough, and many of our prisons are so overcrowded

they're releasing prisoners early. In some places, our children cannot even _____ a Bible privately and read it. In many states, schools can teach _____ but cannot teach about God or creation. Are we a "nation under God"?

While the first amendment of our Constitution grants us the free exercise of _____, many have reinterpreted that to mean freedom from the Religion of Christianity. We ask again: are we a "nation under God"? From our human standpoint, we might say no; we're not a nation under God anymore. But is that the viewpoint of heaven?

We can _____ against God, but that does not mean that God has ceased to be God. We can throw Him out of our lives, ignore Him, deny Him, and even despise Him, but the Lord is still the one and only _____. He is still the one and only _____ of this nation or any nation. The Bible says, "There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the LORD. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD" (Proverbs 21:30-31).

Job proclaimed, "I know that You can do all things, (speaking about God) and that no _____ of Yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). God deals with mankind on the basis of how people _____ to Him. If we are obedient, He will _____ us. If we are stubborn and rebellious, we'll suffer His _____. The real issue is whether we will live obediently "under God" or whether we'll live our lives according to our own terms.

Read Romans 2:5-11. What can be said about our country can be said about any country. The Lord God blesses those countries that _____ Him and in His time shows His wrath to those that reject Him. Many have lost sight of how we bring _____ on ourselves by rejecting the will of God. We're causing so many of the problems of our time by tolerating _____. The Lord gave us His laws to _____ us and to bless us. God loves us. When we reject the law of the Lord and embrace sin, we do so to our ruin. **Read Psalm 1:1-6.**

You can't thumb your nose at God; you can't blaspheme Him, or rebel at His will and then expect things to go _____ at judgment. The Holy Spirit gives us a look at the empty, pagan world in Paul's day when He inspired Paul to write, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer _____ as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of _____. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (Ephesians 4:17-19).

When people stop _____ the Bible, they delude themselves with empty, imaginary notions. They start thinking about aliens, vampires, werewolves, witches, and genies. These are all figments of people's imaginations just like the pagan _____. Those who focus on such things are darkened in their understanding and become alienated from the _____ God wanted to give them. Without God, people then begin to harden their hearts toward the _____ and what's good and become totally selfish, greedy, and filled with lust.

God wants something _____ for us and has provided Jesus Christ to show us the way to an abundant life. Paul contrasted this life with the Christian life, "But that is not the way you

learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your _____ self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the _____ self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:20-24).

Democracy can be a _____ thing when people are righteous; but when the unrighteous are the majority, everyone suffers when the majority tolerates and promotes sin. Good men who realize their accountability to God will _____ wisely, but evil men bring disgrace to their nation. The Bible says, “Righteousness _____ a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). Proverbs 11:11 says, “By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the _____ of the wicked it is torn down.” Proverbs 29:2 says, “When the righteous increase, the people _____, but when a wicked man rules, people _____.”

If we want to see _____ for the better, we must set our hearts on serving God. We must be a nation “under God.” We must _____ rebelling against God and _____ pursuing God’s will. It’s never enough simply to say that we believe in God and in Christ. The Bible says, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is _____?” (James 2:19-20). Faith that is unwilling to _____ God is dead and useless indeed!

Obedience means we carefully _____ to a command and place ourselves under the authority of the one we hear. Obedience is _____ what you’re told. I recall my parents saying to me, “Did you _____ me?” I knew what they meant and that I needed to obey what they told me. You can’t obey until you seriously listen to the instruction and submit your _____ to God.

Jesus _____ the Father and went to the cross. By His obedience, we have the _____ of salvation opened to us. The Bible says, “Although he was a son, he _____ obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who _____ him” (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Obedience was not trivial to Jesus Christ; it was His _____. The Lord Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father _____ me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are _____ to him” (John 8:28-29). If we’re to follow Jesus, then we too should set our hearts on _____ the Father in all we do. We need to say what David said, “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). Do you _____ in doing the will of God?

It seems so human to see a problem in our lives and then just _____ it. We’re too easily satisfied with our own sinful weaknesses and put off our need to _____. The Bible says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a _____. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a

doer who _____, he will be blessed in his doing” (James 1:22-25).

Obedience has so much to do with mindset and _____. Many people are like the little boy who was told to sit down. He muttered under his breath, “I may be sitting down on the _____, but I’m standing up on the _____.” You won’t keep on following the Lord if your heart is not in it. But when your heart is in it, it becomes a pleasure, not a _____. The Bible says, “For this is the love of God, that we _____ his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). When we realize God’s commandments are for our _____, we’ll gladly do what God instructs and quit following the selfish ways of the world.

Our _____ set the direction of our souls and our destiny. The Bible says, “For those who are according to the flesh set their _____ on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh (that is, sin) is _____ toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot _____ God” (Romans 8:5-8).

Our task is to please God in _____ that we do. We can’t change in a day everything that has corrupted this country, but each of us can determine to change our individual lives. We can return to the Lord’s side and stop tolerating sin. We can speak up for what is right and speak against what is wrong. We can’t live our lives in neutral, sitting silent and letting _____ have its way. We must restore our faith in Jesus Christ and commit ourselves to follow the will of God.

In 1938, as the war in Europe threatened the United States, Irving Berlin wrote a song that stirred the _____ of every American. He called for Divine _____ in the song, “God Bless America.” He wrote, “While the storm clouds gather far across the sea, let us swear allegiance to a land that’s free, let us all be grateful for a land so fair, as we raise our voices in a solemn _____. God Bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her through the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam God _____ America, my home sweet home.” That song still stirs my heart.

Don’t you think that God wants to bless America? The question is not whether God will bless His righteous people, He will, but whether we’re living lives _____ of His blessing and favor. Nations are made up of individual people, and faith in God is an individual _____. So decide to be a genuine Christian who lives what he believes and stands up for God’s way! Maybe you’ve been complacent about your faith and commitment to God. Isn’t it time you turned your heart back to God?

If you care about the society that your children will inherit from you, you’ll commit your life to Jesus Christ. If you pray for God to bless America, live a life worthy of His blessing and grace. You can do this by placing your faith in Christ as the Son of God; turning away from sin and demanding righteousness in your own heart and life; confessing Christ before all; and by being baptized. When you’re baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church according to Acts 2:38, 47; and Acts 22:16. Won’t you turn your life around today?

July 14, 2019

The Answer is God 2 Timothy 3:1-5

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

Someone commits a violent _____ in America every 26 seconds and a _____ every 36 minutes. Why? Today, we're exploring the _____ of violence and the solution. The Lord's way is a way of love, joy, and peace. It blesses everyone who _____ it. Psalm 1:2 tells us about the blessed man. God said, "his _____ is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." If you want a _____ world, it begins with you. Don't wait on others. Today seeking the Lord and meditating on His Word can make all the difference. Learn what God desires from you and then _____ it. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love me, you will _____ my commandments" (John 14:15). I know you love the Lord and you want to serve Him.

Lately we've seen lots of violence and hearing the word "_____." The nightly _____ carries story after story of assault, rape, and murder. Violent crime in America has _____ dramatically in the last 50 years. According to the FBI, there were 288,000 violent crimes in 1960; but in 2018, there were over 1.2 million violent crimes reported. We've grieved over violent school shootings, terrorist acts, and bombings. We wonder how anybody could be so _____ and hard-hearted.

While some psychologists speak of violent people being mentally disturbed, others say they are evil. Perhaps it takes crime so horrific as this for us to _____ that there is such a thing as evil. Postmodern America has spent so much time excusing itself and justifying its sins. It's _____ how wicked and how evil humans can be. More than anything, we need the teaching and the love of Jesus to _____ our hearts and to live righteously.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:1-5. He warns Timothy about the evil changes that will take place as time passes.

From the earliest days, the _____ speaks of the violence in this world. In Genesis 4, God had regard for Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering God had no regard. Cain became very _____ and his face fell. God warned him, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, _____ is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must _____ over it" (Genesis 4:6-7). But Cain let his anger grow in spite of God's warning. Verse 8 says, "Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and _____ him."

What Cain did was evil. He planned to kill Abel out of his _____. God said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own _____" (Genesis 9:6). God has always considered taking the life of another as _____. The Lord's Ten Commandments say, "You shall not _____" (Exodus 20:13). Murder is and has always been _____. Revelation 21:8 says, "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake

that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

The New Testament _____ us not to follow Cain. The Bible says, “We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own _____ were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12). Cain first thought evil and then he put his deadly plan into action. We must master our thoughts and not allow evil to overcome us.

The Lord Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is _____ with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matthew 5:21-22). The Lord condemns evil in the heart, even if we don’t _____ on it. Anger, hate, and vengeance is as evil as murder itself. We shouldn’t even entertain the _____ of harming or slandering another person.

The Lord Jesus said, “For from within, out of the _____ of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they _____ a person” (Mark 7:21-23). Because our inner thoughts affect how we _____, we must be careful to keep our hearts free from evil. We have to decide that we’re going to live _____ ugliness and malice.

According to Jesus, murder begins when people lose _____ for another person. Spitting in the face of another, looking with contempt upon another, or releasing one’s anger are signs of a murderous spirit. Jesus forces us to consider our thoughts and our words so that we don’t _____ our anger and hatred to overwhelm us. The Bible says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be _____ from you, along with all malice. Be _____ to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32). We must learn to let go of evil thoughts and be kind to others, even if they’re not kind to us.

Evil in the heart _____ to the most terrible sins. Even _____ people, if they allow jealousy or hatred to build up in their hearts, can do unspeakably cruel things to others. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees were behind the death of Jesus Christ. They chose Barabbas, the criminal, to be _____, while they cried out for the blood of Jesus Christ. They didn’t fool Pilate, however. Mark 15:10 says, “For he (Pontius Pilate) perceived that it was out of _____ that the chief priests had delivered him up.”

Why were they envious? First, because Jesus could perform _____, but they couldn’t. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some men ran and told the chief priests and Pharisees. John 11:47-48 says, “So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will _____ in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’” The second reason came from their _____ of losing their livelihood at the temple. They figured it was better for Jesus to die than for them to lose their nation. Many people today do horrible things out of jealousy and envy.

Another cause of hatred is something you might not expect; it’s the _____. People don’t want the truth told if it _____ their sins. Jesus said, “And this is the judgment: the light has

come into the world, and people _____ the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things _____ the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed” (John 3:19-20). Sinful people want the darkness to cover up their sinful ways. They hate for their sins to be exposed and hate anyone who exposes them.

Herod had John the Baptist arrested and put in _____ because of Herodias, the wife of his brother, Philip. John had been saying to him, “It is not _____ for you to have her” (Matthew 14:4). Herod was grieved about the matter, but Herodias plotted to have John beheaded. An evil person who has hatred in his or her heart has no compassion and will take vengeance into their own _____.

Selfish desire can _____ people to commit murder. People who are greedy for power and gold will do anything to eliminate their competition. The Bible says, “When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel” (2 Chronicles 21:4). Lust for _____ causes people to do horrible things, even to their families. James 3:16 says, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”

Unrestrained sexual _____ leads to evil. When David lustfully committed _____ with Bathsheba and got her pregnant, it led to many other sins. He tried to _____ it up by getting Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, to come home to her. When nothing else worked, David arranged for Uriah to _____ in battle. Nathan, the prophet, told David, “Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is _____ in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites” (2 Samuel 12:9). When we sin against others, we’re also sinning against _____ Himself. If you love God, you’ll not _____ selfishness to dominate your life.

The apostle Paul listed a number of fleshly sins in Galatians 5. Each of them arises out of _____. When people rebel against God and must have their own way, they lose sight of everyone else. They grow callous and don’t _____ who they hurt. **Read Galatians 5:19-21.** People who hold to fleshly sin cannot live with God forever.

We must be _____ to set our hearts on serving the Lord rather than living like the world. **Read 1 John 2:15-17.** Selfishness leads people away from God, and loving God leads people away from selfishness. The answer to evil is God’s _____.

Paul explains how loving God and loving people _____ us away from evil. He said, “Owe no one anything, except to _____ each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no _____ to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8-10). Just as filling your heart with anger and hate leads to sin, filling your heart with what is good and loving leads to righteousness. There’s a stark _____ between the person who loves God and his neighbor and the person who loves only himself.

Keeping God in our hearts isn’t trivial. It’s not a _____. It’s the most important thing that

you can do. It affects your life and the lives of everyone around you. Don't let anything come _____ you and the Lord. Jude 21 reminds us to keep ourselves in the love of God. When God is our _____, we love what is right and good; and when we push God out, every evil thing comes into our lives. **Read Romans 1:28-32.**

Why are we so angry and violent? Why has evil become so prominent? It's because we've _____ God; we no longer "see fit to acknowledge God." We've stop reading the Bible and worshipping at church; we've convinced ourselves that we're an accident of evolution rather than created beings with intelligent design. We've let sinful behavior politically correct God's Holy Word, so what God calls sin is now _____ acceptable. Without _____ we've loved darkness and hated light; we've loved sin and blasphemed righteousness. We _____ our media with every ungodly thought, every ungodly word, and every ungodly act. We glorify sin and _____ righteousness. When we choose to be godless, why should it surprise us that our society becomes wicked? When we reject the love of God, why should it surprise us that we become angry, hateful, and callous?

When we shut God out of our hearts, we let the _____ walk in. When God cannot enter our schools, Satan and his followers will. When we can't read the Bible or pray in public any more, why should we be surprised that sin fills our cities? We won't let the Bible into our schools, but we sure want them in our prisons. Shouldn't that teach us something? We need God in our hearts and in our lives.

The solution to violence is this: the _____ of Jesus must be in our hearts and His _____ in our lives. When Peter cut the ear off the high priest's servant, Jesus healed the man and said, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will _____ by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

The Lord Jesus knew people get angry and are violent. He taught a _____ way. He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and _____ for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45). If we're to be like God, we will love and even pray for our enemies.

Jesus practiced what He preached. Remember how Jesus prayed when they were crucifying Him. "Father, _____ them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The grace of God can even forgive the violent. Peter spoke to the Jews at Pentecost, the Jews who were responsible for the death of Jesus. He said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus (and then He pointed His finger) whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

They were cut to the heart over their sin and asked what they could do to be forgiven. Peter responded in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When we change our hearts and are baptized, we too can find God's forgiveness. The closer we draw to God, the better our world will be.



The Pearl of Great Price
Matthew 13:44-46

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

Is there anything so valuable to you that you would _____ everything you own to possess it? Today, we will see how valuable Jesus holds His kingdom, that is the church, to be. The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's means of reaching _____ souls. Romans 1:16 says, "the gospel is the _____ of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The Bible gives us reason to believe in Jesus as the Christ and to love the God who created and sustains us each day. If you believe and you love the Lord, you'll want to _____ Him and live for Him all your life.

Years ago, my mother gave Jackie and me a precious treasure that she made with her own _____, a beautiful quilt made from silks and satins. It has bright colors—red, blue, green, gold, pink, and purple. Each stitch, she said, was made with _____. I treasure that quilt, not only for its own beauty, but even more so because she made it. I treasure her. Her quilt is valuable in its own right for the materials and the hours that she put into it, but that's not why it's so valuable. To me, it's priceless, an irreplaceable heirloom, made with love.

The Lord too has given us great treasures in Jesus Christ; they're given in _____. We have the forgiveness of sin, eternal life, the peace that passes understanding, a home in heaven, the joy of our salvation, and the Word of God to guide us each day. God's treasures are priceless because they affect our _____ and they are everlasting. These treasures are available to us, but we must be willing to _____ other things in order to possess them. What we give up is hardly worth anything compared to what we _____ in Christ. We must take advantage of the opportunity to follow Jesus.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Matthew 13:44-46. Here Jesus, in two very brief parables, presents the _____ of the kingdom of heaven.

There are many _____ of treasures. Some are valuable monetarily, some are valuable to the heart; but I want to talk about the treasures of the _____. These treasures last beyond this life; they're _____. The treasures of the soul are the real treasures. If you possess them, you have _____. Without them, you have _____ that will last.

First, _____, himself, is a treasure. Having a relationship with God is the _____ of treasures. God is our Creator, Savior, our sustainer, our hope, and our life. God loves us, hears our prayers, provides for us, and guides us. Isaiah said, "The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is Zion's _____" (Isaiah 33:5-6). It matters that the Lord God, the one you read about in your Bible, is your God. If _____ is your god, you'll be disappointed because you can never get enough of it.

Solomon said, “Better is a little with the _____ of the Lord than great treasure and _____ with it” (Proverbs 15:16). If _____ is your god, you’ll tire of it. If _____ is your god, what will you do when you get too old to work? The only god of any value is the God who will not perish, the One who is _____ this physical world—the God of heaven, the God of the Bible—Jehovah God. God is so good to us all.

Second, _____ is a treasure. **Read what Paul wrote in Colossians 2:1-3.** There is nothing more precious, more spiritual, wiser, purer, or more loving than simple New Testament Christianity. We’re thankful to God for Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, who _____ life and truth and salvation to this world. We may easily say that in Christ we have “A _____ that can never be fathomed; A _____ that can never die; A righteousness that can never be tarnished; A _____ that can never be understood; A _____ that can never be disturbed; A _____ that can never be diminished; A _____ that can never be disappointed; A _____ that can never be clouded; A happiness that can never be interrupted; A _____ that can never be darkened; A strength that can never be enfeebled; A beauty that can never be marred; A _____ that can never be defiled; A _____ that can never be baffled; resources that can never be exhausted.”

No wonder the apostle Paul, though he was a respected Jew, _____ it all up for Jesus Christ. He was indeed a blue blood, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church, blameless, and respected. However, he said, “But whatever things were _____ to me, those things I have counted as _____ for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may _____ Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8). To Paul nothing was more important than knowing Christ.

Christ was on Paul’s heart and his mind day and night. He said, “For to me, to _____ is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Paul gladly sacrificed himself for the _____ of Christ. He didn’t count his life as dear to himself if he could but fulfill the ministry to _____ the gospel (Acts 20:24). He said, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). That was the _____ of his life—it was his treasure! I hope that it’s also yours. I know that I can’t live without the Lord Jesus in my life.

Third, _____ is a treasure. Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on _____, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in _____, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your _____ will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). We live only a short time on this earth, and we must _____ for the time when we cross beyond this life. We must treasure our _____ home. What treasures are you laying up in heaven? They won’t be earthly treasures, but they’ll be heavenly. Perhaps it’s a _____ whom you’ve converted to Christ. Perhaps it’s a gift that you gave to the Lord to _____ others. It’s only what you _____ to God that survives this life. Everything else will perish.

Your life here is just a _____ that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Don't _____ your life today by failing to prepare for eternity.

Read the parable the Lord Jesus told in Luke 12:16-21. You may think you have all the right strings to pull, but there is one that never belongs to you—and that's the string to your soul. You'll either spend eternity with God or without Him. What are you doing with your life?

Fourth, the _____ of God is a treasure. **Read what Solomon said in Proverbs 2:1-6.** Solomon spends nearly ten chapters of the book of Proverbs trying to get his son's attention. He wants his son to hear what he has to say, because he realizes what a treasure the _____ is.

Solomon said, "Buy the truth, and do not _____ it; get wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). Truth is available to all, but it's not _____. You have to _____ it out of the pages of the Bible. The more you _____, the greater treasure you'll find there. Many people are spiritually impoverished, because they've never _____ the Word of God. They're willing to accept whatever they _____ from others, never questioning. If someone tells you a _____ and you believe it, you've missed the truth and the wisdom it brings. Acts 17:11 says the Bereans "were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, _____ the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." I hope you are also examining the Scriptures.

David said, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not _____ against You" (Psalm 119:11). The Word of God treasured up and cherished, has great ability to _____ us in time of temptation. In Matthew 4, when the devil _____ Jesus, the Lord answered every challenge with a quotation from the Word of God. He _____ told Satan, "It is written." It is written might be better stated or translated, "It _____ written." God wrote it, and it's still authoritative, and it's still _____, and it still teaches us how to live. The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but on every _____ that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The Word of God makes us _____, and it will last. Everybody is interested in things that last. The Lord said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

Fifth, the _____ is a treasure. Some people _____ or put down the church, but how these people think and how Christ thinks are two different things. The church is the Lord's treasure. He treasures the church more than we can imagine. The church is not a building, but _____. God treasures _____ member of His church. **Read what Peter said to the church in 1 Peter 2:9-10.** God sees in the church a people for his _____ possession. They are precious, chosen, cherished, and beloved. He considers every member of the church a royal _____, called out of the darkness of this world and called into His marvelous light. The church is His means of telling the world about the excellencies of God and of His Christ. God treasures His people, and you can tell how much He values her by what He is willing to give for the church.

Acts 20:28 simply says that Christ purchased the church with His own _____. Christ gave up everything for the church. God can manufacture gold and silver very easily. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Things don't matter to God, but the blood of Jesus is something else. The Lord poured out His blood for the church. We should treasure the things that Jesus treasures and love the church the way Jesus loves it.

The Lord Jesus taught, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from _____ over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and _____ all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46).

Hidden treasures today are _____. In the ancient biblical lands, however, they were _____. Israel, which was a land bridge between Egypt and the East, was repeatedly invaded, ravaged, and captured. To protect themselves, people _____ treasure in the ground, in walls, in tree trunks, or wherever they could. On some occasions, they died or were captured, and no one _____ where the treasure was hidden.

These parables talk about the kingdom, which is the _____. I hope you have found the kingdom of God in one of the churches of Christ near you. Become a part of a local church and treasure it. I know the church isn't _____, but it is divine in origin. When the church lives the way God intended it to live, there's nothing in all the world better and more noble than the church of the Lord. I want everyone to be a member of the Lord's church.

The Lord Jesus said, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:20-21). What matters to you? What are your treasures? I hope that God, Christ, heaven, the Word, and the church are your treasures. I hope you've _____ the gospel and have received the priceless grace of God.

Do you treasure the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of your sins, or the grace of God? Paul said, "by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain" (1 Corinthians 15:10). He didn't want a gift so great as the grace of God to be taken lightly or thrown aside. He wanted God's grace to matter in how he lived and what he did. Do you?

Are you putting Christ first in your life? Would you give up everything to know Him? Are you worshipping with the church? Are you reading your Bible? Are you praying regularly? Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? You can do that by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by being baptized into Christ. When you are baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church. There is never a better time to obey the Lord than today. Today! Tomorrow may be too late. Don't wait another day to put your life in order. Treasure up God in your soul. Cherish the Lord Jesus, and live a life that honors and pleases Him.

July 28, 2019

Whatever Colossians 2:6-8

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

Most people _____ they love God, but do you love the truth? Someone has called this generation the “whatever” generation because people will _____ nearly anything. Is this wise? I love the Bible because it _____ God’s eternal, unchangeable teaching. God’s Word is never fickle. Since God’s Word doesn’t change, we can count on His _____ to remain true. When God promises to forgive sins, we can be forgiven. When God promises the obedient a _____ in heaven, we can freely choose to be obedient and enjoy that promise.

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point has a simple but rigorous _____ code. It simply says, “A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do.” Honesty and integrity have _____ been important to our nation’s military. But I wonder how important it is to the rest of us. Sometimes gullible and sometimes deceptive, Americans today seem all too ready to believe whatever they like, whether it’s _____ or not. Many have _____ their ability to distinguish between what is true and what is not, between what is right and what is wrong. Many believe “whatever” is popular at the time, and are undisturbed when “whatever” is false or harmful.

In a pluralistic society where people feel pressured to believe everything is okay, many believe that all religions are the same and end up believing in _____ with any conviction. Many have ceased to _____ for the truth or to love it. If every belief is true, then _____ belief can be counted on. If every belief is true, then nothing is _____, nothing matters. People who say all religions are okay are actually confused and deceived. I often hear people say that we cannot say any doctrine is _____, but is this true? What has happened to loving the truth and being _____ to the Lord Jesus?

Our reading today comes from Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 2:6-8. He warns about the problems of believing just anything that comes along, and encourages focus on Jesus Christ.

Colossae was a small town in the Lycus River Valley on the main route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Other nearby cities were larger and more important; Colossae had _____ much of its importance. Romans, Greeks, and others had transplanted there. Jews lived there, and the frequent visitors made it a place susceptible to _____ new idea that came along. The inspired apostle Paul wrote the Colossian letter to deal with a strange doctrine arising among some members of the church. He wrote to _____ them of the false teaching and deception in this worldly philosophy.

Read what God’s Word says in Colossians 2:1-8. A smooth talking stranger can easily _____ a naïve person with false promises and worldly traditions that _____ good. Paul warned them not to be fooled by such _____. They wouldn’t find the truth in listening to anything but Jesus Christ.

Learning to distinguish what is true from what is false is one of the most important lessons of life. Some traditions are true, while others are false. A tradition is merely a belief or a practice that

May be reproduced in its entirety for purposes of classroom material or personal study.

PO Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 1-800-321-8633

This study sheet is prepared by Jerry Campbell – www.searchtv.org; jerry@searchtv.org

has been _____ down from one generation to the next. When a belief is in error in one generation, it'll be in error in the next; but the second generation has never heard anything else and so _____ what it has heard is true. Once a deceptive tradition becomes accepted and is passed down from generation to generation that idea can hardly be shown to be _____. So, people get convinced of a _____, think it's the truth, and remain in error. Oh, how very sad!

Disbelief is the rejection of a belief, a _____ to accept it. To disbelieve in Jesus is to _____ him as the Son of God. This might come in the form of denying His _____ or refusing to believe in His resurrection. It also might come in the form of refusing to believe the things that He _____. The Lord Jesus said, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the _____ that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (John 12:48). Failure to believe Jesus is a serious matter. Many people will find themselves rejected on the last day because they _____ to believe what Jesus teaches.

People misbelieve when they're convinced that something false is _____. Some deceive by causing others to believe a lie and to fall into error. The Lord Jesus condemns those who _____ falsehoods and errors. Paul was _____ when some false teachers were misleading the churches of Galatia. In strong language the apostle of the Lord said, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different _____—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to _____ the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Why did Paul say teaching a _____ gospel leads one to be accursed? Because changing what God teaches _____ people to believe a lie. When people believe a lie, they follow after something other than _____ and separate themselves from God. Satan separates people from God by lying to them. The Lord Jesus said about the devil, "He was a _____ from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a _____ and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The devil lied to Eve and caused her to _____ against God and to die spiritually and physically. Lies still lead people into sin and _____ death. It matters what you believe.

People today are deceived by all kinds of falsehoods and half-truths. A half-truth is when someone tells you a _____ that leaves out other relevant information. For instance, it's true that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. Sarah was also Abraham's _____. So when Abraham in fear told Pharaoh that Sarah was just his sister, he was only _____ right. Abraham's lie caused lots of _____. Half-truths are some of the most dangerous lies. There's enough truth to _____ people into accepting them, but there's enough falsehood to lead to destruction. A Christian must be very _____ to examine everything he hears.

Some false prophets, in the days of Jeremiah, began fabricating their prophecies. Jeremiah said, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Do not _____ to the words of the prophets who are

prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their _____ imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:16). False prophets in every age have led countless souls away from the _____ of God. We don’t want to be led into error and lose our souls. This is why we must _____ everything carefully. Acts 17:11 says, “Now these (the Bereans) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures _____ to see whether these things were so.” We too should _____ every belief by God’s Word to see what is true and what is false.

We hurt ourselves greatly when we lie to ourselves. God said, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I _____ the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his _____” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Our hearts may tell us what we _____ to hear rather than what is right. If we listen to our hearts and our desires rather than to the Lord, we can easily do the _____ thing spiritually, morally, or practically. Solomon said, “There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of _____” (Proverbs 14:12).

When people _____ for something to be right to believe or do they can begin justifying it in their own minds, whether it’s right or not. These folks set their minds to follow this error and can hardly be persuaded to _____. They must find out the _____ way. The prodigal son was like that. He had to have his inheritance and live the way he _____. When his father gave in, he took his money to a far country and _____ it in a sinful lifestyle. He had to _____ himself before he’d admit how foolish and sinful he had been. I hope that you haven’t allowed your heart to deceive you into making foolish choices. The prodigal son _____ to himself until he couldn’t believe his lies anymore. Then he came to his senses, repented, and went home.

Many people are ready to believe a lie if they think it will _____ them. In a politically correct world, people turn a _____ eye to the truth and focus on what’s convenient and popular. They’d rather give in to a _____ lie than embarrass themselves by taking an unpopular position. Some people think it shows _____ or love to take a position of neutrality on every controversial issue. Others think we can _____ determine what is true, so every view is as good as every other. This view is miles away from the heart and the teaching of Jesus. It may appear _____ to accommodate others, but sin shows no love for the will of God. God did not create every religion, and not every religion teaches His will. God wants His people not only to love Him but also to love the _____!

The Lord Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who _____ the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; _____ from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:21-23). Being religious does not guarantee that one is righteous. Some people say they are saved by faith _____, but this passage makes it clear that one must in addition to believing also do God’s will. These people who lived lawless lives deceived themselves into thinking that they were still all _____ with God.

Jesus, however, told them to depart. He never knew them or had a relationship with them.

It matters what we believe and how we _____. For years I've heard people embrace the doctrine of salvation by "faith _____." They suggest all one must do to be saved is believe, and once saved one cannot be _____. But this doctrine didn't come from Jesus. People who believe in the "faith only" doctrine or the "once saved always saved" doctrine always have to take it back. They will _____ you can't be saved without loving God, or without repenting, or without obeying the Lord Jesus. Oh yes, faith is essential, but you have to do _____ than simply believe. It takes more than simply believing to _____ God.

People say one religion is as _____ as another and all religions are the same; but 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). The only way to the Father, the only way to heaven, is through Jesus Christ. Again, Acts 4:12 says about Jesus, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be _____." It's popular to say all religions are the same, but the Scriptures teach otherwise. We need to choose Jesus.

Why should I _____ Jesus as Lord? Why should I serve Him? I serve Him because I _____ Him; He died for my sins, nobody else did that. I serve Him because Jesus only tells the _____. His teaching remains true until the end of time. Why would I hold to beliefs that _____ with the wind? William Inge said, "He who marries the spirit of an age soon finds himself to be a widow." We need _____ truth that doesn't change or compromise. We find eternal truth in the words of Jesus. No one but Jesus can _____ my sins. No one but Jesus will come again in the clouds. No one but Jesus will _____ me on the last day. No one but Jesus can take me to _____. I want, and I need, Jesus Christ.

The psalmist David wrote, "As for man, his days are like _____; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more" (Psalm 103:15-16). Life on earth is temporary; we won't live here forever. The devil loves for you to be undisturbed about your _____. He would love to keep you _____ about life, about the church, and about the truth. He would love for you to _____ till another day to decide. When you want to do what is right, the devil will tell you, "later," to get your mind off spiritual things. He doesn't want you thinking about the cross, about the church, about your salvation, or about heaven and hell. He wants you to live for the _____ and to ignore your soul and the future. He wants you to remain confused and even apathetic.

Today is the only day that you have to make your soul right with God. Yesterday has passed, and tomorrow is not assured. If you love the Lord and want to be right with Him, put your faith in Him. Repent of sin and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you obey the Lord by repenting and being baptized, God washes away every sin and adds you to His church. You become a child of God and have the hope of eternal life. There are no good reasons to think about "later." Why not attend one of the churches of Christ near you. Tell them that you want to obey the gospel and to be right with God. Study with them. Get involved in the church, serve the Lord, and make your faith a priority. Won't you do this today?