

Program Transcripts

May 2024



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

MAY 5 – BACK TO THE BIBLE

What the Lord has caused to be written in Scripture never loses its authority. It stands written. The Scriptures had authority in the first century and will have authority in this 21st century. Let's go back to the Bible.

MAY 12 – ONE BODY

Did you know the New Testament emphasizes Christ has only one body. We are not talking here about His physical body but His spiritual body, the church. Yes, Jesus built and purchased His one body, the church.

MAY 19 – TILL DEATH DO US PART

Marriages that last a lifetime are becoming rarer these days. Staying faithful to one's spouse remains a challenge, but people can remain married fifty years and beyond when they choose to love God and love each other.

MAY 26 – DEVOTED CHRISTIANITY

Early Christians were devoted to their faith in Jesus Christ. It was not a weekly observance but a daily commitment to serving the Lord. They took their faith seriously and would not let anything move them from their devotion to the Lord Jesus.

Back to the Bible

From the earliest times of Christianity, the Scriptures warn of people in the church departing from the truth. Paul told the elders of the church of Ephesus in Acts 20:29 to 30, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Later, Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2 and verse 1, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."

We're living in a generation that has false prophets and teachers who've come in among churches and spoken perverse things and heresies that destroy people's commitment to the Lord Jesus and His truth. I've seen such churches that split and die because a wolf began spreading false teaching among the people to draw them away from the truth. This is why we need to know what the Bible and to stay with it.

Our bible reading today comes from 2 Kings chapter 23 verses 2 to 4. And talks about Josiah and his reform.

"The king went up to the house of the LORD and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant."

That's a reading from God's holy word. About a commitment to keep the word of God. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful that through the ages people have committed themselves keep Your word. Help us Heavenly Father to also keep Your word. To do the things that You've taught us to do. To love You with all our heart and with all our soul. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

You might be asking, "Phil, why should we go back to the Bible? Isn't the New Testament a book written nearly 2,000 years ago? What has that to do with us today?" Well, that's a fair question. I'm asking you to commit your life to Jesus Christ, to love Him with all your heart and soul, and to put Him first in your life. And so I must have good reasons to ask this of you and good reasons why I've done that. I've often explained the reason I am a Christian is because Jesus Christ died for me in order to forgive my sins and He rose from the dead to give abundant reasons for recognizing Him as Lord. Now I believe Jesus, so I take His word seriously.

The Lord Jesus promised the apostles in the first century in John 16:12 to 13, "I still have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." Now Jesus promised the first-century apostles that they would be guided into all the truth, not most of it but all of it. The Holy Spirit would not leave out anything the people of God needed; they would have all the truth needed by the church for all time.

2 Peter chapter 1 verses 2 to 3 in the Legacy Standard Bible says, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything (everything) pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." Full knowledge? God certainly gives us all the truth, and this is why we must study diligently, so that we may handle the word of God accurately. Colossians 4 and verse

12 speaks about the prayer of Epaphras: Paul said, "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." And that's what we should all pray.

You see these passages, in scriptures, they assure us that the teaching of Jesus found in the word of God is all-sufficient to meet all our needs for life and godliness. God hasn't short-changed us in the truth. Our Father in heaven is omniscient, that is, He knows all things and can see the future. And when He revealed to the apostles the word of God, He prepared them and all of us today with the truth that leads to eternal life. The Bible is not simply old stories; it is the foundation of our spiritual lives with profound answers to our questions.

Paul said in Ephesians 4 and verse 5 that there is "one faith." By this he meant coming to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and taking seriously all His teaching. One cannot say, well, "I believe in Jesus," if one doesn't believe what Jesus did and teaches. "The faith" refers to what is believed, that body of doctrine or teaching which can be found in the New Testament. Jesus revealed this body of teaching through the Holy Spirit who inspired the apostles and prophets to write down His teaching. Now the Lord Jesus promised in Matthew 23:34 to send "prophets and wise men and scribes." The work of His scribes was to make copies of His teaching, and we find what He and His apostles teach in the New Testament. It was in the heart of the Lord not only to teach His people but also to preserve His words for all time.

Now Jude taught the Christian faith was delivered only once. Many people miss this passage. Jude 3 says, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you exhorting that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Now Jude said this faith had been delivered once for all time and Christians should contend earnestly for this once delivered faith. It was already settled and needed to remain unchanged. Now through the ages men have twisted the faith into some new cultural religion. But Jude calls for the once delivered faith to remain the same as it was given. This confirms the Lord's promise to the apostles that they would be guided by the Holy Spirit into all the truth.

And when we look at all the different religious groups that call themselves "Christian" but believe and practice things never found in the once-delivered faith of the New Testament, we marvel at how far many in America have wandered away from the truth and the morality of God. Much of what some call Christianity has little in common with the Christianity found in the New Testament. Rather than seeking to please God by following the Scriptures, they seek to draw disciples to themselves.

Our culture tends to make up its own faith rather than go to the Bible to find its faith. They don't really listen to Jesus or His word; oh, they listen to and obey whatever is popular for the moment. For many Jesus is merely a comfortable religious symbol. They pick and choose what they like and they reject anything they dislike. They don't listen to the faith delivered by Jesus; oh they tell Jesus what they believe. Some religious groups vote on what to believe rather than to let Jesus rule as Lord.

They remind me of the golden calves that Jeroboam put up in Dan and Bethel, telling the people in 1 Kings 12:28, "behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." The Jesus that many serve is not the Lord Jesus Christ of Scripture but a humanly manufactured symbol more like our culture than Scripture. Now this type of Christianity twists the Scriptures and cherry picks what they like while they ignore the rest. Friends, we must go back to the Bible to find the true Jesus and the true faith.

A popular but false Christianity is nothing new. Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 verses 1 to 4, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they'll accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

Well, that do you do when this happens? How do you return to true, biblical faith? Well, you repent and forsake the human things and you devote yourselves only to the things that come from God. You must know the Scriptures well enough to know what is biblical and what is not. And when you see that you're practicing a religion that has a human origin, you need to abandon the human and embrace what is divine.

Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately (accurately) handling the word of truth." Now one who ignores Scripture and does what he pleases spiritually is hardly a workman that handles the word of truth accurately. The person whose eye is on our culture more than on the Lord will miss the precious promises the Lord offers. You can't have Jesus as your Savior if Jesus through His word is not also your Lord.

And this is why we need to examine what we believe and how we practice our faith. People used to ask, well "What would Jesus do?" Well, that's was not a bad question. Let's go farther and ask, "What does Jesus require of us in His word?" The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Now true disciples don't wander from the words of Jesus found in the New Testament. They make their home in these words. Because of this, they can be set free! They can be free from sin, free from the deceptions of the world, and free from the entrapments of false religion. Now false religion ends in false hope. True faith in Christ and His word ends in a living hope and an inheritance in heaven.

False religion tells you all you have to do to be saved is believe or say some little prayer, but the Scriptures teach repentance and baptism are also necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Saul of Tarsus prayed for three days and nights (Acts 9 verse 9 and also verse 11), but he was not free from sin until he was baptized and washed away his sins (Acts 22:16).

False religion tells you that once you are saved, you cannot lose your salvation. Oh that sound good. But the word of God says in Hebrews 3:12 to 14, "Take care, brothers, (now he's speaking to christain brothers. He says,) lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sins. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." Salvation is conditional, and Christians must remain faithful to the end if they wish to share in Christ.

Hebrews 10 verses 26 and 27 tells the consequence of continued deliberate sin on the part of a Christian, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." My friends, God means what He says. You can't quit on God, and deliberately sin all you want, and then expect God to save you in the end.

False religion says it doesn't matter what you believe or what church you attend. But if you're supporting a false religion, you may be deceiving yourself. You see false religions tell falsehoods. 2 John 9 to 11 says that, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." You see, false teaching leads to evil deeds

and false hope. Can you imagine how terrible it would be on Judgment Day to find out that what you believed was false?

Saul of Tarsus found out he was wrong about Jesus Christ and his zeal in persecuting the church. He found out in time to make a change. He said in Philippians 3:7 to 8, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (He goes on to say) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." You see he became a servant of Christ and followed the truth. And you too can change your path in life. You can leave a false religion that only gives a false hope and return to the truth that's found in God's Holy Word! Please don't wait to find out at the Judgment what is right. Please follow Jesus.

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You have revealed Your will to us in Your word. Help us heavenly Father to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. And to do Your will and to love others. In Jesus name, Amen.

We've been receiving calls, from many people in several states, telling us they feel as if their church, their church, has left them. The place they worshiped left its biblical foundations, left that once delivered faith. And now they feel there's no place for them to worship biblically anymore. They no longer hear biblical preaching that points to truth or speaks of sin and immorality. They hear ideas and practices that are foreign to Scripture and ask their leaders why this change has taken place. Well, when they do so, they're often ignored or shunned as troublemakers.

True Christianity turns to the words of Jesus for the truth, not human creeds, human councils, or whatever is popular in culture. The Lord Jesus came to bear witness to the truth, and "everyone who is of the truth hears" His voice (John 18 verse 37). Many people today have a hybrid faith mixed up with a little of Jesus and an awful lot of the world. They've forsaken the truth once for all time delivered to the saints and are relying on a false Christianity for their salvation. Well, this is why we must go back to the Bible. Only the Scriptures contain the firm foundation of truth.

Now don't be fooled, the true gospel message was delivered through the apostles on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection. Peter answered the people's question, "what shall we do?" because they were cut to the heart and had crucified the Lord Jesus. And he said, "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." Well, that's the same message for all time. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. The people didn't wait, and nor should you.

One Body

Now if you drive through any town or city in this nation, you will see multiple churches with many names and beliefs and practices. Yet, when you read the Scriptures, the emphasis is on the one church and that's significant. The contrast between many differing religious groups and the one church is stark and surprising. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all realize and participate in the vision of the Lord of having just one church filled with brothers and sisters who followed the Lord, were of the same mind and judgment, and loved each other?

That vision can only take place when people stop having itching ears that want to hear what culture and the world say and start listening to the Lord and His apostles in the New Testament. We must go back to the Bible if we desire to be the one body that Jesus desires. We must turn away from doctrines and practices that are never found in Scripture and go back to doing Bible things in Bible ways. Loving the Lord means humbling ourselves and letting the Lord guide all that we believe and to do His will. It means putting Him and His righteousness first.

Our scripture reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 17: 20 to 23. And is part of a prayer that Jesus makes to His Father.

“I do not ask on behalf of these (speaking of the apostles) alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

Isn't it wonderful to know that God can love us the way He loved His Son Jesus. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love for us and the giving of Your son Jesus. And Father we're thankful that we can be one together in truth. And as we love You and serve You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen

Jesus prayed to the Father for His followers to be one, just as He and the Father are one. But before He prayed this, the Lord Jesus recognized that the unity He longed for was built upon the truth. In fact, the Lord Jesus prayed for unity among the people. And before He prayed that He first sanctified or set them apart in the truth. The Lord prayed in John 17:14 to 19, “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

You see the things that unify God's people are found in Whom they believe and what He teaches. We have a common love and a common faith. Christians who devote themselves to the Lord are bound to Him and His teaching. The one body has one head, Jesus Christ. So the body listen they listen to Jesus, and His authority rules their lives through His word. There can be no unity if Jesus doesn't rule in their lives. When people reject the teaching of Jesus, they separate themselves from Him.

The Lord Jesus promised to build His church in Matthew 16 verse 18. Now He purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28). He is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22 to 23). And notice that He is here speaking of church in the singular—one church. The New Testament sometimes mentions churches, such as the churches of Galatia in Galatians 1 verse 2 or the seven churches of Asia

in Revelation 1 through 3. We also, so, should not think that these are denominations who had different names and believed different doctrines. When these churches varied from the truth, the apostles called them to forsake their error and to return to the truth. Some need to do that today.

The New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ in several passages. Consider these Scriptures. Romans 12:3 to 5 says, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Though individual Christians have differing skills and abilities, they still make up the one body.

When churches take communion, the Lord's Supper, they are unified with Christ and one another. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 17 says, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." Now the bread in communion points to the physical body of Christ, and the fruit of the vine points to His blood. By eating the same bread and drinking the same fruit of the vine, they are uniting in fellowship with the Lord and with one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12 to 13 says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." I tell you we are baptized into the one body of Christ, which is the church. In baptism, we cease to belong to ourselves. We belong to Jesus.

Ephesians 1:22 to 23 says, "And he (that is God) put all things under his (that is Christ's) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Now just as one head and one body is normal physically, so spiritually there can be only one head and one body, and that body is defined as the church.

Now the church in the first century began with not Jews alone, but soon Gentiles came into the church. Ephesians 2:13 to 16 explains, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." You see the Lord unites into one new man both Jews and Gentiles. Now since I'm a Gentile, I'm thankful God included me.

The Lord Jesus spoke of His intention to unite Jew and Gentile in John 10:14 to 16. He said, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." Again, the Lord's flock is to be one flock, not many.

When the church at Ephesus had struggles getting along, Paul reminded them in Ephesians 4:1 through 6, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

Jesus loves the church, like a husband loves his wife. And the closeness of Christ to His church cannot be overstated. Ephesians 5:28 to 30 says, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body." Christ loves and cherishes His church, and so should we. Yes, we too.

Colossians 1:17 to 18 says, "And he (Jesus) is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." Now Jesus must be first if we are to remain united. His ways must become our ways. And Paul urges us in Colossians 3:14 to 15, "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."

When Christians fuss, the world stops paying attention and they reject Christ too. Hundreds of fussing churches makes millions of unbelievers. Jesus prayed, in John 17:20 to 21, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Christians must let Jesus rule through His word. And we cannot live in selfishness and expect the world to see Jesus in us.

The church at Corinth was badly divided over their commitment to various leaders. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10 to 13: I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." (then he asks) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Paul couldn't imagine the Corinthians putting Christ in the same category as men.

This scene of division is multiplied today in the denominational world, where people follow their brands with their own beliefs and practices rather than focus on following the word of God. Christians must be united in the same mind and judgment. They must regard Jesus as Lord in every respect and go back to His word for our faith and practice. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:27, "Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel."

The concept of denominationalism with brand name Christianity rather than wearing the name of Jesus Christ has promoted division and devalued the truth. People can't believe differing doctrines and maintain real unity. We must set aside any human doctrines and devote ourselves to a true discipleship of abiding in the words of Jesus Christ.

Now Paul had to deal with Jewish Christians who were not content to follow the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They demanded the Gentiles to also obey the Law of Moses with the traditions of the elders. And they added to God's gospel something that could never save. Paul fought this and said in Galatians 1:6 to 10, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

(then Paul says) For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." We must serve Christ.

When people add to God's word, subtract from God's word, edit it, or twist it because it doesn't match their desires or live up to the times, they're like the false teachers of Galatia. They're deserting Christ and His one true gospel and substituting their own false beliefs and practices. Now if your goal is to please men, you will not please God or be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. God's will must never take second place or be an afterthought. It must be our focus and our priority. Loving the Lord with all our heart and soul means listening to His words and obeying Him. God will never accept people putting their things first! And doing their own will and not His.

Where is your heart? Is it truly on serving the Lord Jesus or on being popular with people? Let's not turn the one body of Christ into something God never intended or God never approved. Let's go back to Jesus Christ and to His word and serve Him and Him only.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that through Your love and the sacrifice of Jesus that we could have the church and forgiveness of sins. Help us Heavenly Father to be one body to listen to You and to the things that You teach and not allow the world to tell us what to believe. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Since the New Testament says there is but one body, and that body is the church, then we can conclude there is but one church built by Jesus and purchased with His blood. Shouldn't we be part of that church? You cannot read of any denomination in the New Testament. There is no record of denominations until after the 1500s; Jesus built His one and only church in the first century. And for this reason, the church is undenominational. Not only that it is pre-denominational, and it must oppose the existence of denominationalism. You can't embrace the church Jesus built and believe Jesus accepts all the denominations that were never mentioned in Scripture.

Jesus prayed for a unity that assumes people are holding to the truth, not a unity where people can believe whatever they please. When you hold to denominationalism, you must believe that we cannot know the truth or that the truth really doesn't matter. Both ideas strongly contradict the teaching of Jesus Christ. He promised we could know the truth (John 8 verse 32) and He said everyone who is of the truth listens to His voice (John 18:37). Are you listening to Jesus?

To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is the Son of God. Believe Jesus died for your sins and rose again on the third day by the power of God. Turn from sin by repenting of your sins and devote yourself to the way of the Lord. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now just as the people on Pentecost repented and were baptized in response to the first gospel sermon, so should you. Baptism is the immersion in water of a person old enough to understand, believe, and repent. We have no biblical record of infant baptism.

Till Death Do Us Part

God was the one who designed and established the first home with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God declared husband and wife should be one flesh. Since that time there've been, there's been good marriages and there's been bad marriages, but it was not because God had a faulty notion in creating marriage. You see there is still nothing that blesses society more than a husband and wife who love each other and are committed to each other for life and love God.

Sweet Jackie and I were married on May, 1974 and have remained married and together for 50 years. For better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, we have remained committed to each other till death do us part. I am certainly not the perfect husband, though God blessed me with the most wonderful wife. Our love and God's blessing and providence have kept us together through it all. We knew from the beginning that being committed to God would help us keep ourselves committed to one another. A solid marriage has also helped us to be godly parents to our children and grandchildren.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 5 verses 25 to 31. Talks about the relationship of Christ to the church and husbands to their wives.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.**”

That's God's will for husbands and wives. To love each other. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your word You give us such wonderful instruction. To know how to treat one another in our homes and in our family. Help us Heavenly Father to love You, to love our families and to love others the way that You have loved us. In Jesus name, Amen.

God's pattern for the family began at creation. The Lord God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:26 to 28).

God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2 and verse 18). And though Adam was surrounded by every living creature, “for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2 and verse 20). “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:21 to 25).

Now God showed his love and wisdom by giving a woman to Adam, giving him just what he needed. She was a helper designed specifically for him. He didn't need another male exactly like himself; he needed a female. And no doubt Adam realized that among the animals there was male and female of each

kind. Man and woman need each other physically, socially, and spiritually. Like a lock with a key or a bow with a string, each needs the other to function properly. Alone neither can accomplish what God intended.

Now God uses this story of old, to speak to every age, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2 and verse 24). Now our Lord Jesus, in fact, quotes this very passage in Matthew 19 verse 5. And yes it's inspired of God. Marriage uniquely unites a male with a female physically and emotionally. The man and woman were to become one flesh, an intimate relationship that took priority over all others. Because of this physical bond, a man should loosen the bonds he has even with his parents and loyally hold fast to his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:1 to 2 says, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband." Sadly, marriage has come upon hard times. According to USAFacts.org, "In 1949, 78.8% of all households contained married couples. But in 2022, 73 years later, only 46.8% of households had married couples." Nearly fifteen percent of all adults in America have been divorced. Now these changes in our society are because people have lost sight of the value and the beauty of marriage as God meant for it to be.

People who remain married usually have important characteristics in their lives. First, they are committed to the Lord's way. Psalm 37 and verse 5 says, "Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it." Again Proverbs 3:5 to 7 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil." We need to trust in God's way. David prayed in Psalm 86 verse 11, "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name."

Some years ago, Mack Lyon noted that, "People who enjoy their marriages have been able to make the change from a "single" lifestyle in which each one does pretty much as he pleases, to one where another person is intimately involved. There are two now who must become one. Happily married people have learned that after the wedding it's no longer "I" and "me" and "mine" and "I want" and "I won't," but "we" and "us" and "ours," and "We'd like" and "we'll consider it."

And there's no place where this oneness is more important than in religious faith. Despite the fact that many couples have agreed that a difference in religious faith won't be a problem in their marriage, it's a statistical fact that it's one of the leading causes of trouble after the wedding. And this is why husbands and wives need to make a commitment together to the Lord and His church. And make it a priority in their lives.

Second, people who remain married commit themselves to marriage for life. They don't consider divorce as an option when difficulties arise. When sweet Jackie and I married, Jackie's mother told Jackie well, "If you can't get along and decide to leave your husband, don't come back home here." Now Jackie's mother was not trying to be mean. She was emphasizing the importance of working out your problems with your spouse. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 7 verses 10 to 11, "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife."

Most marriages face serious struggles, and learning how to forgive and to reconcile is what keeps marriages together. Divorce often takes place, when one spouse won't cease their offensive ways, and the other spouse can no longer forgive. Learning to please your spouse, learning to humbly repent of

offensive ways for one and learning to forgive for the other is essential to keeping a marriage intact for a lifetime. Many times the inability to repent and to forgive kill what was once a loving relationship.

Mack Lyon observed many years ago that, "Some people are confirmed quitters. They've never learned to work through a difficult problem or situation. When they were in school, they quit sports or band when they didn't get to play the position they wanted. They dropped out of school when they no longer liked it. They ran away from home when mom and pop's rules became unbearable. They quit going to church when the church didn't condone their deviant behavior. They go from job to job. And when working hours or conditions aren't exactly to their liking, they quit. Some of them have been known to try to quit living and so they commit suicide when life got difficult. And, they'll walk out on a marriage when a spouse doesn't measure up to their expectations. You can count on it. They'll just get a divorce and quit. The world is always against them they think, they seem never to get a fair shake, so they just quit. Oh don't quit, my friend. Learn to work through the problem, talk it out, pray together, forgive and forget, seek a counselor, and do some things and go some places together. Don't run from marriage to another marriage. Grow up and settle down. And try real hard to make your marriage a happy and lasting one. You can do it and you'll be oh so glad, Mack says, if you do!"

Now almost any married couple could list things that might help another couple to have a happy and meaningful marriage. A marriage counsellor or minister could compile an almost endless list that would enhance a marriage relationship, such as spending time together, being good listeners, working through conflicts, being less critical and more appreciative, never embarrassing your spouse, never abusing your spouse verbally, and always communicating with one another, and a lot of things like this. Some years ago I did a series on marriage called, Together for Life. And you can download a copy free from our website.

Nearly thirty years ago, Mack Lyon said, "But, I believe more than any or all of that, (of course those suggestions) we need the counsel of God. God has a lot to say about marriage which needs to be heard above everything else. In counselling couples preparing to marry Mack often read to them the 127th Psalm. It begins, 'Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.'"

Marriage is such a sacred union it's used many times in the Scriptures to describe that high and holy relationship between Christ and His church, as in the passage we read at the beginning of this program. And it seems to be the only analogy that's entirely adequate to describe that heavenly human relationship. Some messages came through loud and clear from Ephesians 5:22 to 33. First of all the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Second, as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Third husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their own wives. Forth husbands ought to nourish and cherish their wives just like Christ loves and cherishes the church. Fifth men ought to leave their fathers and mothers and hold fast to their wives. And sixth wives are to respect their husbands.

The Scriptures teach the husband is the head of his wife, and she is to be subject to him. In our day, when equality seems to be so important, some think it's unfair that God gave authority to husbands over their wives. But this authority, however, never gives men the right to abuse or to dominate their wives. And any man who treats the woman he married unkindly, unfairly, is breaking God's law. He's not only disobeying God, he's also deceiving himself. Only a fool believes abusing his wife will benefit him. Wise husbands understand the better that they treat their wives, the more their wives will respond with love and respect.

When husbands fail to love their wives, their wives react with disrespect. When husbands sense a lack of respect from their wives they often act in ways that are unloving. So these feelings of being disrespected or unloved tear apart the marriage. When husbands show love and wives show respect, the marriage prospers and strengthens. My friend you can make your marriage better, husbands, if you can learn to demonstrate Christian love to your wife.

Because if a disrespected husband will love his wife anyway, and if an unloved wife will respect her husband anyway, they can start putting their damaged marriage back together. A wise husband loves and pays attention to his wife. He's able to see what she needs to be happy. And every woman needs to feel her husband is close to her and cares about her. Some husbands keep their distance from their wives, and their wives feel unloved because of it. Wives need husbands who will open up enough to share their thoughts and feelings. She feels unwanted or unneeded when he closes up and shuts her out of his life. When he keeps secrets from her, she feels he doesn't love her enough to trust her. Wives need to know their husbands are loyal to the marriage and not looking elsewhere. She also needs to know that he sees her as the most important person in his life (except for God). She needs to know that he cherishes and honors her. And both people must cherish each other.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help husbands and wives to love each other, to cherish each other, to honor each other as You have taught in Your word the bible. And Father may our love for You, our love for one another, grow more and more. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you want a better marriage, then start looking at yourself. How are you treating your spouse? And instead of constantly criticizing, start evaluating yourself. You can help your marriage by improving yourself, rather than putting down your mate. Let's clean up our own lives before we focus on the faults of our spouses. Women, do you show respect to your husbands? Men, do you show love to your wives? Men are you meeting your wife's needs for love and attention, and women are you honoring your husband by meeting his needs?

We can't change our spouses by making unreasonable demands, but we can change ourselves. When we change for the better our spouses will appreciate those changes and will want to change as well. Improving our marriages begins with improving our hearts. You can have a more loving heart by entering into a loving relationship with God. When God's love is in your heart, you'll become more loving and respectful to your family.

Does the love of God live in you? Are you committed to Christ? To become a Christian you must have love for and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Loving God means turning away from the sinful and hurtful ways of the world and embracing the loving and righteous ways of Christ. God calls this repentance, a change of heart that leads to a change of life. Upon your repentance and the confession of your faith the Lord asks you to be baptized in His name, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism you'll be united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection according to Romans 6:3 to 7. The Lord will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) and He'll add you to His church (Acts 2 and verse 47). And then you'll be in God's family. Oh I hope you'll come to Christ and do it today.

Devoted Christianity

The Lord Jesus asks us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength (Mark 12 and verse 30). And this means we must totally devote ourselves to God. Jesus Christ calls us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily to follow Him (Luke 9 verse 23). Now much of Christianity today is weak and compromised. Some Christians are what they call “cafeteria Christians.” That is they pick and choose from the teaching of Jesus what they like and they reject the rest. Some are “fair-weather” Christians who follow the Lord only when it is convenient. Some are Christians in name only. And some are “Sunday-only” Christians who attend worship on Sundays but follow the world the other six days of the week.

I wonder if the Lord doesn't weep over the lack of devotion among many who call themselves Christian. The church at Thyatira said in Revelation 3 and verse 17, “I am rich and become wealthy, and have need of nothing.” They, that is the people at Thyatira, didn't know they were “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. The Lord wants His people to be spiritually healthy and devoted to the gospel and serving and serving Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 6 verses 16 to 18. And talks about how people when they obey from the heart can make a change in their lives.

“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, (that) you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

Oh yes, we can change when we give ourselves from our hearts to the Lord. And aren't we thankful that we can change. Let's pray together.

Father we're thankful that You give us hope that things can be different in our lives. That we can make changes in our lives so that we can serve You and be pleasing to You. Because we love You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

The early church wanted to know and practice their faith, even when they endured opposition and persecution. Acts 2:42 says, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Verses 46 and 7 tells us what their commitment to Lord produced, “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number (that is the church) day by day those who were being saved.”

A spiritually devoted faith is healthy and will attract others. The Lord Jesus taught us in Matthew 5:13 to 16 that, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Does anyone know you're a Christian? Can they tell by the life that you live and the words you speak that your faith matters to you? If you call yourself a Christian but live and talk like a pagan, then your behavior will speak louder than your claim to be Christian. Now instead of supporting the cause of Christ,

you'll a shame the name of Christ. You'll not be able to convert anyone to Christ when your life says that you aren't fully converted yourself. Are you the kind of Christian that others admire and wish they could be like you? Are you the kind of Christian that others would seek you out to pray for them or to ask you a Bible question? The most wonderful person in the world today is a spiritually mature Christian who loves God and loves people.

Hypocrisy and compromise keep people from following Christ. Harsh words, anger, bad attitudes, immoral behavior, and a lack of love do harm to the name and cause of Christ. Paul reminded the Jewish Christians how the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because they were transgressing God's law (Romans 2 and verse 24). Paul said in Titus 2:6 to 8, "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us."

When we think about it, first, the early disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine. They knew that what you believe comes from the One Whom you believe. Christians hold fast to the gospel. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 1 and 2, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Now early Christians believed and took their stand on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If the apostles' teaching had not mattered, they wouldn't have devoted themselves to teaching it daily. Doctrine matters, because God wanted us to know all the truth. There are many religious falsehoods being spread across the globe, and we need the apostles' doctrine to know what is true and also spot what is not true. Christians obey the truth not a half-truth or a false gospel. Romans 6:17 to 18 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Now their heartfelt obedience to a strict form of teaching led them to salvation, where God freed them from sin and made them His servants.

1 Peter 1 verses 22 to 23 reminds us that we are born again by the eternal word of God, when we obey the truth. He says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Now half a gospel will not save us, and substitutes for the standard form will not lead to eternal life.

Paul told Timothy to stick to what he knows is true. He said in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." Now Paul wanted this same truth to be taught down through the generations. And so Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, (you) entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Now what we believe affects our relationship with God and our salvation. If we leave the truth and we turn to a lie, like the Israelites did when they worshiped idols, we can lose our relationship with God and our salvation.

Second, the early church also devoted themselves to fellowship. They wanted to be together as often as they could to encourage each other and to worship God. The Hebrew writer said to some Christians who had grown dull in Hebrews 10:23 to 25 and he says to them, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Now many Christians who were once faithful to attend worship have gotten into the habit of watching religious television or videos at home, even though they can still easily attend worship. Now worshiping at home is not assembling together with the saints. Oh it may be watching them assemble but you're not assembling. Now television and videos are not a substitute for in person assembling. We gather for fellowship to encourage one another to love and good works. And you can't do that while sitting at home. You need your fellow Christians to strengthen you and help you grow in faith and love for the Lord and for others. And when you quit worshiping at church, you're quitting on the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 1:21 to 23 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." Now the promises of Christ contain an "if"! Devoted Christians must remain devoted to the Lord and not moved from their faith and hope.

Third, the early church devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. Now this phrase is not talking about church dinners, where they feed each other. This passage is talking about the Lord's Supper. Now Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, on the night before He was crucified. And when Paul went to Troas, he stayed there seven days. Acts 20 and verse 7 says, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." Now the early church met every Lord's Day, the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper.

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11:23 to 26, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Now the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the Lord's body and blood. And Christians pause as they eat to remember the sacrifice of Christ's body on the cross and the blood He shed to forgive our sins. Now it is a sacred time of quiet examination. We want to observe this Supper with the right mind and in the right way. Christians partake of the Lord's Supper or communion each Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Thankful to the Lord, they discipline themselves so that they will not forget what Jesus did on the cross.

Fourth, the early Christians devoted themselves to prayer. Romans 12:12 says to Christians be "devoted to prayer." How often do you pray to the Father in heaven? When was the last time that you really took time to pray? Do you set regular times to pray? 1 Thessalonians 5:16 to 18 says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Now Paul didn't want the Thessalonians to forget about praying to God. Some Christians go weeks and months without praying at all. The Lord Jesus teaches us that we ought to pray at all times and not lose heart (Luke 18 verse 1). Now God answers our prayers in His time and His way, because He knows what is best for us.

The more you pray, the more you know how much you need to pray! You need that close connection with God. Paul was a great preacher, but he said in Colossians 4:2 to 4, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will

open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”

Devotion to Christ means living the Christian life to the fullest. We love, we serve, and we devote ourselves to the Lord and to His ways. Paul said in Galatians 2 verse 20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Because we are in Christ, we keep away from sin; we love and pray for all; we strive to do good to all; and we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will hear it.

1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” We know our service to Christ has eternal value and makes a difference. Paul urges us in Colossians 3:23 to 24 that, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” We know the Lord loves us and blesses our every effort for good when we devote ourselves fully to Him. Oh I hope you'll do that. Let's pray together.

Father we're thankful that Jesus our Lord devoted Himself fully to us by shedding His blood and dying upon a cross. Help us to be devoted and to give ourselves fully and freely to You in everything. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

2 Thessalonians 1:11 to 12 says, “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh I hope and pray the Christian life that you are living now will glorify God and you will be glorified in Christ. Will the Lord count you worthy of your calling? Have you lived in such a way as to show your gratitude for what the Lord has done for you?

I fear many Christians have ceased to care about the Lord's sacrifice on the cross for their sins. They've forgotten Judgment Day is coming, and God will hold them accountable if they've forsaken Him and have stopped gathering with the saints. I fear many have bought into a lie about when and how they're saved. They've forgotten the first gospel sermon in Acts 2:38 that tells people to “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

I tell you if you wish to be forgiven, repent. That's a real change of heart leading to a change of ways. You leave sin and turn to the ways of Christ. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water not a sprinkling of a baby but the action of a penitent believer. And that's when our sins are forgiven and washed away (Acts 22 verse 16). Now once you've become a child of God, you must remain faithful to the Lord and live the Christian life in sincerity and truth. Your love must continue all the way to the end.