

Program Transcripts

June 2023



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

June 2023

Topics subject to change without notice

JUNE 4 – WE NEED THE CHURCH

Many people think you can be a good Christian without being a member of any church. Is church necessary? For an answer to that question, we must take time to examine what the New Testament says about the church.

JUNE 11 – YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

The Bible is the best-selling book of all time and comes today in hundreds of languages. Some think the Bible is too hard to understand. We ask, “What does the Bible say for itself? Can we understand the Bible?”

JUNE 18 – MORALITY

In a morally confused world, how can we know right from wrong? While many appeal to their feelings, experiences, and cultural norms, Christians turn to the Word of God as their standard for morality.

JUNE 25 – WHATEVER

Many people say there is a God, but they are not sure about the truth. Some today call this the “whatever” generation, because people accept whatever morals or ideas anyone suggests. Is it wise to believe whatever you hear?

We Need the Church

Many people think you can be a good Christian without being a member of any church. Is church really necessary? Today we're going to explore what God says about the church, and you can't afford to miss this study!

We know the Lord's way is the best way, the right way, and the holy way of life. The best way to know the Lord's way is to study the Scriptures. They are God's voice to us today. They were true when the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to write them, and they're true for all time. We're so grateful that you care enough to spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

When you mention the word "church," people respond in a multitude of ways. Some think of the church as optional. Some think of the church as an institution. Some think the church is made up of prejudiced hypocrites. Some think the church needs reinventing in a style more like the culture of our times. Everyone seems to think they know what the church should be like. Even folks who have never read the Bible or have not entered a church door in many years have an opinion about what the church should be.

You've probably noticed religion in America has changed. Many groups have become religious entertainment venues and others become like shopping malls. Some think the primary purpose of church is to cater to my wants and desires. We've become self-centered, thinking Jesus ought to be our servant rather than thinking we ought to be His. And it's no wonder that some see the church as optional and others as a waste of time. Few want to know what Christ envisioned for the church that He built or what place it has in His heart. The Lord never thought of the church as an option; in His eyes it's necessary.

Our reading today comes from Acts chapter 20 verses 28 to 32. And here Paul is talking to the elders of the church at Ephesus about how Jesus purchased the church.

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 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. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood. And how important it is to all of us. Help us to follow You to do what is right and to love the church as Jesus did. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Yes, the Lord Jesus considered the church as necessary. He wants everyone to be a member of His church and to worship with the church regularly. The idea that you can be a good Christian and not be a member of the church is not from the heart of God or scripture. A close look at the New Testament reveals that the church is quite necessary to our relationship with the Lord.

The church Jesus built does not belong to you or to me; it belongs to the Lord. He built it. After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (that is the confession that Peter made) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Yes, Jesus built His church, and not even His death could prevent it.

The church belongs to the Lord, because He purchased it. The apostle Paul by inspirations told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28, to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Now if Jesus loved the church enough to die for it, how can we think so little of it. The church must be precious to the Lord.

The Bible reveals how closely related Christ is to the church in Ephesians 1:22 to 23: "And He put all things in subjection under His 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." Just as your head is inseparably connected to your body, so Christ is inseparably connected to the church. Just as your body does your will as it is conceived in the brain, so the church does the will of its head, Jesus Christ. The church is the fullness of Christ. We must never separate Christ from His church or the church from Christ.

The church is extremely precious to the Lord; and He considers the church as His bride. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:25 to 27, "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." Jesus has gone to great lengths to bless and to sanctify the church. He wants her to be radiant with glory. Jesus values the church.

When people slander the church or make it trivial, they mock and insult Jesus Christ himself. They're saying Jesus is foolish to sanctify and glorify the church. If you wish to make a man angry, just slander his wife. Do you think the Lord Jesus will look kindly on anyone who slanders His bride?

Now, I want to distinguish the church the Lord Jesus calls His bride from what people today think when they hear the word "church." What I am speaking about is the Lord's church described in the New Testament. Many religious groups who call themselves "churches" are nothing like the New Testament church. They differ in name, in organization, in doctrine, in mission, and in worship. They're often more a reflection of our culture than of what God intended the church to be. Some groups have so little spiritual value and content, it's no wonder people see it as unnecessary.

This difference confuses and causes people to stray from the will of God. More than ever, people need to know the truth revealed in God's Word about the church. They need to think clearly about what God desires rather than be pulled out into a false hope by something that calls itself church but differs greatly from the church Jesus built as found in the New Testament. The Scriptures clearly make the church Jesus built a necessity for us to engage if we wish to please God.

Well, why is the church so necessary? Well, there are several reasons. First, the Lord adds those He saves to the church. When the Jews at Pentecost heard Peter preach about Jesus, they were pierced to the heart and wanted to know what to do. Peter replied that they must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Acts 2 and verse 41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." In verse 47 the Bible says, "And the Lord was adding to their number (that is "to the church") day by day those who were being saved." Now the Lord forgives us at baptism and adds us to His church. Baptism was the time they were forgiven or saved and added to the church.

When a person is saved, the Lord adds him to His people to His number to the church. And to be in the church means the Lord has saved you. The Scriptures never contemplate a person who is saved as a person who hasn't been baptized or a person who's not in the Lord's church. The apostle Paul told the church at Colossae in Colossians 1:13 to 14, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Now just as the Lord grants forgiveness when one repents and is baptized, so the Lord adds the baptized to His church. Now the church is the kingdom of Christ!

When John wrote to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1, he revealed to them what Christ had done for them. The Bible says in Revelation 1:4 to 6 that: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: "Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Now the book of Revelation addresses people who had come into a kingdom and were priests to God. John taught that "we" Christians "are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5 and verse 19). There are but two kingdoms: the domain of darkness and the kingdom of His beloved Son. To enter the church is to enter the kingdom of the beloved Son.

The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of the church as a kingdom. The Lord said in Matthew 16:18 to 19, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Well now, why would the Lord build one thing, that is the church, and give Peter keys to something else, the kingdom? He doesn't do that. You see, the church is the kingdom of God today.

How do I know that? Well, think about this. Acts 20:28, you'll recall that the Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. We have no record anywhere in the New Testament that the blood of Jesus ever purchased anything but the church. The twenty-four elders, however, in Revelation 5:9 to 10 sang this new song to the Lord Jesus, they sang "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." The same blood didn't purchase two things—the church is that blood-bought kingdom.

Second, being in the church means you're blood-bought, but there's no promise of being blood-bought to those outside the church. The church contains the cleansed, but the others outside are still in sin. The kingdom contains priests to God, but outside there are no priests to God. The Bible says in 1 John 5 and verse 12, that "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." Being in the Lord's church is vital to our eternal salvation.

Ephesians chapter 2 contrasts the difference between people who are in the world and outside of Christ from those who come into Christ and His church. The apostle Paul reminds those who came out of paganism at Ephesus of what they had been before they became members of the church or the body of Christ. Ephesians 2:12 to 13 says, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Now in verse 19 to 22, Paul describes them after they became Christians. And he said, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (God's family) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Now before

they were strangers without hope and without God. And now they're God's family and fellow citizens in God's kingdom the church.

Third, the church is necessary because being in the church means that you're a member of God's family. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:15, "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household (or family) of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." Now in this passage Paul identified the church as God's household or family. The children of God are in the church. And if you claim to be in God's family but say church membership is unnecessary, you're confused and may be deceiving yourself.

The very act that puts one into the family of God is what puts one into the church. Compare these two verses. First, Galatians 3:26 to 27, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." You see baptism as an act of faith is what makes us children of God. Second, let's consider 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." Now this verse says we're baptized into the body. Ephesians 1:22 to 23 taught us the body of Christ is the church. So baptism is what makes one a child of God and baptism is what puts us into the body of Christ, the church.

When we realize the church is God's family, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the saved, and bought by the blood of Jesus, we see why the church is so important in God's eyes. Being a member of the Lord's church is not optional; are you a member of the church Jesus built? I hope you are. I that you are faithful. That you worship regularly and that you're a part of God's kingdom and body the church.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that Your son Jesus purchased the church with His own blood so that we might be part of it. So that we might be saved, so that we might have an inheritance and so that we might live with You for ever and ever. Oh Father help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many people claim to be members of the church, and they wouldn't want anybody to think otherwise, but they aren't active. They've stopped worshipping at church or supporting it. By their actions they've actually abandoned the church and in that sense abandoned the Lord. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:24 to 25, "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." The Lord wants us to encourage each other to love and good works and not forsake assembling with other Christians. You can't encourage other Christians to stay faithful if you quit going to church altogether.

Now I know some of you can't attend worship because of your health. The Lord understands your situation. But if you can attend worship yet choose to forsake meeting, meeting at all, with the Lord's church, then you're forsaking the Lord too. The Lord loves His people and knows His church. If you quit serving Him, He knows it. When you stop attending, you also open the door to temptation of every kind. You see, you don't have that spiritually healthy way of life. To stay spiritually healthy, you have to stay in church.

And to become a member of the church and to be saved, believe with all your heart Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; repent of your sins; confess Jesus as the Christ; and be baptized. When you're baptized the blood of Jesus will wash away your sins and cause you to be added to church. You'll become a child of God, born again into His family. If you're a member of the church of Christ and have stopped attending, why not come back to the Lord and to the church. Why not get right with God once again. And know that you have hope and an inheritance.

You Can Understand the Bible

The Bible is the best-selling book of all time and comes today in hundreds of languages. Some think the Bible is too hard to understand. Is it really? Stay with us, and we'll find out.

God's way is always a blessing. And we're here to search the word of God. God loves us and gave us His will in written form in the Bible so that every age and nation could know the truth and be saved. God wants every person to believe and to obey His will. Thanks so very much for spending this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week. And we want to hear from you. We also hope you'll encourage your friends to watch this program.

Some think the Bible is too hard to understand. Perhaps you've heard people say, well, "The Bible is not meant to be understood." Or, "The Bible says different things to different people." Or, "What is important is not so much what the Bible says but what the Bible says to me." Well, I've heard people claim "the New Testament addressed the culture of the first century but really doesn't speak to us."

Others dismiss God's word by saying, well, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere and love Jesus." And then there is the skeptic who says, "You can make the Bible say anything you want it to say." Some say, that, "Take a passage of Scripture and read it to a group of people. And there will be as many interpretations of that passage as there are people in the room."

Well, these popular charges against the Bible lose sight of God's purpose in giving us His Word. They seem to forget about God's incredible desire to have a relationship with us that lasts for an eternity. And that relationship means that we can know Him and His will. The Lord Jesus promised us in John 8:31 to 32, that, "If you continue in My word, (that is stay in My word) then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke chapter 1 verses 1 through 4. And here Luke describes how he is writing this book and what it means to Theophilus. He says,

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who (were) from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

Yes, Luke thought that Theophilus needed to know the exact truth about the things they're taught. And we need to know that as well. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that in Your grace and in Your providence You've given us Your word. Which can teach the things that we most need to know and we can know them with confidence. So that we might live with You forever. We pray heavenly Father that we'll be good students and once we learn the will to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Is the Bible meant to be understood? Well the answer is yes, but don't take my word for it. Let's see what the Bible says for itself. Psalm 19:8 says, that "The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 119 verse 18 says, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:125 says, "I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies." Psalm 119 verse 130 says, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It

gives understanding to the simple.” And again, Proverbs 6:23 says, “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.”

When people say the Bible is not meant to be understood, I wonder how they came to that conclusion. Did they get it from the Bible or from people? Surprisingly, some churches don't want you to read your Bible. These churches worry that if you read your Bible, you'll find that what the Bible teaches is really different from what they teach and practice. The Bible has God's authority attached to it, and it challenges those who vary from it.

The apostle Paul warned in Scripture about this kind of problem, and even in his day there were people who were misusing and tampering with God's Word. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 2 to 4, “But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Now, the devil will do anything, anything, to keep people from understanding the truth that can be found in God's holy Word. He'd love nothing more than to blind people to the gospel so they won't know the truth. Satan will tamper with the word to convince you to believe something that's only partially true. He realizes his message must sound true, or you won't buy into it. And if he tells a lie that sounds true, he might lead some astray. And if he can make his lie really appealing, he will. But when people obey the lie rather than listen to God, they're deceived with a counterfeit religion. The devil has supplied plenty of counterfeits in our world today.

Now we wouldn't know what the truth is or what error is if it weren't for a permanent standard of truth. The Bible provides that standard of truth for all time. God's word is settled in heaven and it doesn't change. It's this stability, this solid foundation that allows Christians to remain united to God. God was wise to give to mankind His message in written form in the Bible, because by giving us the Bible, we can know the truth which makes us free. Now the difference between Christ's true disciples and others is that true disciples remain in the Word of God. The others drift away from the word.

So, we must stay with God's word. God expected ancient Israelite parents to teach their children the Law of God. The Lord God was concerned that a generation might arise that did not know His commandments. Moses commanded them, “At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you're going over the Jordan to possess” this is, (Deuteronomy 31 verses 10 to 13)

Now if the Bible were so hard to understand, God wouldn't have commanded all Israel to go through this every seven years. Truly we can understand the Bible. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 29:29 that “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” God gave us His Word to bless us.

Deuteronomy 30 verses 11 to 14 explains, “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it too far off. It's not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the

word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it." God not only wants us to understand the word, He also expects us to love and obey it.

Now the word of God went out to all Israel. And there were all kinds of people listening. They were the wise, the naive, the conservatives, the liberals, the educated, the young, and the old. Those who didn't know God's Law were expected to learn the Law and to obey it. My friend, if you're not an exception, God expects you to know His will. And you're not an exception. God does expect that.

1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 4 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God doesn't communicate in riddles, nor does He hold back some secret message for only the select few. God wants everyone to be able to know the truth, to be saved, and to live in heaven with Him. Jesus, the Bible says in Hebrews 2 and verse 9, tasted death for every person. Why then would God give us a Bible with the words of life, but give it in a way that we couldn't understand?

When God inspired Luke to write one of the four gospel accounts, He chose this Greek Gentile to write to a Roman authority about Jesus Christ. Now Luke didn't grow up knowing about God, and Theophilus had only heard bits and pieces, so here is the inspired Luke who wrote in Luke 1:1 to 4: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that have been taught."

Now Theophilus apparently wanted to know the truth, and Luke said that he could tell him with certainty (that is, exact knowledge) the things concerning Jesus Christ. You see the Bible was written to impart to us true knowledge, exact knowledge, and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The apostle John said in John 20 verses 30 to 31, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." God gave us this book, the Bible, so that we might believe in Jesus Christ and by believing be saved and have life in His name. I cannot imagine why, if this is the purpose of the Bible, that God would write something that nobody can understand. The fact is: we can understand what we need to know to be saved and go to heaven and live with God forever!

In Acts 17:2 to 4 the Bible says, "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.' And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women." Now the Scripture is not some strange riddle, but a book that gives life and tells the marvelous story of Jesus Christ.

From this inspired book, we learn the most wonderful story of love and sacrifice. To some it may be meaningless, but to us it is the most meaningful story in the entire world. I'm so thankful God chose men and inspired them to write that story down in the first century. So that we could hear and read it as it really happened. The New Testament gives us eyewitness accounts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, a story of good news that saves our souls. There's simply no better, no more important, no more meaningful story in the entire world than the gospel.

The gospel provides God's power unto salvation to everyone who believes it, according to Romans 1 verse 16. God knew that He had to reveal Himself to mankind, if they were to know and believe in

Him and find salvation. We can know some things through observing the universe, but we cannot know the full story apart from the Word of God. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." If we want to know the precious truth about God, we must go to His Word. Our task is to hear it, believe it, love it, obey it, and share it with others. Oh, thank God for the Bible!

The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:13, "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end." Paul wrote no other thing but what the Corinthians could understand, and we too can understand the Bible.

In fact, we must understand the word of God and obey it. Why? Because one day we will be judged by the word of God. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 and verse 48 that: "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." You and I will be judged one day by the words written in this book. We will stand before God and give an account for our lives, and the standard will be these written words.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Now we need to know what the will of God is. My friend, the purest source of God's will is found in the New Testament. So don't settle for anything less than the Scriptures. You can go to creeds and you can go to the writings of men. But the word of God is what will judge you in the end. They will lead you to an exact knowledge of the Lord's will. The things written in this book. They'll give you the unfailing truth that leads to eternal life.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that through Your grace and through Your providence we have the word of God written down for us in our age. So that we might know the exact truth about what happened with Jesus. We pray that You will bless us as we study, as we learn, and help us to be obedient to Your will. And to love it always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Think with me. What kind of God says, "I'm going to judge you by the things written in the books" (Revelation 20:11 to 15 and John 12:48 say that), but gives us a book that people cannot understand? Wouldn't such a God be a monster? But our God isn't like that. He gives us a book that we can understand. Our God loves us and wants all men to be saved and to know the truth. Shouldn't we strive to know His will? If our knowing and doing the will of God is the difference between eternal life and death, can we afford to ignore what He says?

Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." God wants us to study the Bible so that we will know the truth and not be ashamed on the day of judgment because we didn't follow the teaching of the Bible. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding."

And I hope you'll follow those teachings and come to Christ. To do that hear the words of Christ and believe them. Repent of your sins and confess the name of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Repentance means that you change your heart, leave sin and turn to the ways of God. And with love and faith be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins as Acts 2:38 and 22:16 teaches. The baptism of Jesus Christ is an immersion in water. And when you do, God will bless you with His grace and forgiveness, wash away your sins and add you to the church. He'll make you His child, He'll and give you an inheritance with Him. Won't you do that, my friend? Won't you do it today?

Morality

In a morally confused world, how can we know right from wrong? Why do Christians appeal to the Bible as the standard for morality? Can't people do what they feel is right?

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Being religious and being righteous are not the same thing. Many who claim to be religious aren't right with God and don't live righteous lives. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 23:27 to 28, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Sadly, some Christians act like that. In their speech they claim to love the Lord, but their actions show that they love the world. Christians ought to do what's right, because they love the Lord and because they are accountable to the Lord. Morality starts and ends in our relationship to the Father in Heaven and His Son Jesus Christ. We choose morality because of who we are and Whose we are. We don't belong to ourselves; we belong to God.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 13 to 16 and they discuss how we should live holy lives.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

That's the word of God. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to live lives that honor You and that are set apart. Help us to avoid the things that are evil and to do the things that are good. Help us in every way always to serve You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The character of God is the basis of morality. God is entirely pure and holy, and He wants His followers to be pure and holy. The adjective "holy" and the noun "holiness" appear more than 900 times in the Bible. The word "holy" in the Old Testament refers to separation from the impure or sinful and a consecration to what is pure and right. God told Moses in Leviticus 19 verse 2, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

The idea of holiness is always set in contrast to something that is profane or common. Our present society has lost its sense of holiness. We've pushed the holy God out and allowed the profane world in. We've ceased to give God the respect and honor He deserves. Obscene language and behavior fill our media, celebrities mock Christ and the Bible, Hollywood glorifies unmarried teenagers losing their virginity, and faith in Christ is now unmentionable at public schools.

What's this done? It's caused us lose our respect for the good and right and to feel no shame about the immoral and wrong. God sent the prophet Jeremiah to Judah, a people who didn't want to hear what God says. And it's similar today. The people then had become idolatrous and immoral. They ignored God and followed prophets who dreamed up their false prophecies. They lived shamelessly. Jeremiah 6:15 asks, "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush." Many today have no shame about anything. They simply don't care.

Morality is unalterably linked to love. Our love and respect for God and our love and respect for other people leads us to do what is right and to refuse to do what is wrong. We learn what is right and

wrong from the holy and pure character of God and we find the motivation to be moral out of respect and love for God. God's ways are loving and kind. And when people follow God, they bless everyone; but when people push God away, you can be sure that chaos and wickedness will fill their lives.

1 John 4:7 to 8 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Love, God, and morality are inseparably linked together. To reject one is to reject the others as well.

The apostle Paul explained how love and morality fit together in Romans 13:8 to 10. He said, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (You see) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

Everything God morally requires of us is right and loving; and love means it ought to be done. Everything God morally forbids is wrong and unloving; and it must not be done. It's wrong not only because it violates God's law but also because it fails to show love to God and other people. And you can't separate morality from love.

Now scripture reveals how God sees sexually immoral behavior in the book of Ephesians, chapter 5. Verses 3 to 5 says, "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (and that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

People who refuse to live moral lives won't have an inheritance with God. People tell us immoral behavior is no big deal, but God says in Ephesians 5:6 to 10, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become (partakers) partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."

Before a person comes to know the Lord, he lives in darkness and he thinks like the world thinks about sin. But once a person comes to know Christ, he can no longer live like he did as an unbeliever. There is a difference between people who know and love the Lord and those who don't. God said in Ephesians 5:11 to 12, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret." Some of our television shows expose how ungodly and sinful people live. Godly people find it shameful even to mention the sinful things people do in secret.

The Lord Jesus said in John 3:19 to 21 "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." True Christians forsake their sins and live righteous lives, while wicked people cover up their past.

God expects His people to live holy and pure lives. He doesn't want them to live as worldly people live. The Scripture says in Romans 12 and verse 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is

good and acceptable and perfect.” God expects His people to change their lives, to leave the old sinful life behind and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly.

They transform their lives by renewing their minds. And the more they draw close to God by studying His Word, the more they become like Christ. When Christ is in their hearts, sin no longer has the appeal it once had. Suddenly, sin becomes disgusting to them because they see how sin ruins. Committing adultery, murder, stealing, and coveting are destructive. Drunkenness, premarital sex, illicit drug use, and lying hurt everyone involved.

When you transform your life and conform to the Lord Jesus, you have nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, your life will reveal what the will of God is. God's will is good, and acceptable, and perfect. Now righteousness blesses everyone. We delight in having good people around us. We want to know that we can trust our family, friends, and neighbors. Businesses want employees who have moral character. Cities, states, and nations want moral and God-fearing leaders. When we associate with or elect ungodly or immoral people, we get people who open the door to more and more wickedness.

The Scripture says in 1 John 2:15 to 17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

What you love determines the direction of your life. If you love sinful things, you'll find ways to sin and get others to sin. Every sin arises from the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, the pride of life, or a combination of the three. All the sinful things that people prize and yearn for will not be of any value on Judgment Day. How good you look, how much money you have, and all your worldly accomplishments may impress people here and now; but they won't show God how you loved Him. One day the earth and all its works will pass away. Only the person who does the will of God abides forever.

C. T. Studd wrote a little poem that we should take to heart: “Only one life, 'twill soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last.” That's true. Don't waste your life on fleshly things that will perish. Don't lay-up treasures on earth and ignore your relationship with God. Don't get so filled with your pride that you have no room for the Lord Jesus. God didn't make you to live on earth forever. He has something better in store for you. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9:24, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” If you live only for the here and now, you'll lose everything. But if you faithfully serve the Lord Jesus, you will have eternal life in a place far better and grander than anything in this life. “Only one life, 'twill soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last.”

Why does all this matter? Why are we talking about morality? Because the moral choices that we make in this life determine our eternal destiny. Whether we choose to follow Christ or choose to follow the world matters. We can't pretend our choices don't matter. Of course, they matter. And God is not blind, and He will not overlook our behavior. Galatians 6:7 to 8 says, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” You can't live to please the devil and expect to enjoy the grace of God. Don't deceive yourself.

Each of us must choose whether we'll follow God or follow the world. And your life matters because your example and your influence matter. When you give in to worldly lusts, you tell your children, your neighbors, and your friends what direction you intend to go. When you support ungodly ways, you tell what side you're on. You can't straddle the fence, and you can't remain neutral. You must choose

between serving God and serving sin. Now your soul depends on choosing what is right and rejecting what is wrong.

You can't push God out of your heart and expect Him to bless you on the last day. It just doesn't work that way. 1 John 1:6 says, that "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." You can't be close to God and love sin the way the world does. James asked the rhetorical question in James 4 and verse 4, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity (that is hostility) with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Christians ought to know this.

The apostle Paul asked in Romans 6:1 to 2 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" We can't, not if we love the Lord and expect to enjoy His grace and forgiveness. Friend where is your heart? What life are you choosing to live? I hope and pray that it's one that is a holy and pure life.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your grace and love. Help us to never cheapen and take Your grace for granted but to turn from our sins. And turn to what is right and to do Your will and to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Sadly, many Christians fail to live up to God's moral standards. They claim to follow Christ but live as worldly as the people who never read the Bible. They want the Lord's salvation but not His morals. Some Christians actually shame the name of Jesus Christ by the way they think, the way they talk, and the way they act. Many call themselves Christians but have quit worshiping at church and ignore the morals of the Bible. They get caught up in sin and drift away from God. Sin causes people's love for God to grow cold.

If we call ourselves Christians and love the Lord, we must watch how we live. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:17 to 19, "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed (redeemed) from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." The Lord Jesus, Himself, redeemed you from sin with His own blood. No one could pay a higher price. Does that matter to you?

I hope it matters greatly. Friend, abandon the worldly ways of sin and come to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We can't let sin dominate us anymore. Believe in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized, God will wash away all your sins, make you His child. And we hope that you'll do that today!

Whatever

Many people say there is a God, but they're not sure about the truth. Someone has called this the "whatever" generation because people accept whatever morals or ideas they hear. Is this wise?

We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. I love the Bible, because it reveals God's eternal, unchangeable teaching. God's Word is never fickle. And since God's Word doesn't change, we can count on His promises to remain true. When God promises to forgive sins, we can be forgiven. When God promises the obedient a home in heaven, we can freely choose to be obedient and enjoy that promise. Thanks so much for joining us today; we want to hear from you and be part of your life each week.

The Academy at West Point has a simple but rigorous honor code. It simply says, "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do." Honesty and integrity have always been vital to our nation's military. I wonder how important it is to the rest of us. Sometimes gullible and often deceived, people today seem ready to believe whatever they like, whether it's true or not. Many have stopped distinguishing between truth and falsehoods. Many have stopped distinguishing between what is morally right and wrong. They are content to believe "whatever" and are undisturbed when "whatever" is absurd, shameful, or harmful.

In a pluralistic society, where people feel pressured to believe everything is okay, many believe all religions are the same and they end up believing in nothing with any conviction. Many have ceased to search for the truth and to love it. If every belief is true, then no belief can be counted on as right. Nothing matters. People who say all religions are okay have bought into religious confusion. And what has happened to loving the truth enough to search what God says? What's happened? If we believe everything we hear, we cannot be faithful to the teaching of the Lord Jesus?

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the church at Colossae chapter 2 Colossians chapter 2 verses 6-8. Colossae was a small town on the road to somewhere else and people would come through and speak about all kinds of strange things and Paul was calling them back to the Bible.

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

We need to take that warning seriously and stay with Christ. Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we're thankful that your Word gives us the truth that we need, to know what you'd have from us and to be able to distinguish truth from error. Help us to stand firm in the things you have taught and to do your will always. In Jesus' name, amen."

Colossae was a small town in the Lycus River valley on the main route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Now other nearby cities were larger and more important. Colossae had lost much of its importance. Romans and Greeks had transplanted there, and Jews lived there, and the frequent visitors made it a place susceptible to every new idea that came along. Paul wrote the Colossian letter to deal with a strange doctrine arising among some members of the church. He warned them of the false teaching and a worldly philosophy that was deceiving them.

God's Word says in Colossians 2:1-8: "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is,

Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Smooth talking strangers can easily fool a naïve person with false promises and worldly traditions that sound promising. Paul warned them not to be fooled by empty human traditions that are false. Instead, Paul pointed them to the truth found in Jesus Christ.

Learning to distinguish what is true from what is false is one of the most important achievements of life. Some traditions are true, while others are false. A tradition is merely a belief or a practice that has been passed down from one generation to the next. When a belief is false in one generation, it will be false in the next; but if the second generation has never heard anything but this falsehood, it will assume what it heard was true. Once a deceptive tradition becomes accepted and passed down from generation to generation that idea becomes rooted in people's hearts. So, people are convinced of a lie, think it's the truth, and remain in error. This even happens among religious people. And I think, how sad!

Disbelief is the rejection and refusal to accept a belief. To disbelieve in Jesus is to reject him as the Son of God. Well, this might come in the form of denying His miracles or refusing to believe in His resurrection. It also might come in the form of refusing to believe what He teaches. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:48 that, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” Failure to believe Jesus' teaching is a serious matter. Many people will find themselves rejected on the last day because they failed to believe what Jesus teaches.

People misbelieve when they are convinced that something untrue is nonetheless correct. To deceive is to cause someone to believe a lie and then be in error and they not know it. The Lord Jesus condemns those who teach falsehoods and errors. Paul was shocked when some false teachers were misleading the churches of Galatia. And in strong language, the apostle of the Lord said in Galatians 1:6-9, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble 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 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.”

Why did Paul say teaching a false gospel leads one to be accursed? Because changing what God teaches leads people to believe a lie. When people follow something other than God's teaching, they believe a lie and they separate themselves from God. Satan separates people from God by deceiving them with a counterfeit religion. The Lord Jesus said this about the devil in John 8:44 that, “He was a murderer 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 liar and the father of lies.” The devil lied to Eve, led her to sin against God, and to die spiritually and physically. Lies still lead people into sin and spiritual death. You see it matters what you believe and whether you listen to the Lord.

People are deceived by all kinds of falsehoods and half-truths. A half-truth is when someone tells you a truthful fact that leaves out other relevant information. For instance, it was true Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. Sarah was also Abraham's wife. So, when Abraham was afraid and told Pharaoh Sarah was his sister, he was only half right. Abraham's lie caused lots of trouble. Half-truths are

dangerous lies. There is enough truth to fool people into accepting them, but there is enough falsehood to lead to destruction. A Christian must be very careful to examine everything he hears.

Some false prophets in the days of Jeremiah began fabricating prophecies. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23:16, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.'" False prophets in every age have led countless souls away from the will of God. We, we don't want to be led into error and lose our souls. And this is why we must examine everything carefully. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these [speaking of the Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." And we, too, should test every belief by God's Holy Word to see what is true and what is false.

And we hurt ourselves greatly when we lie to ourselves. God said in Jeremiah 17:9-10, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" and then the Lord says, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." Some human traditions convince our hearts to accept what we want to hear rather than what God says. If we listen to our hearts and desires rather than to the Lord, we can easily do the wrong thing spiritually, morally, or practically. Solomon said in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."

When people wish something to be acceptable to believe or practice, they can justify it in their own minds. Their desires can lead them to deceive themselves. They set their minds to follow this error and don't want to repent. They must discover their errors the hard way. The prodigal son was like that. He had to have his inheritance and live life the way he wanted. So, when his father gave in, he took his money to a far country, he wasted it in a sinful lifestyle. And he had to ruin himself before he'd admit how foolish and sinful he had been. I hope, my friend, you haven't allowed your heart to deceive you into making foolish choices. The prodigal son lied 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 the lie will benefit them. In a politically correct world people turn a blind eye to the truth and focus on what is convenient and popular. They'd rather give in to a lie than face embarrassment by taking an unpopular position. Some think it shows wisdom or love to take a position of neutrality on every controversial issue.

Others think we can never determine what is true, so that every view is as good as every other. Now this view is miles away from the heart and the teaching of Jesus. It may appear to accommodate others in love, but this view shows no love to the will of God. You see, God didn't create every religion; and not every religion teaches His will. God wants His people to love Him and love the truth found in His Scriptures!

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does 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; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

You see being religious doesn't guarantee that one is righteous. Some people say they're saved by faith alone, but the Lord Jesus said one must also do God's will to enter heaven. These people who lived lawless lives deceived themselves into thinking they were still right with God. Jesus, however, told them

to depart. He never knew them or had a relationship with them. They could not enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see, it matters what we believe and whether we obey the will of God. For years I've heard people embrace the doctrine of salvation by "faith only." They suggest all one must do to be saved is believe, and once saved always saved and that they cannot be lost. But this doctrine didn't come from Jesus. People who believe in the "faith only" doctrine always have to take it back. They have to admit you can't be saved without loving God, without repenting, or without obeying the Lord Jesus. Faith, yes, is essential, but you have to do more than simply believe in order to please God and be saved.

People say one religion is as good as another and all religions are the same; but the Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The only way to the Father 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 saved." Oh, it's popular to say all religions are the same, but the Scriptures teach otherwise. I choose Jesus.

Why should we confess Jesus as Lord? Why should we serve Him? We serve because we love Him; He died for our sins. We serve Him because Jesus tells the eternal Truth we need to hear. Why would we hold beliefs that change with the wind? William Inge said, "He who marries the spirit of an age soon finds himself to be a widow." We need the eternal truth that doesn't compromise. And you find eternal truth in the words of Jesus. Jesus is our Savior. We want and we need Jesus. Let's pray together.

"Heavenly Father, we're thankful for the words that are found in Scripture. Help us to devote ourselves to the things that we have learned there and to do your will. In Jesus' name, amen."

David wrote in Psalm 103 verses 15 and 16, "As for man, his days are like grass; 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." Life on earth is temporary; we won't live here forever. The devil loves to disturb you about your soul. He'd love to keep you confused about life, about the church, and about the truth. He'd love for you to put off deciding what is true.

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, the church, your salvation, or heaven and hell. He wants you to live for the present and ignore your soul. He wants you to remain confused and apathetic.

Today is the only day you possess 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, adds you to His church. You become a child of God and you have the hope of an eternal life. There are no good reasons to think about it "later."

Why not attend one the churches of Christ near you. Tell them that you want to obey the gospel and 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?