

Study Guide for the Week of January 6, 2008

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.spwired.com.

Monday, January 7. While some Christians take the Genesis account of creation literally, most United Methodist Christians see it as a description of **why** God created rather than **how**. The rhythmic repetition of certain phrases captures the poetry of the passage it also reflects the ancient Hebrew understanding of the world. The Genesis story is teaching several profound and important truths: That God is the creator who brings order from chaos; that the creation is good; that human beings are created in the image of God. In its poetry and theology it is not irreconcilable with the Big Bang theory, or the theory of evolution (if by this theory we mean the gradual development of increasingly complex life forms over time). **Read Genesis 1:1-23.** What do you notice in reading this passage? For an interesting article on how the creation story might be read in the light of modern science see the article "A Common Cosmology of the Ancient World" on the American Academy of Religion website at www.aarweb.org/syllabus/syllabi/g/gier/306/commoncosmos.htm.

Tuesday, January 8. One way God identifies himself in scripture is as the "I AM". The Hebrew word for this is Yahweh. Any time you see "LORD" in all caps in your Old Testament the actual Hebrew word is Yahweh which means, "I AM that I AM." This can mean, "I am the source of life. All being derives from me." **Read Exodus 3:13-15.** Why would God use this as his personal name? If evolution is the mechanism by which species developed, through mutation and natural selection, in what sense would God still ultimately be seen as the Creator and Source of life? Check out the online book by Harry Emerson Fosdick called, *Dear Mr. Brown: Letters to a Person Perplexed About Religion*. www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=583.

Wednesday, January 9. John's Gospel begins with a passage that mirrors the opening of the book of Genesis. John is offering a new perspective on the words of Genesis. **Read John 1:1-5, 10-18.** Jesus is called the "Word" by John. In Genesis God merely spoke and creation came into existence. "Word" in John signifies God's desire to communicate himself to the world. What do you think John meant when he said, "in him was life"? Take a look at this paper by Alister McGrath, PhD in both Natural Science and Theology at Oxford. It's his view on the debate between science and religion. www.cis.org.uk/resources/articles/article_archive/mcgrath_rsa_lecture.pdf.

Thursday, January 10. The Apostle Paul, in speaking to philosophers at Athens, describes his understanding of God's work as Creator and the idea that whether we believe in him or not, it is God who sustains all life. **Read Acts 17:16-34.** What does it mean, "In him we live and move and have our being?" Check out this article on line by Henry F. Shaefer II, a distinguished scientist entitled, "*Scientists and their Gods*". www.leaderu.com/offices/schaefer/docs/scientists.html.

Friday, January 11. Look over the message notes from last weekend's message. Aaron mentions doubt. What is its role in our quest for knowledge and faith? Why is it important? How did Aaron answer the questions given? **Read Psalm 19.**