

Study Guide for the Week of January 20, 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 21. While the Old Testament includes passages of violence and warfare, sometimes pursued in the name of God (we'll consider these in this coming weekend's sermon on The Bible's Disturbing Passages), we also find passages that indicate God's displeasure with violence and a vision of a world without violence. **Read Genesis 6:5-13 in the Old Testament.** Why does God decide to bring about the end of humanity? How does God "feel" about this? What does this tell us about human violence and God? How violent is humanity today? Consider how we and today's children entertain themselves, video games, television and film, and even music. How violent is our society? For an interesting article on the role of religion in war read, www.csmonitor.com/2006/1121/p09s01-coop.html

Tuesday, January 22. The Old Testament prophets offer glimpses of a "messianic" age – a vision for a future where violence no longer exists. **Read Micah 4:1-5 in the Old Testament** (it's parallel is found in Isaiah 2). This passage, in its version from Isaiah, is inscribed on a stone wall across from the United Nations representing the vision of this body. **Read Isaiah 11:1-9** where Isaiah describes his vision of the messianic kingdom (the time after the Messiah comes). Christians work toward this vision now, but believe we will not fully realize it until Christ returns. Look over your sermon notes from Sunday – what constitutes a just war? How would you apply these criteria to the War in Iraq? Afghanistan? The First Gulf War? World War II?

Wednesday, January 23. Today we'll consider what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount that relate to violence and peace. **Read the Beatitudes of Jesus – Matthew 5:1-12 in the New Testament.** How do these scriptures speak to the question of religion and violence? Try using them as a basis for prayer – asking God to help you be humble (poor in spirit), meek, merciful, etc. The newsletter for the National Catholic Peace Movement is found at www.paxchristiusa.org/ and offers quotes, essays and ideas for waging peace.

Thursday, January 24. Jesus' teaching with regard to enemies is well known, but not often lived. Let's read and reflect upon it today. **Read Matthew 5:21-26, and 38-48 in the New Testament.** These are hard things to practice. How might one's faith help them to practice these things? **Read Matthew 7:1-5.** How might this passage help us in living at peace with others? Take the time to pray that God might help you to live the passages you have read today. Pray for your enemies or those who have wronged you, and for those who we might consider, as a nation, our enemies. An interesting article on how South Africa avoided a blood-bath after apartheid can be found at www.soon.org.uk/page25.htm

Friday, January 25. Today let's turn to the writings of the Apostle Paul as he sought to teach early Christians how the Christian life was meant to be lived. **Read Romans 12:9-21 in the New Testament.** How does this passage speak to the relationship between religion and violence? If religious people actually lived these words how would this affect our world? Read the last verse again. Try using all of the verses you just read in prayer, asking God to help you to live them.