

Study Guide for the Week of January 27, 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.

Our goal in this week's study guide readings is to see if we can experience what was described in the last point of yesterday's message – encountering and being encountered by God. Each day try these steps as you read from the Bible:

1. Pray, asking God to hear from him as you read.
2. Read the scripture two times through – the second time answer the following:
 - 1) What, if anything, happened in this passage?
 - 2) What principles might we learn about God from this passage?
 - 3) What does the passage tell us about the people involved (if any)?
 - 4) How might the people involved serve as either a positive or negative example to me? How am I called to emulate, or do the opposite of this individual or group of people?
 - 5) What might God ask of me through this passage? Would I do it?
3. Write down your thoughts and insights.

This represents just one way of studying the Bible. Alongside this method it is good to study the historical setting of the story. Study Bibles are very helpful with this. To whom was the author writing? Why were they writing? What was happening at the time the letter was written that shaped what the author said?

Monday, January 29 –Using the above method, **read Genesis 12:1-9**. (Note Abram's name will later be changed to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah). How old was Abraham when God called him to go to a new place? What does this teach us about age? Does retirement from work mean retirement from doing God's work? Abraham's most exciting times were still ahead of him at age 75--how exciting is that?! For what purpose would God bless Abraham (vv. 2-3)? What does this tell you about God's expectations of you and how you use your blessings? Would you have packed up everything to move to a land you'd never been before at age 75 as Abraham and Sarah did? What does this tell you about Abraham? To build an altar was to stop and offer a sacrifice to God--it was an act of worship. How many times does Abraham do that in this short period? Why do you think he did? What did you learn about God? About Abraham? What might God say to you through this story?

Tuesday, January 30- Today you'll read one of the most familiar passages in all of the Bible, **read Psalm 23**. Notice that in the first three verses the Psalmist talks about his relationship with God, but at verse 4 the Psalmist, having described his experience of God, now breaks out in prayer, speaking to God. What does this Psalm say about God? About the Psalmist? What might it mean to you? Try reading it aloud. Try using it as the basis of prayer.

Wednesday, January 31 – Today you'll read a very well known story, found in the prophetic Book of Daniel, when Daniel is thrown into the lions' den. **Read Daniel 7**. Daniel was written for a people who were in danger of compromising their faith, who were ruled by those who worshiped other gods. What would this story have meant to them? Are you ever tempted to compromise your values and beliefs to fit in? How is Daniel an example to us today?

Thursday, February 1 – Today we turn to one of the teachings of Jesus. **Read Luke 18:9-14**. Describe the heart of the religious leader (the Pharisee). Describe the tax collector (tax collectors were seen as traitors by the Jews because they worked for the Romans--they tended to be non-religious and were often seen as sinners). Is your heart more like that of the Pharisee or the tax collector? Why do you think Jesus told this story? What does God look for in us?

Friday, February 2 – Today we'll read selected verses from one of Paul's letters. Paul writes this letter from a prison cell, awaiting news as to whether he'll be executed. **Read Philippians 1:9-11**. Why does Paul pray this for his readers? **Read 2:3-4**. How does this apply to you? **Read 4:4-9** – this letter is characterized by joy and rejoicing, though Paul writes from prison awaiting possible execution. In these verses he notes how he can have joy in the face of possible death. What might God's word be to you in the verses you have read today?