

Study Guide for the Week of July 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, July 7. Read Matthew 6:5-15 in the New Testament. The Lord's Prayer is set inside a larger section of teaching about prayer. What did you notice about the kind of prayer that Jesus would define as "effective"? How does that compare to your prayers? Notice that this teaching on prayer closes with a reiteration of the forgiveness phrase from the Lord's Prayer. Remember that one definition of forgiveness is to give up your right or desire for vengeance. Who do you need to forgive? How does holding back on forgiving others affect your ability to receive and experience forgiveness?

Tuesday, July 8. Read Luke 18:9-14 in the New Testament. What was the Pharisee's problem? We need to note that in many ways that the Pharisee is a lot like us...a good person trying to do the right thing. But of the two, which one do you think went home experiencing forgiveness and grace? Who in turn is more likely to be merciful and forgiving to others? What made the tax collector's prayer more powerful? Whose prayers are more like yours? When was the last time you laid your soul bare before God? What happened?

Wednesday, July 9. Read Luke 19:1-10 in the New Testament. What do you think were some of the kinds of sins that were in Zacchaeus' mountain of debt to God? Do you think Zacchaeus experienced forgiveness that day? Zacchaeus extends the forgiveness he receives by doing what? Zacchaeus shows us that our response to God's forgiveness is not just to extend forgiveness to others, but to seek forgiveness from those we have wronged. Who is on that list for you?

Thursday, July 10. Read Ephesians 4:29-5:2 and Colossians 3:12-15 in the New Testament. One of the phrases of the Lord's Prayer that we have already studied is *Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done...* We learned that in that phrase we are inviting God to build his kingdom in us and through us. Today's passages talk about what it looks like when our lives reflect God's kingdom. Notice that forgiveness is a key part of both of these pictures. How does your life reflect mercy, compassion and forgiveness? When does it not reflect these kingdom values?

Friday, July 11. Read Luke 23:32-34 in the New Testament. Who was Jesus forgiving? Sometimes we may think that we just cannot forgive someone...what they did was unforgivable. This action of Jesus tells us that forgiving someone (or the world) for some terrible injustice is not just something he taught, but something he did. It's not just an idea! It's an action with the power to change the world. Who are you withholding forgiveness from? Why? How does their sin compare to your debt to God? What potential new life lies on the other side of forgiving?