

Study Guide for the Week of December 10, 2007

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. For 2007 the Study Guide is designed to help you read through the New Testament in a year. 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, Dec 10. Read Ephesians 5:21-33 in the New Testament. The practical advice of Christian living continues as Paul turns to relationships. In our culture today, it may be tempting to tag Paul as a sexist because of this passage. In reality, he highly elevates and esteems the value of women way above the patriarchal traditions of his day. Paul relates the relationship of husband and wife to that of Jesus and the church. This is not about hierarchy or power. It is about mutuality and selflessness; serving each other in humility and love. How would taking this attitude change your relationship?

Tuesday, Dec 11. Read Ephesians 6 in the New Testament. The same spirit of serving rather than being served carries over in Paul's advice regarding children and slaves/servants. As you read vs 5-9, think about the power-based relationships you have. Who is placed in authority over you and how can you apply vs 5-8 to them? Who do you have authority over and how can you apply vs 9 to them?

Wednesday, Dec 12. Read Philippians 1:1-11 in the New Testament. Paul was writing this letter to the church at Philippi (see your map) from house arrest in Rome while awaiting his trial. In spite of his circumstances, Paul writes an encouraging letter filled with gratitude, humility, unity, hope, and JOY. As you read today's verses, look for some of these themes.

Thursday, Dec 13. Read Philippians 1:12-30 in the New Testament. Paul never saw hardship and persecution as punishment, but rather as opportunity to tell the good news. His attitude was not one of self-pity, but of overcoming-power through Christ. What do you notice about Paul's attitude in vs 18-25? How are these like or unlike your attitudes? Paul closes this section by challenging his readers to take on his attitudes as they live lives that are consistent with the faith they profess. What encouragement or challenge speaks to you?

Friday, Dec 14. Read Philippians 2:1-11 in the New Testament. Paul continues to address the attitudes of people, because attitudes connected to selfishness or conceit or judgment of others lead to a divided church. In this beautiful passage, Paul's appeal is no longer to follow his attitude, but that of Christ Jesus, described in verses 6-11. What is your attitude in comparison? Look at Jesus own words in Matthew 23:11-12.

Saturday, Dec 15. Read Philippians 2:12-30 in the New Testament. Verses 12-13 are well known and often quoted. Paul is not talking about working FOR salvation (God has taken care of that). Rather he means to work FROM our salvation TO the fullness of salvation that God wants to bring to others through us. The words "fear and trembling" mean to return to the humility and obedience to God reflected in yesterday's reading (vs 5-11). God works in us to bring God's will into effective action in the world..."to shine like the stars..." How are you letting God's light shine through you?

Sunday, Dec 16. Read Philippians 3 in the New Testament. Have you noticed the theme of "joy" or "rejoicing" so far in Philippians? Verse 1 today is a reminder that our rejoicing is in God, and what God is doing, not in our own accomplishments. When Paul talks about forgetting (vs 13) what is behind, he is not just talking about his sins and mistakes, but also accomplishments and glories. His vision is beyond that – reaching for what is yet to come. Why do you think that is an important message for the church? Our church?