

Study Guide for the Week of August 6, 2006

ESPRESSO YOURSELF—What Do You Say?

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.saintpauls-umc.com.

Monday. Today's reading touches on several things: worry; money and possessions; and keeping our eyes on God. **Read Matthew 6:22-34.** What does this passage say about our money and possessions? What does it teach us about worry? Notice how Jesus boils down these issues in verse 33. He is saying that we can keep perspective on all the areas of our lives if we seek (keep our eyes on) God and his kingdom. Aaron talked about how showing thanks to God is a way to keep our eyes on him. Where is most of your focus? How can you turn your eyes more and more upon Jesus?

Tuesday. Today's reading relates back to yesterday's theme of keeping our eyes on Jesus. **Read Matthew 14:22-33.** Peter is to be commended for stepping out of the boat, for trusting Jesus, for being obedient when Jesus called. Peter actually took a few steps on the water! But when he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the waves and the wind, he sank! How might your life reflect this same sort of scenario but in a different context? When have you had your eyes on Jesus, but then let your eyes wander and sank into the chaos of life? Once again, living "thank you" lives toward God helps us to keep our eyes on him and allows us to walk through the challenges of life.

Wednesday. **Read Malachi 3:8-10** in the Old Testament. We must remember that God is the one speaking in this passage, so we can choose to accept this word for ourselves or reject it. Does the blunt language of this passage make you uncomfortable? Aaron pointed out the tension we have in giving our money: it puts us in the flow of God's blessings, but at the same time we must realize that we don't buy God's love and blessings--they are free. However, we must be obedient to God's will. Have you made the decision to work toward tithing (giving 10% of your income to God)? Would you say that you have positioned yourself to receive God's blessings? Do you trust that he will live up to his promise and open the floodgates of heaven and bless you more than you could hold?

Thursday. **Read Psalm 100** in the Old Testament. Entering God's gates with thanksgiving implies coming into God's presence with thankful hearts. Since God is present everywhere how might you face the ordinary things of your day with a heart of thankfulness? What have you taken for granted in the past that you could see in a new way? Remember, looking at the ordinary things of life with heart of intentional gratitude allows us to see God in a way we would not any other way? **Read Ephesians 2:8-9.** In this passage we see God described as a gift-giver. If you were to follow God's example, how might you become better at giving gifts to others? Think of several examples and prepare to live them out this week.

Friday. **Read Luke 17:12-19.** Why do you think the one leper came back and gave thanks? Why might the others not have stopped to do the same? Notice that even though the nine did not give thanks, Jesus did not take their healing back from them. It was still given to them in love and they were allowed to keep it. What does this tell us about God? What has God given you that you've not yet taken the time to thank him for?