

Study Guide for the Week of Feb 5, 2006

Everyday Matters

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. Read Luke 10:25-37 in the New Testament. First look at the two commandments quoted from the Old Testament, one about loving God, the other about loving our neighbors. These are called the great commandments. Jesus is lifting them up as the very core of what it means to follow God. Mark said, “all people matter to God, so they should matter to us too.” These commandments seem to say that we cannot fully love God if we’re not willing to love our neighbors (including strangers). And just so we don’t get too much wiggle room, Jesus draws a pretty wide circle around the word “neighbor” with his parable of the Good Samaritan. How wide are your circles?

Tuesday. Read Matthew 7:1-5 in the New Testament. Mark briefly touched the ways we make very quick judgments about others, especially strangers. What does Jesus have to say about making judgments about other people? Why do you think he feels so strongly about it? What is the difference between setting appropriate boundaries with people who have not yet earned our trust and judging that someone is not worthy of our time/love? Is it possible to show hospitality to a stranger within boundaries?

Wednesday. Read Mark 9:33-35 in the New Testament. Judgmentality (from yesterday) is one sin that prevents us from living hospitable lives. Another problem that gets in our way some times is inward focus. It’s a tendency we have to look inward at our needs at the cost of ignoring or not recognizing others. At its best, looking only at our needs is inconsistent with Jesus teaching and example. At its worst, it is selfishness in the highest degree. It can lead us to thinking that we have entitlements. It is very much the opposite of the spirit of servanthood Jesus teaches and models. Examine yourself today. How is your spirit of servanthood? For more passages about it, read John 13:1-17 or Luke 14:1-11.

Thursday. Read Luke 19:1-10 and John 4:1-26, 39-42 in the New Testament. Mark mentioned 3 principles that relate to the way the Jesus shared hospitality with the strangers that came to him. Look for those three principles (see outline on the other side) in the story of Zacchaeus and the Woman at the well.

Friday. Read Romans 12:9-13 in the New Testament. Paul is encouraging the church in Corinth to practice love in this passage. What ways are you extending love, making Saint Paul’s or our community a more hospitable place?