

Study Guide for the Week of February 26, 2006

Contagious...part 3. The Power of an Invitation.

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 19:10. This passage was at the heart of this entire message series. It is Jesus' mission in one sentence. Copy this passage down and then rewrite it in your own words as a way to internalize its meaning. Remember that if we choose to follow Jesus, then his mission becomes our mission. **Read Matthew 28:19-20.** We read this passage in last week's study guide, but it was at the heart of the message yesterday. This is where Jesus sends all of his followers out into the world to be the living extension of his mission. As you read this passage, would you say that you are "on mission"? If you are not on this mission, then how would you describe the mission you are on? Rewrite this passage in your own words.

Tuesday – Read John 1:35-46. Here we see Jesus calling his disciples. Note what happens first to Andrew. He was a disciple of John the Baptist, but John pointed to Jesus and called him "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." That was a very powerful statement. John knew that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Two of John's disciples decide to follow Jesus and they end up hearing the good news and beginning their faith walk with Jesus. Andrew was one of those disciples. Notice that one of his first responses is to go and find his brother, Simon Peter. What does Andrew tell his brother? After that, Jesus asks Philip to follow him and he does. What does Philip do next? This is a pattern of invitation. Aaron said that Christianity is an invitation-driven faith. We see this demonstrated early on in this passage. How are you at inviting others?

Wednesday – Read John 4:1-26. This is a story of Jesus' encounter with a woman at a well. It needs to be noted that she was there at an odd time of day. This may mean that she was avoiding contact with others. Because she was known to have had many husbands and was not married to the man she was living with, she may have been ostracized by many people. In fact, some people may have decided that she was too far from God to have any hope. Other people may have thought that, but not Jesus. He interacts with her, answers her questions, then focuses on her deep spiritual thirst. We must do the same. Even for people who have been saying "no" to God for a very long time, we must not say "no" for them. Instead we hold out hope, we never stop inviting, we believe that God loves lost people and we should too. Are there people in your life that you have said "no" for assuming that they would never accept an invitation to worship or some other event?

Thursday – Read John 4:27-38 in the New Testament. Look carefully at Jesus' statement about the harvest being ripe. He's telling his disciples that many, many, many people are simply waiting to be asked to follow him. They are ready to hear good news. What was true then, is just as true today. There are many people who are only an invitation away from beginning, or restarting, a relationship with God. And Jesus would say to us, what he said to his disciples, "open your eyes and look at the fields." 65,000,000 Americans said they would attend church if only a friend invited them. Who do you know that might be among those 65,000,000 people? What is keeping you from inviting? What might be the result if you did invite them?

Friday – Read John 4:39-42 in the New Testament. This is the result of Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. Notice what she does. Notice what she says. Notice the responses of the people who came out to meet with Jesus. What does this story teach us about the power of making an invitation? What two families or individuals might God be leading you to invite? Be contagious!