

## Study Guide for the Week of March 26, 2006

*Can You Hear Me Now? A Study on Prayer—When God Says “No.”*

*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](http://www.saintpauls-umc.com).*

**Monday** – We begin this week’s readings with a passage where God says “no” to one of his most dedicated servants, the apostle Paul. **Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.** We don’t know exactly what Paul’s “thorn” in the flesh was. Many believe that it was the failing of his eyesight, others a temptation he struggled with, physical pain, or possibly a difficult person that was an ongoing challenge. Is there anything in your life that you would consider a thorn in your flesh? We need to be clear that God would never put a sin in our lives, but he might allow a temptation to be present in order to make us stronger. How might Paul have been made stronger because God said “no” to him? How might a struggle or suffering make you stronger and trust God more?

**Tuesday** – **Read Mark 14:33-36.** Here we see Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. This occurs just before he is betrayed by Judas and taken away to be tried. The next day he would be crucified and buried. Notice the agony that Jesus experiences, so much so that he falls to the ground to pray. **Read Luke 22:44.** In this passage we see that Jesus was in such anguish that he sweats drops of blood. It was this anguish that led him to ask God to take the cup from him. Jesus was asking God if there was a way for him to avoid being crucified. God said “no” to his prayer, but notice that God sent an angel to give him strength. How has God given you strength in the midst of a struggle or hardship? Does it give you any sense of comfort that was a time when even Jesus experienced a “no” in his life?

**Wednesday** – **Read Matthew 25:31-46, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13.** These passages all speak about forgiveness. They point to the reality that if there is a sin in our lives, that keeps us from hearing from God. If we do not forgive others, then we close off God’s forgiveness to ourselves. **Read Isaiah 1:15.** What does this passage tell us about the effect sin has on God hearing our prayers? If you know you have unforgiven sins in your life right now, spend time in prayer asking for God’s forgiveness. These are prayers that nothing can stop. At the same time ask for God’s strength and protection so that you do not return to those same sins that you have just received forgiveness for.

**Thursday** – **Read Isaiah 58:3-9.** This passage links justice with prayer. It talks about how we cannot expect God to hear us when we are fighting with one another, neglecting the needs of those who are hungry, homeless and oppressed. What might you need to do in order address this issue? **Read Proverbs 21:13.** Why would God want us to meet the needs of others in order to hear our prayers?

**Friday** – **Read Matthew 5:23-24 and 1 John 2:9.** Sometimes relational strife can be a barrier in our prayer lives. What do these passages teach you about dealing with relationship problems? How important is it that we address these issues? **Read Romans 12:18.** This passage lets us know that we should work for relational harmony and peace, but it also implies that we may not be able to do so because it takes work on the part of the other person too. However, we cannot let the other person’s unwillingness get in the way of resolving the problem if it is at all possible to find resolution. What relationships do you need to work toward peace within so that you eliminate any barriers to prayer regarding this?