

Study Guide for the Week of May 21, 2006

Christianity and the Religions of the World—Part 6, Christianity

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.

This week we will read passages from the Bible, which capture the basic Christian message and the wideness of God's mercy.

Monday – Let's begin our study of the basic gospel of Christ by reading one of the first recorded Christian sermons, preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost when God poured out the Holy Spirit on the disciples giving birth to the church. **Read Acts 2:22-47.** What does Peter say here about God? About Jesus? About our human condition? What did Peter instruct those who responded to his preaching to do? What does it mean to "repent"? If you are not sure, you might look it up in a dictionary. He also commands baptism – this is the outward and visible sign that one has entered into a covenant relationship with God – a sign that you have decided to follow Christ and that God has adopted you, forgiven you, and given you life. Have you been baptized? If you have never been baptized, but have committed your life to Christ, baptism is the next step. Please call the church office to find out more about baptism and how you can schedule a time to be baptized. Notice what the early Christians did after they gave their life to Christ – what does this correspond to in our church today? Are you doing these things?

Tuesday – Today we'll look at the life and ministry of Jesus. Take the time to read the following two chapters in one sitting – it will take about ten minutes. These chapters quickly recount a host of different things Jesus did – each of which is meant to point to his identity and to the nature and character of God. Ask this question as you read these two chapters: What do we learn about the heart and character of God through each of these stories? **Read Matthew chapters 8 and 9.** Allow these stories to shape your prayer – talk to the Lord about what you read.

Wednesday – **Read Luke 19:1-10.** What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? **Read John 8:1-11.** The latter of these stories was an independent story about Jesus that circulated distinct from John's gospel and was added to his gospel probably in the early second century. What do these two stories tell us about the heart of Jesus? What was Zacchaeus' response to Jesus' mercy? What did Jesus command the forgiven woman to do? What do you think Zacchaeus was like before he met Christ? After he met Christ? What was this woman like before and after her encounter with Jesus? How do these stories speak to your life?

Thursday – Let's take a look at the human condition as described in the New Testament and God's action on our behalf in the light of this condition. **Read Romans 7:14-8:17.** What do the verses in chapter seven teach us about ourselves? Have you ever experienced this? Chapter eight is God's response to our dilemma. Notice not only what Jesus has done for us, but also how the Holy Spirit is such an important part of the Christian life. In your prayer thank God for the gift of life in Jesus, but also take time to invite the Holy Spirit to work in your life.

Friday – Today we turn to the first letter of John (not the gospel of John, but the first letter of John, found near the end of the New Testament). John was one of the eyewitnesses who had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry. **Read I John 1:1-2:11 and I John 4:7-12.** What do these passages teach us about God? About being Christ's followers? Allow this passage to guide your prayer today.