

Study Guide for the Week of September 24, 2006

God Is Closer Than You Think—The Choice

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.spwired.com.

Monday. Read Matthew 13:44-45. In this passage Jesus is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven. In verse 44 he says it's like a man who comes across a treasure buried in a field. The implication is that the man is plowing and unearths a treasure chest. He does not own the land so he goes and sells all his possessions to get enough money to buy the land. The treasure in the field is worth more than the field itself. The man in this story didn't go out treasure-seeking. He wasn't some Indiana Jones. Instead he discovered this treasure through the nature course of an ordinary day of plowing in the field. Jesus was teaching us that we, too, find the Kingdom of God, and God himself, in the ordinary moments of our days. But at the same time, it is worth investing all we have in those ordinary moments (our work, our play, our rest, our relationships) in order to experience God. **Read Psalm 139:1-18.** What is the central theme of this passage? How have you experienced God in the ordinary moments of your days? Spend time in prayer asking God to help you see him in those ordinary moments in the days ahead.

Tuesday. Read 1 Kings 19:1-8 in the Old Testament. What kind of day was Elijah having? Have you had days that feel like this? How and why did they come about? How did God show Elijah how close he was when Elijah fled from Jezebel? What did Elijah do to move into God's closeness?

Wednesday. Read Matthew 5:44-48. Aaron said that one way we encounter God is through our relationships. And one type of relationship through which we encounter God is through the difficult people in our lives. Who are those people in your life? Might you be a difficult person in someone else's life? What is Jesus teaching us about how to treat those who are causing us difficulty? How have you seen God through a difficult person?

Thursday. Read Hebrews 10:22-23 and 1 Chronicles 16:10-12. What do these passages tell us about ways God encourages us to seek his presence? How could you live this out in your life? What obstacles might you encounter to living out these ways to seek his presence? How might you overcome those obstacles?

Friday. Read Matthew 25:32-46. Very few passages in scripture are as clear as this one in terms of how Jesus is present in particular people. Reread this passage and pause at each description of a type of person. Who do you know that fits that description and how do you move toward them or away from them? What might you do to improve in your responses? Which type of person described in this passage would be most difficult for you to make contact with, and why? How might you have to step outside your comfort zone to be with Jesus as he is manifested in some of the most marginalized people? Ask God to give you his eyes to see people the way he sees them and his heart so that you might love them the way he loves them.