

# Study Guide for the Week of September 7, 2008

*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! Message manuscripts are available at [www.spwired.com](http://www.spwired.com).*

**Monday -- Read Philemon 1-25 .** This short letter is written by Paul to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Although scholars disagree about the nature of the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus, it is clear that Paul is advocating for reconciliation between the two. Paul is willing to take on any debt that Onesimus owes Philemon so that their relationship may be restored (see verse 18). What do you think motivated Paul to write this letter? Do you think the letter was successful in its intent? Are you willing to take on the debt or responsibilities of others for the good of a relationship?

**Tuesday -- Read Philemon 1-25.** As you read this letter again today, consider the way that Paul is asking Onesimus to behave. How does Paul suggest that Onesimus decide on the right course of action in this situation? Read verse 8 and 9 again. In these verses, we read that Paul is confident in his ability to give clear directions to Onesimus; however, Paul “appeals to Onesimus on the basis of love” (verse 9, NRSV). Do you let God’s love guide your actions? How will this scripture shape your actions today?

**Wednesday -- Read Luke 15:11-24.** This is the first section of a parable that we will finish tomorrow. In verses 16 and 17, the son makes a decision about what he will do in the middle of a depressing and seemingly hopeless situation. In verse 20, the father makes a decision about how to react to the return of one of his sons. What do you think shaped the father’s decision? The son’s decision? Does this story suggest ways that you might respond to different situations in your life this week? If so, what? If not, what might give you guidance?

**Thursday -- Read Luke 15:25-32.** These verses finish the parable from yesterday. You may wish to reread the verses from yesterday to gain better context for these verses. How does the son react in this passage? What is the father’s response? Consider the entire story from Wednesday and today. Do you see yourself in the situation of the younger son, his brother, or the father? Consider that God’s love for you is like the father’s love for his sons - unconditional.

**Friday -- Read Mark 12:28-34.** You might think about the question asked of Jesus as one in which the scribe is seeking to know what principles should guide actions in one’s daily life. Do you ever wonder what principles or guidelines should impact your daily choices? Read the passage again and imagine Jesus speaking to you in his reply. If you were to respond to these words of Jesus, how would it change your interactions with family, neighbors, or co-workers? Allow these words to shape your actions today.