

## Study Guide for the Week of April 3, 2005

### *Life's Missing Ingredients—Part 1, Purpose*

*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'll start off the week by reading from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. This is famous for repeating again and again that all of life is vanity, like chasing after the wind. This is the writing of a person who had set and met many great goals, yet was not able to truly connect with a purpose at that time. Aaron called this sense of futility, "moving dirt piles." **Read Ecclesiastes chapter 1.** While setting goals is a very good thing, those goals end up being empty if they are not goals set within the context of a purpose. Is this a missing ingredient for you or have you discovered that purpose? What do you hear in the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes that rings true for you?

**Tuesday.** **Read Colossians 1:16-17** in the New Testament. This passage points to God's plan in bringing all things together. It is in understanding that God has brought all things together that we also understand that he has a plan and purpose. **Read Psalm 139:15-16.** This passage reminds us that it was God who created us individually and it is God who has each day numbered. He has a plan and purpose in creating us and for our lives. Take a moment and rewrite this last passage in your own words. What does it mean that God pays that close attention to you and has a plan for your life?

**Wednesday.** **Read Philippians 3:7-14** in the New Testament. There are two important themes in this passage. In verses 7 and 8 Paul talks about how the things of this earth he considers loss, or worthless, compared to knowing Christ. So often we put material things or earthly relationships ahead of our relationship with God through Jesus. Material things and earthly relationships are certainly not bad things, but when they are first and foremost in our lives, taking God's place in that order, then we suffer. In your heart of hearts, what is most important to you--things of this earth, or your relationship with God who gives you purpose, direction and an appropriate view of things on this earth?

**Thursday.** **Read Romans 12:2** in the New Testament. These are Paul's words encouraging us to experience a transformation that will allow us to understand God's will and God's plan. What do you think Paul means when he tells us to experience a transformation of our minds? How might we experience a transformation of our minds? **Read Matthew 6:19-24.** Again, this passage teaches us to work toward achieving Godly riches, not material gain. This happens as we serve God and work along side of him in his plan. Reread verse 24. If you were to take this passage at face value, what would it mean for your life?

**Friday.** **Read Acts 13:36** the New Testament. Rewrite this passage below replacing David's name with your own. What might you begin doing today to work along side God in his purposes to help in achieving his mission? What would it mean going to sleep each night knowing that in your home, neighborhood, job, etc, you lived out God's purposes in very tangible ways? What might it mean to wake up each morning knowing that whatever tasks you had to do that day you were going to work alongside God and fulfill his purposes as you tackled those tasks? Spend a few minutes asking God to guide you as you go about your day that he might transform the ordinary tasks you do into opportunities to live out his purpose. And if purpose seems to be a missing ingredient for your life, spend time asking God to make his purposes clear for you.