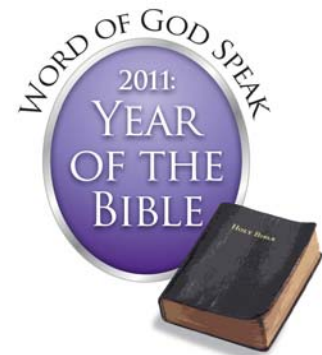


Week 42: Colossians 2 – 1st Thessalonians 5

Study Guide for the week of October 17 - 23, 2011

(This week's study guide comes mostly from Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines, Iowa)



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Did you feel special as a child? Why or why not? Do you remember a positive time as a child when you were chosen for something? How do you feel special as a child of God? How do you feel about being chosen by God simply because of his great love for you? How does understanding that you have been chosen by God affect your desire to obey him? How does it affect your actions, your attitude, and your gratitude? Do you struggle with either ignoring God or being complacent in your relationship with him? Ask God to help you overcome any stumbling blocks in your relationship with him.

Discussion starters *If you are leading a life group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: Do you remember a positive time as a child when you were chosen for something? Explain the experience.
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9 Review what these verses are teaching about Jesus. How have you understood that Jesus is fully God and fully human? What is confusing in this essential Christian belief? What is positive in this belief for you?
4. Colossians 2:11-12 What is your experience of baptism, either your own or that of your family or friends? When and where were you baptized? Do you know if you have baptism sponsors (Godparents) and who they are? Do you know any stories from your baptism? Did you ever consider baptism a death? What do you think these verses mean? How would you think about physical death if you understood baptism as the only death that really mattered?
5. Colossians 4:6 What does it mean to have your speech seasoned with salt? Read Exodus 30:34-35. In this passage from Exodus, Moses is given instructions for the incense which is offered as a thank offering. Is all your speech a thank offering before God? How would your speech change if you considered your words as "seasoned with salt" for God?
6. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 Did you realize you are a preacher? St Francis once said, "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words." What sermon are you preaching with your life?
7. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 What are the challenges to live quietly, mind your own business, and work with your hands in an era of publicity seekers, tell-all media, and the denigration of manual labor? What principles is Paul trying to teach? Is it possible to apply those principles to your life? How?
8. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 Do you tend to work ahead or procrastinate? Do you like to do things in advance or to wait until the last minute to pressure you into action? What is something important in your life right now that you are procrastinating doing? Is there something where are you procrastinating in your relationship with God? Explain. Describe what you would do tomorrow if you knew for certain that Jesus was returning the following day? How could your answer to the previous question affect how you actually live tomorrow? By the way, how do you know Jesus isn't returning in two days??!!
9. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-23 List all the ways Paul calls us to encourage each other in this passage. Now brainstorm how you could apply these examples in your own life. Finally commit to doing at least one of those things this week and report back to your group.

Bible verse to memorize: Colossians 2:9

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. Have everyone answer this:

What was your high and low of the past week or two?

As you listen to people's answers, identify anything that deserves prayer. Ask a volunteer to pray for each of the concerns that you have identified. Then go into a time of prayer.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a life group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in life groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.