

SOUTHRIDGE CHURCH

STUDY GUIDE: February 7, 2010



★ Check Out The “Special Resource For Lent” On The Last Page Of This Study Guide!!

In many ways, a life of following Jesus has much in common with many other hope-filled visions of life in our world. It envisions a God of love who wants to pour his love into our world. It envisions a God who is present all the time and everywhere, especially in the community of those who love him. It envisions a God who is mobilizing that community to change the world. Where Christianity is different than all other faith stories in the world is in the story of the cross. It is only through Jesus’ death and resurrection that any of this is even possible for me or for our world. It’s the cross that changes everything, including you.

In your own way and at your own pace, please freely explore the follow up questions, Bible study materials, daily Bible reading suggestions, spiritual exercises and other resources listed here to take this conversation to the next level in your life. Use a journal or take advantage of the community with which God has surrounded you (including your family!) to work through what you find here. This resource is for you. It is an invitation to take the conversation beyond Sundays and to make it a 24/7 reality in your life. Enjoy!

GOING DEEPER:

1. If you’ve never done this as a group, spend some time sharing the stories of your spiritual journeys of faith. Consider covering questions such as the following.
 - What kind of person were you before you started this spiritual journey that you’re on, wherever you’re at? What was your life like?
 - When/how did things start to change? How did God begin to get your attention, break into your life and make a difference?
 - If you are still hesitant to turn your will and life to Jesus, what is holding you back? What would it take to convince you to trust your life to Jesus?
 - If you have, when/how did you decide to make Jesus the forgiver and leader of your life? Describe the difference that Jesus has begun to make in your life? How have you seen your life start to change?
2. If there are folks in your community who have not decided to express their faith in the act of baptism, reflect on the meaning and purpose of baptism as a group.
 - Why would someone choose to get baptized? If you have, was it a significant moment for you and God? How?
 - **Read Matthew 28:19-20.** What does Jesus say in these verses about baptism? Who needs to be baptized?
 - **Read Romans 6:3-7.** What does baptism symbolize? How meaningful was that symbolism to the people who have been baptized?
 - **Read Acts 2:37-38, 41; 8:35-38; 16:29-34.** When should a person get baptized? What creates the hesitation to get baptized right away?
 - Why would someone choose not to get baptized? What makes that choice difficult? What are the obstacles? How would the rest of the group respond to these objections?



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WEEK SIX: HOW?

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BIBLE STUDY:

Read Acts 9:1-19 (in the *New International Version*); **Acts 22:1-22** (in the *New Living Translation*); and **Acts 26:9-24** (in *The Message*).

If you don't own these three Bibles, use other versions or go to <http://www.biblegateways.com/>.

The Intersociety Commentary of Acts (author not specified) says: "The most important event in human history apart from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the conversion to Christianity of Saul of Tarsus. If Saul had remained a Jewish rabbi, we would be missing thirteen of twenty-seven books of the New Testament and Christianity's early major expansion to the Gentiles. Humanly speaking, without Paul, Christianity would probably be of only antiquarian or arcane interest, like the Dead Sea Scrolls community or the Samaritans."

Review the following questions:

1. Have you chosen to become a follower of Jesus? Was it a "Road to Damascus" experience? Has God spoken to you directly (through a still, small voice, a vision, or other manifestations)? Do you think such a conversion experience is desirable/necessary for all Christians or just for the "worst" cases (like Saul)?
2. Thinking about who Paul was, and who he became, look at **1 Timothy 12-17** and reflect on the fact that God chose to rescue the "worst" of sinners. What HAS God done in your life and (perhaps more importantly) what COULD he do? What are you hoping he will do?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: When and why did "Saul" become "Paul"? Check out various online commentaries of Acts 13:9.

Bible Study continued on next page....



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BIBLE STUDY CONTINUED...

Jim Carlson (of Lone Rock Bible Church) writes: “Regarding this whole business of conversion -- nothing has changed. We won’t get our names in the Bible, we may not see the blinding light, but there’s a time in the lives of God’s people where He gets our attention, He takes the initiative, He turns on the light, and He brings us to Himself, and then He changes our lives. Saul wasted no time in being baptized, publicly identifying himself as a Christian, and then heading out on the ministry to which God has called him. That hasn’t changed for us either. The most important litmus test of these three steps is the third one, who are we trusting? Who is in charge? And what is He doing through his servant? Questions for each of us. Questions He’ll ask us some day.”

Review the following questions:

1. Who do we trust to guide our lives (other than ourselves)?
2. Who is really in charge of our lives (spouses excluded)? How do you know?
3. In what ways are we being used by God to have an impact on the world? (OK, maybe St. Catharines)

NEW TO THE BIBLE

Those who are new to reading the Bible may want to explore some of the ideas and suggestions on our website.

[CLICK HERE](#)

DAILY READING TEXTS: During the course of the “Q” series our community is going to journey through a 7 week encounter with the entire Bible. These 42 readings provide an overview of the message of the Bible and even though some are longer, none should take more than 10-15 minutes. The reward will be well worth the effort. So dive in and discover God’s Story!

DAY	THEME	TEXT
Monday	Good News For Everyone	Acts 10:1-11:18
Tuesday	Paul Spreads The Good News	Acts 13:1-14:28
Wednesday	Saved By Grace Through Faith	Romans 3:1-31; 8:1-39
Thursday	Love Is All You Need	1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 3:1-4:21
Friday	Jesus Is Coming Again	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
Saturday	Judgment Day	Matthew 25:31-46
Sunday	Forever and Ever	Revelation 21:1-22:21



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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES:

- ✓ Spend time meditating on some or all of **Psalm 51**, **Mark 1:14-20** and **Revelation 21**.
 - Read the text slowly and prayerfully.

 - Read the text again highlighting the phrases or verses that especially speak to your present situations:
 - **Psalm 51** - probing the need for confessions and repentance.
 - **Mark 1:14-20** - reflecting on everything the disciples gave up to fully follow Jesus. Imagine yourself as one of them.
 - **Revelation 21** - reflecting on God's perfect future vision for our world.

 - Read the text a third time, but only the highlighted passages. As you read, pray each phrase or verse, applying the words of the passages to your particular situation. Write a prayer of response in a journal. Be attentive to the Spirit's loving care and tough upon you.

RESOURCES:

[Christ for Real, Charles Price](#)

[Simply Christian, N.T. Wright](#)

[Prodigal God, Tim Keller](#)

SPECIAL RESOURCE FOR LENT:

On Wednesday, February 18, the Church around the world will begin Lent, a 40-day journey of preparing to celebrate Easter, something Southridge will be doing through this resource between February 14 and March 28. One way to experience Lent is to spend each of the 40 days contemplating the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. To do this, consider ordering **Contemplating the Cross: A 40 Day Pilgrimage of Prayer** by Tricia Rhodes. This unique book uses Scripture reading and meditative prayer to lead people through an imaginative journey through the final week of Jesus' life.

http://www.amazon.com/Contemplating-Cross-Day-Pilgrimage-Prayer/dp/0849945488/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1264970946&sr=8-1