

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE (P.55)

Do you ever wonder to yourself if you are living your life the way God wants you to? I mean completely - in thought, word and deed. Tough question? Here's another one.

Do you believe that you have reached your full potential as a Christian? Or, putting it in another way, are you really using all of the gifts that God has given you - your time, your talents, and your treasures to serve Him and others?

Some of you may be able to answer "yes" to one or perhaps both of these questions.

I can't. It helps me some when I remember that no one is perfect. And it helps me even more when I'm reminded that it's not so much about what we do for God as it is about what God has already done for us. But does that mean that we don't even have to try to respond to his love and grace? I don't think so.

Many of our friends at saint St. Paul's are trying by looking to Bible study as a means of learning about God. They are finding that reading God's word is one thing. Understanding it is quite another.

If we really want to live our lives for Christ, what better way than to let him teach us how.

I recently asked this question of those in the study class that I attend: How would you say the Bible study is helping you? Here's what some had to say.

- I'm beginning to find out how little I understand in the Bible when I read it alone at home.
- It helps me so much to hear Pastor explain something. But, you know, I think we learn from each other, too.
- I believe that it's becoming easier for me to speak more openly about Jesus.
- It challenges my understanding of the Bible.
- I'm learning what I need to do to be a disciple of Jesus.
- I enjoy just being together like this, the chance to really to get to know someone with whom I've only been acquainted before.
- I like the faith stories some of you have told.

As we adjourned after class one day, one of my friends remarked, "Wasn't that terrific!" Another said, "I wonder why more people don't come." I thought: Perhaps some might be reluctant to come because they knew so little about God's word and feared others might think less of them for this. To anyone who feels this way I say, "Nonsense! It is you who would benefit the most. Come and see for yourself, even if you just come and listen. You would be most welcome."

There are several bottle studies scheduled each week from which you can choose. You'll find them listed in the church bulletin every Sunday, or check with the church office.

So, ask yourself if you have the time. You just might find it would be will become the best time of the week for you.

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS... REALLY WELL (P.176)

Birthdays are happy times, aren't they? Especially for kids. Parties and presents and, of course, cakes and candles. Two of my grandsons, Drew and Jeff, celebrate their birthdays in January. One year, when they were just little tykes, they both had to be reminded to make a wish before they blew out the candles. And they had to keep their wishes secret, too; otherwise, their wish wouldn't come true. Those are the rules.

Remembering back to when I was their age, I probably wished for a new toy, or a sled, or maybe a baseball mitt; but, as we grow older, our wishes change somewhat, don't they? As a teenager, I can recall how I hoped and prayed for good marks on my SATs so that I could get into a good college. As a young adult, getting a good job was high on my wish list, and, a few years later, finding the perfect wife - and raising a family. And all the while most of us what I wished for was for me - and, of course my family -- success on the job, good health and happiness for all of us.

And then came retirement. Almost without realizing it, I came to feel that what I really wanted most now was to get to know my Lord Jesus better. It's a little late in life, but now I'm beginning to spend more time with my Bible and attending some of our small group studies at church - something I should have begun years ago.

We are often reminded that we are to be good stewards of everything God has entrusted to us. Not just our treasures and talents, but the *time* he has given us, as well. Here at St. Paul's, what better way to use our time than to spend it in Bible study?

What's in it for those who attend? How about great fellowship, a chance to be with some really nice people and to get to know them well? How about a chance to get better acquainted with our Lord and Savior? - all this while listening to Scripture explained in a way that will enhance your understanding of God's word.