

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 9/16/18

Monday – Read I John 4:7-12. **Love One Another.** Mr. Rogers said, “What changes the world? The only thing that ever really changes the world is when somebody gets the idea that love can abound and can be shared.” God loves us first and reaches out to us before we ever love God. God loves us simply because God is good. Methodists call it prevenient grace. John says that God demonstrated prevenient grace by sending his Son into the world that we might live through him and to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. To atone means to reconcile and make right. The Sacrificial Theory of Atonement is the belief that we can only be made right with God through offering a sacrifice. In Jesus, God provides the sacrifice. Jesus is both the Priest and the Sacrificial Victim. John says that because God loves us we ought to love one another. Spend some time thinking about the depth of God’s love for you, and then ask God to help you share God’s love with the people in your life.

Tuesday – Read I John 4:16-21 and John 15:12-17. **Love Casts Out Fear.** Fear can make people do awful things to other people. Fear is at the heart of racism and bigotry. ¹⁸ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.* Mr. Rogers understood that ²⁰ *those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.* If we love God then God’s love is present in our lives and in our relationships with people. For whom would you be willing to lay down your life? Thank God for Jesus’ willingness to lay down his life to offer forgiveness and life to you.

Wednesday – Read John 4:1-42. **Love Crosses Boundaries.** As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Mr. Rogers worked to bridge racial divides by demonstrating God’s love to Francois Clemmons who played Officer Clemmons on Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood. It was important to Mr. Rogers for his young viewers to see that persons can be friends with all kinds of people. Jesus was willing to bridge the chasm between Jews and Samaritans by going into Samaria. Jesus calls us to meet people where they live instead of avoiding them. Jesus crossed another social barrier by speaking to the Samaritan woman he met at Jacob’s well. He began his conversation with her by asking her for a drink of water. One of the best ways to begin a spiritual conversation with an unchurched person is to ask a question. Jesus asked this woman for a drink, and then he offered her living water. He offered her grace and hope. This is the longest conversation Jesus has with any person in the Gospels, and she was the first person to which Jesus revealed that he was the Messiah. How did Jesus make himself known to you? Pray for people who need grace and hope.

Thursday – Read John 13:1-17. **Servant Love.** This was one of the last lessons Jesus taught his disciples, and it was one of the most important. One of the hardest things about following Jesus is that he never expects us to do something that he wasn’t willing to do himself. The Master humbled himself to serve even when it meant washing dirty, stinky feet, and he tells us that we should follow his example in serving in ministry this way. If we look at the way Jesus does ministry, then we know what to do, but Jesus says it is about more than just knowing the right answers. He tells us, ¹⁷ *“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”* As you pray think about the people Jesus is calling you to serve.

Friday – Read John 13:34-35. **Love Like Jesus.** On Maundy Thursday Jesus told his disciples, ³⁴ *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”* ³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* God’s love is the mark of a disciple. It’s the kind of love we have seen in Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood. It’s the kind of love we demonstrate when we serve food to students at the John Marshall Neighborhood Market. It’s the kind of love we show when we care for sick and hurting people. It’s the kind of love we embody when we forgive someone who has wronged us. It’s the kind of love that dares to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. Ask God to help you share God’s love with the people in your life.

Saturday – Read I Corinthians 13:1-13. **Love is...** The Apostle Paul describes *agape* or *Godly love* to us in this passage. As you read these words consider the person or persons whom you love the most. ⁴ *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant* ⁵ *or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;* ⁶ *it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.* ⁷ *It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* ⁸ *Love never ends.* The New International Version translates verse 5 as *Love keeps no records of wrong.* Don’t go to bed angry. When we take the time to work things out, it helps us to not carry our frustrations into the next day. Ask God to help you demonstrate this kind of love to your friends and family.

Lectionary Readings: Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 19; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38.

Find this Prayer and Study Guide at www.nicholshillsumc.org.