

Weekly Study Guide

The week of May 15, 2016

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SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

Option 1:

Christian growth takes practice. Nobody runs a marathon with their first step out the door. Use these weekly "soul training exercises" to help you practice cooperating with the Holy Spirit so you can hear and walk by the Spirit's leading all throughout your life.

Try praying this prayer regularly this week: "Holy Spirit, my ears are open to you today. Fill me up. Lead me to Christ. Make me like Christ." Share with your group next week what you experience.

Option 1 & 2:

Regular habits of private Bible reading strengthen our relationship with God and teach us how to follow Jesus. In addition to the thematic exercise above, you can use this guide each week to lead you through relevant sections of the Bible.

MONDAY

Matthew 14:1-12

TUESDAY

Matthew 14:13-36

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 15:1-20

THURSDAY

Matthew 15:21-39

FRIDAY

Matthew 16:1-12

SATURDAY

Matthew 16:13-28

Group Discussion

CONNECT

When you can get away for a while, what's your favorite place to go?

THIS WEEK'S LEARNING GOAL

This week we are learning the story of the first Christian Pentecost, the day when God poured out His Spirit on all the followers of Jesus.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Begin today by reading Acts 1:1-5. This scene takes place after Jesus was raised from the dead and before he ascended to reign with God. It's the background for the story of Pentecost.

- What does this passage say Jesus was talking about during the 40 days leading up to this time?
- What did Jesus tell them to do?
- What did he promise them?

The story of Pentecost is found in Acts 2. Pentecost was a Jewish holiday that took place fifty days after Passover, which was the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The followers of Jesus were gathered together for the occasion, and many other Jews had also journeyed to Jerusalem because of this major holiday.

- **Read Acts 2:1-13.** (You can skip the hard-to-pronounce names in verses 9-11 if you want to!)
- Describe what happened in your own words.

Read Acts 2:14-24 to see how Peter explained this strange event.

- Peter recalled a passage from the ancient prophet Joel. What did Joel say would happen which was now coming true (verses 16-21)? (The imagery of verses 19-21 isn't meant as a literal weather report. This was a common way for ancient prophets to communicate the dramatic, world-changing effect of their words.)
- The heart of Peter's message is in verses 22-24. According to Peter's words, what was it that led to this day?

After the rest of Peter's message, the crowds responded. Their story can help us learn to respond to the Spirit in our lives. **Read Acts 2:37-47.**

- What did Peter say the people should do in response to these events (the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the Spirit-inspired testimony about them)? See verses 38-39.
- Acts 2:42-47 describes the Spirit-filled life of those who responded. What were the characteristics of this new life?

It's important to know the story of Pentecost, and it's important to know that God's Spirit is given to us too. Use the following questions to explore how you can live a life empowered the Holy Spirit.

- Why do you think the Spirit is important in Christian life?
- Are there things about living by the guidance of God's Spirit which are confusing or even frightening to you?
- Consider again the characteristics of the Spirit-inspired life shared by the early Christians at the end of Acts 2. Is that what you normally think of when you hear the word "spiritual"? Why do we need the Holy Spirit to live in ways that are like this?
- One of the important ways we learn to recognize and follow the promptings of God's Spirit in our lives is to share them with other Christians. Do you think God might be leading you to something or trying to tell you something? Share it with your group and ask for their help.

SOUL TRAINING EXERCISE

As a group, recall last week's soul training exercise (acts of secret service). Did you learn or experience anything you'd like to share with your group? Now, look at the soul training exercises on the front of this study guide and get ready to practice them this week. Is there a particular time of day or some other specific commitment that would help you succeed in doing these exercises?

PRAY

Prayer can be as much about listening as it is about speaking. In your prayer time today, ask for God's Spirit to strengthen and guide you. Leave some time of silence to listen for what God might put on your heart.



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