

## STUDY GUIDE

Monday, April 19- Saturday, April 24

**Monday, April 19** – When it's all said and done, relationships are all that really matter. It doesn't matter how much money we have, where we live, or how many beautiful toys we have collected. None of these can comfort us, console us, cry with us, or love us. Our investment in the people we care about is the only legacy that has the power to endure beyond our lifetime. All of us are designed as relational beings, social creatures who yearn to belong. It's the way God made us – in His image. We all need God's love. Describe the way God's love for you provides you with love for others. **Read 1 John 3:16, 4:7-12, 16, 19.**

**Tuesday, April 20** – Our sins, faults, and failures don't go away – we either confess or suppress... The key to how we leave this earth basically comes down to how we experience forgiveness and extend it to those around us. Many Jesus followers have times when they doubt that God's forgiveness is deep enough to cover everything, forever. Read the following passages: **Ephesians 1:7-8, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 8:12, 1 John 5:11-15.** What truths spoke to you? How completely do you accept God's forgiveness? Do you usually believe it's real, or do you live in persistent skepticism? When someone forgives you, do you feel relief? Or do you keep beating yourself up? How does your ability to accept forgiveness influence your willingness to extend forgiveness to others?

**Wednesday, April 21** – If we are counting the days before we left this earth, we would be looking for ways to build bridges, to bring about healing, and to enjoy our most important relationships. No one wants to leave this earth with unfinished business. We want to leave our loved ones having experienced the summit of our relationships as the result of our courage to love. Consider some of your most important relationships. All of them will involve problems at times, but they also provide opportunities to grow and bring greater fulfillment through deeper intimacy. By acknowledging and then solving relational problems (rather than sit back and wait), we affirm that our relationships are too important to let them suffer or stagnate. **Read Colossians 3:12-15, Romans 15:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and Galatians 6:1-2.** Let these thoughts resonate with you as you strive to have better relationships.

**Thursday, April 22** – There should be a special term for conflict in a healthy relationship. *Friendly fire? Care clash? Affection affliction?* Whatever you call it, dealing with conflict is an important skill to learn, because conflict plays a role in every relationship. Our task, as those who want strong, healthy relationships, is to become experts at fighting fair. Assuming someone has to lose, the world's fights to win. But under God's rules, no one loses because the relationship is more important than who's right or wrong. Conflict dealt with by God's rules draws people closer, because they team up to confront the common enemy – conflict. **Read 1 Peter 4:8, Galatians 5:13-16, 1 Thessalonians 3:12.** Do these verses describe the attitude you want to cultivate in order to keep the relationship a priority during conflicts?

**Friday, April 23** – Sandpaper people are part of God's plan for your life. He allows sandpaper people into your life so He can craft you into a sharper tool for His purposes. Paul explains, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). In the Greek, the word for "workmanship" literally means "a work of art or a masterpiece." God is crafting you into the perfect tool to accomplish His amazing plan for you. What could you do to cooperate better with some of God's methods for crafting you into the perfect tool? **Read 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:24 and 13:20-21.**

**Saturday, April 24** – How we see God, life's obstacles, our future hope, or our present circumstances depends largely on where we focus our attention – on the negative or the positive. Do we choose to see the people and circumstances in our lives as blessings or as problems? Some vision problems require corrective lenses. That's why God gives us His Word and His Spirit to aid the eyes of our hearts. Some vision problems are helped by exercises, which is why God commands us to choose to live out attitudes of trust, hope, acceptance, and gratitude. The bottom line: Abundant life requires recognizing what we have. **Read Psalm 50:23, Ephesians 5:3-4 and Philippians 4:6-7.**