

Study Guide

Monday, May 10- Saturday, May 15

Monday, May 10. Read Hebrews 5:5-10. The Bible uses “father” imagery to talk about God. The Bible also at times shows God as a mother. In this passage, the writer of Hebrews draws on the experience of childhood to tell us about Jesus’ life. Jesus prayed earnestly, reverently, submissively. Jesus learned from suffering. This is our path, too, as God’s children. Hebrews says Jesus offered up fervent prayers and petitions. One writer said that though there are many mysteries about prayer, if Jesus needed to pray, then I do, too. How central is your prayer life to your spiritual growth? In what ways would you like to deepen or expand your personal conversation with God? Hebrews also says that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. What kinds of suffering have you, or people you are close to, gone through? What lessons have you learned from those experiences? How do you understand the inner processes (including the tears) through which God can use suffering to develop your character?

Tuesday, May 11 – Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7. Though Paul the apostle was not a father, as far as we know, he formed an almost fatherly friendship with Timothy, a gifted protégé. (You can read about their first meeting in Acts 16.) A godly mother and grandmother also did much to shape Timothy’s life. These verses show how all of those people formed him for the better. Paul tells Timothy that he remembers him in his prayers, night and day. Is there anyone that you know is praying for you regularly? If so, in what ways do you sense that their prayers bless you? Who are the people in your life that you pray for regularly? Do they know you are praying for them? In what ways have parents, grandparents and other important people encouraged you to value and use your God-given strengths? What effect have they had on you? How can you mentor and encourage those who are younger than you are? Ask God to show you someone you can encourage and uplift today.

Wednesday, May 12 – Read Proverbs 30:11-17. This passage of ancient Hebrew wisdom makes some challenging links. The writer believes that a failure to respect aged parents, and help them when needed, is a sign of other hurtful character traits. Proverbs says a person who relates to parents solely in a spirit of “Give! Give!” is apt to be haughty, proud and ungenerous. The writers of Proverbs saw the harm that comes from a failure to respect and value parents. How would you express the benefits you receive from building as helpful a relationship as possible with your parents? What are some of the main life lessons you have learned in relating to your parents? Parents are human, of course. That means they have limitations as well as strengths. How well have you been able to establish appropriate boundaries with your parents? How can you do healthy self-care while honoring and blessing your parents as these proverbs call you to do?

Thursday, May 13 – Read Matthew 21:28-32. Jesus used parent/child relationships to cast light on our life with God. In this story, he asked which is better: giving a parent nice words while ignoring their wishes, or expressing your inner resistance and then doing what the parent wants you to. The answer seems simple. Applying it to your walk with God can be a challenge. In Jesus’ day tax collectors were not just disliked. People saw them—often rightly—as traitors who abused the poor. How could Jesus say prostitutes and tax collectors were entering God’s Kingdom before the religious leaders? For what reasons does God prefer honest repentance to pious words that don’t match our lives? Where is the “growth edge” in your life right now? In what area(s) do you have a sense that God is nudging you to move forward, or urging you to deal with issues that until now have been under the surface for you? How are you responding to these divine nudges in your life?

Friday, May 14 – Read Mark 10:13-16. Jesus loved children, and children loved Jesus. Often a parent will say, “You’ll always be my little girl (or boy).” The picture of Jesus taking the children in his arms and blessing them can remind us that we remain God’s children no matter how long we live. We are always invited to live in Jesus’ steadfast love. At this point in Jesus’ work, his disciples were very sure that their master was the next ruler of Israel, perhaps even of the world. This was serious, grown-up business—no children needed or welcome. How did Jesus teach the disciples that his rule was different than they expected? What can you learn from Jesus’ lesson? How do you understand Jesus’ main message when he said that we must receive the Kingdom of God like a little child? What aspects of childlikeness did Jesus’ enemies need the most to be more open to God’s Kingdom? How can living with a child-like spirit toward God help you to grow and mature in your faith?

Saturday, May 15. Personal Application: Are your parents and grandparents alive? If so, review your relationship with them. What insights did you gain this week? What is one area where you feel good about how you relate? What is one area where you want to grow? Prayerfully plan specific growth steps. If your parents or grandparents are gone, which other people can you bless by applying what you've read this week? How will you go about growing those relationships?

Prayer: Dear God, as this week's readings remind us, you did not give us a timid spirit but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. Help us in the days and weeks ahead to be powered by your Holy Spirit to better love and serve others, including our parents, children, neighbors and co-workers. Give us the self-discipline to act as you would have us act and refrain from acting where you would have us refrain. Amen.