

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, October 31 – Read Matthew 7:13-14. If we are honest with ourselves, these are statements from Jesus we would rather not have to read or pay attention to. For many in our culture, we have taken the path of least resistance. If we are not totally happy with our job, we quit. Not satisfied in our marriage, we try something else. Our kids complain about going to church, we don't go. The church's schedule doesn't quite fit into ours, we stop going or go church hopping. Jesus says His way is not the common path taken by most people. How would you define what it means to be normal in today's world? In what ways is being normal not working out for you?

Tuesday, November 1 – Read Romans 12:2. It appears that 'normal' has always been an issue for followers of Christ. But notice our passage doesn't just say quit behaving as the world does, but redirects our minds to God and His ways. It is possible to avoid most worldly customs and still be proud, covetous, selfish, stubborn and arrogant. Only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates our mind are we truly transformed. What are some of the causes of your normal way of thinking? What one or two areas in life do you need to start thinking differently about immediately? What is your next step to changing the way you think? What you think determines what you become. Who have you become as a result of your thinking?

Wednesday, November 2 – Read Numbers 11:16-17. Part of being normal in today's world is being busy. We may have the false impression if I don't do it, it will not get done. If we continue with this belief and keep trying to do everything, we will burn up or burn out. If you could handle everything yourself, you wouldn't need God. Moses learned this the hard way. He spent every day trying to handle all of Israel's problems. He was so overwhelmed, he asked God to take his life. That's when God intervened with our passage for today. If you have more than you can handle, God wants you to lean on him to lighten your load. While normal people continue to add items to their to-do list, maybe you should do something weird instead: start a to-don't list. What needs to go on that list today?

Thursday, November 3– Read Ephesians 5:15-17. In Andy Stanley's book, "The Best Question Ever", we are challenged to ask this question: "Is it wise?" Paul says to be wise, not foolish. Be weird, not normal. Don't let culture divert you from living in the present, being fully engaged with people around you and the gifts and challenges that draw you back to God. Don't let the chaotic pace of normalcy tug you in the wrong direction. Many people will try to make you drift – their expectations, the urgent but not important, a false sense of self. Be different. Be careful how you live, how you plan; what you say yes to and what you say no to. As you are about to enter the weekend, before you make choices of where to go and what to do, ask yourself this question: Is it wise?

Friday, November 4 - 1 Peter 2:11-12. Many of us like to take trips to other parts of the world and when we go, we stand out. We don't act like the people that live there, we don't dress like them and as hard as might try, we don't eat like them. And to the native person, we might be weird, but we are simply strangers in their land. Peter says Christians will always be strangers in whatever land we live on. Our "culture" is a heavenly one. The question then is, 'Do others see you as a stranger, as someone weird'? We are encouraged in these verses to not live like normal people live. How have you seen your life become weird in a God way the more you pursue Christ? What do you think is the custom weird God has designed just for you? What are some things you can do this week to start living weird in a God way?