



## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, January 10, 2010

### The Power of One

*What Difference Do It Make? (Week 1 of 4)*

**John 6:3-8— The Word from the Bible (TNIV)**

*When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*

*Philip answered him, “It would take almost a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”*

*Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”*

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#### **The Power of One**

Few of us realize the influence and impact we could have in life. The world seems so immense and complicated. Everything moves at a faster pace than we can think. Stories of chaos and hostility surround us. We often find that even the simplest things in our lives are out of our control. How can I make a difference?

As Christians, we believe there is a power beyond us that multiplies our efforts. Our commitment to Christ is the first step in yielding to the power of God — that power which gives our lives significance and meaning. All the gospels relate stories that remind us that even the disciples have no idea what Christ can do with their limited resources and gifts. Specifically, we see this in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (found in John’s Gospel, chapter 6). Even while the disciples doubt, Jesus uses the meager resources of a young boy to feed thousands.

We read about the great things that Christ had done through those with great faith dreams. Yet, I feel so insignificant in this huge world. How can God use me? What gifts or abilities do I have?

In the 1960s, Edward Lorenz used the term the “butterfly effect” to describe how small events can alter the course of the world in huge ways through cause and effect. Technically, it’s called *sensitive dependence on initial conditions*. His scientific research, in some ways, changed the way many scientists look at the world. Could the simple flapping of the butterfly’s wings start a chain reaction to cause a giant weather event?

As Christians, we have known the power of one person’s action (no matter how insignificant they may seem to us) in God’s hands. But for most of us, knowing and believing are two different things. Can God use me?

#### **Scripture Notes — John 6:1-15. Feeding of the Multitude**

The Gospel writer John wants us to know that the disciples are limited in their thinking and their faith. The disciples have yet to realize what God can do with the most insignificant faithful efforts and offerings. But the unnamed youth who gives his lunch represents all who give what they have, without reservation, into Jesus’ hands, that he may make it serve many. More is left over, even so, than what was offered — 12 baskets, one for each of the 12 disciples!

The feeding miracle in all the gospels is a decisive conclusion to Jesus’ Galilean ministry. It is a final sign of the awaited prophet — like Moses’ feeding the people of God in the wilderness with manna (Exodus 16) or like Elisha’s multiplying barley loaves for hungry men (II Kings 4:42-44). The people recognize the sign, but they misinterpret the nature of Jesus’ mission. They wish to make him a king, a temporal ruler to restore the independence of Israel and give them material goods (verse 26). But Jesus’ **“kingship is not of this world”** (18:36).

In refusing this role, Jesus loses his popular following, including many of his disciples (Mark 8:11-21). His enemies

among the Jewish leaders will use this occasion, later bringing charges that he is a revolutionary leader against Roman authority (18:33-37; 19:12-16.)

The miraculous crossing of the sea, the discourse on the living bread ... from heaven, the subtle reference to Jesus' ascension and gift of the Spirit, and many other allusions suggest the new redemptive Exodus that Jesus will accomplish. Peter's confession (Mark 8:27-30) anticipates the confession of the church, as of all true believers, in the Holy One of God. *(Includes edited excerpts from Interpreter's Concise Commentary)*

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### **A Story of the Power of One — Gideon**

Gideon was distinguished by his leadership in delivering Israel from annual Midianite raids (Judges 6:11-8:35). There was nothing special about Gideon. When the angel appears to Gideon (6:11-24), he is performing the menial tasks of a servant — an indication of his position in the community. His response to God's call was typical to many of our responses, *"But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."*

God had great plans for Gideon. From the clans of the Israel he gathers 32,000 men. A number vastly inferior to the Midianite army of 135,000 trained warriors. One can only assume the fear and concern Gideon felt being outnumbered over 4 to 1. God did not want Israel to take credit for the victory, so he had Gideon run the volunteers through a series of test that left only 300 to fight against 135,000. Then God in essence says, ***"Now you are ready."***

The battle was over in a matter of hours, with not one loss of the 300. Further, the small band continued to pursue the larger army, chasing them across the river Jordan never to threaten Israel again.

Significant in this story is how God can accomplish the impossible through the faithful. In the quaint language of Judges 6:34: ***"the Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon."*** He was peculiarly God's man, favored with special divine revelations and unusual power; hence his success against impossible odds — 300 against 135,000!

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## **Prayer Focus**

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

***Remember... someone is praying for you. Here are a few prayers to guide you. These prayers were written with the season of Advent in mind. They were listed on the Creighton University online ministry page. Often we feel rushed and anxious during December. Hopefully these prayers will help you focus on the presence of God as you start each day or as you face a day full of activities and pressure.***

### **Psalm 108**

(This week, God led me to this prayer by King David. Challenged by his enemies, David turned to God and realized that real victory comes only through divine presence)

**My heart, O God, is steadfast;  
I will sing and make music with all my soul.**

Awake, harp and lyre!  
I will awaken the dawn.  
I will praise you, LORD, among the nations;  
I will sing of you among the peoples.  
For great is your love, higher than the heavens;  
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.  
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
let your glory be over all the earth.  
Save us and help us with your right hand,  
that those you love may be delivered.  
God has spoken from his sanctuary:  
"In triumph I will parcel out Shechem  
and measure off the Valley of Sukkoth.  
Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine;  
Ephraim is my helmet,  
Judah is my scepter.  
Moab is my washbasin,  
on Edom I toss my sandal;  
over Philistia I shout in triumph."  
Who will bring me to the fortified city?  
Who will lead me to Edom?  
Is it not you, God, you who have rejected us  
and no longer go out with our armies?  
Give us aid against the enemy,  
for human help is worthless.  
With God we will gain the victory,  
and he will trample down our enemies.

*Have a great week!*

*Remember Ron Hall, bestselling author  
or "Same Kind of Different as Me"  
and "What Difference Do It Make"  
will speak in worship on Jan. 24  
at 9:30 & 11 a.m.*

**INVITE YOUR FRIENDS!**

*God is doing great things at Trietsch.*

*Tell someone you love them today.*

# Daily Readings

*Starting February 21st, we will be doing a four-week study on the book of Galatians called "Real Christians." During the next few weeks, we will be reading through the book of Galatians in preparation for this series. Hopefully these readings and reflective questions will prepare you for the sermons. The study guide reading allow us to dig deeper.*

**Monday, January 11 – Read Galatians 1:1-10.** Paul begins this letter by proclaiming that freedom is the purpose of the gospel. We are set free from the bondage of sin and guilt by the forgiveness and power of God. God has created us for a purpose and a future that can only be attained through following Christ. What is holding you back from the future God has created for you?

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**Tuesday, January 12 – Read Galatians 1:11-23.** Chapter one ends with Paul's defense of his apostleship. His message comes not just from his conversation with the disciples, but from his own revelation of Christ. How has Christ spoken to you? How has that message affected or changed your life?

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**Wednesday, January 13 – Read Galatians 2:1-10.** In this passage, Paul states and justifies his mission to the Gentiles. He reminds the Galatians that his authority comes from the earliest leaders of the church. In verse 5, he warns them of false believers who misrepresent the gospel. Which spiritual disciplines help us avoid being misled? How do we know the truth?

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**Thursday, January 14 – Read Galatians 2:11-21.** Paul confronts and rebukes Peter for yielding to the pressure of the Jewish Christians to be circumcised and follow the food laws as a requirement for salvation. Paul states in verse 15, "***we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.***" Are there times we make matters of law a requirement for salvation? In what ways do we require actions as proof of our discipleship? Are we saved by faith or works?

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**Friday, January 15 – Read Galatians 3:1-14.** Paul continues his argument of faith over works. He speaks of the spirit of God that works miracles by faith instead of works. In what ways do you see the spirit of God in those around you? When we are outside the church, can others see the spirit of God through our faith in Christ?

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