



## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, March 14, 2010

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### MythBusters

*Myth: Christians are Hypocrites (Week 3 of 3)*

*The Word from the Bible (The Today's New International Version)*

**Galatians 5:5-6** — *But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

**Galatians 5:13-14** — *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Galatians 5:22-23** — *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**Galatians 6:2** — *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

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#### **When I say: "I am a Christian"**

Throughout the letter, Paul has been making his case: Salvation is the grace (gift) of God. We are not worthy of it. We cannot earn it. We are justified (made right) with God by God's grace and our faith (response to that grace). With the cross, Jesus has purchased our pardon, doing for us what we could never do ourselves.

The remainder of his letter articulates the practical implications of the Gospel. Christian liberty is not a license to keep on sinning. To receive salvation is to begin a process of working it out in life. Though the yoke of the law has been removed, the cross has been accepted, and life becomes a rhythm of death and resurrection. Christian freedom makes us slaves of Christ. The only way to use this freedom is by self-investment in the lives of others for Christ's sake, by ongoing dying to those things to which Christ died, and by the continuous production of the fruit of His Spirit.

So, Paul was very specific in taking one third of his letter — chapters 5 and 6 — to elaborate on the practical implications of the Gospel.

#### **Galatians 5:13-14 – Freedom to love**

Paul is compelled to talk about responsible freedom – freedom working itself out in love.

We are **"called to be free"** (v. 13). There is a freedom that belongs to all persons because they are human beings. From the beginning (creation), God has given us free will. We have the freedom to do good or evil. We are free to follow God in love or indulge ourselves in self. Paul says in this passage is **"But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another humbly in love."** Freedom requires discipline.

The Greek word *aphormi*, translated here as "indulge," is sometimes translated "opening" and literally means "a place for jumping off." Paul is the only New Testament writer who uses this word. He uses it often. Originally, the word was used in military terms as the place where an attack would be launched.

For Paul, the sinful nature was defined as self indulgence. Thus, this self-indulgence was the basis for an attack on the person God created us to be – **"serving one another humbly in love."** The criterion to guide our Christian freedom is love. It is the love that was defined in the law by God to Moses (Lev. 19:18), and reiterated by Jesus (Mark 12:29-31) and now restated by Paul: **"Love your neighbor as yourself"** (v. 14). This is what Jesus meant when He said we would save our lives by losing them. If we give our life in love to others, we will find real life.

### **Galatians 5:22-23 — Fruits of the Spirit**

How difficult it is when people live the life of the Spirit. In introducing this catalogue of the character traits of a Christian, Paul uses a singular word, *karpos*, whereas he has talked in the plural about the works of the flesh. This leads us to see that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and each fruit of the spirit which follows in the list is another expression of love. This distinction between the works of flesh and the fruit of the Spirit grew out of Paul's experience. His life had been in chaos. His sinful nature in rebellion against God made him at war even with himself, and split his life into fragmentary deeds. Then came the reconciling love of Christ, integrating his life with God and with others and bringing him together inside. It all centered in the unifying love of Christ. Thus, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc., were simply love in another form.

But here it comes – the surprise as Paul tosses in that extra line. ***Against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law.*** Wow! You can throw the book away. Forget about codes to regulate your life. Don't think the list of fruit is ever exhausted. When you are in Christ, and are moved by the Spirit, the unexpected and the unlisted will come. Gifts and fruits you never thought of will be expressed in you. Freedom is yours, and the Spirit is free, so who can tell how He may express Himself in you? Spontaneity is the name of the Christian game.

### **Galatians 6:2 – Carry Each Other's Burdens**

Paul is talking about the inter-relatedness of all of humanity. ***"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together"*** (1 Cor. 12:26). ***"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak"*** (Rom. 15:1). The new life into which we have been born through Christ is a shared life.

The Greek word used to describe the shared life of the people of God is *koinonia*. Our best word for it in English is *fellowship*, but this is far too limited to encompass the meaning of the Greek. *Koinonia* means sharing, all kinds of sharing: sharing in friendship (Acts 2:42), being partners in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5), sharing material possessions (2 Cor. 8:4), having fellowship in Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), and sharing life together in the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Above all, *koinonia* is fellowship with God. ***"That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship"*** (*koinonia*, 1 John 1:3). In *koinonia*, we are bound to each other, to Christ, and to God. Our life is a shared life, we bear one another's burdens.

Crucial to living this shared life is learning to listen. Is there anything that enhances our feelings of worth more than being listened to? When you listen to me you say to me, "I value you. You are important. I will hear and receive what you say." When I really listen to a person – listen with ears and a heart that hears – it becomes revelation, and the Spirit comes alive in the relationship. Certainly that is the primary (though perhaps not the only) mode and place of revelation of Spirit – in relationship. When I listen, the gap between me and the person to whom I listen is bridged. A sensitivity comes that is not my own. I feel the pain, the frustrations, the anguish — sometimes feeling these and identifying a problem even when the other is not actually sharing the problem or these feelings explicitly. I listen in love, and the sharing moves to the deep and intimate levels where the person and I really live. The Spirit opens doors and hearts and effects change.

The miraculous thing is that I do not have to have an answer for the person with whom I am sharing. In my listening, I become the answer, and if something specific is needed, the Spirit reveals the "answer" in the listening relationship.

Another essential for the shared life of the people of God is that persons must be available to each other – available in love. This is what Paul is talking about: ***"Carry each other's burdens."***

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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. Have a great week!***

As we consider the call of Christ to "love neighbor as self," listed below is the prayer of Saint Francis. St. Francis was born at Assisi in 1182. After a carefree youth, he turned his back on inherited wealth and committed himself to God. Like many early saints, he lived a very simple life of poverty. He established the rule of St Francis, which exists today as the

Order of St. Francis, or the Franciscans. He died in 1226, age 44.

The prayer has many of the biblical truths of what it means to be a Christian - to seek to give, and in so doing, receive blessings. St. Francis' prayer is a bold one, asking for strength to give of ourselves to meet the needs of others. He recognizes that it "is in giving that we receive," that as we give of ourselves, we receive the peace and blessing of our risen Lord Jesus. We cannot earn eternal life, but we are pardoned from the sins that block our claim on it.

Think about the situations that you are involved in that require peace, consolation, hope, light and joy. Then, if you're bold enough, pray the prayer!

### ***The Prayer of Saint Francis***

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

***Have a great week!***

***Invite someone to worship this week.  
You will be glad you did.  
God is doing great things  
through the ministry of Trietsch.***

*Next week we begin the sermon series called...*



### ***Stained***

When you think of church, what is an image that comes to mind? If you are like many, you think about stained glass.

For centuries, the story of Jesus has been portrayed through broken pieces of colorful glass.

Yet for all of its familiarity, stained glass has much to teach us.

The beauty of stained glass is not in the individual pieces. When seen by themselves, these segments do nothing. But when seen as a complete image, with light shining through, they transform into something beautiful.

Let the light of Christ shine through the shards of your experience, and turn your life fragments into a beautiful image.

For the next three weeks including Easter, get to know the Master Artist.

# Daily Readings

*The first four of these passages focus on the words of Jesus from the gospel of Luke. Through the words and parables of Jesus, we can see more of how to “carry each other’s burdens”. Read these passages carefully each day. Examine your relationships, the manner in which you treat others, and your opinions about those different from yourself. On Friday, the passage is the focus for next week’s sermon. Read and study this passage in preparation for next Sunday’s sermon. The study guide readings allow us to dig deeper.*

**Monday, March 15 – Read Luke 10:25-37** — Called the parable of the Good Samaritan, this passage reminds us that the quality of one’s life is measured not by position, but by showing mercy. Who is your neighbor? Have you been a neighbor to someone in the past week? Is there someone that needs mercy right now?

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**Tuesday, March 16 – Read Luke 12:22-34** — Anxiety is the focus of Jesus’ words. Often our worries over the future stand in the way of true Christ-like behavior. We are afraid that God’s promises will not be enough. Jesus promises more than we can possibly handle, if we only have faith. **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Where is your treasure? What do you value most in your life? Are you anxious about your life? What can you do to leave your fears behind?

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**Wednesday, March 17 – Read Luke 14:7-14** — In this parable recorded only in Luke, Jesus rebuked those guests who strove to get the best seats and therefore exhibited a lack of humility. The parable closes with Jesus now encouraging his followers to turn to those who can not repay your good wishes. What position do you take at a gathering? Who is usually on your invitation list for parties? When do you include the least?

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**Thursday, March 18 – Read Luke 15** — Jesus responds to the criticism of the Pharisees and scribes that he spent too much time with sinners and tax collectors with three parables about the lost. The lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son all tell the story of God’s love that never gives up on us. Are those in your life that you have “written off”? Of all the characters in these parables, which do you relate the most? Have you ever felt lost?

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**Friday, March 19 – Read II Corinthians 4:7-12** — Next Sunday, we will look at this passage from II Corinthians 4:7-12. Paul shares of the power we receive from God. God’s people will never be defeated. “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carry in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” Have you ever been broken, hurt or disappointed? Do you believe that Jesus Christ can make all things new? Will you let Christ work this miracle in your life?

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