

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, September 19 – Read Romans 5:8. Every trade and every craft has its own Jordan. That special “inside talk” sometimes used ordinary English words but gives them totally different meanings. For instance, you may have grown up with a “sister” but in carpenter talk, a “sister” is a short piece of wood that is used to reinforce a joint between two ceiling or floor joists. In daily conversation grace means that someone moves fluid and beautifully. We admire a dancer’s graceful steps or a figure skater’s graceful twirls. It can be a woman’s name or a prayer before you eat. In the New Testament you will see grace many times. It means nothing less than that God chooses to love the unlovable. Grace means that God went first to rescue us. Grace means that the purchase of our freedom was 100% God’s doing. Grace means that the pressure is off to perform, that you can always find a resting place in your Savior. Grace means that God’s love for you is unlimited and unconditional. (timeofgrace.org)

Tuesday, September 20 – The gospel message is based on mysteries and paradoxes that seem illogical and unbelievable to outsiders to the faith. The Trinity? How can God be three and one at the same time? God tells you about himself not explain enough so that you understand but rather so that you appreciate and worship him. He tells you of his essential unity, but he reveals that three distinct persons are at work in the universe. It is the Father whom Scripture describes as the grand planner. In servant mode during his earthly ministry, Jesus gave 100% of his attention and respect to the Father’s saving design. **Read John 8:28-29.** From all eternity, even before mankind’s fall into sin, the Father lovingly predesigned the rescue he foreknew his Son would need to carry out. The greater our lives are aligned with his plan, the greater satisfaction and joy in life. (timeofgrace.org)

Wednesday, September 21 – Read 1 John 3:1. How would you live today if you knew at the very bottom of your soul that you were loved? It would free you from having to make sure you were being loved. How much chasing after being loved have you done? How much effort have you poured into your pursuit of being loved? God’s one-way love for us is the only love that can free us from our incessant pursuit of the love of others. We must be done with all that! Because no matter how many people you get to love you, it will never be enough. Haman (in the book of Esther) had everyone in the entire city bowing down to him when he rode by, but it wasn’t enough. He didn’t have Mordecai’s worship and it drove him crazy. Even though we can see the stupidity of Haman’s deadly desire, you and I act the same way. It doesn’t matter how much we are loved by others; it never totally satisfied because the holes in our hearts weren’t meant to be filled by anything other than a perfect love – the love of God. But here’s the good news: though the gospel, we get to be free from that slavery. We’ve been loved by Somebody who

knows our hearts, who sees every dark and doubtful thing within them. And yet He Loves Us and He gives Himself for us. God's grace liberates us from this kind of glutton for love. I don't need to seek endlessly and fruitlessly to be loved anymore. The perfect love of Christ has satisfied my need and driven out my fear. *(by Elyse Fitzpatrick)*

Thursday, September 22 – Read Ezekiel 14:3-5. God's word through Ezekiel was, "I will do this." Don't you wish that, at the very moment we were justified by grace alone through faith alone, idolatry were no longer an issue? Our great hope is that we will not always be idolaters. One day we will be as lovely and as loving as Jesus, because God does not lie and He will bring His covenant to completion. So we can relax and go under the surgery of the One committed to our freedom, the One who said, "I will do this." Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10:14, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." John wrote, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). Paul and John both exhort us to fight idolatry: we are beloved children whom God has promised to liberate. It's this relationship that enables us to be honest about the fact that we give our hearts and our energies to things that are not God. Only those who know themselves to be fully and eternally accepted in Jesus have the motivation and moxie to do this hard – and heart – work. Remember this: It is only as we learn how loved we are that we can face our wounds. It is only when we know that God will free us that we are free to survey the idols that grow in those dark, bruised places. Jesus will do the work within in, trust Him when He says, "I will do this." *(by Scotty Smith)*

Friday, September 23 – Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. I am my greatest relational problem – me. And your biggest problem is you. You will be sinned against and suffer abuse but our greatest and deepest difficulty in relationships actually exists inside of us, not the outside. Paul offered the cure when he said Jesus came to rescue you from you. Grace alone changes the whole relational paradigm, our whole lifestyle of inward-bentness. Grace liberates you from you, so you can actually have a thing that could be described as a relationship. Grace frees you from bondage to self-righteousness. If your hope and security in life are placed in the basket of your righteousness. It's hard to live with you, because you cannot be wrong. But God gives you, in his Son, a righteousness that's not your own. And once you get that it's not about but about Christ, and once you know that as you stand as righteous before God you are free to own up to being a bit of a mess, you don't have to be so defensive about everything or get your own way. Also, embracing Christ's righteousness as your own gives you freedom from needing to be in control. **Read Luke 12:32.** It's not you trying to construct a kingdom of your own and placing your hope in it. You've already got more than you could ever want in God's kingdom, so your arguing and your angling can be put to rest. Christ's righteousness frees you from bondage to unrealistic expectations. You stop seeking horizontally what is only supplied vertically; you stop asking people in your life to be your persona messiahs, who

will make you feel good about yourself, give you meaning and purpose, will make you happy. Grace says we've already been given everything we need for life and godliness. It's all ours in Christ. *(by David Paul Tripp)*