



**Willow Glen United Methodist Church
Easter Season 2013
Study Guide**

In his visit to Willow Glen, the Rev. Schuyler Rhodes from Temple UMC in San Francisco encouraged us to take up the challenge: Each one bring one to Christ in the next year. But isn't that an impossible goal? Can each one of us really have that much of an impact on another person in just one year? The answer to that question is found in the Easter story. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is surely able to do wonderful things through you! But if we're going to allow God to use us to bring others to Christ, we're going to have to think and pray together about what that means and how that could possibly happen.

First, we have to return to the Source, the Easter experiences of the first disciples. By studying how it happened then, we can start to imagine how it might happen through us now. This brief Scripture guide will complement the sermons you will hear during the Easter season, all of them aimed at preparing each one to bring one.

Spirit to spirit

Sunday, April 7

Sermon text: John 20:19-23

After the disciples discovered the empty tomb, they ended the day locked in a room, afraid. Jesus appeared and breathed the Holy Spirit on them. It was as if he were saying to them that there is no time to be afraid of the implications of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit is here. Act now.

Similarly, there is a sense in the church that we are never ready to reach out. And that is only natural. Ask a newborn. She probably wasn't ready to leave the womb, either. But birth happens. Ready or not, Easter comes.

Monday, April 8

So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. John 16:22

As you think about the gift of Easter, what is the joy that no one can take away from you? With whom do you share that joy?

Tuesday, April 9

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? Isaiah 43:19

Do you think that God may be doing a new thing in your life even if you can't see it yet? Ask the person who knows you best what they see God doing in your life.

Wednesday, April 10

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Romans 13:11-12a

Is salvation nearer to you? Is God more real to you now than five years ago? Why or why not?

Thursday, April 11

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1Peter 2:10

Look at your face in the mirror. Say to yourself: "I am a child of God. God loves me, and there is nothing I can do about it." Repeat it until you believe it.

Friday, April 12

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— Ephesians 5:8

We are reluctant to talk about our dark times, but just consider who we are hurting by keeping silent. First, we hurt ourselves by keeping a part of us in the dark, instead of living as whole persons in the light. Second, we hurt others who are desperate to hear that they aren't the only ones dealing with darkness. Do you have a story to tell? Who needs to hear it?

Saturday, April 13

For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! 2 Corinthians 6:2

There is nothing extraordinary about this day, except that God is in it. Be on high alert today for signs that God is listening to your life. If you have the opportunity, listen to someone else's life today. And, in your own words, assure them that God is listening.

Face to Face

Sunday, April 14

Sermon text: John 20:24-31

Thomas wouldn't take a second-hand account as sufficient evidence of the resurrection. He needed to see the risen Christ face to face. He reminds us that people need a real (and not just virtual) relationship with God. The very best way to share our faith is not on Facebook but face to face.

You know someone who is longing for a real relationship with God (though they may not know it yet). You may not be ready to share your faith with this person, but you can begin to prepare by praying regularly for them. Pray each week from now until Pentecost that God will open their heart and yours and provide you with a way and a will to reach them.

Monday, April 15

"Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, LORD, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Psalm 27:8-9

Not all of us are on Facebook. Some of us don't want everyone to know everything that is going on with us. Still, we want to know that God has got our status update. Today, post a prayer on God's wall.

Tuesday, April 16

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? Psalm 42:2

Sometimes we seek out friends to fill up the holes in our soul. But even when we satisfy our thirst for human relationship, we still have a thirst for God. Are you ready to get real with God? What does that mean for you?

Wednesday, April 17

*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face, let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.* Song of Songs 2:14

Reading the Song of Songs is like overhearing lovers talking. Both Judaism and Christianity have interpreted this book as a poem about the love of God for God's people. Read the Song of Songs as a testament to how intimately God loves you.

Thursday, April 18

Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

2 John 12

The author of Second John sounds like he is rebelling against the new technology of letter writing. Would that we would go back to it! I remember when my mom and her sister wrote letters to each other every week (long distance phone calls being too expensive). Instead of sending an email, try to find the time to send a letter to someone this week. Tell them how they make your joy complete.

Friday, April 19

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:10

There are people in this church who have a gift for restoring what is lacking in our faith. Who is that person for you? Call them up and thank them. Arrange to spend some time with them.

Saturday, April 20

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

It is easy to have lots of "friends" in this online world without having anyone who really knows us (except God). A lot of our relationships are dim reflections of what we'd like them to be. Try this: unplug from the internet for one day and use the time you save to take a friend to lunch or out for coffee that day.

Heart to Heart

Sunday, April 21

Sermon text: Luke 24:13-35

The disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't know they were talking with Jesus, but afterwards they realized that their hearts were burning within them as they walked with him on the road. Can you imagine Jesus showing up in your casual conversations with others? As people share with us about what is going on in their lives, it is easier than you think to share with them God's life. Today, you will get a pack of church invitation cards with encouraging words printed on them to give to anyone you meet who could use some TLC (tender love of Christ).

Monday, April 22

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you.

There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.

In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

The work of Easter requires an open heart. In order for God to use you to reach someone else's heart, pray today that God will take the restrictions in your heart away.

Tuesday, April 23

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

Cultivate a glad and generous heart and people will notice. They will ask you where you got it. You can tell them!

Wednesday, April 24

Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts.

1 John 5:10

Week Three

Having the testimony in your heart means that the way you live is a testimony to the love of God. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." See if you can preach the Gospel without words today.

Thursday, April 25

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

What has the Spirit written on your heart for others to read? Do you give them a chance to read it?

Friday, April 26

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Do you ever wonder what to say to someone who is going through a particularly hard time? Memorize this passage of Scripture. Then you will have something precious to offer them. The right passage of Scripture at the right time can be a Godsend.

Saturday, April 27

I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,

I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;

I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Psalms 40:10

Are you keeping God's saving help hidden in your heart? Have you spoken of God's faithfulness in the "great congregation"? Is God calling you to? Call the pastor.

Hand to Hand

Sunday, April 28

Sermon Text: John 21:1-19

Jesus appears to his disciples while they are fishing and joins them for breakfast on the beach. What this story suggests is that Jesus shows himself to us in two ways: when we gather to work and when we gather to eat. Then, when he shows up, he tells us (as he told Peter): Feed my sheep. That's our job: to bring the Bread of Life to everyone. And two of the best times to invite someone new to church and to introduce them to Christ are when we are working together and eating together. The question for us is how do we intentionally make an opening for Christ to appear at our meals and in our mission work?

Monday, April 29

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."

And let everyone who hears say, "Come."

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

Revelation 22:17

When God plans a gathering, everyone is welcome. No one gets turned away. How do we plan events at the church? Do we extend the welcome to everyone? Whom are we leaving out? Why?

Tuesday, April 30

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

Luke 14:12-13

We have a tradition of hosting a weekly barbecue for the church during the month of July. It's been a church family event, where we have enjoyed the company of friends. If we continue this tradition, does it need to change in light of what Jesus says in Luke? How would you change it?

Wednesday, May 1

But he said to them, "You give them something to eat."

Luke 9:13

In Luke's story of the feeding of the 5,000 [Luke 9:10-17], the disciples operate out of a principle of scarcity; Jesus, out of a principle of abundance. Do we focus more on scarcity or abundance at WGUMC?

Thursday, May 2

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work...He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

2 Corinthians 9:8,10

Oftentimes when we plan a meal (or other event) and put together a guest list, we worry about whether there will be enough for everyone. Jesus didn't worry about that and neither should we. The wider the welcome, the wider the grace. Look around you today and celebrate God's abundance.

Friday, May 3

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:37-40

In his story about the Last Judgment, Jesus tells us that the needs of the last come first. How does that shift your understanding of Christian living? How does it shape our understanding of Christian ministry? In light of this story, what is the one thing you would change about yourself? About this church?

Saturday, May 4

...and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

Galatians 2:9-10

Saturday, May 4 (con't)

Peter and the others went to the Jews; Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. Willow Glen UMC has a special ministry to families. Still, we have to remember the poor. Our Change the World Days give families a unique opportunity to make a difference in their community. So here we have a great opportunity to welcome someone new into our church family. Plan ahead to invite someone to join you for our next Change the World Day.

Side by Side

Sunday, May 5

Sermon text: Matthew 28:16-20

In what is called "The Great Commission," Jesus gives us our marching orders: make disciples of all nations, baptize, and teach. This would be impossible except for the fact that, in the words of John Wesley, "all commands are covered promises." In other words, God does not command us to do something that God doesn't promise us the grace to do. In this case, the command comes with the promise: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Because we can count on that, we can dare to begin to make disciples. If we do, we discover that along the way, we ourselves become disciples.

Monday, May 6

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:12-15

This week, pray about making the commitment to bring someone to Christ in the next year. If you doubt whether you can do this, hear Paul saying: "If not you, then who?"

Tuesday, May 7

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Bring Christ: we can do this for others because someone did it for us and because the entire communion of saints (the great cloud of witnesses) is cheering for us. Remember to keep praying for the person you know who is longing for a relationship with God (see April 14th), and pray for a way and a will to reach them.

Wednesday, May 8

But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

Acts 3:6

Read Acts 3:1-10, the story of Peter healing the man who was disabled from birth. You may have no silver and no gold, but you have tremendous gifts to give. Do you realize what a miracle you are? Don't worry about what you don't have. Use what you do have, and God will use you to bring someone to Christ.

Thursday, May 9

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went.

Acts 8:26-27a

Read Acts 8:26-40, the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Notice how Philip goes wherever the Spirit of God tells him to go, even if that takes him down a wilderness road. The Spirit leads him to someone hungry for God and gives Philip the opportunity to proclaim the Good News. Does the Spirit ever nudge you to go see someone? You just may be the face that they need to see today. If you get the nudge, don't ignore it. Get up and go and grace will go with you.

Friday, May 10

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:22-23

Read Acts 17:16-34, the story of Paul in Athens. Notice how Paul went through the city and looked carefully at how the Athenians expressed their spiritual hunger. He listened. He learned. He borrowed their language. Now think about the person you are praying for. What do you know about them? What are their hungers? How do you think Jesus might appeal to them? What would be Good News for them? What Paul did in Athens, can we do in Willow Glen?

Saturday, May 11

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live...I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

John 14:18-19, 25-27

Each One Bring One is not as hard as it sounds. If Christ is with you, then wherever you go, Christ goes, too. So we bring Christ to others just by going to them and bringing our selves to them. Today, recite the words of an old Irish hymn, known as St. Patrick's Breastplate:

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.*

Spirit to spirit

Sunday, May 12

Sermon Text: Luke 24:44-53

Before ascending, Jesus once again promises his disciples that they will be clothed with power from on high. Next Sunday is Pentecost, the celebration of the birth of the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also a reminder of unfinished business, for every church is always needing to be reborn in the power of the Spirit. Fortunately for us, the Spirit is here to help us. The readings for this week remind us of all the many benefits of life in the Spirit of God.

Monday, May 13

"I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Mark 1:8

Baptism in the name of Jesus is a baptism into the power of the Holy Spirit. If you were baptized, that power is within you and only needs to be tapped into. Remember your baptism and reclaim your gift!

Tuesday, May 14

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:14-17

How do we know that we are children of God? Paul says that the Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit. John Wesley called that "assurance." With this blessed assurance, we can live a life in the Spirit. But does that really change anything? Does being a brother or sister of Christ mean anything? What can you do now that you couldn't do before you knew Christ?

Wednesday, May 15

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Being a brother or sister of Christ doesn't mean that we have everything figured out. We don't always know what we need or how to pray for it. Never fear. The Holy Spirit's here! Think of a problem in your life that you can't quite reduce to words. Spend some time in silent prayer today and let the Spirit intercede for you with sighs too deep for words.

Thursday, May 16

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

The more we pray in the Spirit, the more our lives start to look like the Lord's. Our task (to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world) starts with our own transformation. Would a friend say that you are looking more like Jesus these days?

Friday, May 17

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:19-23

As our lives begin to conform to Christ, we start to bear the fruits of the Spirit. And when we share these qualities with others, they get a taste of the kin-dom of God. Which of these fruits is ripening in you this season?

Saturday, May 18

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Read all of 1 Corinthians 12. This is the chapter on spiritual gifts. Not only does the Spirit baptize us with power, adopt us into the family of God, intercede for us in prayer, transform us into the likeness of Christ, and cultivate within us the fruits of a Christ-like character, but the Spirit also gives us gifts to give to others in order to build up the Church, the Body of Christ. We surely need you to help us build up this church. What gift did the Spirit give you? What are you doing with it?

Friend, tomorrow is the Day of Pentecost. Whatever you do, heed these words of Paul to the people of Thessalonica:

"Do not quench the Spirit."

[1 Thessalonians 5:19]

Instead,

*"rekindle the gift of God that is within you...
for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,
but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."*

[2 Timothy 1:6-7]

And with the power and love and self-discipline given to us by the Holy Spirit, we can say with confidence that EACH ONE CAN BRING ONE.

So be it. Go to it!