

October 2, 2005

Coming Here: Disciple Bible Study *Continued*

"Yes, but ..." we say. "I'd like to know the Bible that well, but how do I begin?" After all, the Bible's a little daunting to those of us who revere it as the Word of God. We aren't really confident of our own ability to comprehend it.

Its language and history are not much like our experience in 2005. It doesn't use examples familiar to us (Know any good friends who are shepherds?) and it contains stories quite unlike anything we might read in the *St. Pete Times* (Read about any burning bushes lately? Or serpents that talk?)

St. Augustine's shorter version of the famous multi-year Disciple Bible Study, with its videos and student guide books, will lead us and encourage us to enjoy and grapple with various Old Testament books. "You'll still have to do the class work," says **Virginia Ryan**, our course leader. "This Disciple Bible study won't let you off the hook on that one. But the Disciple program is so solid, so well thought out, that you'll be amazed at how much you accomplish." It's meant to lead you toward becoming a real disciple.

But what must we know about Bible study itself? First, no Christian has a monopoly on understanding either God's Word or the words of the scripture. This includes everyone from biblical scholars to the most uninformed Christian. So we certainly can risk sharing our opinions during class, and we will learn to truly listen to each other. And since it's unlikely that many of us have mastered Hebrew or Greek, some of the original languages of the Bible, we will be exposed to a variety of translations from various scholars to find a fuller understanding of what is written. In that process of searching for meaning, we will sometimes arrive at different understandings of scripture passages. Yet it is not likely that process will disturb God as much as it will some of us.

It's true that God has not laid out His truth in stark clarity. This can be frustrating in something as essential to us as the Bible. Knowledge and understanding will come, we have been told since childhood. What we weren't always told is that it may come very slowly. It may come with considerable effort. And sometimes we'll need a guide.

Disciple Bible Study at St. Augustine's can be that guide. It begins Thursday, October 20th in Ford Hall's conference room at 5:30. Virginia Ryan will be our facilitator for 90 exciting minutes. Register now by telling **Judy Krug** that you want to join this Old Testament study.

Gifts From God

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.

The Lord God gave the peoples of the earth a garden. And the people said, "That's very nice, God, but that's not enough. We'd like a little knowledge, please."

The Lord God gave them knowledge. And the people said, "Now that we have knowledge, we'd like things."

The Lord God gave them gifts unequalled. The sun. Lightning and thunder. Rain and flowers. Animals and birds and fish. Trees and stars and the moon.

God gave them the rainbow. God parted the Red Sea and gave them manna. God gave them prophets and children and each other.

But still the people said, "That's not quite enough."

God loved the people; and out of ultimate merciful goodness, God gave them the Gift of Gifts – a glorious present never to be forgotten. God gave them Love in the form of God's Son – even Christ Jesus.

There are some that don't open their eyes or their ears or their hearts. And they still say, "That's not quite enough." They wander through the world looking for happiness.

But others open their whole being to the Lord, bending their knees to praise God and carrying thanksgiving with them every day.

For these the whole world is a gift.

Ann Weems

"... more* from St. Augustine's" is for members and friends of a courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg. This newsletter is about recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheerleading.

Members Judy and Tom Krug are co-editors; Mordecai Walker is co-founder. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the project. And now every issue is available online at www.staugstpete.org our web-site-for-church-shoppers, which also has nice photos, Episcopal info links, and a good bio of our patron saint.