

**Notes & Group Questions from Oct. 31-Nov. 6 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

### **LAMENTATIONS 4:1 - EZEKIEL 16:41**

10/31 - Lamentations Chapters 4 and 5 are tough chapters to read. We know why everything that we read in these chapters has come to pass from our readings in the book of Jeremiah. I guess the thing personally that jumped out at me today when reading this chapter were these thoughts: **Q: Have I personally ever experienced anything like what we read about in this chapter?** The answer is no. The second thought or question that came to me, however, was this: **Are there people in our world today that are experiencing similar things that we read about in this chapter?** And I believe the answer is obviously yes. Not for the same "reasons" that Jerusalem was experiencing all of this of course - but the same experiences of starvation and lack of hope are indeed happening in our world today. Then.... **the question becomes - is this fair? Is this right? Should we try to do something for people in our world that are experiencing starvation, lack of hope, and worse? What will we do?** I know there are thousands of organizations that we could support to help those in need in our world. One that I have personal experience with is [World Vision](http://www.worldvision.org). If you have an extra dollar a day, you can sponsor a child and radically change that child's life - forever. Or, even if you have an extra dollar a month, World Vision can do incredible things with that dollar. **Which international relief organization do you invest in?**

11/1 - Today we begin the book of the prophet Ezekiel! Ezekiel is a prophet whose name means "God strengthens" - which is clearly a good thing for those in the prophet business. We've recently wrapped up the book of Jeremiah and are well aware of the challenges facing a prophet. The interesting thing to note is that Jeremiah was prophesying in Judah, whereas Ezekiel was prophesying in Babylon to the exiles from Judah. These two were doing their work at about the same time, but in different geographies. Ezekiel gets his call to be a prophet in probably his 30th year of life - the age when most of the priestly line were called to be priests. Instead, Ezekiel was called to be a prophet - which, is probably a good thing because he is living in exile in Babylon - so wouldn't have been able to perform the priestly duties at the Temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's call comes in 593 B.C., which is 7 years prior to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Ezekiel's ministry goes until 571 B.C., at the age of 52.

~ Ezekiel ~

Author: Ezekiel

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: Ezekiel, who grew up as a priest, was carried off to Babylon with the Jewish exiles deported in 597 B.C., and there he became a prophet of God. His message was one of coming judgment for those remaining in Jerusalem, but his preaching was not well received by the Jews who were with him in captivity. When his dire predictions came true in 586 B.C. with the destruction of Jerusalem, the people listened then on with great earnestness. His message changed at this point from being one of unbending judgment to one of comfort and hope for the future. The worst had come; it was now time to make plans for beginning again. Ezekiel saw himself as a shepherd and watchman over Israel. As a shepherd, he was to protect the people, but as a watchman, he was to warn of danger ahead.

Theme: The message of Ezekiel is based upon the unchangeable holiness of God. This is both a promise and a warning. It is a warning because God has promised to remain faithful to his people and this will not change. The book of Ezekiel shows God's unbreakable promise fulfilled in both respects: the city fell according to promise because of Judah's sin, and the city would be restored according to promise because of God's faithfulness. The lives of God's people determined how God would treat them. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 14)*

11/1 - In today's readings, chapter 1 is an incredible vision and call that Ezekiel receives! Obviously the flying creatures with 4 faces and wings are a highlight of this vision. What is up with these you ask? Good question. They are called "cherubim" later in the book of Ezekiel (chapter 10) and are also thought to be the creatures in Isaiah called seraphs - and they show up again in the book of Revelation. If you get a vision, and you see these creatures, you know something big is going on... :) The interesting thing about these creatures is that their four faces representing a human, lion, ox and an eagle have many interpretations, which all basically relate to the nature of God. An interesting interpretation I read was that these 4 represent the 4 Gospels - Matthew being the lion, Mark being the ox, Luke being the human and John being the eagle. You'll have to pick up a commentary to read more on why these analogies have been made.... Ezekiel Chapter 2 is God's Call and Commission of Ezekiel. **Q: Don't we all wish that God could be this clear with us about the purpose of our lives sometimes?** :) Ezekiel Chapter 3 has the great narrative of Ezekiel eating the scroll of God. And it

tasting like honey - even though it had words of doom upon it. In Ezekiel 3:3 we read: *"Then he said to me, 'Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.' So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth."* **Q: Can we eat of the Word of God? Does the Word nourish us? How does the Word nourish us? Is the Word nourishing you today? Is it as sweet as honey? Is the Word literally spiritual food? Will you eat of God's Holy Word, the Bible, today – and every day of your life?** Then, in Ezekiel 3 verse 15 ends with a very appropriate line I believe- *"I sat there among them for seven days, overwhelmed."* **Think you'd be overwhelmed if you experienced chapters 1 & 2??** Whew. I am looking forward to us starting the book of Ezekiel! Thanks for joining me on this journey!

11/2 - In Ezekiel chapter 3 today God appoints Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel! This might sound pretty good at first... but there are some serious ramifications for Ezekiel to follow through with what God asks Ezekiel to do. My thoughts based on this chapter - **Q: Are there times in our lives where God asks us to do something that may sound good at first, but then turns out to be harder than we initially thought it would be? With potential some serious ramifications? If so, do you quit? Or do you forge ahead with what God asks of you? Will you stay within God's will for your life - even when the going gets tough? If God calls you to be a watch-person, will you be obedient to the call?**

11/2 - Ezekiel chapters 4 and 5 get into God's signs of the coming siege and judgment of Jerusalem and Israel. The thing that went through my mind when reading all of this was the 3rd commandment from Exodus chapter 20, verses 4-6: *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments."* The term in these verses "jealous God" did come to my mind when reading Ezekiel 4 and 5. And not in a bad way. But, just in the way it was. God commanded no idols. Israel/Jerusalem created idols and did not repent after repeated warnings. God was "jealous" of all of this, and the siege and judgment came. Ezekiel chapter 6 continues along the lines of chapters 4 & 5 - with judgment against the very land of Israel because of the pagan shrines. Verses 8 & 9 stood out to me in this chapter: *"But I will let a few of my people escape destruction, and they will be scattered among the nations of the world. Then when they are exiled among the nations, they will remember me. They will recognize how grieved I am by their unfaithful hearts and lustful eyes that long for other gods. Then at last they will hate themselves for all their wickedness."* Here we see that God will preserve the Davidic line - and that the Israelites will eventually repent, and the nation will eventually be restored (as we know in hindsight now). Verse 10 in this chapter also seems to sum up a lot of what's going on in God's mind in today's readings in Ezekiel: *"They will know that I alone am the LORD and that I was serious when I predicted that all this would happen to them."* **Q: Do we know that God is alone the Lord in our lives today? Do we trust his Word and his predictions without a doubt?**

11/3 - Ezekiel chapter 7 has a line that repeats twice in verses 4 & 27: *"Then you/they will know that I am the LORD!"* We are seeing here that God is not happy with Israel in large part because they do not realize that he is the Lord. They have sold out to other gods and idols and sin and don't really think God will do much about it. Well, God opens this chapter with strong words in verse 1: *"The end is here!"* God's patience has run out. But, keep in mind that God kept trying to get the Israelites to repent over and over and over again. They wouldn't. **Q: Do we sometimes test God's patience? If so, will we repent in the areas of our life where we test God's patience?**

11/3 - Ezekiel chapter 8 reminds me of a lawyer making a case in court! And God absolutely puts forth a strong case for why the end arrived for Jerusalem in the 5th/6th century B.C. It is so sad to see these sins take place in and around the Temple. In chapter 9 we see six angels of God appear from the north gates - where one of the major idols was located. In this vision, these 6 angels are carrying out God's judgment on Israel. Verse 7 gives us a hint that God is preparing to leave the Temple completely: *"Defile the Temple!" the LORD commanded."* We'll pick this up in tomorrow's readings...

11/4 - Ezekiel's vision of the Lord in Jerusalem continues today in chapters 10 and 11 as the glory of the Lord first leaves the Temple and then leaves Jerusalem completely! This is a big deal as the glory of the Lord had pretty much been in the Temple since it's construction. We are also visited by the cherubim again in these chapters. Chapter 11 verses 19 & 20 stood out to me today, with a message for the exiles in Babylon - *"I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead, so they will obey my laws and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God."* **How are our hearts today? Are they tender? Single in their focus on God? Do we have a new Spirit within us?**

11/5 - Ezekiel chapter 12 today reminds me that sometimes in my own life I believe God sends some signs and warnings and I, like the Israelites in exile in Babylon, can be a rebel. I ignore the signs and warnings or think - oh, that won't come to pass for a long time... **Q: Do you suppose this is wise? Is there a sign or a warning God may be sending your way in your life currently? Will you listen and obey? Will you pay attention to God's warning signs in your life?**

11/5 - I love the story of Ezekiel packing up his pack in broad daylight and leaving through a hole in his house during the evening in chapter 12 today! In verse 7 we read - "*So I did as I was told. In broad daylight I brought my pack outside, filled with the things I might carry into exile. Then in the evening while the people looked on, I dug through the wall with my hands and went out into the darkness with my pack on my shoulder.*" It is interesting that in chapter 12 God says three times: "*Then you/they will know that I am the LORD!*" **Q: Why do you think he repeats this three times in this chapter? Should this be a statement we should consider in our own lives? Who is the Lord of your life - yourself or God? Do you know that God is the Lord? Is God consistently in the very center of your life?**

11/5 - Ezekiel chapter 13 verse 2 stood out to me today: "*Son of man, speak against the false prophets of Israel who are inventing their own prophecies. Tell them to listen to the word of the LORD.*" **Q: Do we see this in our world today? People inventing their own prophecies? Inventing their own religions? Picking and choosing what philosophies they like the best? Do we do this? Should we be listening instead to the Word of the Lord? Are you actively involved in a church where the Word is clearly taught and Jesus is clearly the cornerstone?**

11/5 - Ezekiel 14 verse 3 I believe can definitely speak to us today: "*Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that lead them into sin.*" This is scary to think about... **Q: Have we set up idols in our hearts? Have we embraced things that lead us into sin? Think this is a good idea... ? Can we turn these idols in our hearts over to the Lord? It is my hunch that an idol set up in our hearts is one of the toughest things to get rid of. We need Jesus in our lives to free us idols. Will you let Jesus remove any idol that is in your heart this very day? Please don't let that idol hang around in your heart any longer...**

11/6 - I am fascinated by God's words in Ezekiel chapter 14 verses 13 & 14 today: "*Son of man, suppose the people of a country were to sin against me, and I lifted my fist to crush them, cutting off their food supply and sending a famine to destroy both people and animals. Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves, says the Sovereign Lord.*" The first thing these verses tell us is that God's judgment upon Jerusalem at this time was certain. Even the righteousness of Noah, Daniel, and Job couldn't change that - only these 3 men would have been saved. However, this got me thinking. Is it possible that sometimes today we try to build up our own righteousness to ensure our own salvation and basically do nothing to try to build up others righteousness and help them toward their salvation? Meaning, do we sometimes retreat into a "Christian bubble" and ignore the rest of "the world." Leave them to their own devices. It just made me think when reading about Noah, Daniel, and Job that my hunch is that these 3 would not just chill out and relax in the glory and certitude of their own righteousness. My hunch is that they would get out there on the streets and try to save others. **Q: So, what about you and me? Are we just cocooning in our own righteousness and salvation, or are we taking salvation to the streets? Are we retreating from the battle for others' salvation or are we engaged in it? What say you?**

11/6 - Ezekiel chapter 15 is an interesting one for me today, where God basically calls Jerusalem a useless grape vine. In reading this I am also reminded that Jesus in John 15 uses the grape vine analogy again saying "*I am the vine and you are the branches.*" This tells me that Jesus redeems even useless grape vines! :) **Q: However, using this Ezekiel analogy, are we growing in our lives like trees or like vines? How thick are your roots? How solid is your core?**

11/6 - Ezekiel chapter 16 is a fascinating and sad look at the city of Jerusalem. This is the first time I have really spent a little bit of time with this chapter. The question I find for myself in reading this chapter is this: **Q: has God blessed us similarly in some ways that he blessed Jerusalem? Have we, perhaps, in some ways used the blessings that God has given us in improper ways?** Verse 6 in this chapter stood out to me: "*But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, 'Live!'*" Bible commentaries suggest that this one word - **Live!** - is God's basic desire for all humans. How powerful is that realization? How very beautiful... Live! Let us Live!

## **HEBREWS 2:1 - 7:28**

10/31 - Hebrews chapter 2 starts strong with the first verse: "*So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.*" This is powerful. We must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we'll drift away from it. My thoughts here are that listening carefully in this sense also means listening often to the truth. Or reading often

of the truth. Reading the Bible often. Say, every day? :) I think our human nature is such that we'll oftentimes hear something and it goes in one ear and out the other. We need repetition. We need a routine. We need the truth. Please don't drift away from it! **Q: What's your routine to stay close to God and not drift away?**

10/31 - Verse 12 is beautiful: *"I will declare the wonder of your name to my brothers and sisters."* Here Jesus calls those who believe in Him his "brothers and sisters." What a great thing! To be brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ! And in the gospels Jesus also calls those who believe in Him his "friends." This is incredible to consider. **Q: Who better is there to be your brother and your friend than Jesus?**

10/31 - And verse 18 is a great reminder that *"Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted."* We all will go through temptations in this life. Don't feel bad if you are "tempted." Jesus himself was tempted by the devil in the gospels. The problem comes when we give into temptation and commit the sin. However, when in the midst of temptation, this verse reminds us to turn our minds to Jesus when we are being tempted - and he will help us! He has been there - he has been tempted. Another great tool to combat temptation is bringing Scripture to mind. In fact - this is exactly what Jesus did with the devil in the desert. Each temptation the devil threw at Jesus, Jesus combated with Scripture. What a holy sword Scripture is in the midst of temptation! To help us in the midst of temptation, memorizing Scripture regularly is a very wise practice. **Q: Do you memorize Scripture? Do you think it would help you in the midst of temptation?**

11/1 - Hebrews chapter 3 today is a great look at the lives of Moses and Jesus. The text today doesn't really dive into this point, but something I heard recently that is worth remembering - Moses introduced to Israel the Old Covenant (testament) via the Ten Commandments and laws. Whereas, Jesus ushers in the New Covenant to Israel and all of the world. So, this chapter goes into why Jesus is greater than Moses. Probably this Old Cov v. New Cov point alone would prove this to be true - but, obviously Jesus is also God in the flesh. Moses was simply a man. (albeit a great man in many ways!) Today in Hebrews 3:13 we read: *"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."* **Q: When was the last time you encouraged someone in their walk of faith? Will you encourage someone today? How does encouragement help us avoid sin's deceitfulness? Do you realize that sin is indeed deceitful? (sin sells you nothing but lies) Do you realize that sin can harden your heart? Do you realize that one of the best ways to be free of the bondage of sin and a hardened heart is through encouragement of others in your church community? Sin is too strong for us to battle on our own. We need Jesus. We need each other. We need to be actively involved in a church community each week. Don't attempt to make a go of this life alone. . . it's far too risky.**

11/1 - Verse 15 is repeated twice in today's readings, so it probably is something important for us to remember - *"But never forget the warning: 'Today you must listen to his voice. Don't harden your hearts against him as Israel did when they rebelled.'"* **Q: Are you listening to God's voice? How is the soil of your heart toward God? Will you let him plant new life within you? Will you let him pull the weeds that need to be pulled?**

11/2 - Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 of course makes a One Year Bible blogger's heart happy :) - *"For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."* **Q: Do you believe that the Word of God is full of power? Not just power, but Living power? Does it cut deep into your innermost thoughts and desires - and expose the condition of your heart? Does the Bible expose you for who you really are? Do you believe that the Word of God can do this? Will you let the Word of God do this?**

11/2 - This chapter opens up with a beautiful verse: *"God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands."* On a busy day, doesn't God's place of rest sound nice? I like that! God has promised us a place of eternal rest if we will simply have faith in his Son. His Son whom verse 14 today tells us: *"That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him."* **Q: Are you clinging to Jesus as your High Priest? Do you trust Him? Are you longing for your eternal rest with Jesus?**

11/3 - Hebrews chapter 5 verse 10 today tells us this about Jesus: *"And God designated him to be a High Priest in the line of Melchizedek."* Who is Melchizedek? He first appeared in Scripture in Genesis 14:18-20: *"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."* Melchizedek was clearly important, as Abram gave him a tenth of

everything. And Christ is a "High Priest in the line of Melchizedek." The thing to keep in mind is that most Bible scholars do not believe that Melchizedek was literally Christ. So, for us today, it's fine history to know. But, Christ is our High Priest, as this chapter of Hebrews makes clear. Verses 11 - 14 today are a great reminder that as Christians we must learn to become "self-feeders." We can't rely only on pastors and teachers and mentors to provide us with spiritual nourishment. We must learn to grow our relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit through our own study and prayer as well. I submit that the One Year Bible is one great way to feed yourself spiritually daily! **Q: How else are you feeding yourself spiritually these days?**

11/4 - Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 1 definitely stood out today: *"So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God."* I think sometimes we can get too caught up on the basics of Christianity and then never really grow in our faith. I do believe God is calling us first and foremost to come into relationship with Him through faith in his son Jesus. But, after that, let us grow! Let us no longer conform to our worldly ways and passions, even though we now have faith in Jesus. Let us become saints. Let us love and serve God, other people, and the poor more and more with each passing day. Let us go on and become mature in our understanding! Let us move forward from always being "disciples" to becoming "apostles." **Q: How is your spiritual growth these days? Are you growing? Do you want to grow?**

11/5 - Hebrews Chapter 7 is fascinating! It's basically an argument for why Jesus is our High Priest today - even though he is not from the tribe of Levi - the tribe of priests. Instead, the author of Hebrews argues that Jesus is immortal and is a priest in the line of Melchizedek. Most commentators I have read have said that Jesus is not Melchizedek nor vice versa. Basically, the author is making the case for the New Covenant - New Testament - that the Levitical priesthood line is completed by Jesus who is instituting a new covenant with Jesus as our High Priest. We need no other. We can go directly to God through Jesus. **Q: Do you believe this? Do you practice this? Do you pray in Jesus' name?** The name of our High Priest in heaven!

11/6 - Hebrews chapter 7 verse 27 teaches us today: *"Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people."* I hadn't really thought a lot about this before. In the Old Testament the Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices first for their own sins - and then they would be clean / pure enough to offer sacrifices for others sins. The good news of course in the New Testament and in this chapter is that we now have the perfectly clean and pure High Priest of Jesus Christ - who does not need to purify himself first! He never sinned. **Q: Will you take your sins to Jesus, your High Priest?**

#### **PSALM 103:1 - 106:12**

10/31 - Psalm 103 is a great Psalm today! Each verse is a powerful reminder of God's character and our relationship to God. Verse 8 definitely stands out today - *"The LORD is merciful and gracious. He is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love."* **Q: Do you believe that God is merciful and gracious? Have you experienced God's mercy? His grace? Do you believe that God is slow to get angry? When was the last time you experienced God's unfailing love?** (think now... God loves you so much he's given you beautiful life-giving oxygen to fill your lungs as you read this... praise God for the very air we breath!)

10/31 - Today in Psalm 103 verses 11 & 12 we read these verses about God – *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."* I think these verses are a wonderful look at what it means to be spiritually reborn and living in relationship with God. These verses are a glimpse of the true freedom that is found in relationship with God - freedom of living in God's perfect love, and freedom from our slavery to sin. **Q: Do you believe that God's love for you is as high as the heavens are above the earth? Do you believe that God has removed your sins (transgressions) from you as far as the east is from the west? Do you thank God often for His love for you? Do you thank Jesus often for saving you from the bondage of sin?**

11/1 - Psalm 104 is a beautiful hymn to the Creator! I like all of the verses - verse 19 stands out to me because I can find some great images related to this verse on the web! :) *"You made the moon to mark the seasons and the sun that knows when to set."* **Q: How has God's creation ever spoken to you or evangelized you? How do you connect with God in his creation?**

11/2 - Today we finish up Psalm 104, which we started yesterday. I mentioned in yesterday's post, that this is a great Psalm of praising God's creation. And indeed it is. What I didn't realize yesterday, but I picked up today, is that this Psalm overall goes through Genesis 1 and the story of creation. Not quite in the same order of creation, or the same details. But, essentially this Psalm is a retelling of Genesis 1. Very powerful... I love Psalm 104 verse 33 today - *"I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath!"* I so pray that this verse will be true for both you and me. I pray we will sing to God as long as we live. I pray we will praise God to our very last breath. And in particular at our very last breath I pray we are praising God! **Q: How are you singing to God these days?**

11/3 - Psalm 105 verse 4 stood out to me today - *"Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching."* I like that - search! If you search for God, he will indeed be found. **Q: Have you ever searched for God? And for his strength? Are you maybe searching now? Do you believe he will be found? Will you keep on searching?**

11/4 - Psalm 105's verses today give us a good Cliff Notes version of the end of the book of Genesis and beginning of the book of Exodus!

11/5 - Psalm 105 wraps up the book of Exodus Cliff Notes version today, with a great closing verse 45 - *"All this happened so they would follow his principles and obey his laws. Praise the LORD!"* Indeed, praise the Lord! **Q: How are you praising the Lord these days?**

11/6 - Psalm 106 is a repentive Psalm, likely written by a Levitical priest after returning to Jerusalem after its destruction. Verse 2 stood out to me today - *"Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him half enough?"* **Can you list all of the glorious miracles of God? Can anyone? Are you praising God today? Every day?**

11/6 - Verse 3 is powerful- *"Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right."* I think this is such an important thing to know - we will be happy when we deal justly with others and when we do what is right. This is happiness. Not money or fame or power or luxuries. Dealing justly with others and doing what is right is happiness. **Q: So, Biblically, are you happy?**

#### **PROVERBS 26:23 - 27:6**

10/31 - Proverbs Chapter 26, verse 23 is so true - *"Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot."* Be watchful for the smooth words or smooth talker. Again, think of the devil tempting Jesus in the desert in the gospels... **Q: do you think those were smooth words being said by the devil in those temptations? Another thing I'd like to caution each of us on - let us not be smooth talkers ourselves! Really. Think about your talk to others - are your words simple and sincere? Or are you smooth talking at times?** I on occasion catch myself "talking smooth" and I'm so disappointed when I hear myself talk like that! I don't think I'm hiding a wicked heart with those smooth words - but I'm sounding just fake as can be. I think maybe I default to smooth talking if I'm feeling tired or rushed or not confident for whatever reasons. I just pray that we would be sincere-talkers. Speak sincerely to each other from the heart. Through our relationship with Jesus, we should have nothing to hide from others. Let us leave our smooth talking ways completely behind! Let us talk simply and sincerely!

11/1 - Proverbs 26:24-26 is another good reminder to look beyond simply the "kind words" that we may hear... get to know the underlying motives... *"People with hate in their hearts may sound pleasant enough, but don't believe them. Though they pretend to be kind, their hearts are full of all kinds of evil. While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, it will finally come to light for all to see."* Someone could end up being two-faced if we're not careful. Let us also make sure that we ourselves are never two-faced toward others! **Q: How do you deal with people who are two-faced? Have you yourself ever struggled with being two-faced? How do you overcome this?**

11/2 - Proverbs 26, verse 27 today is so true: *"If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will roll back and crush you."* This is a great reminder to "do unto others as you'd have done unto you" - and if you do unto others bad stuff, you'll often fall into your own trap! **Q: How have you learned the truth of this Proverb?**

11/3 - Proverbs 26:28 teaches us: *"A lying tongue hates its victims, and flattering words cause ruin."* This is a great reminder not to lie nor to flatter! **Q: Why do you think flattering words cause ruin? Have you been flattered recently? Have you felt odd when being flattered? Do you flatter others? Should you?**

11/4 - Proverbs verse 1 today is fantastic: *"Don't brag about tomorrow, since you don't know what the day will bring."* Indeed, don't brag about tomorrow - each day is such a blessing to be thankful for. Live for today. With Jesus. And don't brag about tomorrow! **Q: Have you ever struggled with bragging? How do you overcome it?**

11/4 - Today in Proverbs 27:2 we read: *"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips."* **Q: How often do we heap praise on ourselves? Maybe even in our own minds, if not verbally? Where does our strength and wisdom and achievements truly come from? Is the Lord your strength? If we are praised by others, do we accept the praise into our own hearts? Or, do we share with the person giving the praise, where the praise truly should be directed?** Psalm 115 verse 1 wisely reminds us - *"Not to us O Lord, Not to us – but to your name be the Glory."* Amen!

11/5 - Proverbs 27:3 teaches us today: *"A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the resentment caused by a fool is even heavier."* This is a great reminder that carrying resentment in our hearts is a heavy burden we don't need to bear! **Q: Are there any burdens in your heart today that you will let Jesus take from you? Will you reach out to Jesus and let Him heal your burden?**

11/6 - Proverbs 27 verse 6 is an interesting one. And indeed true. *"Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy."* **Q: Why should we watch out for many kisses from an enemy? Let us thank God for a friend who will speak truth into our life! Even if it hurts at first to hear it. Think about this - is someone being a better friend to you if they tell you a truth about your life that may wound you - or if they say nothing at all and let you keep on keepin' on with something wrong you may be doing?** Let us embrace and welcome truthful wounds from our friends! We need this type of iron sharpening iron. Sometimes we need to be lovingly and truthfully wounded by our friends to grow closer to God.

#### **Group discussions:**

- Introductions.
- What were some of your favorite verses or passages from the past week's readings?
- What are some questions that were generated for you based on the past week's readings?
- What is something new you learned about God or the Bible from the past week's readings?
- How did God speak to you through the past week's readings?
- What is something you want to change or grow in your life based on the past week's readings?
- **Discuss the bold Questions in the Study Notes**
- Any prayer requests for the group for the coming week?

**Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.**

**Daily questions for this next week's readings you may want to journal or pray through and discuss with your group next Sunday:**

- My favorite verses or passages:
- What I learned from the readings:
- My questions for further study:
- How God spoke to me through the Word:
- Something I want to change or grow in my life based on the Word:
- My prayer points based on the Word:

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