

**Notes & Group Questions from November 21-27 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

**EZEKIEL 42:1 - DANIEL 4:37**

11/21 - Ezekiel chapter 42 continues the description of the temple in Ezekiel's vision and the dimensions. In this chapter we learn about the rooms for the priests of the temple. The interesting thing for me, as I was reading this chapter today, is that my mind wandered a bit and wondered if maybe somehow this was / is a heavenly temple that Ezekiel was describing? I'm not sure. I have so much more to learn about the temples. **Q: But, it's interesting to think if maybe somehow we might see something like this temple in heaven?** An interesting thought at least for me to ponder.

However - the tricky thing is that in chapter 43 there are descriptions of sacrifices for the altar in this temple. And of course Christ was the final sacrifice for our sins - so there is no need for the old covenant sacrifices. So, this could certainly dash my imagination of this being a heavenly temple we'll see some day. Though - I did read somewhere that if this is a heavenly temple, the sacrifices described in chapter 43 may be "memorials" or ceremonial - but not required, as they were in the old covenant. I don't know... fascinating stuff to ponder however!

11/21 - Back to how all this might apply to our lives today. Verse 20 in chapter 42 stood out to me: *"So the area was 875 feet on each side with a wall all around it to separate the holy places from the common."* The last part of that verse stands out - to separate the holy places from the common. **Q: I wonder about that in our lives - do we do anything that separates the holy from the common in our own lives? Do we need to? My thought here is that if we don't allow for some "holy places" to appear in our lives, might we just settle for common places throughout our lives?** A Holy Place for us might be 5 minutes of prayer. Or 15 minutes of reading the Bible. Or going to a church service. Or listening to worship music. Or not scheduling anything one day a week, so we can take a Sabbath day of rest. **What are you doing to create some Holy Places in your life?**

11/21 - Chapter 43 is incredible with God's return to the temple. I love this verse - *"And this is the basic law of the Temple: absolute holiness!"* Absolute holiness. Okay - so this is not something we are going to see or "achieve" this side of heaven. It's impossible for us to be absolutely holy on this earth. Only Jesus was absolutely holy and sinless. However, I think the call for our eternal lives is absolute holiness. So, know that faith in Jesus will ultimately lead you in this direction - and I do believe we can grow in holiness in this life. God's grace gives ultimate absolute holiness in heaven. **Q: Do you want absolute holiness? Are you moving toward absolute holiness in your life today? Do you also realize you won't reach absolute holiness this side of heaven? But, yet, do you still desire absolute holiness someday?**

11/21 - Verse 21 in this chapter is a foreshadowing of Jesus' death on the Cross at Mt. Calvary: *"Then take the young bull for the sin offering and burn it at the appointed place outside the Temple area."* How does this apply to Jesus' death on a hill outside of Jerusalem's city gates? This is best explained in Hebrews chapter 13 verses 11-13 as follows: *"The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore."* Powerful... **Q: Will you walk with Jesus outside the city gates of Jerusalem? Up to Mt. Calvary? Will you follow Jesus all the way up that hill?**

11/22 - In Ezekiel chapters 44 and 45 today we see the priesthood restored to Israel! It's interesting that the Levites are taken down a notch in how they can serve in the temple and the Zadokites are elevated. Zadok was a priest during the time of David & Solomon and a descendent of Eleazar and ultimately Aaron. Chapter 44, verse 28 really stood out to me today: *"As to property, the priests will not have any, for I alone am their inheritance."* I like that! God alone is the priests' inheritance. **Q: What is our inheritance? Is it property? Is it things of this earth? Or could our inheritance be God as well? Should God be our inheritance? How is God our inheritance? If the Lord is not our inheritance, what then do we inherit? The wind? It's an age old debate as you'll see in the image above. Where do you stand? Can we inherit eternal life through the grace of God and faith in Jesus? Or do we simply inherit the wind? (Nothingness) What does your heart tell you? Most importantly, what does the Bible tell you?**

11/23 - Ezekiel chapters 45 & 46 describe some new regulations on how offerings are to be done, when compared to the

original Pentateuch regulations - primarily from Numbers chapter 28. Apparently these chapters in Ezekiel have created some reconciliation work for rabbis in the past to figure out the proper regulations. Verse 20 in chapter 46 did stand out at me in today's readings: *"He explained, "This is where the priests will cook the meat from the guilt offerings and sin offerings and bake the flour from the grain offerings into bread. They will do it here to avoid carrying the sacrifices through the outer courtyard and harming the people by transmitting holiness to them."* Per a previous chapter this goes along the lines of the priests needing to take off their clothes in a special room after being in the Temple, to avoid transmitting holiness. This is interesting to me because you would think that transmitting holiness would be a good thing. Apparently not in this case. This does remind me of when Moses was on the mountain receiving the Laws, he had to wear a veil over his face amongst the people when he came down from the mountain because his face was so radiant from being in the presence of God. I read a commentary that said this transmission of holiness, in this case in Ezekiel, was not something for the Israelites to concern themselves with, because this was a vision of a future temple. I read another commentary that made the interesting point that these passages in Ezekiel can help demonstrate the transmission of holiness from Jesus' robe to the woman who suffered from bleeding for 12 years - see [Mark 5:22-34](#). She was healed by reaching out and touching Jesus' robe. Of course Jesus says that it was the woman's faith that healed her - not her touching his robe. It is intriguing to think about the transmission of holiness via garments or sacrifices. I'll need to do more study on the problem of "transmitting holiness" in this case in Ezekiel. **Q: Please share your thoughts on this with your table group?**

11/24 - We finish the book of Ezekiel today! The book of Daniel begins tomorrow! Ezekiel chapter 47's opening verses about the River of Healing are just beautiful. As I was reading these verses about the River of Healing I imagined myself jumping into the river and just being refreshed and renewed and restored! Great stuff... This river is very reminiscent of the river in the Garden of Eden - and the River of Life described in [Revelation chapter 22](#). Verse 9 in ch. 47 of Ezekiel sums it all up well - *"Everything that touches the water of this river will live. Fish will abound in the Dead Sea, for its waters will be healed. Wherever this water flows, everything will live."* **Q: Can you imagine this river of healing flowing from the temple? Can you imagine some rest & restoration & refreshment & healing through this river?**

11/25 - Today we start the book of Daniel, which is an incredible book! The book of Daniel takes place in approximately 605 B.C. during the first captivity of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Daniel is exiled to Babylon to Jerusalem in 605 B.C. - whereas Ezekiel, the prophet of the previous book, was exiled in 597 B.C. It is generally believed that Daniel himself wrote this entire book. Though some say that Daniel couldn't have written this book because his prophecies in the this book are spot-on. Thus, some think someone else must have written the book in retrospect. Let's forge ahead with the belief that Daniel indeed wrote this book. I do believe that God can indeed prophesy events through prophets like Daniel before they actually happen...

~ Daniel ~

Author: Daniel

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: Daniel was carried off into captivity in Babylon as a young boy where, although he was a captive, he received an education and ultimately rose to a high position in Babylonian, and later, Persian government. Because of his trust in God he was subjected to barbarous persecution, at one point being thrown to the lions. Three of his compatriots were thrown into a furnace, but they too survived by the power of God. The book deals with many historical events of Daniel's day, but it also contains prophecies concerning the future. Daniel saw the great world empires that were to come, but saw more than just that. He also saw the power of God and the Messiah, Jesus, who was to come and undo the evil of this world, ultimately to establish a kingdom of righteousness that would never fade away.

Theme: Daniel's major theme is the sovereignty of God. God rules over the affairs of men, directing the course of history toward his own ends, working in and through the acts of men. The kingdoms of men rise and fall but God remains forever. God's will remains forever as well, and it is God's determination to bring salvation to men by the Messiah whom he will send. Ultimately evil will be overcome and good will triumph because God has willed it so. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 14-15*)

11/25 - Daniel chapter 1 verse 7 is worth diving into to show how Nebuchadnezzar was trying to change the religious alliances of these 4 young men from Jerusalem - *"The chief official renamed them with these Babylonian names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar. Hananiah was called Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach. Azariah was called Abednego."* Daniel's name in Hebrew means "God is my Judge" - his new name Belteshazzar meant "Bel, protect his life!" Bel, or Marduk was the main Babylonian god. (you can see where Nebuchadnezzar was going with this...) Hananiah's name in Hebrew is "the Lord shows grace" and Shadrach means "under the command of Aku" - the moon god.... Mishael's name in Hebrew is "who is like God?" and his new name Meshach is "who is like Aku?" And finally Azariah's name in Hebrew is

"the Lord helps" and his new name Abednego is "servant of Nego/Nebo" - the god of learning and writing. **Q: Do you think that someone's name can be reflective of who they are? Are names important?**

11/25 - Verse 8 is worth exploring - *"But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king."* Why do you think this was? Was Daniel just being picky? Snooty? Well, that was kind of my first thought. Further study shows that the food the Babylonians were going to feed Daniel and the 3 others were sacrificed to idols. Which is not a good thing in the Law... And furthermore, the wine was poured out on pagan altars. Again, not good. So, Daniel is making a very wise move here. **Q: Will we do things like this in our own lives? Things that appear to be "harmless" on the surface, will we refuse, if we know they will actually be damaging to us or our relationship with God? Even if our peers are pressuring us? Will we not defile ourselves?**

11/25 - Daniel chapter 2 verse 20 has a great start to a prayer from Daniel to God - *"Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he alone has all wisdom and power."* Check out the remainder of the verses in this chapter - this prayer. This praise. **Q: Do we pray to God in this manner? Do we open up our prayers with praise for God? Do we acknowledge that only God has all wisdom and power? Can we learn something from Daniel's prayer?**

11/26 - Today in Daniel chapter 2 we see Daniel conducting his affairs with Nebuchadnezzar with wonderful humility! In verses 27 & 28 Daniel says: *"There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can tell the king such things. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future."* Here we see that Daniel is giving God the glory for the dream about to be revealed. Daniel was taking no credit for this. **Q: Today, do you regularly give God the glory in your life? Or do you try to take the credit yourself?**

11/26 - The dream interpreted by Daniel is summed up in verses 44 & 45: *"During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed; no one will ever conquer it. It will shatter all these kingdoms into nothingness, but it will stand forever. That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain by supernatural means, crushing to dust the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold."* The dream & interpretation are prophesying the kingdom of Babylon (gold), followed by the Medo-Persian Kingdom (silver), then Greek kingdom (bronze), then the Roman empire with a mix of iron & clay - representing strong and weak states within the Roman empire. These are all B.C. kingdoms, taking us up to the time of Jesus the Messiah, when the rock cut from the mountain comes and becomes the everlasting Kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar is impressed with the dream interpretation and says to Daniel in verse 47: *"Truly, your God is the God of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."* **Q: Think Nebuchadnezzar is sincere about this? Or, think he will be the next day?** Look how quickly he changes his mind in Chapter 3...

11/26 - In chapter 3 we read the incredible story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In verses 16-18 we read: *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."* Focus on the words in verse 18 – "But even if he does not". **Q: Do you have the faith of these three men in God? Even if God does not show up in your life as you hope he might, will you still have faith? Will you not serve other gods or worship false idols? Back to verse 16 - Do you realize that you do not have to defend your faith to others? Do you believe that God can rescue you from the direst of situations? Even a fiery furnace?**

11/26 - In verse 28 we hear Nebuchadnezzar giving praise to God again - similar to chapter 2 verse 47 above: *"Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."* **Q: Are we willing to die rather than serve or worship any other "god"?** (big question I realize... but a fair one. This is happening to Christians around the world today. Please remember to pray for the persecuted church around the world.) Below is a portrait by Guy Rowe of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were willing to die for their faith in the True Living God rather than worship another little "g" fake god.

11/27 - Daniel chapter 4 is an incredible chapter today! There is a lot going on in this one. We open up this chapter with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon giving praise to God as verses 2 & 3 tell us: *"I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how powerful his*

wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations." **Q: Does this sound like the Nebuchadnezzar we've come to know?** We'll, we must read on as he tells us how he got to the point of praising God like this... Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree in this chapter is relatively straightforward, as is the interpretation that Daniel gives. One intriguing verse to me was verse 27 where Daniel pleads with Nebuchadnezzar to repent to avoid what will happen per the dream - *"O King Nebuchadnezzar, please listen to me. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past by being merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper."* **Do you think Nebuchadnezzar listened to Daniel? What if Daniel was telling us to do this same thing this very day? Would we listen? Will we stop sinning and do what is right? Will we be merciful to the poor?**

11/27 - We see the sin of pride bring down Nebuchadnezzar in verse 30 as follows - *"Just look at this great city of Babylon! I, by my own mighty power, have built this beautiful city as my royal residence and as an expression of my royal splendor."* **Q: Are their times in our life where we boast of what we have "done" or "created" by our "own mighty power"?** **Good idea.... ?** In this chapter today Nebuchadnezzar becomes Gollum from the Lord of the Rings! :) Yes, I did hear someone teach on this chapter recently and he placed up on screen a picture of Gollum from Lord of the Rings and suggested this is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar essentially in verse 33 - *"That very same hour the prophecy was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws."* **Can you see how sin can drive us to basic animal instincts? Like Gollum? Do you see how godly wisdom can save us from becoming like animals? Like Gollum?** Pride seems to be a very tempting sin for all of us - and not a good one to pursue - as Nebuchadnezzar tells us himself in verse 37 - *"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble those who are proud."* **Do you believe this to be true?**

#### **JAMES 5:1 - 2 PETER 1:21**

11/21 - Today we wrap up the book of James. This has been such a powerful book for me to read these past few days! I am convicted and challenged by this book, which is wonderful. Today in chapter 5, verse 5 stands out: *"This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment."* This reminds me of the scene at the end of the movie "Schindler's List" where Oscar Schindler breaks down crying when the war is over - and after he has saved so many lives - and yet he cries out - "This gold pin - this pin could have saved a life! This car.... could have saved 10 lives!" **Q: This scene - and this verse - makes me ask myself if I am using my finances wisely? Am I investing in others? Are my luxuries taking away from other's very lives? Am I accumulating treasure when I could have been serving others?** I cannot encourage you enough to watch this scene in Schindler's List again if you haven't seen it in a while. Every time I watch this scene something happens to my heart that only God can explain... it changes me...

11/21 - Verse 9 stands out: *"Don't grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you."* This is such a great reminder of Jesus' call to not judge others! Don't grumble about others. **Q: How often do we grumble about others? Are we grumbling about someone currently? Is this a healthy practice?** By the way, I have been bad about grumbling about others recently - in fact, I almost got sideswiped on a freeway recently by a guy who was not paying attention to where he was going. In all honesty, I have no idea how we avoided not hitting each other, but for the grace of God. I was so shook up by the near miss I was "grumbling" big time about this guy's carelessness. Interestingly and thankfully I was not cussing at him nor giving him bad gestures, but I was grumbling in my heart about how not smart I thought he was - and I immediately caught myself and asked God to forgive me for this sin. And I believe He did. Let us not grumble in our hearts about others. It is a sin.

11/21 - The first half of verse 16 is so true - *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* **Q: Is there someone in your life you can confess your sins to? Someone you can ask to pray for you? Do you believe this practice will heal you of that sin?**

11/21 - And the last half of verse 16 also is amazing to remember - *"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results."* **Q: Are you praying for others? Earnestly? Do you believe prayer has great power and that God listens and can bring about wonderful results?**

11/22 - Today we begin the Apostle Peter's first epistle!

~ **First Peter** ~

Author: Peter the apostle

Place: Uncertain, perhaps Rome

Date: A.D. 63 or 64

Content: The apostle Peter wrote this letter near the end of his life to comfort and encourage the Jewish Christians who were living in Asia Minor. He points out that suffering is part of the Christian life and that God has an imperishable reward reserved for those who trust him. In case any were thinking of returning to Judaism to escape from persecution, Peter points out that the church is now the chosen nation and the priesthood of God. Hence any thoughts of returning to Judaism were futile. Peter then presents the example of Christ who suffered and admonished the believers to be prepared for the same experience.

Theme: The theme of First Peter is triumph through suffering. Early Christians lived difficult lives, often paying for their faith with their lives, but this letter shows us that it is worth it, no matter what the price. God knows all that is occurring and in his eternal plan will work everything out for the best. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 32*)

11/22 - 1 Peter 1:4-6 are powerful verses: *"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while."* These verses tie in nicely with the Ezekiel 44:28 comments above, no? :) **Q: Are we truly glad about this priceless inheritance? Do we believe there is a priceless inheritance for us in heaven? Do we understand that we may have to endure many trials in this life before receiving this inheritance? Will you endure the many trials that will come your way, knowing that God's inheritance is awaiting you through His grace and your faith in Christ?**

11/22 - Verse 8 is a beautiful thought about Jesus and our relationship with him - *"You love him even though you have never seen him."* **Q: Even though you have never seen Jesus, do you love Him?**

11/23 - 1 Peter 2 verse 2 is awesome! *"You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness."* **Q: Do you crave pure spiritual milk? What is pure spiritual milk? Could it be the Word of God, the Bible? Do you believe the Bible can help you grow into the fullness of your salvation? Do you cry out for this nourishment? Do you drink deeply of this nourishment? Daily?**

11/23 - Verse 5 is beautiful imagery: *"And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ."* **Q: Do you believe that you are a living stone in God's spiritual temple? Do you believe you are a holy priest of God? If realizing that you are a holy priest of God is something new for you, how might this change how you live your life?**

11/23 - Today in First Peter chapter 1 verse 15 we read: *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy.""* **Q: Do you believe that God is holy? Do you believe that you are called to be holy? Is this a goal in your life – to be holy? What are some ways you can move forward on this goal of being holy? Have you moved forward in holiness in this year? Will you continue to move forward in holiness next year? What are some specific areas of your life that God is calling you to holiness in during this coming year?**

11/24 - 1 Peter 2 verse 11 is powerful - *"So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls."* **Q: Do you believe evil desires fight against your soul? If so, will you keep away from evil desires? Will you not entertain those desires anymore?**

11/24 - Verse 24 today about Jesus is so strong - *"He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds!"* **Q: Are you dead to sin? Are you living for what is right? Do you believe you have been healed by Jesus' wounds? Will you accept this healing? Will you kneel down at the foot of the cross and be healed?**

11/25 - 1 Peter 3 verse 13 is definitely something for each of us to consider - *"Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good?"* I think this is very true. **If you are "eager" to do good, who will want to harm you?** Well, true, maybe someone who becomes jealous or who is just plain having a bad day... but generally speaking, I think we can avoid a lot of troubles in our life if we stay focused - no, eager - to do good. All the time. **Q: Are you eager to do good?**

11/25 - Suffering. Not something we like to think about - much less experience... 1 Peter 4 verses 1 & 2 are well worth

letting sink in a bit - *"So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning. And you won't spend the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God."* **Q: Do you believe these verses to be true? Are you ready to suffer for Christ? Have you decided to stop sinning? Are you anxious to do the will of God and abandon chasing evil desires? Do you believe this is the Way?**

11/26 - We finish the letter of First Peter today! Second Peter begins tomorrow. In First Peter chapter 5 verse 8 today we receive a stern warning we all must heed: *"Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith."*

**Q: Do you believe the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion? Will you take a firm stand against him? How will you do this?** Memorizing scripture on a regular basis I believe is one very effective tool in this battle. As is reading and studying the Bible each and every day. I actually was sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office recently and I picked up a Christian magazine that had an article on how to fight temptation. This article basically said to "know thyself" - know what and where your weaknesses / temptations are. Then, after taking this inventory, memorize a scripture verse or two that you can easily bring to mind when you find yourself in one of those times of weakness / temptation. And to cling to that scripture verse for all its worth. I haven't personally tried this yet, but I think I will. I do think that we can cling to scripture like a life preserver in our moments of weakness / temptation. Let us not ever forget that on this side of heaven the devil is out there prowling...

11/27 - Today we start the book of Second Peter! This is another great letter from Peter to the early Christian church written in approximately 65 to 68 A.D., just before Peter was martyred during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero. 1 Peter was more of a letter of encouragement to early Christians who were facing suffering, whereas 2 Peter is written to dispel false teachings within early Christianity.

~ **Second Peter** ~

Author: Peter the apostle

Place: Uncertain, perhaps Rome

Date: A.D. 67

Content: This letter was written by Peter shortly before his death and deals with the problems that the church would face after his departure. He encourages the believers to continue in their spiritual growth, realizing the truth of the Christian gospel. It does not consist of fable but fact. He warns them of false teachers who would destroy the truth by exalting their own ideas over those of the church. Finally, he points out that Christ will return some day to destroy the old order of this world; as a result, we ought not to become too attached to it.

Theme: Second Peter is a call to steadfastness in the midst of numerous pressures to drift from the truth. The world is seeking to undo the work of God, but we must resist all such pressure by living godly lives, believing the truth, enduring persecution, trusting God, and looking for Christ's return. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 33*)

11/27 - 2 Peter 1 verse 3 brings up a couple of good questions we should ask ourselves - *"As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life."* **Q: Do you want to know Jesus better? How will you do this? (hint - reading the Bible daily is one great way...) How else? Do you want to live a godly life? What does a godly life look like? Do you believe Jesus' divine power gives you everything you need to live a godly life?**

## **PSALM 119:1 - 119:112**

11/21 - Today we begin Psalm 119, the longest Psalm and chapter in the Bible! This Psalm is a beautiful meditation on God's Word and how it helps us stay pure and grow in faith. Almost every verse in this Psalm mentions God's Word. I pray that this Psalm is encouraging to you as you read through the One Year Bible! Today in Psalm 119 verse 11 we read: *"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."* **Q: Have you hidden God's word in your heart? So that you might not sin against God? Do you realize that all sin is indeed a sin against God? Are you memorizing Scripture on a regular basis? And, more importantly, reflecting on Scripture?** Check out this link for some great free online resources to help you memorize Scripture - <http://www.memoryverses.org/>

11/22 - Wow. Psalm 119 verse 29 is powerful - *"Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your law."* Do you ever lie to yourself? If you answered no, are you lying to yourself now? :) I think that lying to ourselves is part of our fallen human condition. I think we're probably pretty good at it. And I think that maybe the cure for this is even found in this same verse - the prayer of *"give me the privilege of knowing your law."* It is a privilege to know God's Word. It is a free privilege, but a privilege that I think we can often take for granted or simply ignore. Through our study of God's Word

let us pray that we allow God to show us any area of our life where we might be lying to ourselves. And let us allow God to redeem that area and give us the clarity of Truth. **Q: Like this Psalmist, will you pray to God and ask Him to keep you from lying to yourself? Will you pray this prayer often?**

11/23 - Today in Psalm 119 verses 47 & 48 we read – *“I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.”* **Q: Do you believe it is possible to delight in God’s commands? Why might this be a good thing? Do you believe it is possible to actually love God’s commands? What are God’s commands? Where can we find them? (okay, I’ll give you a hint – the answer is all over Psalm 119 :) - God’s Word, the Bible is where we can find God’s commands) Do you meditate upon God’s decrees as found in the Bible? Do you love the Bible? This seems like a strange question to ask in some regards. . . but, maybe ask yourself this – do you love books in general? I think many of us would say we love books. (Maybe using the term loosely. . .) So, if we were to consider just one book that it would really make sense to invest our time in; to meditate upon; to read for all of our lives; to love – what would that book be? Why would it be that book? Are you a bookworm when it comes to the Bible?**

11/23 - Today in Psalm 119 verse 37 we read: *“Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.”* **Q: Are there currently things in your life that you are spending time on – focusing your eyes on – that are worthless? What are these things? Do you want to turn your eyes away from these things? Will you? Do you believe that your life can be preserved by the Word of God – the Bible? How will you continue to preserve your life according to God’s Word on a daily basis next year? Do you consider the Bible literally to be a “life preserver” for you in the midst of the raging rivers of life? Will you hold onto this life preserver each and every day?**

11/24 - Wow. I love Psalm 119 verse 54 today - *“Your principles have been the music of my life throughout the years of my pilgrimage.”* What a beautiful metaphor - God’s principles being the music of our lives through all our years as we are on our pilgrimage. Great stuff! How might God’s principles actually become the music of your life? Do you think you’d need to be reading God’s Word frequently to tune into his frequency? (did you catch that - frequently & frequency? :) I commend you for reading the Bible each day this year as we go through the One Year Bible. I pray you’ll continue to read the Bible daily in all of your years to come. I pray God’s principles are and will be the music of your life. Verse 59 today is a great verse for each of us to consider - *“I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your statutes.”* **Q: Have you ever reached a mid-life or maybe even a quarter-life crisis where you pondered the direction of your life? Do you like the direction your life is heading now? Do you want to change that direction? Will you turn to follow God’s way? God’s Truth? God’s life for you? Do you believe that God’s plans for you are so much bigger than any plans of your own that you could dream up on your own?**

11/25 - Psalm 119 verse 71 has an interesting take on suffering - *“The suffering you sent was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your principles.”* **Q: Do you believe suffering can be good for you? Can it teach you to pay attention to God?**

11/26 - I am continuing to love our readings of Psalm 119! This is an incredible Psalm... I somehow am re-reminded of how amazing this Psalm is every 6 months that we read it in the One Year Bible. I could write something on each verse. For example, I love the imagery in verse 81 today - *“I faint with longing for your salvation; but I have put my hope in your word.”* I faint! I long! I hope! And Verse 83 - *“I am shriveled like a wineskin in the smoke, exhausted with waiting. But I cling to your principles and obey them.”* I am shriveled! I am exhausted! I wait! I cling! I obey! I love this Psalm... Verse 95 actually backs up the reflection above on 1 Peter 5:8 quite nicely - *“Though the wicked hide along the way to kill me, I will quietly keep my mind on your decrees.”* **Q: How can you quietly keep your mind on God’s decrees? Will you make this a habit to quietly keep your mind on God’s decrees? Would this be a good habit?**

11/27 - Psalm 119 verse 105 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible! *“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”* **Q: Do you believe God’s Word, the Bible, is a lamp for your feet? A light for your path? To help put this in perspective - without God’s Word, the Bible, is it possible that we would have no lamp for our feet? No light for our paths? That we’d essentially be groping in the darkness without God’s Word, the Bible? Verse 111 is incredible: *“Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart’s delight.”* What is your treasure? Where is your treasure? Is God’s Word, the Bible, truly your heart’s delight?**

**PROVERBS 28:6 - 18**

11/21 - Proverbs 28 verse 6 teaches us today: *"It is better to be poor and honest than rich and crooked."* I have often paraphrased this proverb in this way - "It is better to be poor and happy than to be rich and miserable." Though, I think the Proverb reads better and has more truth in the way it is actually written in the Bible. "Honest" is better than "Happy"... Actually, the more I think about this, I think that honesty actually will lead to happiness. If you are honest with yourself and others, I do think you'll be happier obviously than if you are dishonest with yourself and others. To take this a step further, and to reflect on the "absolute holiness" verse in Ezekiel today, I might even paraphrase this Proverb to say "It is better to be poor and holy and than rich and un-holy." Not sure if this works? I do want to say that I don't think being rich means you'll be crooked or miserable or un-holy. But, I think there is so much truth to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 16:26 - *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* We need to be careful around too much money or too much power or of course too much (any?) pride. Too much can distract us from God... In fact, whether we're rich or poor, I think if we don't always keep in mind that absolutely everything we have comes from and belongs to God then we can indeed become "blinded" by money in one way or another... **Q: How does this Proverb stand out to you?**

11/22 - Proverb 28:9 makes me simply say yikes... *"The prayers of a person who ignores the law are despised."* This proverb is quite the opposite from yesterday's readings in James telling us the prayers of a righteous person are powerful in James 5:16b: *"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results."* **Q: Think there is a correlation between what these two verses teach?** Lord, please let our earnest prayers be heard!

11/23 - Proverb 28:11 today teaches us: *"Rich people may think they are wise, but a poor person with discernment can see right through them."* This is a great reminder to not think of ourselves as being wise in our own eyes... others will see through our supposed "wisdom"!

11/24 - Today in Proverbs 28 verse 13 we read: *"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."* **Q: Are there sins you are concealing? Maybe even from your own consciousness? Do you believe concealed sin will affect your prosperity? (Not just financial prosperity, but your spiritual, physical, & mental prosperity?) Can you find a trusted friend or pastor to confess your sins to? Do you believe that in doing so you will find mercy? Will you confess and renounce your sins? Will you find mercy?**

11/25 - Proverbs 28 verse 14 today teaches us: *"Blessed are those who fear to do wrong, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble."* **Q: I think this should simply should make us ask - Do I fear to do wrong? What does it mean to fear to do wrong? How does one live one's life if you fear to do wrong?**

11/26 - Proverbs 28:15-16 today teach us: *"A wicked ruler is as dangerous to the poor as a roaring lion or an attacking bear. A ruler with no understanding will oppress his people, but one who hates corruption will have a long life."* These verses are a reminder to me to pray for our leaders in government. Their actions matter. In very significant ways. **Q: Do you think our prayers for our leaders matter? In very significant ways?**

11/27 - Proverbs 28:17 today tells us - *"A murderer's tormented conscience will drive him into the grave. Don't protect him!"* There is a very real example of this Proverb with Cain in Genesis chapter 4, where Cain became restless for the remainder of his days after murdering his brother Abel.... In Genesis 4:14 Cain himself tells us - *"I will be a restless wanderer on the earth."* This is one of the saddest moments in the Bible for me.

#### **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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