

Notes & Group Questions from December 19 - 25 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

ZEPHANIAH 1:1 - ZECHARIAH 8:23

12/19 - Today we start and finish the book of the prophet Zephaniah! Zephaniah was different from some of the recent prophets that we have read in that he came from royal lineage. He was the descendent of King Hezekiah. Thus, Zephaniah writes about the upper class, courts, and priests with quite a bit of authority and clarity. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. He prophesied in approximately 640-620 B.C. The purpose of his prophecies were to announce God's coming judgment against Judah. But, as we see with the other prophets, Zephaniah also writes about God saving a remnant of people who love and honor God with their lives - thus preserving and carrying on the covenant promise to Abraham. A good overview of the book of Zephaniah is at bible.org [at this link](#). The link includes a funny opening line: "The Book of Zephaniah is probably best known for being the least known book of the entire Bible." :)

12/19 - Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 5 stood out to me in today's readings: *"But the LORD is still there in the city, and he does no wrong. Day by day his justice is more evident, but no one takes notice--the wicked know no shame."* As you read the 4 preceding verses, you'll note that God is calling the people and leaders of Jerusalem to the carpet for their sinful ways. And in the midst of all this, comes this beautiful verse 5. God is still there in the city. In the midst of all the chaos and shame. And even through all of this, God's justice actually becomes more and more evident. I think this verse really jumped out at me today because I read a horribly depressing story in the paper recently about just some awful things that were done to children in a nearby city. And this story reminded me that we indeed live in a fallen world. There is evil in our world that invades the hearts of men and women. And yet, even in the midst of all of this chaos and shame in our world today, *"The LORD is still there in the city, and he does no wrong. Day by day his justice is more evident, but no one takes notice--the wicked know no shame."* **Q: Do you take notice of God in our world today? Even in the midst of everything else going on that may attempt to distract you from God? Is God's justice (and love and compassion and mercy and call to holiness) becoming more and more evident to you each day of your life? This very evening, do you believe that God is still there in the city? Will you take notice?**

12/19 - Chapter 3 verses 11 & 12 also stood out to me in today's readings: *"I will remove all the proud and arrogant people from among you. There will be no pride on my holy mountain. Those who are left will be the lowly and the humble, for it is they who trust in the name of the LORD."* We of course continue to see the sin of pride coming up over and over again in the Old Testament. Here God reminds us that pride and arrogance are not attributes of those who love him. It is indeed the lowly and the humble that better reflect the attributes of those who love and trust God. **Q: Is pride something that you struggle with? Do you realize that pride can be a hindrance to a fully loving and obedient relationship with God? Will you lay down your pride and seek humility? Will you seek to place your trust in God rather than your own abilities? When was the last time you bowed low before God?**

12/20 - Today we start and finish the book of the prophet Haggai! This is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, with Obadiah being the shortest. This short book does have a lot to offer! Haggai prophesied in 520 B.C. about 18 years after the Jews had returned from exile in Babylon in 538 B.C. When Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, he issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple. About 50,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem and began building the temple's foundation in 538 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel. However, neighboring nations were alarmed by the rebuilding of the temple and politically stopped the progress in 536 B.C. Here is where the story picks up with the prophet Haggai encouraging the process of the temple rebuilding to commence. A good overview of the book of the prophet Haggai is online at bible.org [at this link](#).

12/20 - Today in Haggai chapter 1 verse 3 we read: *"So the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?"* What stands out in my mind when reading this verse is the concept of tithing. Check out this amazing verse in Malachi 3:10 on tithing (which we'll read on December 31st) - *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."* It is very rare in the Bible that God says "test me" and follows it up with an incredible promise of a blessing. **Q: Will you test God with a tithe to your church, ministries, and nonprofits this next year?**

12/20 - Chapter 1 verse 8 is a strong one for us to consider as well: *"Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD."* I think the key word in this verse is the very small but very powerful - **Go**. Go.... **Q: Where in your life is God calling you to go? Is there something God is calling you to do? If you are obedient in this calling, do you believe it will bring pleasure to God? Will you go?**

12/21 - Today we start the book of the prophet Zechariah! You'll note that we are now at the 2nd to the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi is after Zechariah – and we'll be camped out in this book for quite a few days. Zechariah was a prophet during the post-exile (returned from Babylon) period at about the same time Haggai was a prophet. Both started their prophecies in 520 B.C. – however, Zechariah prophesied for many more years going forward – probably until about 480/475 B.C. Zechariah's name means, "The Lord remembers," which is fitting for this book. God is remembering his covenant promise to the Israelites in this post-exilic period. Zechariah's prophecies are similar to Haggai's in that he is encouraging the Israelites to rebuild the temple. Zechariah is a wonderful book, filled with 8 night visions, 4 messages, and 2 oracles.

12/21 - Chapter 1 verse 3 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty."* What a great calling and promise from God! Return to me – and I will return to you. **Q: Are there areas in your life where you need to change your ways and return to God? If you change our ways, or repent, and return to God, do you believe that God will also return blessings to you for this act of repentance? Will you return to God? Why would this be wise? Is it a risky waste of time to be apart from God? Will you no longer turn back?**

12/21 - In verse 8 we begin to read about Zechariah's night visions. It is interesting to note that all 8 of his visions in this book take place in 1 night. Visions are different from dreams in that Zechariah is in an awake state while these visions occur. You'll note that the four horsemen described here are very similar to the "four horsemen of the apocalypse" described by John in Revelation chapter 6, which we recently read. The four horns in verse 18 are thought to represent Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and Persia and the four blacksmiths in verse 20 are thought to represent Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Greece.

12/22 - Today in Zechariah we read about the future prosperity of Jerusalem, the Exiles being called home, and cleansing for the high priest. Chapter 2, verses 4 & 5 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Hurry, and say to that young man, 'Jerusalem will someday be so full of people that it won't have room enough for everyone! Many will live outside the city walls, with all their livestock--and yet they will be safe. For I, myself, will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, says the LORD. And I will be the glory inside the city!'"* My mind took me to the thought of the holy heavenly Jerusalem being chocked full of people who love God! And a wall of fire - holy protection - surrounding everyone in a heavenly Jerusalem and providing safety. And God's glory reigning eternally... I don't think this is quite proper exegesis on this passage... :) but I like the thought!

12/22 - Chapter 1 verse 13 also jumped out at me during this Christmas season: *"Be silent before the LORD, all humanity, for he is springing into action from his holy dwelling."* **Q: I think sometimes we get so busy during the Christmas season that we forget to be silent and to be still. We can just go, go, go - rush, rush rush - and maybe miss the true meaning of Christmas? Don't forget the song, "Silent Night, Holy Night...." Can you find time and space to be silent before the Lord this Christmas? And time and space to reflect upon what the advent of Jesus as a baby in the manger means to you?**

12/22 - Chapter 3 verses 8 & 9 were also beautiful for me today in this Christmas season as we think about the birth of Jesus: *"Listen to me, O Jeshua the high priest, and all you other priests. You are symbols of the good things to come. Soon I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. Now look at the jewel I have set before Jeshua, a single stone with seven facets. I will engrave an inscription on it, says the LORD Almighty, and I will remove the sins of this land in a single day."* **Q: Are you looking forward to the coming of the Branch? What does the Branch symbolize to you? Verse 9 above also looks beyond Christmas and toward Good Friday - How were our sins removed in a single day? Do you believe that your sins were removed by Jesus on the cross on that single day?**

12/22 - And chapter 3 verse 10 also works well in this Christmas season! :) *"And on that day, says the LORD Almighty, each of you will invite your neighbor into your home to share your peace and prosperity."* **Q: Will you have an opportunity over this next couple of weeks to invite someone into your home to share in your peace and prosperity? Or, if not, can you find an opportunity to go out and share your peace and prosperity with others?**

Maybe volunteer at a place that has neighbors that really need your peace and prosperity this Christmas season?

12/23 - Today in the book of the prophet Zechariah we read about Zechariah's visions of a Lampstand and Two Olive Trees, a Flying Scroll, and a Woman in a Basket. Chapter 4 is essentially a vision of encouragement for the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem - not by their own might, but by relying on the Spirit of God. The rebuilding will be led by Zerubbabel, the political leader of Jerusalem at this post-exilic time, as well as by Joshua, the priest - and these two are represented by the 2 olive trees in the vision. The bowl of oil held by the lampstands in the vision represents God's power through his spirit. Chapter 4 verse 6 stood out to me in today's readings: *"It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty."* **Q: How often in our own lives do we try to do things by our own force or our own strength? And not look to God? Would we ultimately lead more productive and peaceful and joyful and restful lives if we instead allowed God's Spirit to move in our lives? Or will we continue to try to do things by our own force and strength?**

12/23 - Verse 10 is a great reminder for each of us - *"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand."* **Q: If we do feel led by the Spirit of God to work on something - and it turns out to be maybe something bigger than ourselves - do we sometimes get discouraged by the task before us? Do we despise small beginnings?** Be encouraged to know that God rejoices in small beginnings! Take the first step! Take the plumb line in your hand! (I will be honest - it's not always easy to get motivated for typing in this blog each evening. Most days I am motivated - but not always. Sometimes I just have to "take the plumb line in my hand" - get started with the typing - and God shows up....)

12/23 - In chapter 5 we read about the vision of the flying scroll - which is a very large scroll with a purpose of encouraging repentance with a clear message of judgment. The second vision of the woman in the basket is essentially purging sin from the land of Jerusalem, and plopping it down in a more fitting place where they will build a temple for it! To worship the sin... Babylon... **Q: Are there areas in our life where we need to deposit some sin into a basket, close the lid, and let the basket be taken away to another place far from us? Is it possible that there are areas of sin in our life where we actually worship the sin somehow? Will we turn away from this false idol worship and return to loving God whole-heartedly?**

REVELATION 10:1 - 16:21

12/19 - Revelation chapter 10 brings forth the angel and the little scroll! Note that this scroll is not the same as the scroll in Revelation chapter 5, verse 1. This first scroll contains a revelation of judgments against evil, whereas this little scroll's contents are not disclosed - though, it may contain a judgment as well. You will recall from our readings of Ezekiel earlier this winter that, similar to John in this chapter, Ezekiel was instructed in a vision to eat a scroll that was sweet to taste but contained judgments against Israel. From Ezekiel chapter 3 verse 3 you'll recall: *"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."*

12/19 - Revelation Chapter 10 Verse 1 in today's readings has some cool stuff going on in it - *"Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire."* The angel being surrounded by a cloud recalls God speaking to Peter James and John on the mountain of the Transfiguration in Matthew chapter 17 verse 5 - *"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"* The rainbow over the angel's head recalls God's promise to Noah after the flood to never destroy the earth by water again, as we see in Genesis chapter 9 verses 15 & 16 - *"I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."* And the angels feet being like pillars of fire recalls the pillars of fire and cloud that guided and protected the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt, as we see in Exodus chapter 13 verses 21 & 22 *"By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people."*

12/20 - Today in Revelation chapter 11 we read about the Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet bringing the third terror! The two witnesses in today's reading are modeled after Moses and Elijah. They may be representing two actual believers who will be martyred or they may be symbolic of all testifying believers in the final days. In verse 11:7 we have the first mention of the beast in the book of Revelation - the enemy that comes from the bottomless pit and wages war in

the hearts and lives of men and women. In verse 11:8 allowing dead bodies to lie out in the street is a major violation of decency. In verse 15 things begin to shift in big ways as we read: *"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: 'The whole world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'"* **Q: Is the whole world now part of the kingdom of God? What are some examples of why or why not?**

12/21 - In Revelation chapter 12 today we read about the Woman and the Dragon! The woman is representative of the believing Messianic community and the twelve stars represent Israel's twelve tribes. The red dragon is Satan. In verse 5 we read about Jesus: *"She gave birth to a boy who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And the child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne."* The "caught up" part of this verse is representative of Jesus' ascension into heaven. In verse 7 we read about Michael the Archangel, who we recently read about in the book of Daniel chapter 12 verse 1 when Daniel is prophesying about the end times: *"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people-everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered."* In the remainder of the chapter we see a war in the spiritual realm, with Satan becoming alarmed that his time is short and increasingly angry at those who love God. Verse 10 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, 'It has happened at last--the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ!'"* What a great proclamation! **Q: Are you looking forward to the salvation and power and kingdom of God? And do you believe in the authority of Jesus Christ?**

12/22 - Okay, I know I'm doing some serious hermeneutics stretching above today in the Zechariah readings... I'll try to get back to some exegesis here in Revelation chapter 13! Today we read about the beast that comes out of the sea and the beast that comes out of the earth. This is a pretty intense chapter that ends in the infamous number of the beast, 666. One thing I learned from reading Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion book today is that the 3 sixes could represent the unholy trinity of Satan - which is comprised of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet coming up in Revelation chapter 13. Also, the number 666 was probably applied to the emperor Nero, whose Greek letters in his name represent numbers that total 666, by John's 1st century readers. The other way to look at this number is that each of the numbers fall short of the holy numbering of 777 - which represents complete perfection. In verse 1 we read: *"And written on each head were names that blasphemed God."* Back in the Roman empire many emperors assumed titles of deity and require worship of them, which would obviously be blasphemous to God. An example was the [emperor Domitian](#) (AD 51-96) required people to address him as Dominus et Deus, which means "our lord and our god".

12/22 - Verses 13 - 15 should be warning to us to not fall for false signs and wonders that do not come from God... as we read about the beast from the earth - *"He did astounding miracles, such as making fire flash down to earth from heaven while everyone was watching. And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people of the world to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life. He was permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak. Then the statue commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die."* The danger of these above verses can best be demonstrated by Deuteronomy chapter 13 verses 1 through 4 - *"If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, 'Let us follow other gods' (gods you have not known) 'and let us worship them,' you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him."* **Q: How do these 2 sets of verses - from Revelation and Deuteronomy - speak to you? Are there possibly even false signs and wonders and false idols in our world today which draw our attention away from loving God with all of our heart and soul? Will you hold fast to God?**

12/23 - Today in Revelation chapter 14 we read about Jesus (the Lamb) and all believers (the 144,000) in the heavenly Jerusalem (Mount Zion). I love verses 4 and 5 in this chapter: *"For they are spiritually undefiled, pure as virgins, following the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb. No falsehood can be charged against them; they are blameless."* **Q: Are these 2 verses attractive to you? Do you want to be like this someday in heaven? Spiritually undefiled? Pure? Following Jesus wherever he goes? Blameless?**

12/23 - We then read about the Three Angels and In verse 8 we read: *"Then another angel followed him through the skies, shouting, 'Babylon is fallen--that great city is fallen--because she seduced the nations of the world and made them*

drink the wine of her passionate immorality."" Babylon, as we know from our recent readings in the Old Testament, such as Daniel, was in ancient Mesopotamia and the commercial, political, and religious center of a world empire led by Nebuchadnezzar. Some commentators believe that John is writing about Rome here when he says Babylon - and that John uses the term Babylon because it would be too dangerous for him to say Rome. Some others believe this reference to Babylon refers to the time of the antichrist in the end days, and represents the corrupt political and religious systems of the world in the end times. Verse 12 is likely referring to the end times, but it does make me think about the persecuted Christians in our world today - *"Let this encourage God's holy people to endure persecution patiently and remain firm to the end, obeying his commands and trusting in Jesus."* There are thousands, if not millions, of Christians in our world today who suffer for their belief in Christ. They are persecuted. Today. **Q: How can we encourage these holy people of God who are enduring persecution today? Prayer is certainly one thing we can do, as a starter. Have you heard of the International Day of the Persecuted Church? [Please visit their website by clicking on this link - and then click on the links on their home page to check out some great ministries that are serving the needs of the Persecuted Church.](#)** Thank you for considering praying and getting involved in the Persecuted Church.

PSALM 138:1 - 144:15

12/19 - Psalm 138 is an awesome Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to God from David! You'll note that the word Temple is used in verse 2 - and of course the Temple was built by David's son Solomon. It is thought that David used the word Temple in reference to the tent holding the Ark of the Covenant. Some have also thought that this Psalm possibly was written after David's time, in the post-exile period. Either way, it is a beautiful Psalm of praise. Psalm 138 begins a final collection of eight "Davidic" Psalms, which are framed by songs of Praise in Psalm 138 & Psalm 145 - and Psalms 139 through 144 are six prayers. In Psalm 138 today, verse 3 stood out to me - *"When I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me the strength I need."* **Q: Do you believe that God answers your prayers? Maybe not exactly in the way you'd expect, but that they are answered? Do you believe that God answers your prayers through encouragement and by giving you strength?**

12/19 - Verse 7 stood out to me as well - *"Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will preserve me against the anger of my enemies. You will clench your fist against my angry enemies! Your power will save me."* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus' power will save you in times of trouble? Or do you rely on your own power and maybe forget about Jesus during times of trouble? Will you rely on Jesus, realizing that only His power will ultimately save you?**

12/20 - Today we read Psalm 139! I LOVE this Psalm... and had somehow forgotten about it. Is this Psalm anyone's favorite Psalm out there? I would not doubt it if was. This is just an incredibly beautiful Psalm about how much God loves and cares for us. And just how well God knows us. Please read and re-read this Psalm this week if you can. And rejoice in how much God loves you and how much he knows you. Each of the verses in this Psalm are incredible. I'll highlight a few. Verse 3 - *"You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am."* **Q: Do you believe that God charts out your path for you? Do you believe that God gives you true rest? Do you believe God knows where you are every single moment of your life?**

12/20 - Verses 13 & 14 - *"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous--and how well I know it."* **Q: Do you believe that God was loving and caring and creating you in your mother's womb? Are you amazed by the complexity and wonder of the human body? Could it be anything other than the marvelous workmanship of a loving and creative and living God?**

12/20 - And verses 23 & 24 to close out the Psalm: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."* **Q: Do you consistently ask God to search your heart and mind? Do you confess to God what is not right in your heart and mind? What needs healing? Do you ask God to even point out to you things that you may not realize are destructive to you and others in your heart and mind? Do you believe that this process of confessing your sins to God and asking for forgiveness and healing will lead you along the path of everlasting life?**

12/21 - Psalm 140 is a prayer for deliverance from evil. And this Psalm certainly should be a good reminder of the Lord's Prayer, where we pray - "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." **Q: What is the one thing that can truly deliver us from evil? Can we deliver ourselves from evil on our own? Or do we need something beyond ourselves for this deliverance?** Verse 7 in this Psalm gives each of us something to consider and should be an encouragement: *"O Sovereign LORD, my strong savior, you protected me on the day of battle."* **Do you believe God is**

your strong savior who will protect you from evil on the day of battle? Do you believe that perhaps every day is a day of battle? Do you believe that Satan or evil ever rests in attempting to tempt people? Should we pray for protection from evil on a very regular basis? The Lord's Prayer / Our Father is one great way to do this each day...

12/22 - Psalm 141 is a beautiful prayer of David's - praying for deliverance from the wicked and their ways. Verse 4 is powerful - *"Don't let me lust for evil things; don't let me participate in acts of wickedness. Don't let me share in the delicacies of those who do evil."* **Q: Is this a prayer you could incorporate into your prayer life? What might be some examples of "delicacies of those who do evil"? Will you pray to God to avoid these "delicacies" and "treasures" that will ultimately fail you?**

12/23 - Psalm 142 is a prayer of David's when he was fleeing Saul and was hiding in a cave. David is praying for deliverance to God from his enemies. I thought verse 3 was powerful - *"For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me."* **Q: Have you ever felt this way? Overwhelmed? And traps every which way you look? And you have no idea which way to go? At a time like this, will you cry out to God as David did in this Psalm? Will you "pour out your complaints before him and tell him all your troubles"? (v. 2) Do you believe that God knows which way you should turn? Will you allow God to ""be your place of refuge"? In times like these, will you allow God to be "all you really want in life"? (v. 5)**

12/24 - Psalm 143 verse 8 stood out to me today - *"Let me hear of your unfailing love to me in the morning, for I am trusting you. Show me where to walk, for I have come to you in prayer."* I read somewhere before - I think it was [Bruce Wilkinson's book "Secrets of the Vine"](#) - that many great men and women of our Christian faith connect with God in the morning through prayer, reading the Bible, and other quiet time activities. Bruce even suggested that this is the preferential way to go - to start your day by spending time with God in the morning, rather than at night. Because he said this would then transform the rest of your day - in terms of being more conscientious of our relationship with God. This does make sense to me - and in fact, I have started reading the One Year Bible now in the mornings, and it is a beautiful way to start the day! I like what this Psalmist says - *"Let me hear of your unfailing love to me in the morning."* And it reminds me that somehow, somehow, it almost seems easier to me to connect with God in the morning. Actually - one other thing I used to do in the morning is read a page or two from [Oswald Chambers "My Utmost For His Highest."](#) And I am thankful that I did this in the morning for a season. **Q: How about you? Do you have some way that you connect with God in the morning? Are you able in some way to hear of God's unfailing love for you in the morning?**

12/25 - Psalm 144 verses 3 & 4 are fairly well known: *"O LORD, what are mortals that you should notice us, mere humans that you should care for us? For we are like a breath of air; our days are like a passing shadow."* **Q: If our days are like a passing shadow, how then should we be spending our days? What types of things should we be investing our time & money into? What should we be investing our very hearts and minds into? Are you wisely spending your passing days in godly ways?**

PROVERBS 30:11 - 30:31

12/19 - Proverbs 30 verses 11 through 13 are a great reminder of the commandment to honor our father and mother - unfortunately these verses are an ugly glimpse of what it looks like to ignore this commandment: *"Some people curse their father and do not thank their mother. They feel pure, but they are filthy and unwashed. They are proud beyond description and disdainful."* I pray this Christmas season that each of us has an opportunity to honor our father and mother in some special way. Let us be pure and truly humble in this area of life.

12/20 - Proverbs 30 verses 15 & 16 today tells us: *"The leech has two suckers that cry out, "More, more!" There are three other things--no, four!--that are never satisfied: the grave, the barren womb, the thirsty desert, the blazing fire."* The "grave" is a reminder to each of us that this earthly life is temporary... An old saying goes - "no one gets out of here alive." I don't think this saying took into account heaven - but you get the point for this earthly life. **What are you investing your temporary earthly life in? What is God calling you to do with your life? Next year, how will you live joyously to love and serve others and God?**

12/21 - Proverbs chapter 30 verse 17 teaches us today: *"The eye that mocks a father and despises a mother will be plucked out by ravens of the valley and eaten by vultures."* This Proverb is another great reminder to honor our parents, as one of the Ten Commandments teaches us. How are your eyes toward your parents these days?

12/22 - Proverbs 30 verse 19 tells us about the author's amazement of *"how an eagle glides through the sky."* This is a great reminder of God's creativity and how it is exhibited in nature!

12/23 - Proverbs 30 verses 21-23 are a continuation of the sayings of Agur, from probably around 700 B.C. during the reign of King Hezekiah.

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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