

**One Year Bible Blog – Weekly Notes - [www.OneYearBibleBlog.com](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com)  
January 1 - January 8, 2011, [Copyright © 2004-2011 One Year Bible Blog](#)  
*Weekly Notes will cover our readings from Sundays through Saturdays***

**Notes & Group Questions for January 1 - 8 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

**GENESIS 1:1 - 19:38**

**1/1 - BOOK OF GENESIS OVERVIEW:**

Author: Moses

Date: ~1420 B.C.

Content: The book of Genesis was written to explain how everything began; in fact, the very title Genesis means “origin” or “beginning.” It explains that God created the universe, how man was created and placed in a perfect environment, how sin began, and how God provided salvation for lost man. The beginning of human history is described, the beginning of arts and crafts, how human languages began, and where the various nations came from. The focus then shifts to the beginning of the Hebrew people with Abraham, followed by the histories of Isaac, Jacob and his sons, and the book ends with Joseph in Egypt.

Theme: The main idea that runs through the book is that although God made everything good, man’s sin has spoiled it. God has not given up, but is now in search of man to save him. The overall control of God is stressed, and special attention is given to how God directs history for the good of his people and their salvation. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers “The One Year Bible Companion” p. 1)*

1/1 - Moses is the author/compiler of the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch, or the books of the Law. It is believed that these five books were written by Moses during Israel's 40 years in the desert after the exodus from Egypt - which was likely between 1446 B.C. and 1406 B.C. The book of Genesis is foundational to understanding the rest of the Bible. It is a book of relationships - between God and his creation; between God and humans; and between humans themselves. In Genesis, God pledges his love and faithfulness to humans through covenants. It is a narrative that continually demonstrates faith.

1/1 - In Genesis chapters 1 & 2 we read about the Creation account and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The 6 days of creation have main 2 lines of thought by various scholars: 1. they were 6 literal 24 hour days or 2. they were 6 figurative days of an undefined timeframe, which could even be millions of years. One quick note about the location of the Garden of Eden. It is believed to have been near where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet, in what is now southern Iraq.

1/1 - Today we read this incredibly powerful verse in Genesis chapter 1 verse 27: *"So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them."* **Q: Do you believe that you are made in the image of God? Is this a powerful thing to reflect upon? What might this mean for your life this new year, knowing that you are made in the image of God? Does this give you a sense of possibility for your life? A sense that you are made for a great purpose in this life?**

1/1 - Chapter 2 verse 3 is beautiful: *"And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation."* A day of rest. One day a week. **Q: If God did this, think we should too? :) 6 days of work and play and 1 day each week of resting in God. I confess I like the concept a lot more than I actually put it into practice. Perhaps 2011 can be a year of new beginnings where a Sabbath day of rest enters our lives each week? How are you doing on taking a Sabbath?**

1/2 - In Genesis chapters 3 we read about The Fall. Chapter 3 is a foundational chapter of the Bible to understand. From this chapter our history goes forward with sin passed on to every man and woman through the seed of Adam. This sets the stage for God's pursuit of men and women in Genesis, followed by the Exodus from Egypt, the Laws, the judges, the kings, the prophets - and ultimately the final solution to the Fall: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (ultra-Cliff Notes version here... you'll get the full version of all of this over the next 363 days... :-)) It is through belief in Jesus as Messiah that we are saved from what began here in Genesis chapter 3. **Q: What is your reaction to reading about The Fall in Genesis today? Is it painful to read about The Fall after reading about The Creation yesterday? If Satan was able to deceive Adam & Eve back then, do you think he still deceives people today? What is our remedy from the lies and deception Satan might throw our way? Do you believe reading and studying God's Word on a daily basis might be one remedy? What are some other remedies? (prayer, going to church, being in**

## **a small community group with others, etc.?) Do you believe Jesus has saved us from The Fall?**

1/2 - In Genesis 3:1-4 in today's readings we are first introduced to the devil in the Bible, who clothes himself as a snake. The devil is often referred to as the "great deceiver", and in this chapter you can see why. I think an important thing for us to realize today is that the devil continues to work in our world. He continues to deceive men and women. And, unfortunately, he is good at what he does. I have a hunch that probably a few people reading this blog do not believe in the existence of the devil. I will admit that early in my Christian walk, I did not believe in the devil's existence. However - thankfully, I was discipled by a godly man who counseled me through Bible passages that prove his existence - chapter 3 of Genesis certainly being one. In fact, one interesting thing my friend said to me at this early stage of my Christian walk was this - "The devil's greatest trick is to make you think that he does not exist." This is a very powerful statement. Please consider it. **Q: Why would this be his greatest trick?** Because if you believe there is no devil, then you may believe there is no evil, and you then may believe that there is really no sin or nothing you can do wrong, and then you may come to believe that there is no moral code. **You see the slippery slope of not acknowledging and realizing the existence of the devil and evil?**

1/2 - The other problem of not realizing the existence of the devil or evil is that you can more easily be tempted and enslaved to bad habits and sins. So - I know I'm going on quite a bit here about this point - **Q: I just want to encourage you to ask yourself - do you believe in the existence of the devil? Do you believe in the existence of evil? Of temptation? Of sin?** There is a remedy and solution to protect and keep you from all of this - and that is Jesus. But, it's possible that you may not run into the loving and saving arms of Jesus if you don't believe in the devil or evil. Second to last point - a book that did help open my eyes in a big way to existence of evil in our world today is [Frank Peretti's "This Present Darkness"](#). It is a Christian book and one that I believe will really bring home the seriousness of evil and temptation in our world today. You may want to check it out if you have questions on all of this. Also, C.S. Lewis, in the intro to his incredible book about evil and temptation in our lives called ["The Screwtape Letters"](#) writes this: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight." A great quote... and a great reminder to not have an excessive nor unhealthy interest in the devil or evil - this is of course extremely dangerous! And the bottom line is of course to turn your eyes and gaze toward God and Jesus for ultimate protection - and I do believe reading the Bible each day is one of the best ways to do exactly this!

1/2 - In verses 12 and 13 we see Adam and Eve passing the buck on why they sinned. Check out Adam's words in verse 12: *"but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."* At first glance you might think that Adam is just blaming Eve in this verse, but note that he is also blaming God! "the woman YOU gave me..." Adam was blaming God and Eve - anybody but himself. **Q: How often do we do this in our lives? Blame others for our mistakes?** Verse 15 is a prophetic verse that carries forward to Jesus: *"From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* This last sentence refers to Jesus ultimately defeating the devil through his life, death on the cross, and resurrection!

1/2 - In Genesis chapter 4 we read about the first murder of humankind - Cain killing his own brother Abel in a premeditative way. This is a clear demonstration of The Fall and how sin lives in the hearts of men and women - and can only be redeemed and forgiven today through faith in Jesus and through God's grace. Many of you probably asked yourselves, why didn't God look with favor on Cain's offering? Commentaries I've read suggest that Cain's offering was a careless or thoughtless offering whereas Abel's offering was a choice or generous offering. And God saw the motivation and heart attitude of both men as they brought their offering. It seems that God is looking straight into Cain's heart as he says this in verses 6 and 7: *"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."* That is a scary thought - sin waiting to attack and destroy. In the NIV it translates *"sin is crouching at your door."* Let us be watchful and prayerful to not be overtaken by sin, but to respond correctly to the grace and strength given us through Jesus. **Q: How do you combat the "sin crouching at your door" in your life?**

1/2 - Genesis 4:17 - *"Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch."* - brings up the big question of "Where did Cain's wife come from?" The short answer to this is that his wife was a sister, niece, great-niece, or family member of some sort, which brings up the next question about why was there inter-family marriage in the Bible. Let me refer you to 3 great website links to give

you more in-depth answers on these questions. Please do read the [short answer at this link](#), the [long answer at this link](#), and another [short answer at this link](#) to these questions regarding Cain's wife.

1/2 - In Genesis 4:19 polygamy enters history: *"Lamech married two women--Adah and Zillah."* Polygamy clearly went against God's divine intention of monogamy in Genesis chapter 2:24 - *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."* God's original plan early on in the Bible is monogamy in marriage. We will see many cases of polygamy this year as we read through the One Year Bible - this is humankind thwarting God's will - which we will also see in many ways throughout our readings this year. I think sometimes we can get hung up on the "strange stuff" we read about in the Bible - but one important point to make is this - The Bible records both God's will and teachings, and people's sin. So if we happen to read about people's sin in the Bible, as we do here in verse 19 with Lamech's polygamy, please don't confuse this with this being God's will. It's people's sin. And we'll see this again in the Bible - fortunately we have a loving God who sent his son, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

1/3 - In Genesis chapter 5 we read about the genealogy from Adam to Noah. You will note that there are some long life spans here in this genealogy. These life spans are often interpreted to be either literal or symbolic - and many evangelical commentaries will say either is possible. Those who believe these ages in this genealogy are literal believe this is the case because of a few reasons: 1. the human race was more genetically pure in this early time period, so diseases did not shorten life spans; 2. no rain had yet fallen on the earth - until the next chapter - so the expanse of water above the earth protected people from environmental factors; and/or 3. God gave people longer life spans so they would have time to fill the earth - per Genesis 1:28.

1/3 - In Genesis 6 we read about the Flood. Most evangelical commentaries say that this was a literal flood that covered the entire earth, while some do say that it's possible that it was a flood that covered the Mesopotamian region of the earth. More seem to go with a literal flood covering the entire earth. Chapter 6 verses 5 & 6 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart."* I think it was this last sentence that really stood out to me - It broke his heart. God's heart was broken over our behavior. I love realizing that God has this type of compassion and care for what we do. What we do matters to God! When we are obedient and faithful and loving, God rejoices! When we are not, it breaks his heart. I hope it encourages you to know that God did not just create you and doesn't really care whether you do well in this life - he is rooting for you! He wants you to run the race well and receive the prize! **Q: How does Genesis Chapter 6 verses 5 & 6 in the days of Noah stand out to you?** *"Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart."* **Is there any correlation to the days of Noah to our modern day? In what ways do you think God's heart is broken over our world today?**

1/3 - In Genesis 6:4 we read about the Nephilim. Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org says this about the Nephilim: *"According to this view, the 'sons of God' of verses 2 and 4 are fallen angels, which have taken the form of masculine human-like creatures. These angels married women of the human race (either Cainites or Sethites) and the resulting offspring were the Nephilim. The Nephilim were giants with physical superiority and therefore established themselves as men of renown for their physical prowess and military might. This race of half human creatures was wiped out by the flood, along with mankind in general, who were sinners in their own right (verse 6:11,12)."*

1/4 - Yesterday's Flood readings in Genesis were about judgment - today's readings are about redemption! Chapter 8 verse 1 stood out to me: *"But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat."* I like that phrase "But God remembered" - but I have a hunch that it is a bit understated in God's love and compassion for Noah and all of creation. Verse 11 is interesting in that if you were ever wondering where our modern day peace symbol of a dove with an olive branch comes from originally - now you know - God's peace symbol to Noah here in Genesis 8:11!

1/4 - In Genesis chapter 9 verses 8 through 17 we read about the first major covenant of God's in the Old Testament called the Noahic Covenant. There are 6 more major covenant's that we will get to later this year - The first Abrahamic covenant, The second Abrahamic covenant, The Sinaitic Covenant (Moses on Mt. Sinai), The Phinehas Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. So - Covenants are a big deal! God is a God of covenants! This one is laid out in all 10 verses but can basically be summed up in verse 11: *"I solemnly promise never to send another flood to kill all living creatures and destroy the earth."* And the rainbow is given as a sign of The Noahic Covenant. **Q: How did reading about the flood affect you? Is there any way you can see the flood as an act of mercy from God?**

1/4 - Genesis chapter 9 verse 3 is intriguing. I forgot to mention this in previous day's posts - but, I read a commentary on the Garden of Eden and even thereafter that early descendants of Adam & Eve were strictly vegetarians - God had given Adam & Eve the fruits & plants in the Garden to eat - and then Adam's son's cultivated the ground for plants / food. But here in verse 3 God is now saying that it is okay to eat animals' meat for food: *"I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables."* Very interesting. We'll get more details on clean and unclean animals per the Law in our OT readings early this year.

1/4 - In the remainder of chapter 9 we read about Noah's son's Shem, Ham and Japheth. Initially I asked myself, why is Noah so upset with Ham? The answer lies in verse 22: *"Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers."* The last 3 words of this sentence were the issue - Ham told his brothers his father was naked. Instead of discreetly just covering up his father on his own, he broadcast the issue to his brothers. **Q: Are there times in our life where we could discreetly take care of problems of others, or could confront the individual directly about the problem, but instead we broadcast what someone else's problems are? Is this the right thing to do? Is this the godly thing to do?**

1/4 - There is a lot of interesting stuff going on in the genealogy in chapter 10, which is typically called The Table of Nations, but I'll just quickly point out verses 21 & 22: *"Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber."* Shem becomes translated in the future as Semites - i.e. Semitic peoples. And Eber is translated in the future as Hebrew. So, you can see that Shem's lineage is going to be the one from where Israel comes from.

1/5 - In Genesis chapter 11 we read about the tower of Babel. I probably should not confess this, but I will - verse 4 made me smile and laugh at myself a bit, which really shouldn't be funny. This verse reminded me of myself at times: *"Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies--a monument to our greatness!"* This verse is obviously not one that made God happy, as we see in subsequent verses. And I guess I have to ask myself - are there times my life or areas of my life where I am attempting to build something that will be a "monument to my greatness"? And I'm afraid that the answer is too often yes. Or it surely has been in the past. I pray that I'm turning over the desire to "be great" over to God more and more these days. I pray that I am not seeking glory for myself - but seeking glory for God. But, I am afraid that sometimes I revert back to wanting to build a "monument to my greatness" in my work or volunteer activities or maybe even personal relationships. And this is pride. It was this pride that brought about the building of the tower of Babel - and it was because of pride that God stopped the building of the tower by giving the human race different languages. **Q: In your life – have you ever sought to build monuments of greatness for yourself? How have you refocused your life to seek to only glorify God?**

1/5 - We are introduced to Abram & Sarai in Genesis chapter 12. This is significant in that it transitions our Old Testament readings from being about the world at large to being primarily about a specific man, Abram, his family, and his descendants. Verses 2 and 3 are an amazing promise from God to Abraham: *"I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."* This is a powerful promise that we will see played out throughout the rest of our Old Testament readings - and into the New Testament this promise continues and is fulfilled in Jesus - and continues in us as spiritual descendants of Abram today. I heard somewhere once that one way to paraphrase this promise is "I will bless you, so that you will be a blessing to others." And I think about that today for our own lives. If we have been blessed by God, is it possible that we have been blessed in part so that we will be a blessing to others? **Q: How do you believe that you been blessed by God? How are you passing along that blessing to others in your life? What are some new ways in 2011 that God might be calling you to be a blessing to others?**

1/5 - The brief story of Abram and Sarai in Egypt is a foreshadowing of what we will see later in Genesis and into Exodus - the descendants of Abram going into Egypt to escape a severe famine - and then ultimately leaving Egypt to the north "with all their household and belongings" (verse 20). I also was intrigued in our Matthew readings a couple of days ago that Jesus as a child went into Egypt, when Mary & Joseph fled Herod's decree to kill all boys 2 & under around Bethlehem. Egypt plays quite a supporting role in the Bible!

1/6 - Chapter 13 verse 9 stood out to me today as Abram was trying to settle the arguments between his and Lot's herdsmen over pastureland: *"I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another"*

place." I guess what I really like about this is Abram is giving Lot the first choice of the land. It seems like Abram is confident that he will personally be okay with whatever 2nd choice is left-over to him because he is in a relationship with God. **Q: What is a time in your life that you let someone else take the first choice, and you took the "leftover" and it turned out to be a blessing overall?**

1/6 - Chapter 14 verse 14 also stood out in regards to Abram's character: *"When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them in Dan."* I don't know about you... but I'll be honest. If my nephew got captured by a band of marauding kings and their army, I'm thinking I might just let my nephew go and chalk it up to very bad luck on his part... But not Abram! When he heard the news that Lot had been captured, it looks like he did not even blink! He called together his household immediately and they were off and running after Kedorlaomer's army. Yes, they were chasing after an army... again, I'm not so sure I would do this... though, hopefully, maybe I now would if I can keep in mind Abram's character here.... **Q: What about you? Would you chase after an army? Is there maybe someone in your life who has been "captured" by something - an addiction, a sadness, some bad luck - and will you go chasing after that person and help to free them from the "army" that has ensnared them?**

1/6 - In verses 17 through 20 in chapter 14 we read about Melchizedek. And I definitely would like to get others opinions on this - Who was Melchizedek? The reason I ask this question is due to Hebrews Chapter 7. (Hebrews 7 is well worth the read at this point in our Genesis journey.) My thinking currently is that Melchizedek was a very great priest - but I don't believe he was Jesus Christ preincarnate. But, again, I'm willing to listen to others on your thoughts on this. My thoughts on this is that Hebrews 7 seems to be saying that Jesus is "like" or "in the order" of Melchizedek - but not quite saying Jesus is Melchizedek. I read there are 4 basic theories on who Melchizedek is - 1. simply a king of Salem and Abram was showing him respect, 2. Melchizedek was a standard title for the kings of Salem. 3. He was a "type of Christ" and he illustrates a lesson about Christ. or 4. He was Jesus preincarnate in a temporary body form. **Q: Who do you think Melchizedek was?**

1/6 - Genesis chapter 15:9-21 is the first Abrahamic Covenant. It was an unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of the land to Abram and his descendants. Verses 5 & 6 in chapter 15 are powerful: *"Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that--too many to count!" And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith."* It is believed that in the dark night sky of the ancient near east Abram could have seen up to 8,000 stars in the sky. And verse 6, the preceding sentence to this one I think is important for each of us to consider. **Q: How do you know that you believe God's promises in your life today? What are God's promises for you? How do we demonstrate faith that God's promises for us through his son Jesus are true?**

1/7 - In Genesis chapter 16 we get another potential Jesus sighting in the OT! :) (Similar to our "potential" with Melchizedek yesterday.) I'll keep you posted on all our "potential" Jesus sightings in the Old Testament - as seen by some commentaries. Some believe that the angel that appears to Hagar in the desert could be Christ pre-incarnate. Why? Because the angel seems to be speaking in the first person, as if the angel is God - (and Jesus is God) - but yet the angel is not described as God the Father. Check out verse 10 on this point - *"I will give you more descendants than you can count."* Next point is that later in this chapter Hagar seems to be giving the angel a bit more credit of the angel "just being an angel", as you'll see here in verse 13: *"Thereafter, Hagar referred to the LORD, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!"* I guess I can see how some commentators go down this path... **Q: Why or why not do you think Jesus could have been preincarnate in the Old Testament?**

1/7 - In Genesis chapter 17 we read about the second Abrahamic Covenant! This covenant was is a conditional divine pledge from God to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendents. The condition? Obedience and consecration to God as symbolized by circumcision. In verse 23 I think we see another example of Abraham's prompt obedience to God's will for his life: *"On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him."* Abraham does not hesitate - does not wait one more day - he and every other male in his household get circumcised that very day! **Q: How are you prompt with your obedience to God's will in your life? Are there some areas in your life where you feel like you might not be so prompt with your obedience?**

1/7 - In Genesis 18 we see some amazing hospitality from Abraham to God and two angels that appear along with God - or Jesus again preincarnate. Hospitality for strangers was important back in Abraham's day. **Q: What is an example of**

**how you show hospitality toward strangers today? What are some areas in your life that God might be calling you to show more hospitality?**

1/8 - In Genesis chapter's 18 & 19 we get a great look at how God responds to intercessory prayer and also clearly see God's judgment in chapter 19. Ch. 18 Verse 17 is a powerful start to our readings: "*Should I hide my plan from Abraham?*" *the LORD asked.*" I think what we see here and in the following verses is that God obviously really cares for Abraham - as a friend - and as one who has been credited as righteous because of his faith. And I do think this is an important point before we read about Abraham's intercessory prayer to God - that for intercessory prayer really to have any standing before God, we need to be in right relationship with God. If we are being disobedient to God or being unrepentant of sins or bad habits that God wants us to give up, then I think our intercessory prayer for others can lose its effectiveness. Check out James 5:16 for this point: "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*" Abraham was credited as righteous because of his faith (Genesis 15:6). Hence, his intercessory prayer was powerful and effective. **Q. How do you intercede for others in your prayers today? Do you believe intercessory prayer to be powerful?**

1/8 - In verse 25 we begin to see Abraham's several requests, or intercessions, to God to spare the city of Sodom for the sake of the righteous living in the city: "*Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?*" And from here we see Abraham bringing down the number of righteous that would need to be in the city for it to be spared. I don't necessarily see what Abraham was doing here as haggling with God - but, I think he was acting out of compassion for the righteous few in the city - and surely Lot and his family were on his mind during these intercessions...

1/8 - In Genesis chapter 19 there is a lot going on. And I'm sure a few things that jump out at you when you read them, and create a lot of questions in your mind. (Lot offering his two virgin daughters (v. 8) & what happened in the cave (v. 30-36), for examples) **Let me recommend you take 10 minutes and read through Bob Deffinbaugh's "From City Councilman to Caveman: "What a Difference a Day Makes" (Genesis 19:1-38)" [at this link at Bible.org](#).** I think this will answer a lot of your questions on why certain things happened in this chapter, from Bob's perspective. One great quote from Bob at this link above is this: "Lot attempted to live his life in a city and then in a cave. We cannot become one with the world, but neither are we to flee from it. The proper balance between the city of Sodom and the cave is the tent of Abraham. We are to live in the world, but without becoming attached to it or conformed to it. We are to be strangers and pilgrims." I like that! **Q: How do you balance living life in the world, but not of it? What might it look like in your life to live in a "tent" like Abraham, rather than in the "city" or the "cave"?**

1/8 - One verse that immediately stood out to me in chapter 19 is verse 16: "*When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful.*" What struck me in this verse is that Lot hesitated. In the previous verse, the angels say very clearly and strongly - "get out of the city! hurry! God is going to destroy it!" And yet... Lot hesitated. This jumped out at me because in our couple of previous day's readings we have seen how promptly obedient Abraham was to God's commands. When God said to get circumcised and circumcise everyone in the house - it happened that same day! And yet, here we see Lot hesitating on a very clear command from angels... **Q: Do you think we live our lives of faith and obedience to God more often like Abraham or Lot? What is an example of a time you were promptly obedient to God's will and commands for your life? And a time you hesitated? Which worked out better in the long run?**

**MATTHEW 1:1 - 7:14**

1/1 - **Overview of the book of Matthew:**

Author: Matthew

Place: Perhaps Antioch Date: A.D. 60-70

Content: Matthew was a tax collector, called by Jesus to follow him early in his public ministry; hence, he was an eyewitness of most of the events he describes. He begins with a detailed account of Jesus' birth of the virgin Mary, his baptism, and temptation in the wilderness. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God, entrance into which meant eternal life. One entered by repentance and faith. Matthew blocks the teaching of Jesus together into five discourses in which may be seen the ethics, the proclamation, the parables, the fellowship, and the consummation of the kingdom. Jesus' death and resurrection end the Gospel with the command to go into all the world with the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ.

Theme: Matthew's main purpose in writing his Gospel is to show that Jesus fulfills the promise of God in the Old

Testament. For this reason Jesus is introduced as a "descendant of King David and of Abraham," and Matthew makes use of numerous Old Testament prophecies and quotations to explain Jesus' life. Jesus came to be the Savior of the Jews, the Gentiles, and ultimately the world. The ethics required by members of God's kingdom are found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7) where the world's values are rejected and the Kingdom of God and his righteousness become supreme. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 21)

1/1 - In today's Matthew readings, we read the genealogy of Jesus. I know that genealogy's can sometimes seem a bit boring to read, but this one in Matthew is phenomenal! If you just finished reading the One Year Bible this past year, you will recognize many of these names. Or - let me encourage you to come back and read this genealogy again on January 1st of next year, if you are going through the entire Bible for your first time this year. This genealogy will amaze you. One of the interesting things to note in this genealogy is the mention of 5 women - Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. It was not the norm in the 1st century to list women in genealogies - only men were typically listed. At least 3 of these women were Gentiles (not Jewish) - Tamara, Rahab, and Ruth. Matthew was potentially trying to indicate to his Jewish readers that God's work in this world is not limited to the people of Israel - nor was God's work limited to men. The genealogy in Matthew is sometimes illustrated by a "Jesse Tree" showing the lineage of Jesus from Jesse, father of King David.

1/1 - Chapter 1 verse 23 is certainly a huge prophecy from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah being fulfilled through the birth of Jesus: "*Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us).*" Jesus is God and came to literally be with us. To experience our human sufferings and temptations - and joys and triumphs. The importance of this birth of Immanuel cannot be overstated. God came to be with us in flesh and blood.

1/1 - Chapter 2 verse 6 is very powerful in that this past year's One Year Bible crew recently read about the prophet Micah's prophesying of Jesus being born in Bethlehem: "*O Bethlehem of Judah, you are not just a lowly village in Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.*" Here again you can see Matthew writing for his Jewish audience - quoting an Old Testament prophet and also focusing in on the town of "Bethlehem of Judah" - the City of David. This was to demonstrate again that Jesus was from the lineage of King David.

1/1 - Verse 10 is a brief verse showing us the reaction of the magi in being led to Jesus: "*When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!*" The magi were also Gentiles and likely astrologers - following a star might lead one to think this... :) But no matter where they were from and what they believed prior, they were filled with joy at being led to the Messiah, Jesus. And they gave him gifts and worshipped him. And for us today - are we filled with joy in reading about the birth of Jesus? Do we realize what this meant back then - and still means today? That Immanuel was born - that God came to be with us. (Note that some Biblical scholars say that contrary to popular tradition, it is believed that the magi did not visit Jesus at the manger on the night of his birth, as did the shepherds, but that the magi came months later and visited him as "child" in his "house" - see verse 11.)

1/2 - In Matthew today we read about The Escape to Egypt. Two things stood out to me in Joseph's behavior in today's readings. In verse 13 an angel tells Joseph to "*get up and flee to Egypt*" - and Joseph responds by leaving THAT NIGHT with the family, as we see in verse 14. That's beautiful obedience. Then, in verse 21 we see Joseph respond similarly when he is told by an angel to return to Israel - he leaves with the family "immediately." I like this - Joseph is acting obediently to God's will in his life - and he is acting pronto! He's not sitting around worrying or fretting or thinking that he'll get to it tomorrow. He goes that night! He returns immediately! **Q: Can we learn from Joseph's amazing obedience in these readings? Is God calling you to do something in your life that you are hemming and hawing about? Is God calling you to forgive someone? To love someone? To serve someone? To encourage someone? Will you be like Joseph and obey God's call for your life immediately?**

1/2 - Today in Matthew chapter 3 we are introduced to John the Baptist! I don't know exactly what it is about John the Baptist - but I love reading about him and his life. He is just on fire for God and Jesus and he is encouraging others to get on fire too! I guess I like that in a person. :-) Another thing about John is that he is so focused on his mission to call others to repentance and to baptize them, that he really does not care about worldly things - like how he looks or what he wears or what he eats. None of that really matters to him. It is the message of the coming of Jesus that matters to him. Maybe it is verse 4 that really stands out to me about John: "*John's clothes were woven from camel hair, and he wore a leather belt; his food was locusts and wild honey.*" I think this is really saying that John lived a simple life. He did not "major in minor things" - he "majored in the major thing" - Jesus! **Q: Is there something we can learn from John the Baptist in**

**our lives today? Are you perhaps focusing too much on things of this world and not enough on God and Jesus? Are you truly loving God and loving people like John did? Or are you spending your life "majoring in minor things"? Will you instead "major on the major thing" that John is calling you to even today - complete passion and love for God: the Father, Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit; and other people?**

1/3 - Today's Matthew readings are incredible on so many levels. We begin by reading about John the Baptist going off on the Pharisees and Sadducees! John is not joking around here... :) I think one verse that really stood out to me was verse 8: *"Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God."* and verse 10: *"Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."* I think what I hear John saying here is that we are called to truly repent and change our ways. Not just to say some nice words or just show up to church on Sundays - but to be transformed. Our lives should be visibly different from our past if we have really turned from our sins and turned to God. And this change will be evident by our lives producing "good fruit" - examples of which can certainly be seen in any of the Ten Commandments or loving our neighbor as ourselves and above all loving God with all our hearts, minds, soul and strength. Our lives should look very different from our past. **Q: Do they? Does yours?**

1/3 - Verses 16 & 17 are phenomenal as we see the three persons of the Trinity interacting with each other! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: *"After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him.""* Jesus' baptism is very significant because it is the act that opens up the public ministry phase of Jesus' life. Now - I think what happens just after Jesus' baptism is something each of us should take heed of - the devil comes in full force after Jesus. I heard someone tell me just before I was baptized about 6 years ago that whenever we make a public declaration that we love God: the Father, Jesus the Son, & the Holy Spirit and that we want to follow Him, the devil and temptation very likely will appear. The devil isn't happy when we are moving forward in our love of Jesus and loving others - and he wants to derail it. And that's what we see here in chapter 4 - God: the Father, Jesus the Son, & the Holy Spirit have just declared "Game On!" with Jesus' public ministry via the baptism - and then who should show up coming after Jesus? **Q: If the devil showed up to tempt Jesus, don't you think he might try to show up in our lives when we are starting something big in our faith walk?** Fortunately, Jesus gives us all the answers we need in chapter 4 to thwart the devil's attacks.

1/3 - Chapter 4 verse 4 I believe is one of the most important verses for us to commit to memory in all of the Bible: *"But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God.'" (NLT).* Or, you might recognize this verse a bit better in NIV format: *"Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* This is such a powerful spiritual truth that Jesus is conveying - we will not live full and true lives if we live simply on bread alone. We need spiritual nourishment - food - from every Word of God. Where do we get this Word of God? You got it - the Bible. And note that Jesus says "every" word of God. This means the whole Bible is spiritual food for us. All of it. Not just the parts we like the best. :) We can learn something and be nourished by even the long genealogies! Seriously. So - I want to applaud you for going through the One Year Bible - you will be getting nourishment from "every" Word of God this year!

1/3 - One other important point to make in Matthew 4:4 and the 2 other temptations in this chapter. We see the devil tempting Jesus with things that may look enticing to Jesus or to us. But they are lies. And note - this is important - how Jesus fends off the devil's temptations and lies - by quoting Scripture! Jesus knew Scripture (well, yes, technically He is Scripture...:) The point is this. I do believe that we need to do more than just read the Bible. We need to memorize many portions of the Bible to protect us when the devil is attacking. If we have Scripture memorized, when we are tempted, we can quickly call to mind a verse or two that will bring us back into right state of mind - focusing back on God: the Father, Jesus the Son, & the Holy Spirit and their love and strength available through the Holy Spirit. If we don't have Scripture memorized, as Jesus clearly did in this chapter, we are at risk of falling prey to the deception and lies of the temptation. So - I am mostly preaching this to myself! :) But, I really want to do more memorization of Scripture this year. I have several verses down - but not enough. [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) certainly comes to mind for me often when I am worried or stressed and it transforms my state of mind immediately! **Q: What can you apply in your life today based on how Jesus rebuked the devil's temptations?** Very important to note is what happened when Jesus rebuked the devil's temptations with Scripture, the Word of God, in verse 11: *"Then the Devil went away."* Amen to that! :) **Are you memorizing Scripture on a regular basis? Are you bringing Scripture to mind when faced with temptation or sadness or whatever ails you? I would love to know which verses you have found useful in your life? Do you have advice on how to best go about memorizing Scripture? Will you join me in my plan to memorize more Scripture verses this year?**

1/4 - Matthew chapter 4:12 begins Jesus' public ministry. Verse 17 is of note: *"From then on, Jesus began to preach, 'Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near.'"* You'll note that Jesus is echoing earlier words of John the Baptist - turn from your sins - repent. The message is obviously of utmost importance - then and now. And then you'll see several times in the gospel of Matthew the term "the Kingdom of Heaven." You'll later see in Mark and Luke's gospel's a similar term, "the Kingdom of God." They basically mean the same thing - but Matthew was using the term "Heaven" instead of "God" because he was writing for a Jewish audience, which did not like to verbalize God's name (out of respect). Per Zondervan's NIV Study Bible, the Kingdom of Heaven is essentially brought about through the ministry of Jesus and those that have faith in Him - the establishment of God's rule in the hearts of people, the overcoming of evil, the removal of the consequences of sin, and a new order of peace. The idea of God's kingdom is mentioned nearly 50 times in the gospel of Matthew. **Q: How have you seen God's Kingdom manifested in your life? How have you seen that the Kingdom of heaven is near? What does repent meant to you? Is repentance a one time thing or an ongoing thing our lives?**

1/4 - Matthew 4 verses 18 through 20 is something that I think all of us should reflect upon in our own lives: *"One day as Jesus was walking along the shore beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers--Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew--fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. Jesus called out to them, 'Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!' And they left their nets at once and went with him."* What would you do if you were at work today or tomorrow and Jesus came to you and said - "Come, be my disciple, and I will show you how to fish for people!" Like Peter and Andrew, would you go at once with Jesus? This is not an easy question for us to answer. But I think it is worth asking. I have a great friend who indeed felt the call of Jesus to leave his very nicely paid architect job in the U.S. and to become a missionary architect in Asia - building primarily hospitals for communities that need them. The point of this passage I think is this - Jesus is indeed calling each one of us to follow Him. We may not need to leave our jobs. (But some of us may...) The call may entail leaving some of our luxurious ways or lazy behaviors behind to truly follow Him. The call to follow Jesus certainly entails leaving our sinful ways behind. **Q: Do you think Jesus still calls people today? Can you share with everyone a time in your life when felt that you were called by Jesus? Maybe it was a time when you were called to follow Jesus for the first time or maybe it was a call to love or serve others in a new way for you? Do you think that Jesus is calling you to something new in your life now in 2010? What do you think Jesus is calling you to do?**

1/4 - Matthew 4:23 nicely encapsulates Jesus' 3 main ministries that we will see over and over again in the gospels - 1. teaching, 2. preaching, and 3. healing. *"Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues, preaching everywhere the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed people who had every kind of sickness and disease."* **Q: How will you allow Jesus to teach you this year? How will you even allow Jesus to preach to you this year? And, this may be the toughest to surrender answer – how will you allow Jesus to heal you this year?**

1/5 - Okay... today is a big day my friends! We are starting the Sermon on the Mount! Whoo-hoo! (are you cheering here with me?? :) ) And as we do, let me encourage you in a few ways on what we'll be reading here. First of all, personally, these 3 chapters of Matthew (5, 6, 7) have been transformative for me over the years. Before I had faith in Jesus, I would continually read these chapters and I kept thinking to myself - "This guy has got some wisdom! I like what he's saying!" And I do believe that the Spirit was no doubt working on me as I read these chapters. So, I do ask that you would be sensitive to the Spirit as you read The Sermon on the Mount. **What is the Spirit speaking to you as you read?** Which verses are really jumping out at you - maybe making you think about some areas of your life that might need some tidying up... I know that this happens to me every time I read the Sermon on the Mount. Here's my other big request for you as you read through the Sermon on the Mount - and really all of the gospels. Try to experience what you are reading as something more than just "historical" teachings or "historical" readings. Try to envision yourself maybe down at your local park and maybe imagine that Jesus was actually at that park surrounded by a bunch of your neighbors and imagine that you heard Jesus actually saying these words to you and your neighbors - today. **Would this change your perception of what you are reading?** Or, maybe imagine that indeed Jesus is not just at your local park - but in your very home saying these words to you. And truly - He is - as you are reading the Bible you are hearing directly from Jesus. I just want to encourage you that the words you read here in the Sermon on the Mount are incredible spiritual food. And I don't think we can come back to these 3 chapters of Matthew often enough. I pray that you will let the Spirit of Jesus speak directly into your mind and your heart as you read and meditate on the meanings of these 3 chapters of the gospel of Matthew...

1/5 - Matthew 5: 17-18 are interpreted in different ways - but a friend of mine has encouraged me when in doubt, just stick to the text, which is wise. So, let's look at the Jesus' words here in this text - *"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did*

*not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them. I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved."* **Q: What does the reading of this text say to you?** Related to these verses above, quoting this from Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion book - which I have found to be a very helpful commentary to our daily readings: "In the Old Testament, there were 3 categories of law: ceremonial, civil, and moral. 1. The **ceremonial law** was related specifically to Israel's worship. Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ; these laws are therefore no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. However, the principles behind these laws - to worship and love a holy God - still apply. 2. The **civil law** applied to daily living in Israel and these laws cannot be followed specifically today in our modern society and culture. But the principles behind these laws are timeless and should guide our conduct. 3. The **moral law** (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and requires obedience. The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today." So, there you have it from one evangelical commentary. I know probably different people reading this blog are going to interpret these verses a bit differently. This framework of these 3 categories of laws above and their fulfillment in Jesus I personally have found helpful and agree with. One other commentary I found related to these verses says this: "Christ does not terminate the law. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; we establish the law. (Romans 3:31)* The law will always be there to point out what sin is, but the law is not the focus, Christ is the focus. Only He can cleanse, and sanctify and change the heart and mind." **Q: How do you look at the Old Testament law in your life? How do you integrate the Ten Commandments, for example, into your daily life? Or do you?**

1/6 - Matthew 5:27-30 are Jesus' teachings about adultery. And really I think these teachings, along with many others in the Sermon on the Mount, are even more so about what is going on inside our hearts. Jesus discusses how the law says clearly how we are "not to do" something - it's very apparent and very "exterior" if we commit a sin like adultery. Jesus says that the exterior/apparent/obvious sin is wrong for sure - but Jesus is equally as concerned with what's going on in the "interior" - inside our hearts. Jesus proposes that if we have looked at someone lustfully with our "interior", we have committed the same sin as if we had actually committed adultery on the "exterior." **Q: Do you see how Jesus' teachings in today's readings are really focusing on the condition of our hearts? How is the condition of your heart today when it comes to these teachings?**

1/6 - Matthew 5:27-28 reads: "*You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" **Q: Are there any good books or websites you can recommend to the group related to achieving victory in this area of our lives? Or any habits or practices of yours that you are comfortable sharing about how you avoid the sin of lust in your life?**

1/7 - What a blessing to read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6! I have to confess, I don't say this prayer very often... and Jesus seems to indicate pretty clearly that this is a good way to pray. :) I do pray often throughout the day - but usually it's pretty immediate stuff - bless this meal, thank you for this day, bless my time at work, etc. etc. What a great thing it would be if I could remember to actually pray the Lord's Prayer a bit more... **Q: How do you pray? Or, in how many different ways do you pray? Do you pray specific prayers regularly, like the Lord's Prayer? Do you keep a list of people by your bedside to pray for regularly? Do you pray by writing in a journal?**

1/7 - Matthew 6:24 has always always been a verse that's convicted me and still does today: "*No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*" There is so much truth here in these 3 little sentences... Who are we serving in our lives today? I once read that one good indicator is to take a look at your monthly budget. Where does the money go each month? Interesting way to look at this. Maybe another way to look at this is how you spend your time each week. How much time is spent at work, volunteering, being with God, being with family/friends, taking a Sabbath, etc. Maybe looking at how we spend our time and money is a good way to see who or what we are worshipping? **Q: Do you believe that it is true that we cannot serve two masters? What are some ways that help you make sure that you're not serving money in your life?**

1/8 - Today in Matthew we continue the Sermon on the Mount! Chapter 6 verse 27 is solid science from Jesus: "*Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not.*" **Wouldn't you agree that scientific studies show that severe worrying (anxiety) can actually decrease the longevity of your life?** Jesus knew his science! :) Truly... I do think you'll continue to be amazed by the scientific validity and Truth that is exhibited in the Bible over and over and over again as we read it this year!

1/8 - Chapter 6 verse 34 has always been one of my favorites to remember: *"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."* Great great truth here. **I'm not sure if anyone has ever read a Dale Carnegie book about worrying?** It's called "[How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#)." It's been probably 10 years ago since I read this book. But, I remember Dale writing about how he lived his life in what he called "day-tight compartments". He used a cargo ship analogy, which I won't be able to explain here well. But, basically, Dale got to the point where he mentally segmented his time off into morning prep time, time with family over breakfast, morning work time, lunch time, afternoon work time, dinner time, family time, time to read, sleeping time. And while he was in the present time of each of these "compartments" of his day he would not worry at all about the other compartments even in that very same day! It's pretty interesting to think about... when you are at work, you focus on work and you don't daydream or worry about your personal life - but, once you are off work, you then don't worry about work at all. I don't know... maybe this Dale Carnegie "day-tight compartments" is only helpful to me... I recommend you listen to Jesus' advice on worrying before you listen to Dale or mine! :) But, if you do worry a lot, this Dale Carnegie book may very helpful for you as well.

1/8 - In Matthew chapter 7 verse 6 we read: *"Don't give what is holy to unholy people. Don't give pearls to swine! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you."* I understand what is being said here - and I can think of specific instances in my life where this type of thing has happened. My question though for each of us is this - how do we show our friends, family, neighbors the love of God? Honestly, I have an evangelistic heart - but I don't think I really openly evangelize much. I love God so much - and it tears me up when I see my friends struggling with addictions - particularly when it seems like they are seeking God but settle for an addiction. So - I don't think this verse 6 is referring to these types of situations - people seeking God in all the wrong places. I think we are called to share the love of God with our hurting friends - with a hurting world. **Q: How do you do this? Do you pray for others? Do you give others books or Bibles? Do you send them spiritual emails? Do you invite them to church? Do you "preach the gospel at all times, and use words when only necessary?"**

## **PSALM 1:1 - 8:9**

### **1/1 - Overview of the Psalms:**

Author: Principally David; also many others

Date: Tenth century B.C. and later

Content: This favorite book of today was also a favorite in antiquity. In it may be seen the many different ways in which believers over several centuries related to God. Every human mood and feeling may be brought to God for him to bless. There are sorrow and joy, anger and calm, doubt and faith, repentance and praise. There are recollections of the past, the struggles of present existence, and visions of a glorious future. In numerous places, God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, is portrayed in his suffering and in his glory. The book of Psalms was used in much the same way as a hymnbook is used today, for public and private worship.

Theme: The book of Psalms teaches principally that God has a personal concern for his people and that he wants us to come to him just as we are. We need not solve our problems before we go to him; we go to him for the solutions. Wherever we are, however we feel, whatever we have done – if we offer ourselves to God, he is willing to help and give us the strength to live again. God's power and control of all things is also seen. Because God is in control of everything, he can help us when we turn to him for deliverance. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 10)*

1/1 - Martin Luther said this about the book of Psalms: *"The Psalter is the favorite book of all the saints. Each person, whatever his circumstances may be, finds in the psalms words which are appropriate to the circumstances in which he finds himself and meet his needs as adequately as if they were composed exclusively for his sake, and in such a way that he himself could not improve on them nor find or desire any better psalms or words."*

1/1 - Psalm 1 verse 2 reads: *"But they delight in doing everything the LORD wants; day and night they think about his law."* **Q: How well does this verse ring true with your life today? Do you delight in being obedient to God? Do you think about God's Word, the Bible, day and night? Do you memorize Scripture on a regular basis?**

1/2 - Psalm 2 is a prophetic and Messianic Psalm. This Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament in reference to Jesus as God's Anointed and the great son of King David. The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word for "anointed one." And the word "Christ" comes from the Greek word for "anointed one." (as we read Anointed One in verse 2 ) Verses 11 & 12 in this Psalm are encouraging and also a strong warning for us at the same time: *"Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling. Submit to God's royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be*

*destroyed in the midst of your pursuits--for his anger can flare up in an instant. But what joy for all who find protection in him!"* I think the closing sentence should be a huge encouragement to us. If we are seeking to love God and Jesus and other people with all of our hearts, mind, strength and souls - God knows it. And he will provide eternal protection for us. Yes, there will be suffering in this life - but joy can be found in knowing that we will have an eternity to spend with God and his royal son!

1/3 - Psalm 3 is a wonderful Psalm of David's, when he was fleeing his own son Absalom - details of which we will read about later this year. Verse 5 stood out to me today: *"I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me."* God watches over us as we sleep! I like that a lot! I hope this verse comforts you as you sleep tonight!

1/4 - Psalm 4 is a wonderful Davidic Psalm. Verse 7 stands out: *"You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and wine."* **Q: How has God's Spirit given you greater joy than any amount of money or material goods or even human love can give? How are you experiencing God's holy joy in your life currently?**

1/5 - Psalm 5 verse 3 reads: *"Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly."* This is a great reminder to pray in the mornings - before we start the hustle and bustle of the day. I know that many of you are reading the One Year Bible readings in the morning, which I think is a great way to start your day! I do see a huge positive difference in my day if I do pray to God in the morning and pray specifically about the upcoming day - and pray for others that I will interact with that day as well. Praise God for the morning! **Q: what do you do in the morning to set your mind and heart on God? Is it prayer, reading the Bible, reading other devotions?**

1/6 - As I read Psalm 6, it seems very penitential to me - like David was making a confession of sins and praying for forgiveness from God. **As you read through these verses, have you ever felt like this?** I have. And it ain't fun. But, it's part of the healing process. I do think we need to allow ourselves to get fully broken before God before we get fully healed. We can't mask over or hide from God what's really going on - we have got to put it all out there on the table before God, for him to be able to truly fix it. However - there is great encouragement and confidence from David in this Psalm in verse 9: *"The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD will answer my prayer."* The Lord will hear your plea! The Lord will answer your prayer! Please plea and pray to him if you need to. He will listen and answer.

1/7 - Today in Psalm 7 verse 10 we read: *"God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right."* What stood out to me here is that it does not say that God saves those who "do" what is true and right. It says that God saves those whose "hearts are" true and right. As discussed in yesterday's Matthew 5 post, below, this is getting toward our interior motives and thoughts and hearts - the important thing is not what we do on the "exterior", but who we are on the "interior". And then certainly if our hearts are true and right, a natural outflow of this is doing good things on the exterior. But, it's the interior - our hearts - that matter most. **Q: How is your heart these days? Is it true and right? And do you believe that God is indeed your shield?**

1/8 - Psalm 8, verses 3 & 4 I love: *"When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers-- the moon and the stars you have set in place-- what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us?"* What I love about this verse is that before I had faith in Jesus, and even God, I used to always look toward the night sky and just be amazed by the stars! I would always think to myself - there is no way that this all just happened by chance. There's gotta be something bigger going on making all of this happen. The night sky was evangelizing me!! :) What a beautiful thing. **Q: How have you ever had the experience of nature, God's creation, evangelizing you? When you are out in nature, how do you offer up praise and thanks to God for His amazingly beautiful creation?**

## **PROVERBS 1:1 - 2:15**

### **1/1 - Overview of Proverbs:**

Author: Principally Solomon; also many others Date: Tenth century B.C. and later

Content: The book of Proverbs contains practical instructions for successful living, given by God to supplement the teaching of the prophets, which was to call men to repentance, and the work of the priests, which was to direct the worship of the people. The book of Proverbs teaches that there is a divine wisdom given to man by God, but there is also a divinely given human wisdom, or common sense, and both must play a part in daily life. Practical sayings from many centuries are collected together in this book; it deals with such diverse matters as the discipline of children, social justice, foolish talk, and money. It ends significantly with a description of a truly good wife.

Theme: The theme of Proverbs is stated in 1:7 – The first step to wisdom is to trust and revere the Lord. This is to say that

only when a man trusts in God will he be truly wise. Human wisdom is fine and necessary but no matter how skilled we might be, without humility in the presence of God and a willingness to learn from him, we will inevitably go astray. The book also teaches the sanctity of human life. Everything that pertains to successful living is a concern to God and he has made provision for it. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 10-11)*

1/1 - Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M., with <http://www.bible.org> (please bookmark & visit this website often in 2011!), has a wonderful Introduction to Proverbs found on this link - <http://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-proverbs> I'll quote from Bob's article's 8 points on how we can benefit from a study of the Proverbs – but you'll need to go to the link above for further details on each of these following points:

1. Proverbs is a book that is concerned with the development of godly character.
2. Proverbs does away with the distinction between the sacred and the secular.
3. Proverbs offers to teach us to be wise.
4. Proverbs teaches us that what is good is also what is right.
5. Proverbs helps us to look at life realistically.
6. Proverbs is as concerned with the process of right thinking as with the product of it.
7. The method of teaching employed in Proverbs is most like the instructional method of Jesus.
8. Proverbs is a key book for obtaining divine guidance.

1/1 - Today we read in Proverbs chapter 1 verses 2 through 4 a great overview of why we should read and study the Proverbs: *"The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people."* **Q: Do you want wisdom? Do you want discipline in your life? Do you want to do what is right, just and fair? Do you want purpose for your life? Do you believe this journey through the Bible this year will move you forward in these areas? Will you cling to the wisdom of the Proverbs this year?**

1/2 - Proverbs chapter 1 verse 7 is basically the mission statement for the entire book of Proverbs! *"Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline."* **Q: What does this proverb say to you? Do you believe we should fear God?** Bible commentaries define this fear of God as "a loving reverence for God that includes submission to his Lordship and to the commands of his words." **Do you believe that fear of God is the beginning of knowledge in our lives? Will you embrace wisdom and discipline in your life? Will you make wisdom and discipline top priorities in your life in this new year?**

1/3 - Proverbs chapter 1 verses 17 and 18 teach us this today: *"When a bird sees a trap being set, it stays away. But not these people! They set an ambush for themselves; they booby-trap their own lives!"* I think these verses basically say that birds are smarter than those who conspire to do harm to others - Are you with me on this thought?? :)

1/4 - Proverbs 1:23 is beautiful to think about: *"Come here and listen to me! I'll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you and make you wise."* **Q: How do you plan to grow in a spirit of wisdom this year? Do you believe studying the Bible can give you the spirit of wisdom?**

1/5 - Our readings in Proverbs 1:24-28 today is a great reminder to not ignore an opportunity to gain wisdom when the opportunity comes, or we may regret it later. Is wisdom knocking on your door today? Will you let Wisdom enter in?

1/6 - Proverbs 1 verse 31 is a strong teaching to consider: *"That is why they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way. They must experience the full terror of the path they have chosen."* I guess what jumped out at me is the simple word "path." Such a simple word... but a profound one. Every single day there seem to be various paths in front of us. Various options. Choices we can make. Paths we can take. Paths that can lead to light and life. Paths that can lead to full terror. What type of path are you on now? Are you on the right path? Who is leading you down this path? Is it God? I'll close with one of my favorite Proverbs, that I have memorized and repeat to myself often, which also discusses paths - Proverbs 3:5-6: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."* Let us pray for straight paths today!

1/7 - Proverbs 2 verse 2 today is a fantastic teaching: *"Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding."* There is so much noise and static and distractions in our modern world today that I think it is often hard for us to "tune our ears to wisdom & understanding." With our 24 X 7 society, we can go 100mph and just kind of feel like we're doing

fine... **but are we really doing fine when we are going that fast and moving all the time? Can you find ways in your life to slow down and "tune in" to God?** I think reading the Bible each day is one amazingly great way to do this! **What are some areas of your life that you can "tune out" this new year so that you can spend more time "tuning in" to God and His wisdom?**

1/8 - Proverbs chapter 2 verse 10 is amazing: *"For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy."* I like that thought that wisdom will enter your heart and then knowledge will fill you with joy! What a great proverb! **Q: Do you believe that knowledge can fill you with joy? What type of knowledge? What type of wisdom should enter your heart? Today - are you filled with joy?**

#### **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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