

**One Year Bible Blog – Weekly Notes - www.OneYearBibleBlog.com
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*Weekly Notes will cover our readings from Sundays through Saturdays***

Notes & Group Questions for January 30-February 5 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

EXODUS 10:1 - 23:13

1/30 - In Exodus chapter 10 today we read about the Plague of Locusts! In ancient times locust plagues were greatly feared and were often considered to be a sign of divine judgment. Next up is the plague of darkness. Some Biblical commentaries have found Pharaoh's statement to Moses to be quite appropriate and ironic that he said this during the plague of darkness in 10:28: *"The day you see my face you will die."* Apparently Moses couldn't quite fully see Pharaoh's face during the plague of darkness? Makes sense to me. Commentaries have also suggested that this verse was a death threat to Moses, and that this death threat was responded to with the coming plague on the firstborns of Egypt, including Pharaoh's son.

1/30 - Today we read in Exodus chapter 12 about God giving Moses and Aaron instructions on the First Passover. Verse 2 stands out: *"From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you."* Here we see that God is actually instituting a new religious calendar for the Hebrews with the month that Passover is in being the first month of the calendar year. This month is in the March-April spring timeframe and is called Abib or Nisan in Hebrew. The feasts that were and are celebrated in this 1st month were - Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. Here is a very interesting note on the Jewish calendar from the NIV Study Bible - "In the ancient Near East, new year festivals normally coincided with the new season of life in nature. The designation of this month as Israel's religious New Year reminded Israel that its life as the people of God was grounded in God's redemptive act in the Exodus... Israel's agricultural calendar began in the fall, and during the monarchy it dominated the nation's civil calendar. Both calendars (civil and religious) existed side by side until after the exile. Judaism today uses only the calendar that begins in the fall."

1/30 - The significance of Passover was that God was introducing the concept of a sacrifice or a substitute for a life. The lamb was sacrificed as a substitute for the Hebrews first-born sons. The blood of the lamb was placed on the doorposts as a sign that the household had sacrificed an innocent life - the lamb. By the blood of the unblemished/perfect lamb, the household was protected from death. This is a foreshadowing of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb for us. He was a substitute for us and our sins. He was an innocent unblemished/perfect lamb - sinless. By Jesus' blood, we are protected from eternal death. **Q: What are some parallels you see between Passover and Jesus' death on the cross?**

1/30 - Exodus chapter 12 verse 11 is of note: *"Wear your traveling clothes as you eat this meal, as though prepared for a long journey. Wear your sandals, and carry your walking sticks in your hands. Eat the food quickly, for this is the LORD's Passover."* By wearing their traveling clothes, the Hebrews were faithfully acknowledging God's Word that they would very soon be freed from slavery and bondage in Egypt. The Exodus would soon begin! And the traveling clothes signified that the Hebrews were ready for the journey! **Q: How about you? Do you think that God may still call you on journeys today? What journey might God be calling you on in 2010? Are you be ready for the call? What are your "traveling clothes" that you're wearing, so that when the "Exodus" comes, you are ready for it?**

1/31 - This is a big day in our readings today - The Israelites officially begin their exodus from Egypt! Today in Exodus chapter 12 we read about God instituting the Festival of Unleavened Bread along with Passover. These both are still observed today by practicing Jews. Verse 14 states the importance of these festivals to the Israelites: *"You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD."* Verses 37 & 38 are amazing: *"That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. And they were all traveling on foot. Many people who were not Israelites went with them, along with the many flocks and herds."* 600,000 men equals probably at least 1.2 million people all together - and probably close to 2 million. This is a massive Exodus! Verse 38 is very interesting in that some Egyptians were joining the Israelites in this Exodus! **Q: Why do you think some Egyptians joined the Israelites in the Exodus? Do you think these Egyptians believed in God? When have you ever experienced a Passover meal in your life? What was it like? How does the Passover foreshadow Jesus' life?**

1/31- In Exodus chapter 13 we read about God's instructions for the dedication of the firstborn. Note that based on this

law that Jesus, the firstborn of Mary & Joseph, was dedicated to God in the Temple in Jerusalem as we read in Luke chapter 2 verses 21 through 24: *"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons.""* I think it's also interesting to note that Mary & Joseph did not present a lamb, but a pair of doves or two young pigeons. This portion of the law came from Leviticus chapter 12 verse 8: *"If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering."* **Q: How have you dedicated your children to God? Or how have you seen family members or your church dedicate children to God? Why do you think we still dedicate children to God today?**

2/1 - Today in Exodus chapter 13 verse 17 we read what I found to be an intriguing verse: *"When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them on the road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest way from Egypt to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."* That last sentence really stood out to me. It makes sense. It was wise for God to do this. But... then I think about our lives today. What if we are faced with a challenging spiritual battle our lives? Will we change our minds about God and return to our "Egypt"? Our Egypts might be the places where we are / were comfortable - enslaved to a sin though we may have been. As I think more about this, I do believe that God is sensitive in our lives, just as he was in the Israelites lives in this verse, as to what we can handle. I do not think he will send us a temptation or a trial greater than we can bear. But I also know that trials do come. And I pray that as the trials come, that we don't go back to our "Egypt"! but that we press on toward the "Promised Land". **Q: Have you ever wanted to retreat from moving forward spiritually and wanted to retreat to your old "Egypt" or back to old habits? How did you overcome this temptation? How do you keep your eyes forward on Jesus, and not back on your old Egypt/habits? Have you ever had to sever friendships for this reason?**

2/1 - In Exodus chapter 15 we read an amazing song that Moses and the Israelites sing to God after passing safely through the Red Sea! Some commentaries say that this is the oldest recorded song in the world! Music played an important part in Israel's celebration and worship. **Q: Does music play an important part in your celebration and worship of God? (I know not everyone is musically inclined, so don't feel bad if this is not a yes.) In what ways does worship music manifest itself in your life? In church, do you really sing the songs to God and God only? And not worry about what your voice sounds like to your neighbors? In your car, do you ever bust out with some loud and true worship singing to God? How do you typically "sing" your praise to the Lord?**

2/1 - The other comment to make on the song in chapter 15 is that this song seems to be a very significant development in the relationship of the people of Israel and God. The people of Israel now seem to really embrace and worship God as their God as we see in verse 2: *"The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my victory. He is my God, and I will praise him; he is my father's God, and I will exalt him!"* Wow... I love that language. **Q: How is God your strength? In what ways is God your song?**

2/1 - Related to music, per above, One thing I personally struggle with is listening to worship / Christian music versus secular music. I grew up listening to all the 80's / early 90's bands you could think of. And I have come to realize that many of the lyrics from these bands are really full of hopelessness, existentialism, sexuality, addiction, narcissism, etc. And yet, for some reason I typically still like the tunes... I had one friend tell me that after he became a Christian he literally threw away most of his CD collection - which was all secular CD's. I guess I still sometimes struggle with being in the world and not of the world. **Q: What do you think is the line of listening to / enjoying secular music, versus it literally being bad for you? Please let me know your thoughts on secular music - do you listen to it? Do you avoid it? Are you cautious about it in any way?**

2/2 - Today in Exodus chapter 15 we read about the prophet Miriam! You'll recall from Exodus chapter 2 that Miriam watched Pharaoh's daughter draw Moses from the Nile when he was a baby and Miriam wisely suggested that she find a Hebrew nurse for the baby (Moses' mom). We'll read about Miriam again in Numbers chapter 12 with a very interesting interaction with Aaron, Moses & God - you can read about it now [at this link](#). Other female prophets we will read about in Bible include Deborah ([Judges 4:4](#)), Isaiah's wife ([Isaiah 8:3](#)), Huldah ([2 Kings 22:14](#)), Noadiah ([Nehemiah 6:14](#)), Anna ([Luke 2:36](#)) and Philips daughters ([Acts 21:9](#)). **Q: How have women impacted your spiritual journey? Who are some women in your life that have really blessed your relationship with the Lord?**

2/2 - Verse 26 stood out to me in this chapter: *"If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you."* It seems to me that here the Israelites are getting a foreshadowing of the Laws to come. "Listen to God - do what is right in his sight. And you will not suffer. I will heal you." We'll dive more into this when we get to the Laws - but, I'll say this now and repeat it often - I do believe that the Laws for the Israelites, as we even see in this verse, were born out of compassion from God. God wanted to preserve and care and heal his people - and imagine living in a desert for 40 years, coming out of slavery... the laws were beneficial for your very well being and life! **Q: How have God's laws been beneficial or compassionate for your life?**

2/2 - Today in Exodus chapter 16 we read about Manna and Quail from heaven. Verses 29 & 30 were powerful for me today, as God speaks about the Sabbath: *"Do they not realize that I have given them the seventh day, the Sabbath, as a day of rest? That is why I give you twice as much food on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must stay in your places. Do not pick up food from the ground on that day." So the people rested on the seventh day.*" You will probably read on this blog over and over and over again about the Sabbath... I am a huge fan of the concept! And such a poor practitioner of it... I honestly think the Sabbath is one of the most compassionate things God ever created for us. And, don't get me wrong - my personal view is not legalistic in the sense of the Sabbath.... But.... personally, I think the Sabbath is just such a blessing of a gift to us. And I think we - I - us - humans - often do such a bad job of really taking a Sabbath. Really taking 1 day a week to really rest and relax and be with God. Recently I read in our local newspaper about a Hasidic Jewish rapper who came through our town on tour - yes, seriously, there is a Hasidic Jewish rapper who is getting hugely popular nationally. Anyhow, the article - in our secular newspaper - wrote about how this rapper will not perform on Fridays or Saturdays in observance of the Jewish Sabbath Law - and Hasidic Jews strongly observe most all of the Laws still today (I believe... except for animal sacrifices - simply because there is not the Temple in Jerusalem today for the sacrifices). Anyhow - I'm going off on some tangents here - but, the point is, that when I read about how this guy will not perform shows on the 2 best money-making nights of the week for concerts, because of his observance of the Sabbath - I dare say his love of God and his appreciation of the Sabbath - it really struck me. And it really reminded me of how really really bad I am at truly resting and being with God 1 day a week. And I'm not feeling guilty about this per se... but maybe I am feeling convicted... :) Basically - I am feeling that God is really calling me to slow down and simply rest and be with him 1 day a week. A Sabbath. **Q: do you take a Sabbath? What do you do - or not do - on the Sabbath? Does it bless the other 6 days of your week? How long have you been in the habit of taking a Sabbath? Is it hard to get in the habit? Any other "tricks of the trade" you can share with all of us about taking a Sabbath?**

2/2 - Verse 31 quick comment - *"In time, the food became known as manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey cakes."* I love that manna means "What is it?!" That is awesome... I think you'll notice throughout our Bible readings this year that names can often be very descriptive of locations, happenings, personalities - and can even be simple questions like "What is it??"

2/3 - Today in Exodus chapter 17 we read about the Israelites defeating Amalekites. We are introduced to Joshua in verse 9. Joshua is from the tribe of Ephraim and he has a strong faith in God and loyalty to Moses, along with leadership skills. He will be Moses' successor who leads the Israelites into Canaan 40 years later. Verse 12 reminded me of how oftentimes we cannot always do things on our own - we oftentimes need our friends help: *"Moses' arms finally became too tired to hold up the staff any longer. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side, holding up his hands until sunset."* **Q: Who are your Aaron and Hur? Who is holding you up your arms when they get tired? And whose arms are you holding up when their arms get tired?**

2/3 - In Exodus chapter 18 we read about Jethro's visit of Moses and Jethro's wise advice to Moses. This chapter has been pointed out to me as something I should take heed of a couple of times over this past year or so... Like Moses in this chapter, I think I have a hard time delegating! :) But, indeed, Jethro's advice in verses 17 & 18 about how Moses was settling every single case is something I need to reflect upon often: *"This is not good!" his father-in-law exclaimed. "You're going to wear yourself out--and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself."* **Q: How about you? Are there areas of your life where you are doing too much? Where you need to delegate to others? Where you need to "let go and let God"? Are you wearing yourself out? Will you follow Jethro's advice to Moses?** Great advice on how to avoid "burnout" in our lives as based on Exodus chapter 18 titled **"The Tyranny of the Urgent"** is online at bible.org [at this link](#).

2/3- Exodus chapter 19 is a significant chapter because the Israelites arrive at Mt. Sinai! Exodus chapter 19 verse 3 all

the way through Exodus chapter 24 verse 18 is what is called by many commentators "The Sinaitic Covenant." You'll recall that we have already read about the Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9:8-17, the Abrahamic A Covenant in Genesis 15:9-21, and the Abrahamic B Covenant in Genesis 17. Per the NIV Study Bible, this Sinaitic Covenant was "made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and as the people God has redeemed from bondage from Egypt. This Sinaitic Covenant is a conditional divine pledge to be Israel's God on the condition of Israel's total consecration to God as his people who live by his rule and serve his purposes in history." Tomorrow we read about the Ten Commandments!

2/4- Big day today! Ten Commandments day! This kind of snuck up on me, but it was a great surprise. Today in Exodus chapter 19 Mount Sinai plays quite a prominent role in the narrative. Below is an image of Mt. Sinai that I think correlates well with verse 18: *"All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake."* **Q: Since we've arrived at the Ten Commandments in our readings today, now is an appropriate time to ask - are the Ten Commandments important to you? Why? Have they always been important to you?** I will confess that there was a time early in my Christian walk where the Ten Commandments didn't really matter to me. All that mattered at that time was my faith in Jesus. But, then, I personally felt that I was not moving forward as a disciple of Jesus' without meditating upon and considering and, yes, applying the Ten Commandments to my life. Am I perfect when it comes to the Ten Commandments? Of course not, this side of heaven. But meditating upon the Ten Commandments and meditating upon my actions - in relationship with Jesus and inviting Jesus into this process - has changed my heart and my actions. **Do you think that we should meditate upon the Ten Commandments and our actions?**

2/4 Verse 19 in this chapter is intriguing as the Israelites speak to Moses: *"You tell us what God says, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us. If he does, we will die!"* The NIV Study Bible commentary suggests that this is the first time that people asked for a "mediator" between them and God. And that mediator is initially fulfilled in Moses, then in the Aaronic / Levitical priests, then in the prophets, and then finally in Jesus Christ - our final mediator. Powerful for each of us to consider... **Q: Who is the mediator between you and God? Has this always been the case?**

2/4 - I liked reading and considering the simplicity of God's instructions on the proper use of altars in verses 24 & 25: *"The altars you make for me must be simple altars of earth.... Build altars in the places where I remind you who I am, and I will come and bless you there. If you build altars from stone, use only uncut stones. Do not chip or shape the stones with a tool, for that would make them unfit for holy use."* For some reason the simplicity of these altars stood in stark contrast to the religiosity Jesus goes after in our Matthew readings today. Maybe God likes us to keep things simple? This is an interesting thing to consider. The gospel message is not complicated. It's simple. Sometimes I think we do a pretty good job of complicating it for ourselves or others though. When maybe instead we should just be sharing with others our simple altars to God.... **Q: Have you ever over-complicated the Gospel in your own life? How do you think the Gospel is simple? But perhaps not simplistic?**

2/4 - Exodus chapter 21 dives into some regulations surrounding slavery. I know this brings up some questions. The One Year Bible Companion today covers this topic at a high level: "The Hebrews, though freed from slavery, had slaves themselves. A person could become a slave because of poverty, debt, or even crime. But Hebrew slaves were treated as humans, not property, and were allowed to work their way to freedom. The Bible acknowledges the existence of slavery but never encourages it." For further study on this topic - Bible.org has commentary on slavery in the Bible [at this link](#), and [at this link](#), and [at this link](#).

2/5 - Today in Exodus chapter 21 we read the very well-known verses 24 & 25: *"If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it. Similarly, the payment must be hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."* What you may not realize about this "law of retaliation" is that it actually was meant to limit the punishment to fit the crime, which prevented cruel and barbaric punishments that were seen in many ancient cultures. Meaning - before this law it might have been seen as "acceptable" for someone to kill someone in return for knocking out an eye - whereas this law limited the retaliation to fit the crime. Jesus of course invokes the higher law of love in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 verses 38 through 42: *"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.' But I say, don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow."* **Q: How do you see that Jesus exemplified this higher law of love for us through his ministry, life, death**

and resurrection?

2/5 - I find it very fascinating to read all of the laws in these chapters today. I think what is incredible is to remember is that these laws are coming directly from God to the Hebrews. I find it very encouraging that God is so interested in the minutiae details that are discussed in these laws! God is not an impersonal God who just sets up the universe like a clock and lets it tick. God is engaged and concerned with our behavior - back then and today! **Q: Do you believe that God is engaged and concerned with your behavior today? In what ways?**

MATTHEW 20:1 - 24:8

1/30 - Matthew chapter 20's parable of the vineyard workers is one that I have at times had challenges with. I, like the workers who labored all day, would think - "that's not fair!" Well.... but then I came to realize that I believe this story is a parable of **Grace**. God's grace. And you know what - God's grace is not "fair." And thank God for this being so! God's grace is so powerful and all-encompassing and life-giving and healing and saving. And God's grace is offered to me. And to you. And to our neighbors. And to everyone. God's grace is offered to people that have sinned against God. Me. You. Our Neighbors. Everyone. God's grace is offered to people who become Christians early in their lives and live wonderfully giving lives. And God's grace is offered to people who become Christians on their deathbed after living destructive lives, but who finally repent and surrender to God. God's grace is given freely. Like these workers in this story, we may accept God's grace at different points in the "day" of our life. Though, of course, some never do ultimately accept God's grace and there is grave risk as the day grows longer... **Q: How about you? What part of the "day" are you in? When did you accept God's gift of grace? Please feel free to share your testimony.**

1/30 - Jesus' teaching in Matthew 20 verse 16 has always been convicting to me: *"And so it is, that many who are first now will be last then; and those who are last now will be first then."* I see the wisdom in this verse... but yet, I still think that I try to be "first" in many ways in my life. I don't like being "last". I like being honored. I like being the star. I don't like being the servant. I don't like to be the guy supporting the star. And yet, Jesus is calling us to be last. To serve others. To let others go first. **Q: How about you? In what areas are you trying to be "first" in your life? How do you see the eternal wisdom in being "last"?**

1/30 - As this chapter proceeds we read about Jesus prophesying his own death and resurrection. And then, we see Jesus prophesy about the end of James & John's life when their mother and they ask to sit at Jesus' right & left in heaven. Check out verses 22 & 23: *"You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" "You will indeed drink from it," he told them.* You will indeed drink from it... James ended his life being martyred for his faith in Jesus. And John ended his life in exile on the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation. And I wonder again about us today... sometimes we hear about the "health, wealth and prosperity gospel", and think that's what we've signed up for as Christians. **Q: But... do you think that it might be possible that at some point in your life that you might be called to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow that Jesus drank from? If you are called to drink from that bitter cup, will you indeed drink from it?**

1/31- Today in Matthew chapter 21 verse 22 we read these words from Jesus: *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."* This is a powerful verse if you really stop and think about it... **Q: Do you believe Jesus' teaching here? Do you believe that if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer?** I do believe this... but then there is always in the back of my mind - "but what about so-and-so who was ill and was praying in belief that they would be healed. But then they weren't..." I don't have any easy answer on this one. I have to believe there are probably some good resources out there for this tough question? **If you know of any resources / books on this subject of prayer - or, more specifically, unanswered prayers - please share with your group?**

2/1 - Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapter 21 verses 31 & 32 is convicting: *"I assure you, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. For John the Baptist came and showed you the way to life, and you didn't believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to turn from your sins and believe him."* This last sentence is so important for our relationship with Jesus. **Q: How and when did you turn from your sins? How are Jesus' teachings showing you the way to life?**

2/1 - Verse 42 is so beautiful as Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22-23: *"Then Jesus asked them, "Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures? `The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous to see.'" And Jesus - like the son of the farmer in the parable just before this verse - was rejected and murdered. However, Jesus didn't remain dead - he rose on the third day and today he is the cornerstone of Christianity.*

He is the cornerstone of our churches. And probably the biggest question each of us needs to ask ourselves – **Q: Is Jesus the cornerstone of your life? How is Jesus the foundation in your life which anchors and directs everything else you do?**

2/2 - Today we read in Matthew chapter 22 the Parable of the Wedding Banquet. This parable has always been so convicting to me personally. It's basically about a king preparing an amazing feast at a wedding banquet, and inviting a ton of people to come to the feast. But - the people don't accept the invitation! They are "too busy" – taking care of their fields and their businesses. And I think about this parable in my own life. Am I sometimes "too busy" to accept Jesus' invitation to be with him? Am I sometimes too focused on my work or my social life or other distractions? Do I get myself so "distracted" that I don't spend time with Jesus? And in doing this, am I missing out on an amazing spiritual feast? **Q: How about you? Do you believe that Jesus is inviting you to spend more time with him? Are you "too busy" to do so? Do you believe that spending time with Jesus will actually be an amazing spiritual feast for your soul? Will you accept Jesus' invitation to the wedding banquet?**

2/2 - In verse 21 we read Jesus' famous line *"give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God."* What you may not realize about the preceding verses is that the Pharisees and the supporters of Herod were trying to trap Jesus. Per the OYB Companion commentary, The Pharisees, a religious group, opposed the Roman occupation of Palestine. The followers of Herod - or Herodians - were a political party that supported the policies of Rome and Herod Antipas. Normally these 2 groups did not get along at all - but they united here to try to trap Jesus. If Jesus had said it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees would say he is opposed to God. And if Jesus had said the taxes should not be paid, the Herodians would have had him arrested. Jesus answer amazed them both.. **Q: How do balance what you give to the government or worldly responsibilities and what you give to God in your life?**

2/3- If you are into memorizing Scripture at all, Jesus' teaching Matthew chapter 22 verses 37-40 is certainly worth memorizing! *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."* So, I think it is fair to say that if you learn nothing else this year in the One Year Bible, please at least learn these 3 verses above. :) However - I am quite sure you will learn these 3 verses and so much more this year! Then, of course, to take things beyond just learning - we need to be applying the learnings from the Bible this year in our lives. **Q: How about these two commandments from Jesus above – how have you learned them? How do you practice applying them to your life each and every day? How do you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind? How do you love your neighbor?**

2/3 - Matthew chapter 23 verse 5 is referring to exaggerated phylacteries: *"Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear extra long tassels on their robes."* From bible-history.com - "Phylacteries (tephillin) are strips of leather to which is attached a very strong, square box made of parchment and painted black. The box contains four parts of the Torah written on parchment: [Exodus 13:1-10](#) and [13:11-16](#); [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#); [11:13-21](#). According to Deut 6:4-9 two phylacteries were used, one for the head and one for the arm. These (called frontlets in Deuteronomy) were put on in such a way that one box rested on the head, between the eyes (seat of the mind) and the other on the left arm opposite the heart (seat of the actions and the emotions, denoting that one loves the Lord with one's heart)." This definition and a good picture of what phylacteries look like is at bible-history.com [at this link](#). I don't think Jesus was demeaning phylacteries in and of themselves - but, he was demeaning those that used phylacteries only for "show," for the wrong motives - the wrong motive of people noticing us instead of giving the glory to God. Which can lead us to this question in our lives today - are there any "religious things" that we do in our life just for "show"? Just so that others will honor us? I think this is such a fine line and something that we have to monitor all of our lives. **Q: Are you monitoring yourself when it comes to your faith to make sure you are not doing anything for "show" or for the wrong reasons? Have there been times in your past where you have done things just for "show" when it comes to your faith? How did you catch yourself / notice that you were doing something just for "show"?**

2/4 - Today in Matthew 23 we read Jesus' "Woe to you!" warnings and teachings. Verses 25 & 26 stood out to me today: *"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy--full of greed and self-indulgence! Blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too."* These verses reminded me a lot of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus very clearly goes to the heart of the matter with many of the Laws. These verses are such a strong reminder for us to guard our hearts - and what we let into our hearts - and the condition of our hearts. Because Jesus is

much more concerned about the condition of our hearts than the condition of our skin. He wants to heal us from the inside out. **Q: How is the condition of your heart today? Will you allow Jesus to heal your heart? To heal you from the inside out? Where will you find true inner peace to heal you from the inside out? Have you ever been healed by Jesus from the inside out?**

2/5 - Matthew chapter 24 verse 2 was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans, under Titus, completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple building: *"Do you see all these buildings? I assure you, they will be so completely demolished that not one stone will be left on top of another!"* Verse 15 stood out to me today's readings: *"The time will come when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about: the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place"--reader, pay attention!"* Per Zondervan's commentary, the primary reference in Daniel 9:27 & 11:31 & 12:11 was to 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar to Zeus on the sacred altar in the temple of Jerusalem. Some believe this is a progressive prediction, which was also fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed - and will also be fulfilled in the future by the antichrist.

2/5- Verses 26 & 27 really stood out to me today as some very wise teaching's of Jesus' (well, yes, all of Jesus' teachings are wise! :), which we would all do well to take note of: *"So if someone tells you, 'Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,' don't bother to go and look. Or, 'Look, he is hiding here,' don't believe it! For as the lightning lights up the entire sky, so it will be when the Son of Man comes."* For some reason that little line, "don't bother to go and look" really stood out to me. Basically, Jesus is saying that if you have to GO somewhere to see the "messiah" in the end of days, it ain't the messiah! :) When the true Messiah Jesus comes again, you will know it without a doubt - Jesus will light up the entire sky! What a beautiful thing to imagine... **Q: Are you looking forward to the day of Jesus' return? Have you always looked forward to the day of Jesus' return? How often do you sincerely say or pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Do you think this is a good thing to say & Pray?**

PSALM 25:1 - 29:11

1/30 - Psalm 25 has some amazing verses today! I think I could write some reflections and questions on each of the verses today... Maybe a good thing for each of us to do is to re-read this Psalm today and really reflect on what the verses are saying to our hearts. David wrote this Psalm as a prayer for God's mercies when he was suffering affliction for his sins and when enemies were seizing this occasion to attack him. It's a very penitential Psalm. One that we might need to pray to God from time to time as David did. I do like verse 5 a lot and I believe it will speak to each of you going through the One Year Bible this year - *"Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you."* **Do you believe that reading God's Word each day is allowing you to be led by God's truth? Are you being taught each day?** Then - that last sentence in verse 5 is amazing. I cannot honestly say that all day long I put my hope in God. I pray that I do... but I think sometimes I drift away from putting my hope in God and I put my hope in myself - or maybe even sometimes I lose hope! I get discouraged about a situation. I get stressed. I worry. **Q: If we put our hope all day long in God, do you think we would get discouraged, stressed, or worried?** I don't think we would...

1/30 - Psalm 25 verse 15 really stood out to me today - *"My eyes are always looking to the LORD for help, for he alone can rescue me from the traps of my enemies."* I have come to realize more and more lately that the Enemy is indeed constantly setting traps for us. I don't mean to scare anyone here - but I think this is something very important for us to realize. It has been said that the greatest trick the Devil can play on us is to make us think that he does not exist. If we don't think the Devil exists, then we logically won't think that he's setting any traps for us. Let me assure you - this is clearly Biblical - the Devil exists. Evil exists in this world. Temptation exists. And evil does not rest. However - the good news - God is so much bigger and stronger and brighter (and this list can go on) than the Devil - the Enemy. David says in this Psalm that his eyes are ALWAYS looking to the Lord for help. Why? Because God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit alone can rescue us from the traps of the Enemy. Again, the traps are out there for us in this modern world. The temptations and dark alleys and wrong turns call to us unceasingly. But - again, great news here - we can be saved from all of that nonsense; all of that darkness; indeed all of that death, through a relationship with Jesus. Jesus saves. Jesus saves us from ourselves. From our sin. And from the Enemy that sets traps for us. **Q: Like David in this Psalm, are your eyes always looking to the Lord for help?** Please don't ever take your eyes off God and His mercies, power, and strength.

2/1 - Today in Psalm 26 verse 2 we read: *"Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and affections."* What a powerful reflection from David - God, test my motives and affections. **Q: What are your motives? Why do you do what you do in life? Whom are you doing it all for? What are your affections? Who do you**

pledge your loyalties to? Who do you give your heart to? Where are you investing your time, treasure and talents? Have you ever asked God to test your motives and affections?

2/1 - Verse 8 of this Psalm reminds me of my church and I pray it reminds you of your church as well: *"I love your sanctuary, LORD, the place where your glory shines."* Wow... the place where God's glory shines! Yes, I do believe this happens in our churches - even if we maybe don't notice it sometimes. When we come together as the body of Christ each week, God's glory shines! **Q: What are some examples of ways you see God's glory shining in your church?**

2/2 - Psalm 27 verse 13 is so beautiful - *"Yet I am confident that I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living."* **Q: Do you have this same confidence? What are some examples of how you have seen God's goodness here in the land of the living? What are some examples of how you are sharing God's goodness with others here in the land of the living?**

2/3 - I love verse 11 today - *"Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the path of honesty."* Teach me how to live... what a beautiful prayer! God - Teach us how to live! Lead us along the path of honesty! Teach us how to live... And Psalm 27 verse 14 today is wonderful for us to meditate upon: *"Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD."* **Q: Is there an area of your life where you feel like you are waiting for the Lord to show up? How do you believe that the Lord will show up?** I pray that this Psalm will encourage within you the virtue of patience. The Lord will show up. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.

2/4 - Psalm 28 verse 2 stood out to me today - *"Listen to my prayer for mercy as I cry out to you for help, as I lift my hands toward your holy sanctuary."* The thing that stood out to me is the image of the Psalmist "lifting his hands" in prayer. **Q: Do you periodically lift your hands in prayer? Do you kneel when you pray? Close your eyes? Bow your head? What do you do to really signify your worship and praise of God? Do you think lifting our hands or doing other body movements can change the way we pray to God - rather than doing nothing unique with our body?** My quick thoughts are that we can absolutely pray at any time in any place without lifting our hands or closing our eyes or bowing, etc. I think this gets toward the idea of "praying unceasingly." However - I do think there is something special about the times in our day when we can really spend some quality quiet time with God in prayer. And the best way for me to personally do this is by really changing my body language first - by kneeling down, closing my eyes, bowing my head, maybe lifting my hands, etc. This somehow I think brings me closer to God - it doesn't bring God closer to me - he's always close. But, somehow, what I do with my body before & during prayer can definitely make a difference in how long I will actually pray to God and how deep into prayer & listening I will go. **How about for you?**

2/5 - I read an interesting commentary on Psalm 29 verse 2 today - *"Give honor to the LORD for the glory of his name. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness."* This commentary suggested that possibly "worshiping God in the splendor of his holiness" may have been a call for the ancient worshipers to basically dress up before going to the Temple. To wear the proper white robes or garb for worship. And this made me think about how we dress for church today. **Q: I'm wondering if maybe we're getting too casual in the way we dress for church these days? I know in my grandparents' day, you were in a suit / nice dress. Today, it seems like we can go to church in just about whatever we want to wear - jeans, T-shirts, flip-flops, etc. And maybe this is okay? Maybe this is a good thing? Or maybe not?** Dennis Prager on his radio show talks about this very topic and says that if we were going to meet with the Queen of England, how would we dress? Obviously, we'd dress nicely. Well, if in church we're going to meet with the King of all creation, how then should we dress? At least as nicely as we'd dress for meeting with the Queen of England? Or no...? Please let me know your thoughts on this topic. **Q: Do you dress up for church? Why or why not? (I'll confess - I wear jeans to church... and sometimes even sandals in the summer...)** **Are we getting too casual with what we wear to church these days? Should we maybe learn something from this Psalm and "worship God in the splendor of his holiness"?**

PROVERBS 6:6 - 7:23

1/30 - Okay, Proverbs chapter 6 verses 9 through 11 make me smile. I do absolutely see the wisdom in these verses... but reading the word lazybones makes me smile. Is this a New Living Translation thing?? I honestly wondered for a split second if I was getting The Message translation on this Proverb somehow today! :) These are powerful words of wisdom I think for each of us to consider: *"But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up? I want you to learn this lesson: A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber."* It is pretty amazing to consider that this Proverb also tells us to take a lesson from the ant! The seemingly lowly ant! We're told to emulate. I love that... and it's so true. The ant

works hard for its keep! What lesson can you learn from the ant today? How do you balance working hard in your life with getting proper rest and relaxation? How do you find the balance?

1/31 - Proverbs chapter 6 verse 14 today tells us: *"Their perverted hearts plot evil. They stir up trouble constantly."* This is a powerful reminder of the utmost importance for us to guard the condition of our hearts continually! **Q: Do you think it is important to guard our hearts in our world today? How do you guard your heart?**

2/1- Proverbs chapter 6 verses 16 and 19 stand out to me - *"There are six things the LORD hates--no, seven things he detests.....a person who sows discord among brothers."* This last portion of the list reminds me that each day we can either spread courage/love/positivity or fear/hate/negativity in our lives to those around us. And I realize that we potentially do some/all of these things at various points in our day or lives. But, I do believe that as followers of Jesus we should be striving to only sow unity among brothers and sisters - and not discord. We should be sowing courage - love - positivity in Christ to others. Investing in others. Building others up. Being Jesus to others. And not sowing discord. **Q: What type of seeds are you sowing each day in your life to those around you? Do you make a conscious choice each day about what types of seeds you will sow?**

2/2 - Proverbs chapter 6 verse 23 should make each of us rejoice in this amazing blessing of reading - and learning! - from the One Year Bible here in 2010! *"For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life."* **Q: Are you learning as you have read the Bible this past month? Is reading the Bible each day changing your relationship with God? Is it changing your behavior in any way? Is reading the Bible a lamp to light the way ahead of you? Will reading the Bible each day change the way you live the rest of your life? Do you believe that the correction of discipline is the way to life? Will you embrace and pray for and accept God's holy and divine correction of discipline in your life this year?**

2/3 -Today in Proverbs chapter 6 verses 27 & 28 we read: *"Can a person scoop fire into their lap and not be burned? Can a person walk on hot coals and not blister their feet?"* How do these Proverbs speak to you? For me, it reminds me of the old adage – "If you play with fire, you're going to get burned!" And, I believe that if there is unchecked sin in our life, we are literally playing with fire. The sin will burn us. **Q: If there is a sin in your life you are struggling with, will you pray unceasingly to God to heal you of the sin? And will pray to God to lead you to any resources or counseling or corrective measures that you should take to facilitate the healing process? Will you allow God to discipline you with his holy and healing love? Will you stop scooping fire on your lap? Will you stop walking on hot coals?**

2/4 - Proverbs chapter 7 verses 1 - 3 today are powerful: *"Follow my advice, my son; always treasure my commands. Obey them and live! Guard my teachings as your most precious possession. Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart."* **Q: Do you guard God's teachings as your most precious possession? If not, what is your most precious possession? And then where do God's teachings rank in comparison to your other possessions?**

2/5 - Proverbs chapter 7 verses 22 & 23 have always stood out to me, reminding me of the mortal danger of sin in our lives: *"He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life."* Yes, these verses are speaking about adultery. But, I think you can apply these verses to many sins that we fall prey to. Once we let the temptation or seduction of the sin overtake our senses we run the risk of the "arrow" or the "snare." Sin has consequences. Very real and often mortal consequences. We need to stay off the path of sin and pray to God to keep us on the paths of truth and righteousness. Please don't walk into the traps of temptation! **Q: How do you avoid the traps of temptation in your life today?**

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:

Visit www.OneYearBibleBlog.com this next week for daily commentary and questions for reflection.

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