

**One Year Bible Blog – Weekly Notes - www.OneYearBibleBlog.com
January 9 - January 15, 2011, [Copyright © 2004-2011 One Year Bible Blog](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com)
Weekly Notes will cover our readings from Sundays through Saturdays**

Notes & Group Questions for January 9-15 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

GENESIS 20:1 - 32:12

1/9 - Today in Genesis chapter 20 we see that Abraham is not perfect (we have seen this humanness of Abraham earlier in our Genesis readings too). This should be good news for each of us! :) Abraham essentially tells Abimelech a half-truth - and yes, half-lie. The thing to remember here is that Abraham has received incredible promises from God and covenants - and yet, it is apparent that Abraham still has some fear of what will happen to him and Sarah. This imperfection of God's people is something that we will continue to see throughout our Bible readings. God uses imperfect people for his purposes. God does typically use those that love him. But, those that love God do still sin and make mistakes. God partners with imperfect people throughout history. God partners with people like you and me. **Q: Are you perfect? This side of heaven? Will you be made perfect someday? How? Or, by Whom?**

1/9 - In Genesis chapter 21 we read about Sarah joyfully giving birth to Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old! Isaac's name means "he laughs" - which in part came from when Sarah laughed when God told Abraham she would have a son a year prior. We also read about Hagar and Ishmael being sent away. Verse 13 stands out when God is speaking to Abraham, as he was upset about having to send Ishmael away: *"But I will make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he also is your son."* Ishmael does later become the ruler of a large tribe in Paran and the Desert of Sinai, south of Israel. Then, one of Ishmael's daughter's marries Esau, Ishmael's nephew. From here the lineage of Esau becomes Arabic peoples and eventually the Muslim religion comes from this lineage. It is said that Abraham is the father of the world's three major monotheistic faiths - Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths.

1/9 - In Genesis chapter 22 Abraham's faith and obedience is tested in what most see as the climax of our readings about Abraham in Genesis. Some interesting things to note about this chapter. It is said that much of this chapter foreshadows what happens with Jesus. A father is called to sacrifice his one and only son - a son he loves so very much. The son is taken to a mountain to be sacrificed. On the mountain a "lamb" is sacrificed - a ram in place of Isaac's life - and Jesus as the "lamb" in place of our lives. Hebrews 11:19 has an interesting point to make about these readings in Genesis 22 today: *"Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead."* In verse 14 we read about the mountain where Isaac was taken and the altar was built - Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah was about 48 miles north of Beersheba, where Abraham and Isaac began their journey - so a 3 day journey at that time makes sense. Some scholars believe that Mount Moriah is the Temple Mount area of Jerusalem, where the first and second temples were located - and also where the Dome of the Rock mosque, built in 691 A.D., is now located. Tons more info on the Temple Mount area, including photos is online here - <http://www.templemount.org/> **Q: What in Genesis 22 stood out to you as you read about Abraham taking Isaac up Mount Moriah? What struck you as interesting or odd about this story? Why do you think this all happened to Abraham and what does it say to us for our lives today?**

1/10 - Today in Genesis chapter 23 we read about the burial of Sarah. I think an amazing thing to note in this chapter is that Abraham is determined to bury Sarah in Canaan, based on God's promise ([Gen 15:9-21](http://www.bible.com/bible/1/Gen/15/9-21)) to Abraham that Canaan would be his and his descendant's homeland. Verse 4 stands out in this chapter and I think can speak for us today as well: *"Here I am, a stranger in a foreign land, with no place to bury my wife."* We will see this type of phrase throughout the Old Testament - the idea of being an alien and a stranger. In Abraham's case, he was literally living in a tent - a very temporary structure. But yet, Abraham was confident in God's promise of the Promised Land. And for us today - we are called to be "in the world, but not of the world". In a sense, we are also aliens and strangers. **Q: How are you acting like you are an alien and stranger in this world? How are you looking forward to your promised land with God in heaven? Are there any ways you are maybe getting a bit too comfortable in this world?**

1/10 - Genesis chapter 24 is a just a wonderful narrative story about Abraham sending his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac! What I like a lot about this chapter was how God was honored by Abraham, and by the servant at the well, and by Laban and Bethuel at the end of today's readings. It was evident that everyone was making their plans and prayers based on God! And not based on their own ideas or will power. God was being consulted. Verse 15 stands out in this chapter: *"As he was still praying, a young woman named Rebekah arrived with a water jug on her shoulder. Her father*

was Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah." As the servant was just finishing his prayer, God was answering it! **Q: Describe a time to the group when you had a similar experience of a prayer being answered? Under what circumstances do you pray to God for His involvement in your life? Do you think that prayer changes things?**

1/11 - Rebekah and Isaac meet and marry in today's readings! Before the meeting & marriage - I love the very opening verse 52 in Genesis chapter 24 today: *"At this reply, Abraham's servant bowed to the ground and worshiped the LORD."* This just made me think - when was the last time that I actually bowed to the ground and worshiped the Lord? I have to confess it was a long time ago. This may sound strange, but one time I was listening to the David Crowder song "Deliver Me" and for some reason I literally fell to the ground, bowed, and worshiped God. It was an experience that's hard to forget. But why is it so hard for me to get back down on the ground and worship God once again? **Q: Can you share with the group a time you bowed to the ground and worshiped the Lord? Do you think our body posture makes any sort of difference when worshipping or praying to God?**

1/11 - Genesis chapter 25 has a lot going on in it today! We read about Keturah, the death of Abraham and the descendants of Ishmael. In verse 19 we begin reading about Jacob and Esau. Jacob we will read about for a large portion of the remainder of Genesis - there is actually not that many chapters we will read about Isaac. In verse 34 we read this about Jacob & Esau: *"Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank and went on about his business, indifferent to the fact that he had given up his birthright."* In Genesis chapter 26 we can see where the old adage, "like father, like son" could have come from. Isaac like his father Abraham told foreigners that his wife was his sister. **Q: What are your thoughts when reading about Jacob and Esau's birth and lives? Do you see any parallels in their behaviors to our behaviors today?**

1/11-12 - Today's Genesis chapter 26 readings open up with Isaac digging wells - and then moving on when the Philistine's contest the wells. This shows an incredible amount of patience on Isaac's behalf. In this arid region of Gerar, water was like gold and people often battled over water. Filling in someone's well was akin to declaring war. Verse 22 stood out to me in these readings about the wells: *"Abandoning that one, he dug another well, and the local people finally left him alone. So Isaac called it "Room Enough," for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be able to thrive.""* For me this was reminiscent of Abraham giving Lot the choice of lands when there was disputes between their herdsmen. Abraham was confident that God would provide even with "2nd choice" of the lands - and Isaac here seems to be following in his father's footsteps of wisdom. I also like the naming of the well - "Room Enough." I think sometimes in our world today we can get so competitive with each other, thinking that there is a limited sized pie and we have to get our piece of it! "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" author Steven Covey calls this the "scarcity mentality" - and he encourages us to instead operate with an "abundance mentality" - that there is ultimately enough pie for everyone. That there is Room Enough. (perhaps we do need to do a better job sometimes of sharing our pieces of the pie however... see our Psalms & Proverbs today on this point) **Q: How do you find yourself operating in your own life - more often out of the scarcity mentality or the abundance mentality? Do you see the risk of the scarcity mentality? And the blessing of the abundance mentality? Do you believe that there is Room Enough?**

1/12 - Genesis chapter 27 today is a very interesting and challenging chapter... both Jacob and Rebekah are deceitful. And Isaac is suspicious of the whole charade. And yet, Jacob receives the verbal blessing from Isaac, which was binding back in those days. I think this chapter is challenging in that it can bring up the question of sin - and can sin be used to fulfill God's will? You know I'm going to defer to our resident-expert on Genesis - Bob Deffinbaugh from bible.org. :) Check out this quote from Bob in his summary of this chapter: "The purpose of God as expressed to Rebekah in [Genesis 25:23](#) was perfectly accomplished without one alteration. The sins of Isaac and Esau and Rebekah and Jacob did not in any way thwart God's will from being done. In fact, their sins were employed by God in such a way as to achieve the will of God. God's sovereignty is never thwarted by man's sin. To the contrary, God is able to achieve His purposes by employing man's sinful acts to further His plans." **Q: Do you believe God is able to achieve His purposes by employing our sinful acts to further his plans? Have you seen God work through sin or redeem a sinful situation in your life?**

1/13 - Today's Genesis chapter 28 readings begin Jacob's adventure as he leaves the land promised to Abraham and Isaac and heads for Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle. Jacob's dream at Bethel is awesome in this chapter! While this dream is often referred to as "Jacob's Ladder," many commentaries say it was probably stairs that Jacob dreamt of - similar to the stairs of a ziggurat (think tower of Babel) that winded around the outside of the tower on the way up. **Q:**

Have you ever had a dream anything like this one? :) Have dreams played a part in your spiritual journey at all? Can you share a dream with the group that was part of your spiritual journey?

1/13 - I do have to admit - Jacob's story and the parallel stories of his uncle Laban, Jacob's wives, and his sons - culminating with Joseph in Egypt - is one of my favorite parts of the Old Testament. This is just good narrative! I think one thing that really opened my eyes to all of the small details of the story of Jacob is that I was in an amazing Bible study for about a year going through this part of Genesis. **I don't know if you've been in a group Bible study before?** If not, let me encourage you to join one! They are incredible. You get so many different perspectives from each person in the group - similar in some ways to what you are getting here on this blog - but more personal and I think far better. You get to go through the text with other people and really dive into things - and even have some fun joking around about things. **Q: If the church you attend has some sort of Bible study, will you consider checking it out this month of January?**

1/13 - I found verses 21 & 22 intriguing: *"Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the LORD my God."* Do you notice the "if" / "then" statement in this vow from Jacob? Jacob is putting some conditions on what it will take for him to make God his God. **Q: Do we do this in our lives sometimes? Do we try to put "conditions" on God? Does this really make sense to do? What if our conditions are not met? What if things don't go as planned? Will we still love God as our God, even if the "conditions" in our life are not met or are not ideal?**

1/13 - In Genesis chapter 29 Jacob arrives at Paddan-Aram, which was close to Haran. See a map on the Bible blog for where Jacob will spend the next 20 years of his life. All 12 of his children besides Benjamin will be born in this land! In this chapter Jacob meets Rachel and Laban, and works for 7 years to marry Rachel - except for the fact that Jacob was deceived by Laban on the wedding night! Which is a bit ironic, as we have seen in recent chapters that Jacob did some deceiving himself... I read one commentary that said for most of his life Jacob was so focused on getting the rights of the first born from his father Isaac - and now he must accept the rights of the first born in this surprise marriage to Leah! At the end of today's readings we see that Leah is beginning to have sons - including Levi who will be the ancestor of the Aaronic priestly line of Israel, and Judah who will be the ancestor of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ.

1/14 - Today's Genesis chapter 30 readings bring us the account of several of Jacob's sons and a daughter being born to Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, and Rachel. We also read about Jacob gaining wealth and wanting to leave his father-in-law Laban's house to go back home in Genesis chapter 30. In verse 37 we read: *"Now Jacob took fresh shoots from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of the bark to make white streaks on them."* It seems in this verse and the ones that follow that Jacob is getting a bit superstitious - and not really asking God for help. Later Jacob does admit that God did do the work of increasing his wealth, and that he didn't do it on his own with his superstitions, as we see in Chapter 31 verse 9 when Jacob is speaking to his wives Rachel & Leah: *"In this way, God has made me wealthy at your father's expense."* I think it's great to see that Jacob starts to realize more and more that God is in control. **Q: I wonder for us, today, do we sometimes act like Jacob with the sticks - and rely on superstition or our own power, when we should be relying solely on God? Are there maybe areas in our work life or personal life where we think we are running the show? Are we really? Or is God? Will we let our superstitions go, and embrace the reality that God is in control?** And - who better is there to be in control, really? :) Actually - I'll share with you a quote someone shared with me once when I was really trying to micromanage a situation - and was worrying and fretting way too much about the situation. The quote is simply this: "Let go and Let God." Let us let go of what we are hanging on so tightly to if it is not of God - and let us instead let God run the show. **Are there areas in your life where you need to "Let go and let God"?**

1/14-15 - Today's Genesis chapter 31 readings take us through Laban's pursuit of Jacob and his family and Laban & Jacob's treaty. In this chapter we read about Rachel taking Laban's "household gods", which were worthless idols - and yet both Laban and Rachel were very attached to idols, which was common in pagan religions of that time. Idols were often family heirlooms that were passed down from generation to generation and could sometimes signify that someone would receive their family's estate if they received the idols. People believed idols could bring blessings - and Laban obviously wanted them back. Though, I think he wanted more than just his idols back - I think he also wanted control over Jacob and his family back. In verses 33 & 34 we read: *"Finally, Laban went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household gods and had stuffed them into her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. So although Laban searched all the tents, he couldn't find them."* Rachel was cunning like her husband Jacob! Verse 42 stood out to me in today's readings as Jacob spoke to Laban: *"In fact, except for the grace of God--the God of my grandfather Abraham, the*

awe-inspiring God of my father, Isaac--you would have sent me off without a penny to my name." I like seeing that Jacob is realizing that the grace of God has blessed him! **Q: Do you think that sometimes in our lives the grace of God is blessing us, and we don't realize it? Do you ever have those moments when you look back on a day, or a week, or even a year and realize that God's grace was so there - and yet... you didn't realize it at the time? How can you live more like Jacob in this verse - and recognize awe-inspiring God's grace more and more frequently in your life? And how will you give praise to God for this ever-present ever-dependable gift of grace that is available to you?**

1/15 - In Chapter 32 we see Jacob preparing to meet his brother Esau. And - we see Jacob praying to God an amazing prayer! Verse 10 is beautiful: *"I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unending love you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!"* **Q: Do you believe that God has been showing faithfulness and unending love to Jacob in our readings? Do you believe that God is showing faithfulness and unending love to you today?**

MATTHEW 7:15 - 11:6

1/9 - Matthew 7:20 was insightful for me: *"Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced."* I think this verse goes back to my post yesterday about how we are still to identify or perceive the types of people we come in contact with - without judging them or condemning them. And one good way to identify someone is by the type of fruit they produce - actions they demonstrate or lives they lead. And while it may sometimes be easier to identify other people's fruit... maybe we ought to look at our own lives too. What type of fruit is your life producing? And let us not forget Jesus' warning in verse 15 today about how we are to identify false teachers. *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."* **Q: Do you believe there are false teachers in our world today? What are their fruits that you will know them by?**

1/9 - Verse 24 is strong: *"Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock."* **Q: Have you really listened to Jesus' teaching these past few days as you read through the Sermon on the Mount? And - will you now obey Jesus' teaching? Would this be wise? Would this be like building a house on solid rock? Will you stay out of the sands of sin?**

1/9 - Matthew 7:25 I think is an important verse for us to meditate upon in our own lives: *"Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock."* I never paid too much attention to this verse - I always focused on verse 24 and building a strong foundation on solid rock. But, I had lunch with a friend recently and he shared with me that this verse 25 - and verse 27 too - should be a reminder to each of us that storms will come in our lives. And I think this is so true. Sometimes we go through wonderful seasons of blessing, and we may think that storms will never come our way - but guess what, they will. If we are followers of Jesus - Jesus who endured an unimaginable storm during his passion and crucifixion - storms will come our way too. So, then, the key becomes if we know storms will come, we really should pay attention to verse 24 and build up a strong foundation of faith during the times of calm. It's kind of like the idea of saving for a rainy day - the day will come when it rains. So let us build up our faith and love in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit today! So that when the storms of life come our way, we will not collapse, but will remain faithful to the beautiful end. My friends, the storms will come. But with Jesus, we do not need to fear them or collapse under them when they come! **Q: Based on the knowledge that storms will come into our life, what are you doing in your life to build a firm foundation of faith? Reading the Bible regularly? Going to church regularly? Being part of a small group or community group or Bible study with other Christians regularly? Praying regularly? What else? Do you think that storms will come to your life? Have you experienced storms in your life in the past where your faith has been your firm foundation and has gotten you through the storm?**

1/10 - Today we read Matthew chapter 8, which is an amazing look at Jesus' healing ministry. While we do read about someone with leprosy, and a paralyzed man, and others with sicknesses and demons - don't we all need some sort of healing in our lives today? Maybe we can learn something from the man with leprosy in verse 2: *"Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached Jesus. He knelt before him, worshiping. "Lord," the man said, "if you want to, you can make me well again."* I will give a caveat here - I do know people that have prayed for healing from various sicknesses and diseases - and it has not always been healed. Please don't see this as any shortcoming in your faith - or in Jesus' power. Oftentimes God's ways are much more of a mystery than we can comprehend on this side of heaven. *"For now, we see in part. But, then - in heaven - we will see in full."* (my paraphrase of Paul's words in [1 Corinthians 13:12](#)) Please don't give up on God or Jesus if the healing is not coming as you'd prayed for it to. Ultimately, all who have faith in the born,

crucified, and risen Jesus will have perfected bodies in heaven. Please stay focused on this "hope of glory", as Paul also wrote about. **Q: Do you believe that Jesus still heals people today? What does he heal people of today? Does he heal sickness? Addictions? Laziness? Pride? All manner of sins? Has Jesus healed you of anything? Do you believe He can?**

1/11 - Matthew's readings in chapter 8:18-34 today are powerful in so many ways. The first section of our readings focuses on the costs of following Jesus. And I do think that we all probably realize that there are some costs associated with faith. However, there is also eternal reward, which outweighs all the temporary costs we might have to pay in this life. In some ways, I do ask myself this - are we really participating in a true faith if there are no costs associated with it? I have heard and read books and listened to speakers about how faith can bring us health & wealth & happiness. And I know there are many times when this is true (see our Proverbs reading today for a good truth to this) - but I do think these would be dangerous goals of faith in and of themselves - we could end up serving health, wealth and happiness as mini-gods of our own design if we're not careful. **Q: Do you believe there is a cost to following Jesus? Is it worth the cost? What are the costs in your life of following Jesus? Do you believe that suffering might be part of the package in this life of following Jesus? Are there any limits to the cost of following Jesus that you couldn't agree to? Would your life be too much?**

1/12 - In Matthew chapter 9 we read about Jesus not only healing - but also forgiving sins. This is a power and an authority - forgiving sins - that only God could truly have. It is true that Jesus would be blaspheming, per the teachers of religious law in this passage, if Jesus was not God. **Q: So, this might be a good point for you to ask yourself: do you believe that Jesus is God? If this is your first go through the Bible or the gospel of Mathew, you may not feel ready to answer this question yet. But ask it of yourself now - and again as you continue to read this gospel: do you believe that Jesus is God? Do you believe that Jesus, as God, could not only heal the paralytic but forgive his sins as well?**

1/12 - In chapter 9, Jesus calls Matthew (or "Levi"), the author of this Gospel, and a Jewish tax collector at the time of his call. Note that while Jerusalem was under the authority of Rome at this time, Rome would hire Jews to collect taxes from other Jews that would be paid to Rome. The Jewish tax collectors were allowed to keep a commission or percentage of the taxes they collected - however, they were notorious for overcharging and making more than they should have in their collections. As such, Jewish tax collectors were typically not allowed to be in the temple - nor were they even trusted as witnesses in trials. And this is our Gospel writer! :) (yes, I still trust Matthews writings - he, like us, was forgiven & changed after meeting Jesus) In this chapter Jesus has a meal with "tax collectors and other notorious sinners." And the religious leaders ask Jesus why he eats with such "scum." I do hope that you see that this is such an amazing thing about Jesus - he will have a meal with anyone - the "scum of the earth" as one translation calls sinners who believe in Jesus in one of Paul's letters. Jesus loves the "scum". And he gets frustrated with the religious leaders who are righteous in their own eyes. Why the difference? I think verses 12 & 13 answer this well: *"When he heard this, Jesus replied, "Healthy people don't need a doctor--sick people do... For I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough."* **Q: So, this leads to some questions we may want to ask ourselves today. Are we spiritually healthy or are we sick? Do we need a spiritual doctor? Do we need Jesus? Are we sinners? Or, do we think we are already "good enough" on our own? Like Jesus, will we talk and dine with "sinners" in our lives today? Or, do we consider ourselves somehow "above" talking and dining with sinners? One thing that I have to be careful of - and maybe all of us do - is not getting myself stuck in the "Christian bubble" or the "Christian ghetto." Meaning, I think we can sometimes find ourselves just spending time, just talking with, just dining with our Christian friends. And then after a while find ourselves completely removed from the world that needs to experience Jesus' love and light and truth through us. I think we are called to minister in the world. Yes, there is a time and place for sure to fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters. But, I think we do well to find some occasion to talk and dine with "sinners" (not so unlike ourselves, also sinners...) like Jesus did. **So, how and when do you find time to talk and dine with folks who perhaps do not yet know God or Jesus?****

1/13 - Matthew 9 Verses 37 & 38 are so powerful in today's readings: *"He said to his disciples, "The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields."* I think each of us can reflect on this teaching from Jesus. **Q: you agree with Jesus that the harvest is so great? And the workers are few? Do you pray to God for more workers for his kingdom work? How are you one of God's workers in his kingdom work? What are some ways in 2010 you could become more of worker in God's kingdom?**

1/14 - Matthew 10 verse 16 stands out: *"Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. Be as wary as snakes and harmless as doves."* This is good advice for us today as well. Jesus is still sending us out today as his followers. And I do think this teaching is wise - for us to be wary and harmless at the same time. It's an interesting line to walk, but I believe a very wise one. I believe the only way to really walk this line well is through the blessing of the Holy Spirit. I don't think we can do it on our own... **Q: How in your life do you balance being wary and harmless? Do you have an example of where this balance really paid off in your life?**

1/15 – Matthew 10 Verse 38 is the first mention of the word cross in the gospel of Matthew: *"If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine."* What strikes me about this verse is that Jesus is teaching that we do have a cross to bear. And we have a choice to make of whether we will take up the cross and follow Jesus. **Q: What is your cross in your life? Do you think you know what it is? How do you bear your cross daily? How do you choose to follow Jesus daily?**

1/15 - Matthew 11 starts off with an interesting question from John the Baptist to Jesus in verse 3: *"Are you really the Messiah we've been waiting for, or should we keep looking for someone else?"* I read an interesting commentary that said this is the beginnings of where we see that people are starting to wonder if Jesus is really the Messiah, because he hadn't overthrown the Roman government. Many in Jerusalem were expecting a Warrior-King Messiah that would free the Jewish people from the oppression of Rome. And Jesus' ministry of "only" preaching, teaching, and healing was bringing up the questions of, "are you really the Messiah?" People were starting to wonder... Instead of the Warrior-King, they are seeing a Suffering-Servant, which was not what was expected. **Q: What do you personally believe the answer to John's question was and is? Is Jesus the Messiah?**

PSALM 9:1 - 13:6

1/9 - Psalm 9 verse 9 stood out at me today and reminded me of Matthew 7:25 above too: *"The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."* **Q: When we are in trouble, do we run to God for shelter? Or do we look elsewhere? Where will we ultimately find true peace and rest from the storms of life? Do you believe that the Bible is a haven for you in the midst of the storms of life?**

1/10 - Psalm 9 verse 18 is so true and powerful: *"For the needy will not be forgotten forever; the hopes of the poor will not always be crushed."* This is a great reminder that God's heart is for the poor in this world! **Q: If God's heart is for the poor - should our heart be for the poor too? How is your heart for the poor these days? How do you remember the poor and their hopes? TOPICAL: How do you see God's heart for the poor in Haiti today?**

1/11 - Psalm 10 is a prayer for rescue from attacks from the proud and wicked. Wisely, you'll note that this Psalmist is not taking punishment into his own hands - but asking God for punishment. We would do well to remember that punishment is the Lord's... For some reason much of this Psalm reminded me way too much of our world today - and I realized that not much has changed over 3,000 years! Verse 4 in particular rang true to me about much of our world today: *"These wicked people are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead."* Only about 100 years ago the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche uttered those exact words - "God is dead." And I know that this viewpoint of many expressed in this Psalm 3,000 years ago, and 100 years ago by Nietzsche, is still a viewpoint of many in our world today. What a sad thing. **Q: What can we do in our lives today to show the world that God is not dead? How can we live our lives to demonstrate that God is alive? Let us share with this hurting and dying world with all that we are that God is not dead. What are you doing with your life today to show others that He Lives?**

1/11 Psalm 10 verse 1 also stood out to me today: *"O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I need you the most?"* Have you ever felt like this? I know I have. However, I also have realized later on that just when I thought God was no where near me, he was actually as close as could be taking care of me. Even though it may have seemed that God was "hiding" from me, he was actually right there with me all along! **Q: When have you ever felt that God was hiding from you? Did you later see he was with you all along? What helps you see God in your life when he feels distant?**

1/12 - I love Psalm 10 verses 17 & 18 today: *"LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them."* The Psalmist here tells us that God knows the hopes of the helpless. **Q: How do you know the hopes of the helpless? How are you listening to their cries and comforting them? Are there any ministries or organizations you support that do this type of ministry that you'd be willing to share with the group? Why do you support this ministry?**

1/13 - Today we read Psalm 11, which is one that you might miss the full meaning of if you didn't know some of the commentary behind this Psalm. Basically in this Psalm King David is expressing his unshakable trust in God to other people around him who are very scared of enemy attacks. Knowing this - check out verse 1: *"I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, "Fly to the mountains for safety!"* **Q: Like David, do we really trust in God for our protection? Or do we sometimes rely on others or our own cunning - or, our own fear - for protection? Are there times when we are faced with a challenging situation that we feel like running away from it? "Fleeing to the mountains" for safety? When, instead, should we simply trust in God for our protection and move forward in spite of the fear within us? Is there an area of your life where you need to turn over more trust in God for ultimate protection?**

1/14 - Psalm 12 verses 1 & 2 are intriguing verses for me - *"Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth! Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and insincere hearts."* **Q: Are there days when you feel like this?** I think there are some days when I do... but not too many. I guess I sometimes wonder about the state of my heart - or if I've gotten enough sleep the night before :) - when I feel like this Psalmist does. It is interesting how this verse goes into people talking with "flattering lips and insincere hearts". I do notice right away when that's happening... particularly the insincerity. **Q: Maybe this is something we should ask of ourselves - do we talk at times with flattering lips or insincere hearts? Or are we sincere people?** I like that thought... being a sincere person. I pray that we all are and can become more and more "sincere" in our dealings with each other and that we would just simply be sincere people. **Q: Are you a sincere person? Do you want to be sincere? Was Jesus a sincere person?**

1/15 - Psalm 13 is thought to be a prayer by David for recovery from a grave illness, based on verse 3: *"Restore the light to my eyes, or I will die."* Yet, even in the midst of this serious illness, David amazingly proclaims in verse 5: *"But I trust in your unfailing love."* **Q: How about you? When you are sick or in the midst of a very challenging or sad situation, do you trust in God's unfailing love? Always? No matter what is going on around you? Do you trust that God will ultimately restore the light to your eyes?**

PROVERBS 2:16 - 3:18

1/9 - Proverbs 2:16-19 I believe can be viewed as woman or man. There are both immoral men and women out there today who will talk flatteringly - which will lead down an incredibly dark path if we entertain the lust. Verse 20 reminds us there is another path to take: *"Follow the steps of good men instead, and stay on the paths of the righteous."* **Will you evaluate all of all the paths that present themselves to you in your life - and stay on the paths that are taken by good men and women? Will you stay only on paths full of light, and avoid at all costs paths that lead quickly to darkness?**

1/10 - Proverbs 3:1-6 today mentions the "heart" 3 times. I think this is significant! Our hearts - and the state of our hearts are of utmost importance. Proverbs 3:5-6 is a verse I have committed to memory and repeat to myself often. It is a beautiful verse to meditate upon. I'll share it with you in the NIV version that I have it memorized in: *"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."* Will you join me in memorizing these 2 verses? I do believe they will bless you immensely whenever you are feeling worried or anxious about anything in life. **Q: How has Proverbs 3:5-6 made a difference in your life? When do you call these verses to mind in your life?**

1/11 - Today we read this in Proverbs 3:8 (just after the verse on fearing the Lord and turning away from sin): *"Then you will gain renewed health and vitality."* I think this is so true. I have been a much healthier person - mentally, physically, spiritually, etc. - since I came to faith in Jesus. Through God's wisdom and grace, I have been able to discern what is healthy for me and what is not. I have let many bad habits go. **Q: How about for you? How has your faith brought you renewed health and vitality? What are there some areas in your life where you still have room to turn some bad habits over to God, and to let them go? How will you do so this year in 2010?**

1/12 - Proverbs 3:9-10 teaches us today: *"Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine."* This is a wonderful reminder to bring our tithes and offerings to God, and he will bless us immensely. We are not called to bring our leftovers - but our first fruits. **Q: Are the first checks you write each month tithes and offerings? How do you write these checks with a joyful and thankful heart to God for this opportunity to give back to Him?**

1/13 - Wow! Proverbs chapter 3 verses 11 & 12 today are so amazing and true... Please meditate on these verses and what they mean to you and your life: *"My child, don't ignore it when the LORD disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights."* I have come to realize in recent years that correction and discipline from God is such a blessing! No, it is not fun at the time that you are going through it. But, it is so necessary for us to move forward in our relationship and walk with God this side of heaven. We need God's holy and divine discipline! I think oftentimes we avoid it. Or run away from it. Or refuse to go through it. Can you see why this Proverb starts off with "My child," :) Please let me encourage you to joyfully accept and go through God's discipline in your life. In some areas of your life it may be the only thing that will break you through to victory. **Q: Do you believe there is such a thing as godly discipline? Do you believe that God corrects those that he loves? Can you think of any areas of your life or times where God has corrected you? Is there perhaps an area of your life today where God is correcting you?**

1/14 - Proverbs 3:13-15 are amazing truths for each of us to learn! I think these Proverbs are so different from what our world often preaches... *"Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding. For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her."* **Q: Where are your true wages coming from in our life? Wisdom or money? Are you investing in things eternal - or things material? Which will give you ultimately a better return on investment? Do you believe that wisdom = happiness? Are you happy?**

1/15 - I love Proverbs chapter 3 verse 17! *"She (wisdom) will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying."* Amen! What a great choice of words - delightful paths and satisfying ways. Do you believe that wisdom will lead you down delightful paths and that wisdom proves to be always satisfying to you? What if we do not pursue wisdom in our lives - might our paths be miserable and might we be always hungry and never satisfied? Let us ever pursue the wise path of true Delight in our lives! **Q: What are some ways that you pursue Wisdom in your life these days? Do you believe reading the Bible for 15 to 20 minutes a day is one way to pursue Wisdom? What are some "delightful paths" (per our Proverb above) that Wisdom has led you down in your life?**

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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