

**One Year Bible Blog – Monthly Notes - [www.OneYearBibleBlog.com](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com)  
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**Notes & Group Questions for February 1 - 28 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

**OLD TESTAMENT (Daily reading schedule at: [www.OneYearBibleBlog.com](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com))**

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?**

2/6 - Today in Exodus chapter 23 we read about the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Final Harvest (also known as Festival of Booths or Ingathering or Tabernacles). Commentary on Exodus chapter 24, entitled "**The Magnificent Meal on Mt. Sinai**" is at bible.org [at this link](#). This old covenant meal was a foreshadowing of Jesus' new covenant Last Supper with his disciples just before his death and resurrection. In chapter 24 Moses is called up on the mountain for forty days and forty nights - similarly Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in the desert after his baptism and before beginning his public ministry.

2/7 - Today in Exodus chapters 26 & 27 we read about God's plans for the Tabernacle, the Altar and the Courtyard. This is my 8th time reading through the One Year Bible, and I have to admit, I have zoned out a bit when reading these chapters in years past. But for some reason this year these details were fascinating to me today! Why the change? I'm not 100% sure, other than I do think repeated study of the Bible year after year does bear fruit and does grow our interest in every iota of God's Word. So, if by chance you felt like you were zoning out a bit when reading these chapters today, don't be discouraged. The interest will definitely come with time and further study of all of God's Word. Let me recommend to you that you don't skim over chapters like these though. Please do read each word. If you skim this year, you'll skim next year and you'll miss out on the fruit that will come from this study. **Q: Why do you think God put so much detail and planning into describing the Tabernacle, etc. in the Bible? Do you think God puts this much detail and thought into all of His creation? Into you?**

2/8 - Exodus chapter 28 verse 1 stood out to me in today's readings: "*Your brother, Aaron, and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, will be set apart from the common people. They will be my priests and will minister to me.*" Here we see that the priests are being set apart as mediators between the people of Israel and God. And this role is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ as our high priest. Jesus is now the mediator between God and us. Personally, I still do see so much value in pastors and clergy in our lives and churches today. We'll study more about these important roles in Paul's writings in the New Testament. However, I also personally believe that we can approach the throne of God through Jesus Christ as our mediator - and that we don't need another human mediator here on earth to approach God. Jesus is more than enough. **Q: How is Jesus your high priest today? How does Jesus mediate between you and God?**

2/9 - Today in Exodus chapter 29 we read about the dedication of Aaron and his sons as priests! Verse 37 stood out to me in this chapter: "*After that, the altar will be exceedingly holy, and whatever touches it will become holy.*" It's interesting to consider the verses prior to this - with the 7 days of sacrifices of young bulls. For some reason this verse reminded me of Jesus and how people could simply touch the tassels of his robes and they would be healed. I think it's fair to say that Jesus was much more holy than this altar was - and Jesus did not require purification rituals or sacrificing of bulls to make Jesus holy, as this altar did. Jesus "embodied" holiness! **Q: Do you believe Jesus is Holy, Holy, Holy? What does Jesus' holiness mean to you today? Does it mean anything? Does it change anything in your life?**

2/9 - In Chapter 30 we read about the incense altar. I read a commentary that said the incense from this altar represented prayers to God from his people. We can see this similarity in Revelation chapter 8 verses 3 & 4: "*Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great quantity of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people, to be offered on the gold altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of the saints, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out.*" **Q: Do you believe that your prayers to God are like fragrant incense? Does this imagery help think about your prayer life? How is your prayer life these days?**

2/10 -Chapter 31 verses 1 through 3 stood out to me today: "*The LORD also said to Moses, "Look, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts."* These verses make me wonder about our lives. **Q: How has God chosen you? What has God given you as gifts and skills? Do you believe that your gifts, skills, and wisdom come from God? How are you using these gifts, skills, and wisdom in the service of God?**

2/10 - In verse 13 we read: "*Tell the people of Israel to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you forever. It helps you to remember that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.*" **Q: How about for you? Do you think taking one day of rest – true rest – as a Sabbath is a good idea? Is there an activity that you**



**are doing 7 days a week, that you can do just 6 days a week? Are you over-scheduling yourself maybe 7 days a week? Can you take 1 day a week to not be scheduled?**

2/11- Today Exodus chapter 32 verse 1 made me think about spiritual "boredom" - "*When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. "Look," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don't know what has happened to him.*" I guess what made me think in this verse was this - Moses was gone only 40 days and 40 nights, up Mt. Sinai. Granted, the Israelites were in the middle of nowhere, so this actually might be quite a long time for him to be gone in these circumstances. But, my thought is this – **Q: Do you think maybe the Israelites had somehow gotten "bored" with God? And I ask this because I wonder if maybe we today get "bored" with God or "bored" with our faith? And if so... why? Why did the Israelites get bored? Why do we get bored?** What makes me nervous about getting bored with our faith is that what we see take place later in this chapter to the Israelites I think can happen to us - we can pursue false Gods and indulge in dangerous sins. Typically, I find faith in God and a relationship with God to be the most adventurous thing on earth! However, I will admit that there have been seasons in my walk where I somehow got bored with my faith. And I think if I honestly look back at those seasons, I think the boredom came because I stopped moving forward in my relationship with God. I let my faith kind of stagnate as a status quo. I started to get distracted by worldly things. And I got spiritually bored. And this was not good. **So - I wonder - what's our cure for boredom in our faith? What keeps our faith fresh? Part of me thinks that daily spiritual disciplines are part of the answer. Reading the Bible every day. Really praying every day. Giving thanks to God every day. How about for you? What do you do to keep your faith fresh?**

2/11 - Today in verses 7 & 8 about the golden calf – "*Then the LORD told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! The people you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves. They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it. They are saying, `These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.'*" **Q: What about us in our lives today? Are we so different from the Israelites? Do we make our own versions of "golden calves" today? Do we have idols that we worship? Money? Career? Popularity? Relationships? Addictions? Our Intelligence? Technology? Do these idols stand in the way of our worship of God? Do they stand in the way of our relationship with God? Do these idols defile us? Do we think sometimes that these idols have actually "brought us out of Egypt" – instead of God? Will we give up these false idols and return to worshipping only God the Father, Son & Holy Spirit with all of our hearts, minds, soul and strength? Will you give up your "golden calf" at the feet of Jesus today?**

2/12 - Exodus chapter 34 verses 6 & 7 are beautiful and we will hear these words repeated again later in the Old Testament a few times: "*I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion.*" **Q: How do these words resonate with you? How do you see that God is merciful and gracious? Slow to anger? And rich in unfailing love and faithfulness? Have you asked God for forgiveness for your sins and rebellion?**

2/15 - Today is the final day of readings from Exodus. Personally, a couple of learnings for me this year from Exodus that I will share are these - 1. Moses' leadership really stood out to me this year as I read through Exodus. And it was interesting to me that his leadership grew over time. Early on in Exodus Moses was saying to God to "please don't choose me to free the Israelites from Egypt - pick someone else" and then by the end of the book Moses has gained enough faith to fast for 40 days on Mt. Sinai and enough confidence to ask God to "show me your glory." I think we can see in Moses how God can transform a person's life completely - and how God can transform our lives completely - if that person enters into a responsive, faithful, loving and obedient relationship with God. Point #2 of my learnings this year - my interest and knowledge in some of the intricacies of the tabernacle has grown, which has been wonderful. **Q: I hope that your reading this past month about the Israelites Exodus from Egypt and their emergence as a nation under Moses' leadership has been a good learning experience for you? More than anything - I hope that reading about God's interactions with His covenant people in Egypt, the plagues, the Red Sea, the manna from heaven, the Ten Commandments, and the plans for the Tabernacle has expanded your understanding of who God is and God's story? What has been an interesting learning for you in Exodus this year that you can share with the group?**

**2/16 - Learning to Love Leviticus!** - This upcoming month of readings is what I call *mission-critical*. We're beginning our journey through the book of Leviticus! As this is my 6th time leading a crew of people through the One Year Bible, I know that Leviticus is the book where we lose many people who started out so strong over the past 6 weeks. I want to let you know this in advance, so that if you feel like maybe not reading your Bible for even just one day this upcoming month,

don't do it! You may find Leviticus "boring" on occasion, but there truly is a lot of depth to it. And if you stop reading the One Year Bible during Leviticus, you'll miss out on so much more of the Bible coming up later this year – including Saul, David, Solomon, the prophets – and the list goes on. If you read nothing else in this posting today, please take ten minutes or so to review the amazing reflection at the link below on the book of Leviticus by Bob Deffinbaugh over at Bible.org. The article at this link below titled "**Learning to Love Leviticus**" will bless you immensely before we embark on our study of Leviticus this week: [http://bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=258](http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=258) An excerpt from Bob at this link above – "Up to this point in time the Book of Leviticus has been the "liver and onions" book of the Bible to me. That is, I know that it must be good for me, but I just don't seem to have a taste for the stuff. To others, the Book of Leviticus is something like camping - they tried it once and that was enough to last them a lifetime. Having briefly looked at the Book of Leviticus, let us get down to the issue of "taste" which must be settled before we will ever benefit from this portion of God's word. The first thing we must seek to do is to identify the reasons why we tend to dislike and thus to avoid this book." [Again, please please read "Learning to Love Leviticus" at this link](#) before you read anything else in this blog posting today. **Q: Have you read the book of Leviticus before? What has motivated you to read the book all the way through? What have you learned from the book of Leviticus in the past?**

## 2/16 – Leviticus begins!

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book of Leviticus was designed to be a handbook for the priests or Levites, hence the name Leviticus. It sets down the regulations that were to govern the life of Israel in general and specifically to give regulations concerning sacrifice and worship. All of the major sacrifices are described, as well as the way they were to be offered. All of the major festivals and holidays are discussed. There are also special sections devoted to the priesthood and regulations concerning ceremonial matters.

Theme: The central theme of this book is that God has provided a way for atonement to be made by the offering of sacrificial blood. This whole system found its fulfillment in the shedding of Christ's blood as the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world. Leviticus also shows that worship is to be orderly and is to follow a regular pattern. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" page 2*) More commentary on Leviticus is at this link – [http://bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=882](http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=882)

2/17 - Today in Leviticus we read about the Sin Offering and the Guilt Offering. Combine this with our readings from yesterday and we've covered the 5 major Old Testament sacrifices - which I'll recap below from the NIV Study Bible. I'd recommend taking a good mental note of these 5 Sacrifices, as we'll keep reading about them this year in various capacities in the OT:

1. **Burnt Offering** - Voluntary act of worship; atonement for unintentional sin in general; expression of devotion, commitment and surrender to God. Bull, ram or male bird is offered - wholly consumed no defect.
  2. **Grain Offering** - Voluntary act of worship; recognition of God's goodness and provisions; devotion to God. Grain, fine flower, olive oil, incense, baked bread, salt offered - accompanied burnt and fellowship offering.
  3. **Fellowship Offering** - Voluntary act of worship; thanksgiving and fellowship as it included a communal meal. Any animal without defect from herd or flock offered.
  4. **Sin Offering** - Mandatory atonement for specific unintentional sin; confession of sin; forgiveness of sin; cleansing from defilement. Young bull for high priest & congregation offered. Male goat for leader. Female goat or lamb for common person. Dove or pigeon for the poor. Tenth of an ephah of fine flower for the very poor.
  5. **Guilt Offering** - Mandatory atonement for unintentional sin requiring restitution; cleansing from defilement; make restitution; pay 20% fine. Ram or lamb offered.
- (above 5 points from the NIV Study Bible p. 151)

2/17 - Chapter 4 verse 21 foreshadows Jesus' death on the cross outside the gates of Jerusalem at Golgotha: *"The priest must then take what is left of the bull outside the camp and burn it there, just as is done with the sin offering for the high priest."* Here's how Hebrews chapter 13 verses 11 through 14 looks back at this verse in Leviticus: *"The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."* **Q: What stands out to you about reading about offerings in our Old Testament readings? Do you see how Jesus was an offering for our sins and is also our high priest?**

2/18 - Today in Leviticus we read about further instructions for offerings. Chapter 6 verse 13 I found interesting:

*"Remember, the fire must be kept burning on the altar at all times. It must never go out."* Commentaries state that the fire was never to go out because the fire was started by God. Humans were not to bring man-made fire to the altar, or they would die, as we will see Leviticus chapter 10 when we read about Nadab and Abihu. The only real "eternal flame" that I can think of in today, that was started by God, is the Holy Spirit. And this eternal flame of the Holy Spirit is made available to you and I through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. **Q: How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life today? Do you experience the Holy Spirit often, or just sometimes? Do you want to experience more of the Holy Spirit in your life? I don't know if you've ever done much study on the Holy Spirit? If not, please do spend a good chunk of time at these 3 links above. Also, I remember a good friend of mine was reading a book a few years ago called "Holy Spirit" - I believe... He said it was an incredible book. I haven't read it. Has anyone else read it? Know the author's name? Or - do you have any other Holy Spirit books or other resources recommendations?**

2/18 - Leviticus chapter 7 verse 27 stands out: *"Anyone who eats blood must be cut off from the community."* This was commanded for 3 reasons - 1. to separate the Israelites from the pagans who drank blood - the pagans drank blood in the hopes of gaining the attributes of the animals from the blood they drank (speed, strength, etc.). 2. the sin of the people was symbolically transferred to the animal before the offering, and the blood represents the life of that animal. 3. for sanitary reasons - blood can carry some nasty diseases.

2/19 - I found Leviticus chapter 7 verse 36 to be powerful as we read about a portion of the offerings going to the priests: *"The LORD commanded that the Israelites were to give these portions to the priests as their regular share from the time of the priests' anointing. This regulation applies throughout the generations to come."* I think this is something for us to consider today - most of us realize that a portion of our tithes and offerings to our churches goes to support our pastors, priests, ministers, clergy. And I believe this is rightly so. These clergy are doing holy work in our churches today. And I know from first hand experience from my past that church ministry work is not easy work. Yes, oftentimes it is joyful work and the most amazing & fulfilling work you can imagine. But, other times it can be really tough work as you can find yourselves on the front lines of spiritual warfare and working with people at very low points in their lives. So - I guess I say all of this to encourage you to not begrudge your clergy in your church for getting paid for their work. Aaron and his sons were "paid" here in Leviticus - and I think it is still proper for clergy to be paid today. (and trust me - most clergy that I know do not get paid an exorbitant amount by a long shot... :) I guess, while I am on this subject, I am also a bit familiar with the house church model today - and I do believe there are some leaders in this movement that are probably not getting "paid" financially. And I think this is great if you can sustain the model. But, personally, I wouldn't fault house church leaders for receiving compensation either. It is holy work that our clergy do. I think fair compensation for this work is fair. **Q: What are your thoughts on your clergy receiving compensation? What are your thoughts on others in other types of ministry receiving compensation? Where do we draw the line of when ministry should be done with compensation or without compensation?**

2/20 - Today in Leviticus chapter 9 we read about Aaron & his sons beginning their priestly ministry. I liked verse 24 as a closing verse to this chapter: *"Fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw all this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground."* I think what this verse does for me is to really confirm that all of the Offerings we are reading about in Leviticus were ordained by God at that time and that what we are reading about in Leviticus is truly part of God's story. Not that I ever doubted this fact - but, when you read about God consuming the offering in fire in such a dramatic fashion, you realize that God was fully pleased with the priest's and the people's obedience. The Offerings are part of God's story - and are foreshadowing the final Offering of Jesus on the cross. **Q: How do you believe the Offerings are a part of our spiritual history? How do the Old Testament offerings foreshadow the New Testament?**

2/20 - In Leviticus chapter 10 we read about the disobedience of Nadab and Abihu. You'll recall 2 days ago that we read in Leviticus Chapter 6 verse 13: *"Remember, the fire must be kept burning on the altar at all times. It must never go out."* Commentaries state that the fire was never to go out because the fire was started by God. Humans were not to bring man-made fire to the altar, or they would die. I realize that this can seem like a very harsh punishment for disobedience. Commentaries suggest that because Nadab and Abihu were in such high spiritual leadership positions, their disobedience carried the risk of leading many people astray. It may help to remember that we saw disobedience from others earlier in the Bible - and we'll see disobedience again later in the Bible - without the consequence of immediate death. But, in this case, disobedience brought death. Think about the risk of disobedience in our lives today. Yeah, sure, maybe we can get away with something dangerous/disobedient 9 times out of 10 - but, there is always the risk that perhaps the 10th time could prove lethal. **Q: So - why take the risk of disobedience at all? Is it worth it? Ever?**

2/21 - Today in Leviticus chapter 11 we read about ceremonially clean and unclean animals for the Israelites. The One Year Bible Companion commentary on this chapter today states that "there were several reasons for this restricted diet - 1. to ensure the health of the nation. The forbidden foods were usually scavenging animals that fed on dead animals; thus disease could be transmitted through them. 2. to visibly distinguish Israel from other nations. The pig, for example, was a common sacrifice of pagan religions. 3. To avoid objectionable associations. The creatures that move about on the ground, for example, were reminiscent of serpents, which often symbolized sin." **Q: Do you think there is any truth to the quote "cleanliness is next to godliness?" Why do you think God focuses so much on cleanliness in the Old Testament? Do you think there is a focus on cleanliness in the New Testament?**

2/21- Today in chapter 11 verse 44 we read: *"After all, I, the LORD, am your God. You must be holy because I am holy."* How does this verse speak to you? Do you think about being holy? Do you want to be holy? Zondervan shares the following commentary on this verse – "Holiness is the key theme of Leviticus, ringing like a refrain in various forms throughout the book. The word "holy" appears more often in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible. Israel was to be totally consecrated to God. Her holiness was to be expressed in every aspect of her life, to the extent that all of life had a certain ceremonial quality. Because of who God is and what he has done, his people must dedicate themselves fully to him." Check out Peter quoting from this Leviticus verse in 1 Peter 1 verses 13-16 – *"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy.""* **Q: How do these verses speak to you? How do you ever you think about being holy? Do you want to be holy, as God is holy?**

2/22 - Today in Leviticus chapter 13 we read about contagious skin diseases and mildew. Quite a chapter! It does make sense to me that this level of detail is given by God on these topics. These instructions were health instructions for the community of Israel as a whole. The NIV Study Bible notes that "the ceremonially unclean were excluded from the camp (the area around the tabernacle and courtyard), where the Israelites lived in tents. Later, no unclean persons were allowed in the temple area, where they could mingle with others." I look at this from the standpoint that they did not have medicines back then to heal people of these contagious diseases - and as such, the only way to keep the diseases from spreading to the entire population was to isolate the sick. I know this doesn't sound compassionate on the surface... but was there a better option at that time? In the New Testament we read about Jesus curing people of leprosy, which was a couple of thousand of years later. It's obvious that skin diseases were a major issue in Moses' day and through Jesus' day - as was mildew during Israel's rainy season of October through March - particularly along the coast and by the Sea of Galilee where it is very humid. **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the contagious skin diseases and mildew? Do you think these laws were compassionate or harsh for their time and place?**

2/24- In Leviticus chapter 16 we read about the Day of Atonement. Ever wonder where the term "scapegoat" came from? Now you know! This chapter. Check out verses 20-23 about the scapegoat - *"When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, and the altar, he must bring the living goat forward. He is to lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the sins and rebellion of the Israelites. In this way, he will lay the people's sins on the head of the goat; then he will send it out into the wilderness, led by a man chosen for this task. After the man sets it free in the wilderness, the goat will carry all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land."* There was also the other goat which was sacrificed. I read a commentary that said that both of these 2 goats foreshadowed Jesus' death - that Jesus was both sacrificed for atonement for our sins and Jesus is our permanent scapegoat. In verse 34 we read – *"This is a permanent law for you, to make atonement for the Israelites once each year."* You'll notice the "once a year" wording in this verse. Contrast this with Jesus' "once for all" sacrifice discussed in Hebrews chapter 10 verses 12 – 14 – *"But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."* For further study on Jesus' "once for all" sacrifice, please read Hebrews chapters 10 and 9. **Q: Do you believe that Jesus' sacrifice was "once for all"? Do you believe that Jesus is your High Priest who has made Atonement for your sins? Do you believe that Jesus as your High Priest sits at the right hand of God? If so, how might fully realizing this change how you live? How you pray?**

2/25- Today we finish up Leviticus chapter 16 with a very simple but powerful statement in verse 34 - *"Moses followed all these instructions that the LORD had given to him."* Moses followed all of the instructions... That sounds so simple, but think about really how amazing it is. Moses did not veer to the left or the right. He stayed on the narrow path. He followed the instructions. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthews 5-7 is a nice summary of some instructions to us from Jesus. **Q: Can what was said of Moses be said of you today? Are you following all of the instructions Jesus has**



**given us?** Don't beat yourself up over this if the answer is no. Not one of us is perfect this side of heaven - except for Jesus. Moses was not perfect either. But, I think we can hopefully learn something from Moses' obedience to God's instructions. I do believe that each of us today can walk along the narrow path to follow Jesus in faith, follow his teachings in faith, and become more and more like Him as we go. Even if we trip or stumble along the Way, if we continue in our faith in Jesus and who he truly is, we will indeed become more like Him as we follow Him. **Q: How well are you doing at following Jesus' instructions in your life today? What are some areas in you can grow in?**

2/25 - Bob Deffinbaugh at bible.org's commentary on Leviticus chapter 17, "The Preciousness of Blood," is [at this link](#). A quote from Bob from this link - "The Israelite of old learned from Leviticus, as nowhere else up to that point in time, the preciousness of blood to God. How much greater value does blood take on for the New Testament saint, whose blessings are all a result of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. As Harrison summarizes the matter, "The blood is the life of the flesh (Lev. 17:11), and it is through the atoning blood of Christ that the believer receives redemption (1 Pet. 1:18-19), forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), justification (Rom. 5:9), spiritual peace (Col. 1:20), and sanctification (Heb. 13:12)." **Q: How is Jesus' blood precious to you?**

2/26 - Today in Leviticus chapter 19 we read about holiness! What a tiny but powerful little word - holy. This chapter is of interest to me in that I continue to struggle with the call to holiness in my life. I understand grace. I get grace. I'm good at receiving grace... :) But holiness? Well, that's a bit trickier for me personally. I guess where I am at these days in my walk with the Lord is really trying to balance grace and holiness. I know we are saved through grace, not works - but, I also believe there is a call to holiness in our lives once we have received that gift of grace. You know I love Bob Deffinbaugh's writings over at bible.org. I think Bob's writings on [Leviticus chapter 19 titled "How to Spell Holy" at this link is up there with some of his best stuff](#). Please check out this link, and make sure you scroll down to read about Bob's take on "perversions of holiness" - 1. stained glass holiness 2. positional holiness 3. equating holiness with the miraculous 4. isolational holiness 5. holiness by redefinition. Great stuff! **Q: What does holiness mean to you in your life? Do you seek to be holy? How?**

2/27 - Today in Leviticus chapter 20 verses 23 & 24 we read - *"Do not live by the customs of the people whom I will expel before you. It is because they do these terrible things that I detest them so much. But I have promised that you will inherit their land, a land flowing with milk and honey. I, the LORD, am your God, who has set you apart from all other people."* These verses are another reminder that God's laws to the Israelites were given to set them apart from the pagans surrounding them and in Canaan. God's laws were given to differentiate what is right and wrong, in comparison to the pagan immoral customs. I wonder about this in our modern world today. **Q: As followers of Jesus, do you think we should be "set apart" from what the modern world tells us to do & how to live? Should we or should we not be living by the customs of our modern world? How are you living your life today? If someone examined your life, how would they see that you are set apart from the customs of our modern world? How do you set yourself apart from the world for God? Are there particular movies or TV or radio programs that you will not watch or listen to? Should we set boundaries for ourselves on what we will and will not watch? Personally, I will admit that I don't watch rated R movie these days. I just know what those movies will typically be trying to "sell" me - and I ain't buying. I do think that we should think about the Holy Spirit indwelling in us and how we might want to set ourselves apart on occasion of what we won't participate in, that the rest of the world wouldn't blink at participating in. What are some examples of how you try to set yourself apart from the world for God?**

2/28 - Today in Leviticus chapter 23 we read about the Appointed Festivals! The NIV Study Bible has a great chart summarizing the Old Testament Feasts and Other Sacred Days, which is significantly paraphrased below with just Name & Purpose:

1. **Sabbath** - Rest for people and animals
2. **Sabbath Year** - Rest for land.
3. **Year of Jubilee** - Help for poor; stabilize society.
4. **Passover** - Remember Israel's deliverance from Egypt.
5. **Unleavened Bread** - Remember how the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt in haste.
6. **Firstfruits** - Recognize the Lord's bounty in the land.
7. **Weeks (Pentecost or Harvest)** - Show joy and thankfulness for the Lord's blessing of harvest.
8. **Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah-New Year's Day)** - Present Israel before the Lord for his favor.
9. **Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)** - Atone for the sins of priests and people and purify the Holy Place.
10. **Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering)** - Memorialize the journey from Egypt to Canaan; give thanks for the productivity of Canaan.

11. **Sacred Assembly** - Commemorate the closing of the cycle of feasts.
  12. **Purim** - Remind the Israelites of their national deliverance in the time of Esther.
  13. **Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication or Festival of Lights)** - Commemorated the purification of the temple and altar in the Maccabean period.
  14. New moons were also often special feast days.
- (Above is from Zondervan's "NIV Study Bible" pp. 176-177)

**Q: Which of these festivals above do you "celebrate" in any way? Which of these festivals do you wish you did celebrate? Which of these festivals above do you see foreshadowing Jesus' life, death and/or resurrection?**

## NEW TESTAMENT

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?**

2/6 - Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapter 24 verse 36 has always stood out to me - particularly when my friends today want to dive into conversations about "if" the end is near: *"However, no one knows the day or the hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows."* No one knows the day or the hour - only God. Good for us to keep in mind. We're not God. :) Verse 35 is an amazing reminder that Jesus' words in the Bible will outlast every single material thing around us today: *"Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever."* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus' words will remain forever?** In today and yesterday's readings in Matthew chapter 24 we read about the end times. **Q: Do you do much study of the end times? What are some books or resources or websites you could point others to, to study more about the end times?** I have to admit, I don't think about the end times very much. I know they will come, but I guess I feel like focusing on the end times too much might distract me from doing other ministry here and now. **How often do you think about the end times? Do you think there should be a balance of time and study when it comes to reflecting on the end times versus being active in ministry in our world today?**

2/7 - Today in Matthew chapter 25 we read about the 10 bridesmaids and verse 13 certainly stands out as Jesus teaches: *"So stay awake and be prepared, because you do not know the day or hour of my return."* **Q: What do you think it means in our lives today to be "awake" and ready for Jesus' return? Are you "awake" this very moment and ready for Jesus' return?** One of the most important points of this parable is that when Jesus returns you won't be able to barter or buy your way into the Kingdom. (as the 5 un-wise bridesmaids tried to do). You yourself will be ultimately responsible for your own spiritual condition! **How are you owning up to this responsibility?**

2/7 - Today we read in Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 through 30 Jesus' "Parable of the Talents." This story of the three servants has often been a parable I have struggled with. For a long time I didn't get what was so wrong about the guy who buried the money. "He at least gave back to the master the same amount he was originally given," I thought. "What's so wrong with that?" Well, as I read this parable again, the thing that really stands out to me is that this parable is not talking about simply money. . . but I think it is talking about our very lives and our time here on earth. I read it now as if God gives each of us a certain amount of time to live on this earth and a certain amount of gifts and skills. And then, we have to ask ourselves - will we simply just go through life very stably & comfortably with those gifts and skills – perhaps even just going through the motions and serving ourselves – to the extent that when God calls us home, we have really not produced much of anything in our lives? What if we spend our time & gifts in such a way that by the end of it we haven't really blessed or served others? We simply give back to God at the end of our lives what God gave to us and nothing more. OR - is it possible that God is calling each of us to do so much more with our lives? Is God calling us to really use the time, gifts and skills he has given us for something bigger than ourselves? Is God calling us to produce a great harvest of loving and serving and blessing others in our lives? So that when we arrive at heaven's gate at the end of our lives we will hear verse 21 from God Himself - *"The master was full of praise. Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!"* **Q: How about your life today? How are you multiplying the skills and gifts that God has given you in your life? How are you investing your skills and gifts in loving service of others? How are you at least "doubling" God's investment in you? What stood out to you in reading the parable of the talents this year?**

2/8 - Today in Matthew chapter 25 we read about the Final Judgment. Verses 34 is an amazing thing to imagine coming in the future: *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* What a beautiful thought - come and inherit the Kingdom prepared for YOU from the foundation of the world! **Q: Do you believe in this inheritance? Do you look forward to this inheritance? How often do you think about this inheritance?**

2/8 - Verses 37 through 40 are so powerful for each of us to consider while we are still here on earth: *"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'"* Whatever we do for one of the least among us, we do for Jesus. And - what we do not do for the least among us, we do not do for Jesus. **Q: How is God calling you today to give food, give water, show hospitality, give clothing, visit the sick, or visit those in prison for the least among us? How do you do this for Jesus?**

2/9 – Matthew 26 Verses 26 through 28 today certainly will remind us of why Communion / the Lord's Supper is so important to us as believers in Jesus: *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* This all took place the night before Jesus was crucified. The bread represents Jesus' body, given for us. The wine represents Jesus' blood, poured-out for many through Jesus' atoning death. **Q: Do our readings in Matthew today remind you of Communion / The Lord's Supper at your church? Is this a positive remembrance for you? How important is Communion / The Lord's Supper to you personally these days? Do you look forward to this remembrance at your church? Have you ever experienced Communion / The Lord's Supper with others in settings outside of your normal worship experience? Maybe at a prayer gathering or outside or in other beautiful settings?**

2/9 - Matthew 26 Verse 35 always stands out to me whenever I read it: *"No!" Peter insisted. "Not even if I have to die with you! I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same.* I guess what jumps out at me in this verse is the question - are we really any different from Peter? Would we proclaim that we would not deny Jesus if you asked us



straight up? Yes I think we would proclaim that. But then... I get to thinking. About how we live our life sometimes. About the decisions we make. About maybe even the bad habits we foreswore off when we were a new Christian. **Q: And yet... do we still find ourselves going back to those bad habits - back to those sins? And, if we are doing this conscientiously - are we in a way denying Jesus when we knowingly sin now? Are we at times denying Jesus as our Lord by our actions? At times, are we really that different from Peter?**

2/10 - In Matthew chapter 26 we read about Jesus' arrest. Verses 53 & 54 stood out to me today when Jesus says: *"Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"* After praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was prepared for what must happen now... Notice how prayer came before this confidence for Jesus of what must happen now. (and Jesus knew that he could call down angels for protection - but he knew he shouldn't) **Q: Do you model Jesus' action of praying before embarking on a significant life decision or trial? How and when do you pray when a significant decision is coming up?**

2/12 - The Passion readings today are always tough... they bring home the reality of what Jesus did for each of us. Tomorrow's readings are tougher. An image of Pilate asking the crowd in Matthew 27 verse 22: *"But if I release Barabbas," Pilate asked them, "what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"* I read an interesting commentary on verse 24 today: *"Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this man. The responsibility is yours!"* Tyndale's commentary said that even though Pilate verbally said the "responsibility is yours" and even though he washed his hands - his responsibility remained. He was essentially afraid about losing his job, because there was the threat to report him to Caesar (John 19:12). Pilate was the Roman governor from AD 26-36 for Judea and Samaria. One of his main duties was to simply "keep the peace" in this outlying area of the Roman Empire - and to do "whatever was necessary" to maintain the "peace"... **Q: Have you ever tried to "keep the peace" in your life – family – job – and ended up turning your back on God? Can true peace be found in our lives apart from God?**

2/13 - Today in Matthew chapter 27 verse 54 we read, just after Jesus' death on the cross: *"The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"* Reflect on these words of the Roman officers and soldiers for a moment. **Q: Do you believe these words of the soldiers are true? If these words are true, what does this mean for our lives today? Are we really living our lives in such a way that reflects that these words are true? Or, is it possible, that sometimes we just say these words of the Roman soldiers, and then just go about our lives as business as usual? If Jesus truly is the Son of God, how then should we be living our lives this very day?**

**2/14 - Matthew 28 is one of the most important chapters of the Bible we will read this year! Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. The resurrection is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and of Jesus' own statements. The Christian faith stands or falls on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. We can read more about this important point from Paul in [1 Corinthians 15](#). Tyndale Publishers outlines these 5 points in their commentary today that the resurrection guarantees:**

1. Jesus was truly the Son of God. ([Romans 1:4](#))
2. God the Father accepted what Jesus did at Calvary on the basis of the resurrection. ([Romans 4:25](#))
3. Jesus as our Risen Lord pleads for his people before the Father. ([Romans 8:34](#))
4. Believers have the hope of eternal life. ([1 Peter 1:3-5](#))
5. Believers will also rise and have resurrected bodies like that of Jesus. ([1 Corinthians 15:49](#), [Philippians 3:21](#), [1 John 3:2](#))

**Q: What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you personally? How does Jesus' resurrection affect how you live your life today?**

2/14 - The Great Commission at the end of Matthew chapter 28 in verses 18-20 is so important for us as followers of Jesus on Earth today: *"Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.""* I like that we see the Trinity in this commission - the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen! The NIV Study Bible commentary today says that Jesus' Great Commission has three steps: 1. Go 2. Baptize them. 3. Teach them to obey everything Jesus has commanded. I know the Great Commission encourages many to go on mission trips, which is wonderful and makes sense. However, I believe that often times the mission field

many of us are called to "go" into is in our own backyards. Our own towns. Our own cities. Maybe even our own homes. Let us go where the Lord calls us to go - near or afar. Will you go? **Q: How are you participating in Jesus' Great Commission today in your life? Are you in some way helping make disciples? Are you in some way helping to baptize? Are you teaching people to obey Jesus' commands?**

2/14 – We finish up the Gospel of Matthew today. I think the main thing that really stood out to me in the Gospel of Matthew readings this year was how powerfully truthful and insightful Jesus' teachings are in the parables. Some of the parables really took on new life & meaning for me this year as I read through Matthew. It is such an amazing thing - every time I read the Bible - or re-read portions of the Bible I should say - I gain some new insight that I never saw before. I hope that has been the case for you as you read through Matthew this year? **Q: What are some new things God has taught you about Jesus as you read through Matthew this year?**

2/15 – **We begin the book of Mark!**

Author: Mark

Place: Rome

Date: A.D. 60-65

Content: John Mark was a companion of the apostle Paul. He finally settled in Rome where he wrote down the remembrances of the apostle Peter. Thus Mark's Gospel reflects the words of an eyewitness of the events he describes. Mark's purpose was to put together an expanded Gospel message. Hence it centers upon the acts of Jesus rather than his words and devotes a disproportionately large amount of material to the last week of Jesus' life. Mark's Gospel begins with Jesus' public ministry and preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Several explicit predictions of his coming death are made (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34, 45) and then Jesus goes to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

Theme: Mark depicts Jesus as the Servant of God who came to do God's will. The miracles, healings, victory over demons, and personal power show the world that Jesus was no ordinary servant, but was truly the Son of God (Mark 15:39). Jesus' resurrection authenticated all that he did, and now we await his return in glory from heaven. Mark also wrote to encourage the Roman Christians in a time of persecution. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pages 21-22) Excellent commentary on the Gospel of Mark is [at this link](#).

2/15 - You'll notice in Mark chapter 1 today that there is no nativity narrative - Mark and John's Gospels do not have the nativity narrative. Verse 1 starts off powerfully with: *"Here begins the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God."* (Good News = Gospel. Gospel comes from the Old English word godspel, which means "good story" or "good tidings" or "good news" and accurately translates the original Greek word: evangelion.) And what is the Good News? It is that God has provided salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is very Good News indeed! I know I mentioned this when we read through the Baptism narrative in Matthew, but I think this is so powerful, that I want to mention it again. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in Jesus' Baptism - 1. the Father speaks 2. the Son is Baptized 3. the Holy Spirit descends on the Son. Verses 10 & 11: *"And when Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens split open and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you.""* Per Tyndale's commentary today, Jesus was baptized 1. to begin his mission to bring the message of salvation to all people; 2. to show support for John's ministry; 3. to identify with our humanness and sin; 4. to give us an example to follow. **Q: When were you baptized? What does your baptism mean to you? When do you reflect back on your baptism?**

2/16 - Today in Mark's readings I noticed that Jesus healed, taught, healed and healed. 3 healings and 1 teaching in today's readings. I don't know about you, but sometimes I personally seem to overlook Jesus' healing ministry. I pay a lot of attention to what he did on the cross for us. I pay a lot of attention to his resurrection. I pay a lot of attention to his teachings. But his healings? Not so much. And if I really stop to think about it, I know that I personally need some healing from Jesus in my life. I have wounds. I have issues. I have "patterns" as the singer David Wilcox would say. :) I need Jesus' healing touch in my life. **Q: How about you? Do you need Jesus' healing touch in your life?** If so, can you reflect on chapter 1 verses 40 & 41 in Mark's readings today: *"A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you want to, you can make me well again," he said. Moved with pity, Jesus touched him. "I want to," he said. "Be healed!"* **Q: What has been your "leprosy" in the past or today? Do you want to be made well again? Do you believe that Jesus wants to heal you? Has Jesus healed you in the past?**

2/18 - In Mark chapter 3 verses 7 & 8 show how Jesus' ministry was quickly being noticed from all over Israel: *"Jesus and his disciples went out to the lake, followed by a huge crowd from all over Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, from east of the Jordan River, and even from as far away as Tyre and Sidon. The news about his miracles had spread far and wide,*

*and vast numbers of people came to see him for themselves."* And now today think about how far and wide Jesus' ministry has gone. Worldwide. **Q: Why do you suppose Jesus' ministry gained such notice during his lifetime? Why do you suppose that Jesus' ministry continues to gain such notice today? How is there is true power in Jesus' ministry? How does Jesus changes lives? Heals people - teaches people - loves people - forgives people.... How is Jesus the Savior of the World?**

2/19 - Mark chapter 3 verses 33-35 make an impact on me each time I read it: *"Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he looked at those around him and said, "These are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."* This last sentence is a powerful proclamation from Jesus. If we are obedient to God's will in our life we are brothers and sisters and mothers of Jesus. Pretty amazing to think about! Jesus is not only our savior - but our brother. And later he calls us friends. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary puts it this way - "It is a great comfort to all true Christians, that they are dearer to Christ than mother, brother, or sister as such, merely as relations in the flesh would have been, even had they been holy. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is ours even now; for though Christ's bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, his spiritual presence is not denied us." **Q: How is Jesus your relative? How are other believers your relatives? Do you believe people in your church are your family?**

2/19 - Mark chapter 4's parable of the Farmer scattering seed is a parable that I am sure can convict each of us in various ways. Verses 16 through 18 I am afraid can sometimes represent all too well the "soil" of our hearts... *"The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word. The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for nice things, so no crop is produced."* The crowding out of the Good News by the cares of this life and the desire for nice things is where I am afraid we miss the mark too often. And when we succumb to these cares & desires, indeed, no crop is produced. However - I do pray that there are moments in life where we can see the amazing power & truth in verse 20: *"But the good soil represents those who hear and accept God's message and produce a huge harvest--thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted."* I just pray for more consistency in our lives to live in verse 20 than in the previous verses... **Q: How is the soil of your heart? Which verses in this parable are you living in these days? Are you receiving God's Word into your heart? Will you allowing God's Word in your heart to produce a huge harvest?**

2/20 - I love the parable of the growing seed in Mark chapter 4 verses 26-29. This parable only occurs in the Gospel of Mark. I equate the seed to be the Gospel, which is filled with so much power and truth and life that *"the seeds sprouted and grew without the farmer's help, because the earth produces crops on its own."* The Gospel message is so powerful on its own that it will produce a bountiful crop. Or - maybe the Bible is another way to look at the seed. Reading and studying the Bible will ultimately produce a bountiful crop in our lives. It can't help but not do so. What do you think the seed represents in this parable? I'll share with you that I have been thinking more and more about farming these days - and the wisdom in how farming works. You plant, you water, you care for the soil, you wait, the plant grows. And this takes time. You reap what you sow. And I contrast this with our society today - or myself - and how everything moves so fast. We want instant gratification. Now! :) We don't like to wait on anything. We don't like the concept of farming... and I'm afraid that this speed of life today can really be unhealthy - or maybe superficial is the word I'm looking for. In any case, I think the patience and process of farming is something that has so much value for us still today. If we are struggling with sins or sadness or whatever, I think we absolutely need to take these things to Jesus for healing - but, we would do well to realize that Jesus may want to do some farming in our hearts. He may want to plant some seeds, and give the seeds some time to grow. Sure, maybe sometimes we'll get an instant gratification healing or answer. But I think more often than not we should be ready for some farming to occur in our hearts. And to thank God for the wisdom of this process! **Q: What do you think of my farming analogies in the reflections above? Has our modern world forgotten about some of the principles of farming the land? Have we forgotten that we reap what we sow? Have we lost our patience, to the point where we will not even wait for the harvest to come in at its appointed time? Are we trying to control things in our modern day life that aren't controllable? Such as the "pace" at which a seed grows into a plant and a plant into a full harvest? In losing some of our knowledge of the principles of farming and growing, are we at risk of losing ourselves?**

2/20 - I think my little tangent on farming and being patient during the process, above, might play in well to Jesus' next parable of the mustard seed in verses 30 through 32: *"Jesus asked, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a tiny mustard seed. Though this is one of the smallest of seeds, it grows to become*

*one of the largest of plants, with long branches where birds can come and find shelter.*"" I think if we can have faith in the seed that Jesus plants in our hearts - be it the Gospel, the Bible, healing, patience, faith - we will see an amazing plant grow that will ultimately bless others. From the tiniest beginnings, with patience and faith, can come the largest of plants. **Q: Have you ever let Jesus plant a needed mustard seed in your heart? And have you been patient and allowed the seed time & space to grow?**

2/21- The structure of today's readings in Mark chapter 5 are amazing! The narrative starts with Jairus asking Jesus to heal his daughter who is about to die - but, then, in the middle of the narrative Jesus' journey is stopped by a woman who simply wants to touch Jesus' robe so that she will be healed from a 12-year suffering. And verse 34 in this portion is just so beautiful as Jesus says to the now healed woman: *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. You have been healed."* Then, the narrative cuts back to Jairus, but it sounds like it's too late for Jesus to come to the house. Messengers report that the little girl has died. Jesus simply tells Jairus in verse 36 - *"Just trust me."* (which is something so powerful that I believe Jesus says to you and me today too - "Just trust me." Don't worry about anything else in this passing life. "Just trust me.") And then in verses 40 & 41 we read: *"Then he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. Holding her hand, he said to her, "Get up, little girl!"* **Q: Why do you think Jesus' healing ministry is focused on in the Gospels? Do you think Jesus' healing ministry continues in our world today? How?**

2/22 - Today we read in Mark Chapter 6 verse 4- *"Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family."* This verse reminds me that sometimes when we really move forward in our faith, our friends ("hometown" from the verse above) and our relatives can sometimes not understand what is going on with us. I think there are phases of our walk with God where really it becomes very personal - between us and God - and through that process God will transform us. And our friends and relatives sometimes may not appreciate our change for various reasons - just as Jesus' friends and relatives did not appreciate his ministry in this verse. I hope that this verse can be of comfort to you if by chance you are having challenges reconciling your faith and your changed heart with your friends & relatives expectations of who you were in the past. Know that you are on the right path. As long as you are staying focused on God and his will for your life, you may have to accept some loss of "honor" (per the verse above) in your status with your friends and relatives. You may not seem to be as "cool" or "fun" as you once were in your friends' eyes. But - if in God's eyes you are loving Him with all of your heart and you are loving your neighbors as yourself, then you are eternally cool and fun in the Kingdom of Heaven. And that's where it really counts. **Q: Where are you seeking "honor" in your life today? In the eyes of your friends and relatives - or in God's eyes? Have you ever sought honor in the eyes of the world and realized it was not worth it?**

2/23 - Today we read in Mark Chapter 6 verse 46: *"Afterward he (Jesus) went up into the hills by himself to pray."* What a beautiful verse for each of us to meditate upon! Jesus went by himself to pray to God. It is interesting to note that this took place just after Jesus fed the 5,000. Jesus had been working hard - he is God and yet he still felt the call to pray to the Father. I think this verse is such a great reminder that you and I need to follow Jesus' example in this verse. And we're so not God! :) So, think about how much more crucial it is for us to pray. Jesus knew that God was his source of strength. His comfort. His wisdom. And prayer was the one sure fire way for Jesus to really connect and spend time with God. **Q: How is your prayer life these days? Are you finding a good amount of time each day to be by yourself and pray? If not, how can you schedule this time into your calendar each day?**

2/24 - How very interesting that today's readings in Mark are about "Clean and Unclean" - based on all of our Leviticus readings recently about this subject. Today we read about Jesus confronting the Pharisees about their "own traditions". I read in NIV Study Bible and OYB Companion commentaries that after the Babylonian exile (we'll read about this late this year in the One Year Bible), Jewish rabbis began to make meticulous rules and regulations governing the daily life of people. And that these rules were added to God's law and essentially elevated to the same sacred status by the Pharisees. In 200 A.D. these traditions of the elders were put into writing in the [Mishnah](#). I think what Jesus gets at here in this chapter is that the Pharisees were allowing the "rules & regs" to overshadow the spirit of God's law. They were not honoring their parents because of the practice of Corban - giving \$ to the temple. Which is a good thing... but at the expense of a great thing of caring for your parents? I know we all could probably go round and round on what is the greatest good - how should we spend our time and our money and our lives. I like that Jesus basically takes us to the heart. What is the heart of the matter? No matter what the matter is - taking care of your parents, giving to your church, following God's laws, receiving God's grace - what is the heart of the matter? One thing that I have been so blessed to learn over the past few years is that the condition of our hearts matters. Immensely. The motives of why we do something - anything - matters. Immensely. We are called in Proverbs to "guard our hearts, for it is the wellspring of



life." If we do not care for the state of our hearts, we can become very regimented or insensitive in our thinking and doing. We might even get to the point in verse 8 of this chapter where Jesus quotes from Isaiah - "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away." **Q: How is the state of your heart today? Is it close to God? How do you draw your heart close to God?**

2/24 - Jesus continues to speak about the importance of what is in our hearts in verses 20-23 today - *"It is the thought-life that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God."* I think this takes us back again to the Sermon on the Mount - where Jesus teaches us in one example that yes, it is wrong to commit adultery. But, if you commit adultery in your heart, it is just as wrong. Because if you commit adultery in the heart, you have essentially defiled your own heart. And from the heart could come the actual act of committing adultery - which would then shatter several lives. But it all starts in the heart.... So - the good news? Jesus can heal our hearts! Jesus is in the business of heart-healing! Maybe in your life, you might need to refocus a little bit less on some external actions and start focusing on the state of your heart? Maybe by focusing on what's going on inside your heart, the external actions will ultimately change? Maybe allow Jesus to heal your heart - and then your external life will be healed as well? I'm not sure you can go about this the other way - trying to work from the outside back in... I think you may need to start on the inside first and work your way out. But don't do this alone - let Jesus walk this healing path with you. **Q: Do you believe Jesus can heal hearts? Has Jesus healed your heart? How?**

2/25- Mark chapter 7 opens up with a gentile woman begging Jesus to release her daughter from the control of a demon. Verses 27 through 29 are a fascinating look at Jesus' ministry - *"Jesus told her, 'First I should help my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.' She replied, 'That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are given some crumbs from the children's plates.'" "Good answer!" he said. "And because you have answered so well, I have healed your daughter."* Here we see that Jesus' ministry was initially to the Jews, but here he heals a gentile woman's daughter because of her humility and faith. And of course as we get to the Great Commission at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' ministry is clearly for "all nations". In fact, Mark's Gospel is a good indicator of how Jesus' ministry quickly expanded beyond the Jews as Mark likely wrote this Gospel in Rome and to a primarily Roman gentile believer audience. **Q: How are you helping take the Gospel to all nations? Are you supporting missionaries or ministries doing this work? Are you doing it yourself?**

2/26- The last few verses in Mark's readings today are some of the most powerful verses that each of us should really reflect upon in our lives today! I wish I reflected on these verses more often. Check out chapter 8 verses 34 through 38 and spend a few moments really reflecting on these verses and on how they speak to how you are living your life today: *"Then Jesus called his disciples and the crowds to come over and listen. 'If any of you wants to be my follower,' he told them, 'you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life. And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul? If a person is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, I, the Son of Man, will be ashamed of that person when I return in the glory of my Father with the holy angels.'" These are incredible verses above! I think the first obvious question these verses open up to us is simply this - do you want to be a follower of Jesus? If the answer is yes, then the instructions that follow are simple and yet not always so easy in our fallen world: 1. give up your own selfish ambition. 2. shoulder your cross. 3. follow Jesus. How are you doing on these 3 points in your life today? And what a profound truth there is in that we will find true life if we give up our life for Jesus - the Good News. I actually have been thinking about this point quite a bit lately. And my thoughts have revolved around "my identity" - and where I get my identity from. I think so often I get my identity from my work or my ministry or my friends or my social life - the problem in all of this is that you'll keep seeing the word "my" in my identity. And I'm realizing more and more that my identity should be in Jesus alone. Jesus should be the identity. The reality. I think that I am really searching for true life in all the wrong places - in my work, in my friends, etc. And true true life is really only found in one place - Jesus. **Q: How about you? What is providing your identity in your life today? Do you think it is possible that your identity could simply be found in Jesus? How is your identity found in Jesus? Do you want this to be the case? Do you think we would do well to not be ashamed of Jesus and the Good News in these adulterous and sinful days... ?***

2/27 - Today in Mark chapter 9 we read about the Transfiguration! I heard a wonderful sermon recently about the Transfiguration. The sermon basically was stating that the Transfiguration of Jesus into a dazzling white & God's voice showed to James, John, and Peter that Jesus was truly divine and the son of God. And, the sermon suggested this

Transfiguration took place relatively closely to Jesus' arrest and death - as such, the Transfiguration was meant to give these 3 apostles the hope that even during the dark days that were soon to come during the arrest, trial and death of Jesus, that they truly were following the Messiah and that he would rise from the dead - although they didn't quite understand the rise from the dead part at this time. I think it is important for us to remember that we have the knowledge of the full story of Jesus, including his resurrection - hindsight is 20/20 - but the apostles did not know exactly what was going to happen at this particular time. The Transfiguration was an incredible sign of God's control in all that was happening and would happen to his beloved son Jesus. **Q: What does the Transfiguration mean to you? What would you have thought if you were James, John or Peter seeing the Transfiguration? As Christians, how can we bring the message of the Transfiguration to our dying world today?**

2/28 - Mark chapter 9 verses 33-35 always stand out to me and I personally always need to be reminded of Jesus' teaching here in the last sentence: *"Jesus asked them, "What were you discussing out on the road?" But they didn't answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. He sat down and called the twelve disciples over to him. Then he said, "Anyone who wants to be the first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."* **Q: How are you doing on this last sentence? When in your life are you taking last place? When are you the servant of everyone else? Do you think this last sentence applies to Jesus' life? Do you think we should model how Jesus lived his life in this regard?**

## PSALMS

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"?**

2/6- Today in Psalm 30 verses 4 through 5 we read: *"Sing to the Lord; you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Do you believe that God's anger can last only a moment, but his favor last a lifetime? If you are weeping now in some area of your life, do you believe that God can bring rejoicing to you? Will you pray to God to grant you favor in this life and in life everlasting? Will you pray to God to heal any situation that you are weeping over today, and to bring you rejoicing tomorrow? Do you look forward to this rejoicing that will allow you to sing to the Lord as a saint and to praise his holy name?**

2/7 - Psalm 31 verse 1 is such a powerful start to this powerful Psalm of David's - *"O LORD, I have come to you for protection; don't let me be put to shame. Rescue me, for you always do what is right."* **Q: In your life today, do you need protection from something? If so, will you run to God for your protection? Do you believe that God can rescue you? Do you believe that God can save you from shame? Do you believe that God always does what is right?**

2/8 - Have you ever felt like Psalm 31 verse 10... *"I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Misery has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within."* I recently read C.S. Lewis' book "[A Grief Observed](#)". Have you read this? It is a very short book. But, wow, it is a powerful short book! It is a memoir C.S. Lewis wrote after the death of his wife and it is so incredibly thoughtful and moving as C.S. Lewis works through his grief and his questions for and about God. Psalm 31:10 reminds me of this book... though not really... it seems like C.S. Lewis didn't quite get as down as the level of this verse. Anyhow - great book I think for any Christian who has lost a loved one. **Q: What has been consoling for you during a time of loss? Do you have any other book recommendations for people who might be going through grief? Books that were helpful to you when you went through a time of grief?**

2/9 - This is a wonderful look at God's goodness in Psalm 31 verse 19: *"Your goodness is so great! You have stored up great blessings for those who honor you. You have done so much for those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world."* **Q: Do you believe that God's goodness is indeed great? Are you honoring God with your life and your actions and your thoughts each day? Do you believe that God is storing up blessings for you? Do you believe that God will bless you if you go to him for protection?**

2/10 - Today we read Psalm 32, which is a wonderful testimony of joy about God's gift of forgiveness to us when we confess our sins to God! In Psalm 32 verses 1 & 2 we read: *"Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!"* **Q: Do you agree with this Psalmist that there is joy in forgiveness? How do you confess your sins these days? Do you confess them verbally to someone else - a pastor / minister / priest / mentor / friend / accountability partner? Why do you confess them verbally? Do you confess your sins to God in prayer? After confessing your sins verbally or in prayer do you feel any different? Do you think confession is relevant? Do you think confession is a spiritual discipline that should be practiced regularly?**

2/11 - Psalm 33 verse 11 is strong today - *"But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken."* I think the thing that grabs me about this verse is that it is God's plans - not our plans - that stand firm forever. Therefore, it's only logical in my mind that we should align our lives such that they are part of God's plan - God's kingdom. I think reading the Bible each day is one excellent way to discern what God's plans are. And then - once we know what God's

plans are, will we then align our lives with his plans? Knowing that his intentions can never be shaken? **Q: How do you align your life with God's plans? Do you consciously try to do this?**

2/12 - Psalm 33 verse 12 today is awesome: *"In him our hearts rejoice, for we are trusting in his holy name."* **Q: How Does your heart literally rejoice when you think about God? How do you trust in God's holy name?**

2/13 - Psalm 34 verse 9 in the NIV reads: *"Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing."* **Q: What does fearing God mean to you? Do you think that fearing God is a good or bad thing? Why? Do you think it is possible to both love God and fear God at the same time? What do you think of when you hear the word "saints"? Do you believe that you are a saint? Do you want to be a saint? Are you acting like a saint? Do you believe that those who fear God lack nothing? Why would this be?**

2/14 - I love Psalm 34 verses 17 & 18 today: *"The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit."* I am sure all of us have moments of needing help. Moments of trouble. Moments of being brokenhearted. Moments of being crushed in spirit. **Q: The big question is what do you do in those moments? Or, who do you turn to? Do you call to God in those moments? How do you know that he will help you? How do you know that he will rescue you? How do you know that he is close to you? How do you know that He is near?**

2/15 - Per the NIV Study Bible, Psalm 35 today is an appeal to the heavenly King, as divine Warrior and Judge, to come to the defense of his servant David who is being maliciously slandered by those toward whom he had shown only the most tender friendship. I like verse 10 a lot: *"I will praise him from the bottom of my heart: "LORD, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the weak and helpless from the strong? Who else protects the poor and needy from those who want to rob them?""* **Q: Have you recently praised God from the bottom of your heart? Do you think that anyone/ anything compares with God? Do you believe that God has rescued you and protected you? Perhaps many times when you have not even realized it?** I think about this on occasion. It is my hunch that God literally rescues us and protects us dozens if not hundreds if not thousands of times each and every day. And I think we typically miss it.... If we knew it, I am sure we would be praising Him from the bottom of our heart very frequently!

2/16 - Psalm 35 verses 22 & 23 are two very impassioned verses that I think we should take note of: *"O LORD, you know all about this. Do not stay silent. Don't abandon me now, O Lord. Wake up! Rise to my defense! Take up my case, my God and my Lord."* I think what these verses do is remind me that we don't have to always speak to God in "hushed" tones or in our "church voices". We can interact with God at any moment as we really are. I don't think we should try to hide our emotions from God. We should come before God at any time - as we are - and let Him take us from there... and heal us from there... **Q: When is the last time you literally cried out to God? Do you think it is healthy to cry out to God?**

2/17 - I love Psalm 36 today! There are some powerful verses in this Psalm... Starting off with verse 1 being a scary & true verse... *"Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain them."* Wow. I'll admit - I've been there. I know what it is like to have sin whispering deep within my heart. Thank God for the gift of Jesus - the savior of my world... Thank God for the gift of the fear of God. And thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit who directs us along the narrow path - the path of life and light. I pray that verse 1 does not ring too true for you today - but if it does, please pray to Jesus to instead fill your heart with Jesus' Spirit, which is the only power that can truly dispel the whisper of sin within. **Q: Have you ever felt sin whispering to you? Do you think that sin can indeed whisper to our hearts? Can it whisper from within our hearts? Do we need more than just fear of God to restrain us from sin? How has Jesus freed you from the whisper of sin within your heart?**

2/18 - Today we read Psalm 37, which is most definitely a Wisdom Psalm! It's like we are reading Proverbs! I love verse 5: *"Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you."* **Q: Do you commit everything you do to God? EVERYTHING? Your waking life? Your sleeping life? Your job? Your relationships? Your family? Your finances? Your time? If so, do you trust that God will help you in everything you do in your life? Do you believe what verse 4 teaches? "Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires."** I love that thought - take delight in God. Do you take delight in God each and every day? Do you believe that he will give you your heart's desires?

2/19 - Psalm 37 verse 16 is powerful today - *"It is better to be godly and have little than to be evil and possess much."* I



don't know what I can add to this.... I think you probably get it. :) Do you live it? Verse 23 is so amazing... *"The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives."* I don't mean to infer that I am godly here... but, I will admit that there are times in my life where I really sense that God is directing my steps - and taking care of every detail. And basically, it feels like I am sort of just going with God's flow. Things are just happening beautifully. And I do sense the Spirit often during these times. My sadness in this area is that I don't realize that God is directing my steps all of the time. And that he is delighting in every detail of my life - most of the time... :) I pray you and I will come to a greater awareness of this in our lives each and every moment: *"The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives."* **Q: How is God directing your steps today? Are you allowing God to lead your steps? Are there any areas of your life where you are not allowing God to lead your steps today?**

2/20 - Psalm 37 verses 30 & 31 read like amazing Proverbs: *"The godly offer good counsel; they know what is right from wrong. They fill their hearts with God's law, so they will never slip from his path."* **Q: How are you filling your heart with God's teachings? How are you doing this so that you will never slip from His path? How are you offering good counsel to those around you? When others around you see you, do they see someone that clearly knows what is right from wrong?**

2/21 - Psalm 38 is powerful. Verses 4 & 5 speak so much to our human condition - *"My guilt overwhelms me--it is a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and stink because of my foolish sins."* Does this verse speak to you in any way, shape or form? If so, please consider then verse 18 - *"But I confess my sins; I am deeply sorry for what I have done."* **Q: Have you ever had overwhelming guilt? How were you healed of this guilt? Has confession of your sins every helped you get beyond guilt?**

2/22 - Today we read in Psalm 39 verse 5 – *"My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you; human existence is but a breath."* This verse is a powerful verse for each of us to meditate upon. **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Do you feel like life moves fast sometimes? If so, how are you spending your time? Are you being intentional about how you invest your time? Are you being intentional about your work? Your friends? Your finances? Volunteering? Serving others? Loving others? Watching TV – or not watching TV? (Have I gone off on my "Kill Your Television" soap-box yet this year? :) I'll save it for a future post...) Do you think life really is "but a breath"? Are you spending your breath wisely? With your breath are you constantly loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself?**

2/24- Today Psalm 40 verse 16 stood out to me for it's pure joy and praise - *"But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, "The LORD is great!""* **Q: Does this verse resonate with you today? How have you searched for God in your life? Are you filled with joy and gladness because of that search? Do you love God's salvation? Do you shout praises to God for all he has done for you? Maybe if verse 16 does not resonate for you today, hopefully verse 17 can encourage you - *"As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord is thinking about me right now. You are my helper and my savior. Do not delay, O my God."* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus is thinking about you right now? How do you believe that Jesus is your helper and your savior?****

2/25 - Today we read in Psalm 41 verse 1 – *"Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble."* For some reason this verse really opens up my heart. Something about the word "weak." Maybe this verse really speaks to me because I myself feel weak at times. And yet, I am so blessed in so many ways. And I realize that there are so many others out there in this world who may not have the blessings that I have, and who are struggling through an extremely tough cycle of weakness. And I wonder – what am I doing to help those who are weak? Do I really have regard for the weak? **Q: Do you? What in your life really demonstrates that you have regard for the weak? How are you investing time or finances into the weak? Are you praying for the weak? Are you loving the weak?**

2/26- Today we read Psalm 42 verse 1, which is one of my favorite verses in the Bible! *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God."* That is so right on. Lately these days I have been longing for God more than ever - and I love that. I am thankful for that. There have been seasons in my life - which can certainly be called "dry" seasons - where I have not longed for God. Where I have not longed for the true Living Water. I just love the picture this Psalm verse paints in my mind - a deer in the wilderness is fleeing from hunters. It is literally dying of thirst as it runs. It is tired. It is weary. It is running from death. And it needs water. It pants for streams of water. Like this deer, I pray that I long for God in the same way. As I flee from sin. As I am tired. As I am weary. As I run from death. I need God. I long for God.

**Q: How about you? How do you long for God these days as a deer longs for water? How are you consistently drinking from the true Living Water?**

2/27 - I think Psalm 43 verse 5 starts off with a couple of questions that then answer themselves by the end of the verse - *"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and my God!"* I would agree with what this verse is getting at. If I find myself to be discouraged or sad, it comes as no great surprise to me that I have been putting my hope in things other than God. I have been perhaps even praising false idols. And the sure fire way to be freed from the discouragement or sadness? To put my hope once again in God and God only. And to praise him again! I think this Psalm verse is a great reminder to make sure we are not placing our hope in anything other than God. For anything other than God will only leave us empty in the end. **Q: Have you ever found yourself discouraged or sad and then found yourself somehow praising God? Has praising God ever dramatically changed your mood?**

2/28 - Psalm 44 verse 3 is a wise statement about where the Israelites and our true strength and victory in life comes from! *"They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strength that gave them victory. It was by your mighty power that they succeeded; it was because you favored them and smiled on them."* **Q: As you look back on your life and at the good things that have happened to you, do you think that these things occurred because of your own power or work alone? Or, do you think it is possible that God's hand was blessing your life through all of those good things - even if maybe you did not notice God was there at the time? Can you share some instances in your life that when you look back on them you realize that God was absolutely there and blessing what was taking place?**

#### PROVERBS

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?**

2/6 - Proverbs chapter 7 verse 25 reminds us once again of the importance of guarding our hearts, the very wellspring of our lives: *"Don't let your hearts stray away..."* **Q: Is there anything in your life that is causing your heart to stray away from God's Truth? Will you not allow you heart to go down that dangerous path? Will you return your heart's allegiance wholly to your Maker and Provider? Will you allow your heart to be chained to God alone, and not to any temptations or sins?**

2/7 - I love the beginning of Proverbs chapter 8 with the imagery of Wisdom calling out to all humankind! Do you hear the call of wisdom in your life today?? Today we read in Proverbs chapter 8 verses 10 & 11: *"Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge over pure gold. For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can be compared with it."* **Q: How are you seeking God's instruction in your life above all else? Do you agree with this Proverb that wisdom is far more valuable than riches? Is reading the Bible each day in 2010 adding to your wisdom? Are you seeking to do more than just read the Bible this year? How are you diving into further study of the Bible? How are you allowing your study of the Bible to transform you? How are you allowing the Bible to change how you think, act, and live? How are you allowing the Bible to give you godly wisdom?**

2/8 - Proverbs 8 verse 13 is a powerful look at what Wisdom hates! *"That is why I hate pride, arrogance, corruption, and perverted speech."* **Q: When you look at your own life - do you hate pride, arrogance, corruption and perverted speech in your own behavior?**

2/11 - Proverbs chapter 8 verse 36 today tells us - *"But those who miss me have injured themselves. All who hate me love death."* This is a powerful reminder of why we should seek and love God's wisdom all of our lives. Let us not injure ourselves! Let us not hate wisdom. Let us not love death. **Q: How do you make sure that you don't miss God in your life?**

2/12 - Proverbs chapter 9 verses 5 & 6 are a reminder that not only does Temptation call us (as we've read earlier in Proverbs this year), but Wisdom calls out to us as well! *"Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your foolish ways behind, and begin to live; learn how to be wise."* **Q: Which voice are you listening to these days? Whose invitation are you accepting? Temptation's? Or Wisdom's? Whose call will you answer? I love all of our Proverbs readings about wisdom these days. And obviously I think most of us would agree that we are finding wisdom in the Bible. My question for today is this - can we find wisdom outside of the Bible? For example, I read Jim Collins famous business book "Good to Great" a few years ago, and I believe I found some business wisdom in this book. I listen to Dennis Prager's radio show and think that I gain some wisdom from his comments on occasion. I read the Wall Street Journal and think that gives me some wisdom periodically. I think the difference though between these 3 modern day sources and the Bible is that Good to Great, Dennis Prager, and the Wall Street journal are not 100% wisdom 100% of the time. Whereas the Bible I believe is 100% wisdom 100% of the time. How about you? Do you think you get wisdom in places outside of the Bible today? Where are those places?**

2/13 - Proverbs chapter 9 verses 7 & 8 are fascinating to me: *"Anyone who rebukes a mocker will get a smart retort. Anyone who rebukes the wicked will get hurt. So don't bother rebuking mockers; they will only hate you. But the wise, when rebuked, will love you all the more."* I do believe this Proverb is true. If anyone needs a definition of rebuke it is: "an act or expression of criticism and censure." (and for that matter censure means - "harsh criticism or disapproval") So, this Proverb teaches us that rebukes of a mocker or the wicked will bring a critical reply or even injury. But that rebukes of the wise can bring love! Powerful to consider! **Q: Do you ever rebuke anyone? Part of me thinks that sometimes we can become so scared of what anyone else will think that we say absolutely nothing - even when perhaps we should rebuke someone. When do you feel it is appropriate to rebuke someone? Is it based on a relationship? Is it based on if they ask your opinion on a matter? Will you ever rebuke someone even if not asked an opinion on the matter? Are you careful to not rebuke mockers or the wicked, but only to rebuke the wise? How do you discern who is wise and able to receive a rebuke? Conversely, have you ever been rebuked by someone else?**

**Have you ultimately loved that person for the rebuke? Even if the rebuke stung at the time, were you ultimately appreciative of receiving the rebuke?**

2/14 - I love Proverbs 9:10 today: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Bob Deffinbaugh has a great look at this Proverbs verse - and many others - in an essay titled "**God and Man in Proverbs**" [at this link](#). A great quote from Bob at this link is: "Proverbs persists in confronting us with the urgency of coming to a decision regarding the fear of the Lord. There are only two ways, the way of wisdom and the way of folly. Those who follow their natural bent will continue on the road to destruction. Those who admit their sin and trust in God will receive life and peace and fellowship with God. Whether by decision or default, every man, woman, and child makes this choice. Do not delay to choose to follow the way of wisdom, the way of life." **Q: What does fear of the LORD mean to you in your life today? How do you fear the Lord? How are you gaining knowledge of the Holy One in your life today?**

2/15 - Today we read in Proverbs chapter 9 verse 12: "*If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.*" This is one of the simplest and yet wisest verses that has jumped out at me in a long time! **Q: Do you believe this Proverb to be true? How about if we go one step beyond this Proverb – If we become wise, will it also benefit others around us? Maybe based on how we will live our lives? And conversely, if we don't acquire wisdom would it be fair to say that others around us may suffer? Could it be that gaining wisdom is both a self-giving and self-less pursuit all at the same time?**

2/16 - Proverbs verse 18 is downright scary: "*But the men don't realize that her (Folly's) former guests are now in the grave.*" This reminds me of Romans 6:23 - "*For the wages of sin is death.*" Yes, sin sells... And sin calls... And sin pays... Death. Sin/Folly pays death. That is downright scary. That's why we read about the sacrifice system in the Old Testament - to atone for sin, which brings death without atonement. Thanks to the New Covenant, our sins have been paid for on the cross by Jesus. Let us not ever forget the gravity of sin. Let us not ever forget that sin sells nothing but death. But let us also not ever forget that Jesus paid our debts once and for all on the cross. So, next time you hear Folly calling out to you from her doorway, walk on by in the light of salvation that was given to you freely by Jesus. Jesus who saves us from death! **Q: Do you believe that the wages of sin is death? How have you seen sin lead to death?**

2/17 - We start Proverbs chapter 10 today, with the reminder that we're currently reading Proverbs of King Solomon, the son of David. Verse 2 is another great reminder for each of us... "*right living can save your life.*" **Q: Do you believe this? Do you practice this?**

2/18 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 4 teaches us: "*Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.*" This is certainly a good reminder to work hard! **Q: How has hard work been a benefit to you in your life?**

2/19 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 5 - "*A wise youth works hard all summer; a youth who sleeps away the hour of opportunity brings shame*" - for some reason reminds me of Paul's writings in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 2: "*Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" **Q: Is the hour of opportunity upon you now? Will you stay awake for it? Is now the favorable time? Is now the day of salvation? Are you awake?**

2/20 - Proverbs 10 verse 7 is so simple but so true... "*We all have happy memories of the godly, but the name of a wicked person rots away.*" **Q: Who do you have happy memories of? Who have you forgotten? How will you be remembered?**

2/21 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 8 is a good reminder to consider how much and how often and how meaningful our words are when we speak: "*The wise are glad to be instructed, but babbling fools fall flat on their faces.*" I read an article recently about how "small talk" is getting more prevalent in our world today. And as a society we are speaking less often about sincere or meaningful matters. Instead we prefer to talk a lot about the weather or sports or celebrities. It does make me wonder - is some of this small talk just babbling? I don't know. I guess I just pray that when we speak we will speak sincerely in truth and love. And not just talk to hear ourselves talk. **Q: Do you think that some of our small talk today is simply babbling? When is it appropriate for small talk? When is it not appropriate?**

2/22 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 10 today teaches us - "*People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace.*" This is a great reminder that in the long run it is so much better - more peaceful - to stand up to an injustice or wrong. We should not let things slide. I think this can apply to our own lives as well. If we know we ourselves



are doing something wrong, we should not just "wink" at our wrong. But we must reproof it and confess it and let Jesus heal it. **Q: When was the last time you delivered a bold reproof? Do you think you should be delivering a bold reproof more often?**

2/23 - Today we read in Proverbs chapter 10 verse 11: "*The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.*" WOW! I love this Proverb on so many levels. The idea of a "fountain of life" is such a great metaphor! Because I think what comes out of our mouth is so much like a fountain – and we are hopefully pouring forth Living Water for others. However, I imagine that there are times when our fountain is not quite so clean and we're pouring forth something else. I think what I find so meaningful about this verse is that I have really been convicted of how important and impactful our words are to others. Our words can really build people up – or tear people down if we are not careful. I don't know about you, but I know there are times in my life when I can be negative with what I say. Then, there are times when I can be very positive and I feel like the enthusiasm is contagious to others. And these are the times when perhaps my words seem to be a bit more like a fountain of life. I say all of this to just encourage you to reflect on the words that come from your mouth. **Q: Are your words typically a fountain of life to others? Are you cognizant of what you say and how you say it to others around you so that your words truly will become a fountain of life to others? Or are you sometimes careless with your words? Do you think our words matter?**

2/24- Proverbs chapter 10 verse 14 today is a great teaching to literally treasure knowledge: "Wise people treasure knowledge." **Q: How do you treasure knowledge? How do you gain knowledge in your life today? Does knowledge bring wisdom?**

2/25- Proverbs chapter 10 verse 16 is powerful stuff! "*The earnings of the godly enhance their lives, but evil people squander their money on sin.*" This is so true. I know there have been times in my life in the past where I was not walking with the Lord and I absolutely squandered my money on sin - and my life was certainly not enhanced in the process. For some reason this verse also makes me think about how sometimes we pursue big salaries and big jobs or careers so that we can spend big bucks on a lavish lifestyle. And I wonder... at the end of the day what that game buys us? I don't think much. I have been thinking more and more lately about how much wisdom there is in living a simple godly life. Maybe take a job that pays less.... but where you work less... you are less stressed... but you can do things like spend more time with God, your family, your friends, and serving others.... where you can read more good books... exercise more.... sleep a full 8 hours a night.... enjoy each day and not be so worried all the time about the future... Sure - with a job that pays less you won't be able to be out and about on the town each night living the "high life". But is this really living? Really? In my own life, I do think about how much "earnings" do I really need - and if maybe.... perhaps.... somehow less is actually more? **Q: Do you think living with less can somehow actually add more to our lives? Is there value in living a simple life? What are some simple life habits that you are practicing these days?**

2/26 - Proverbs 10 verse 17 is a wonderful reminder to allow God to change us, transform us and correct us along the Way: "*People who accept correction are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore it will lead others astray.*" The second part of that Proverb is powerful too - if we don't accept correction, we'll not only be off the pathway, but we will be leading others astray too... that's a scary thought. If you don't accept correction, you'll be bringing others down with you! **Q: Do you accept correction in your life? Do you accept correction from God? Do you accept correction from others in your life? Do you think that if you don't accept correction in your life that you will lead others astray? Can you think of an instance in your life where you ignored correction and it ended up being bad for not only you, but others around you? Can you think of an instance in your life where you heeded correction and it ended up being good for not only you, but others around you?**

2/27 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 18 tells us - "*To hide hatred is to be a liar; to slander is to be a fool.*" Powerful teaching for us to consider. Let us pray that we will not be foolish... **Q: Have you ever slandered someone and realized it was a foolish thing to do?**

2/28 - Proverbs chapter 10 verse 19 today teaches us: "*Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!*" This is a wonderful reminder that we should listen at least twice as much as we talk! That's why we have 2 ears and one mouth... :) **Q: Have you ever had to remind yourself to listen more than you speak? How have you been able to successfully do this?**

**Group discussions:**

- Introductions.
- What were some of your favorite verses or passages from the past week's readings?
- What are some questions that were generated for you based on the past week's readings?
- What is something new you learned about God or the Bible from the past week's readings?
- How did God speak to you through the past week's readings?
- What is something you want to change or grow in your life based on the past week's readings?
- **Discuss the bold Questions in the Study Notes**
- Any prayer requests for the group for the coming week?

**Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.**

**Daily questions for this next week's readings you may want to journal or pray through and discuss with your group next Sunday:**

- My favorite verses or passages:
- What I learned from the readings:
- My questions for further study:
- How God spoke to me through the Word:
- Something I want to change or grow in my life based on the Word:
- My prayer points based on the Word:

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