

Notes & Group Questions for February 20-26 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

LEVITICUS 9:7 - 20:21

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 (I 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?**

MARK 4:26 - 8:38

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... ?**

PSALM 37:30 - 42:11

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?**

PROVERBS 10:6 - 10:17

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?

Group discussions:

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

Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.

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

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

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

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