

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

**NUMBERS 30:1 - DEUTERONOMY 6:25**

3/20 - Today in Numbers chapter 30 we read about the various complexities of vows, particularly related to women making vows. (and how their fathers or husbands can void them on day 1, etc.) Apparently the Jewish system and tradition of vows and what counts and didn't count got even more complex over the years between this chapter in Numbers and when Jesus was born. I love that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus simplifies the whole complex system of vows! Check out Matthew chapter 5 verses 33 through 37 where Jesus says: *"You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.' But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one."* Let's let our yes simply mean yes and our no's simply mean no's! **Q: Do you make vows today? Do you think vows are a good or bad idea? How about legal contracts – are these a good idea in our world today? When should they be used? Or not used? Prenuptial agreements – good or bad idea? (nice hot topic of conversation... :)**

3/21 - Today in Numbers chapter 32 verse 23 we read this strong warning from Moses to the Reubenites & Gadites about their promise to fight with Israel and their desire to settle in the land east of the Jordan river: *"But if you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out."* I think this is powerful for us to keep in mind in our lives today as well! It's important for us to keep our word! If we're not sure we can keep our word, we shouldn't give it. But if we do give our word, and we fail to keep it, we have sinned. And I do believe the sin will still find us out today. **Q: How are you at keeping your word these days? Is there an area of your life where you gave your word and you now are wavering? Can you keep your word in that area? Will you pray to God to give you strength to do so?** Let us not be people who fail to keep our word or who stretch the truth!

3/22 - Today in Numbers chapter 33 we read about the other nations in Canaan. In chapter 34 we read about the boundaries of the Promised Land. In chapter 35 verses 10-12 we read about the Cities of Refuge - *"When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, designate cities of refuge for people to flee to if they have killed someone accidentally. These cities will be places of protection from a dead person's relatives who want to avenge the death. The slayer must not be killed before being tried by the community."* Reading about the Cities of Refuge reminds me of our current day laws of "innocent until proven guilty." It seems like the Cities of Refuge idea still lives on in our justice system today in some regards. **Q: How did the Cities of Refuge stand out to you? How do the Cities of Refuge foreshadow Jesus?**

3/23 - Today we wrap up the book of Numbers and begin Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch (or 5 Books of the Law)! And as we all Learned to Love Leviticus this year, my prayer is that each of us will be Diggin' Deuteronomy as we read through it this year! :)

**~Deuteronomy~**

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book consists of a series of addresses given by Moses in the plains of Moab prior to their entering into Canaan, as well as some specialized regulations and the appointment of Moses' successor, Joshua. In Moses' addresses he summarized the events that led up to that day, exhorted the people to faith and obedience, called the Israelites to rededicate themselves to the task God had given them, and then led them in worship and song. After the appointment of Joshua, Moses left the people and, after viewing the Holy Land from afar one last time, he died. With Moses' death the old order passed away and the destiny of Israel moved into the hands of the next generation.

Theme: The faithfulness and power of God to save are stressed throughout the book. A look at Israel's past shows that God led his people through their darkest days and gave them hope for the future. What God did in the past he could do again. The need for faith and obedience on the part of God's people is also stressed. God's richest blessings are given only to those who will use them for his glory. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 3) Great commentary on Deuteronomy is at this link: [http://bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=885](http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=885) In

Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 1 today we read: *"This book records the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River."*

3/24 - Okay, I think we've come across quite an understatement in our readings today in Deuteronomy chapter 2 verse 1 when Moses says: *"We wandered around Mount Seir for a long time."* Indeed... it was a long time of 3 decades plus of wandering... :) But, it's important for us to remember why it was such a long time of wandering - because of the Israelites' sin in not entering the Promised Land when they were first instructed to do so by God. And, I think about this in our lives today. When we sin. And particularly when we consistently sin - with a bad habit or addiction that we know we should not be indulging in - we can become just like the Israelites, wandering around in the wilderness for a long time... My fear is that we can get so used to our sin and wandering around in the wilderness that we don't ever break free from it. We stay in bondage to the sin. And then we stay in the wilderness. The wilderness for us today may simply be living life half-heartedly in a bit of a haze or a bit of a funk. With some sort of cloud hanging over us. It's no way to live life. I guess I just want to encourage you that if you are struggling with what seems to be an unreleasable sin to not give up. Don't ever give up on victory! Continue to take the sin to Jesus over and over and over again. Take it to God over and over and over again. Pray about it continuously. Seek wise counsel from friends and pastors and professional help. Freedom awaits you. You can get out of the wilderness. The Promised Land awaits you. Please don't continue to "wander around Mt. Seir for a long time".... **Q: Is there a time in your life where you felt like you were spiritually wandering? What got you back on track?**

3/25 - Today in Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 29 we read: *"But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you today? Do you believe it is true? Have you sought God with all of your heart and with all of your soul?** This verse also reminds me of Jesus' teaching of one of the two great commands - which he quoted from Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 - *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* **So - if you have sought after God and found him, do you now today love God with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all your strength? What does this look like in your life? How do you love God in your life today?**

3/26 - Today we get a nice recap of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy chapter 5! We originally read these in Exodus chapter 20 and then again in Exodus chapter 34. There are some differences in the wordings of the Ten Commandments in each of these chapters, but not enough to worry about. :) Check out a quick overview of some of the differences between these 3 chapters' presentation of the Ten Commandments [at this link](#). Bible.org has a great overview of the Ten Commandments, based on Exodus chapter 20, [at this link](#). I love Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 through 9 in our readings today! These verses are known as the **Shema** - which was named after the first word in this verse and means "Hear." [The Shema became the Jewish confession of faith](#), which was recited by pious Jews every morning and evening and it is still recited in synagogue services today. They are the last words a Jew says prior to death. More very interesting information about The Shema from a Jewish website is [at this link](#). *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."* **Q: How does the Shema stand out to you?**

#### **LUKE 4:1 - 7:35**

3/20 - Today we read about the temptation of Jesus. This is a powerful narrative for each of us to consider. We all obviously face temptations in our life. Jesus faced temptations as well. The difference of course is that Jesus did not give into the temptations. He did not sin. I love the fact that Jesus combated the devil's temptations with the Word of God, the Bible. We each would do well to pay attention to how powerful the Word is in thwarting the devil's temptations of us today. Ever feel a cloud of temptation hovering above you? I know I have... And I know that faith in Jesus, calling upon Jesus' name, and bringing to mind the Word of God in times of darkness & temptation can send this cloud away from us! **Q: When faced with temptation in your life, have you ever brought to mind the Word of God? Did this change things? Do you believe that the Word of God can help us combat temptation in our life?**

3/21 - In Luke chapter 5 verses 10 & 11 we read - *"From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus."* **Q: Can you imagine being called by Jesus? If you were called by Jesus to stop your "work" that you are doing now and instead work to bring people closer to God, would you do so? Can you imagine yourself today being like these disciples and leaving everything and following Jesus? do you**

**believe that Jesus still calls his followers to be fishers of people today? Are you a fisher of people? How are you fishing for people for the Lord in your life today? What are some ways that Jesus might be calling you to fish for people today?**

3/22 - In Luke chapter 5 we read one of my favorite healings' of Jesus - where he heals the paralyzed man on the mat - in very large part because of the paralyzed man's friends who carry him to Jesus! I love that his friends did this. I pray if I was paralyzed I would have friends like these! Check out verses 18 through 20 - *"Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to push through the crowd to Jesus, but they couldn't reach him. So they went up to the roof, took off some tiles, and lowered the sick man down into the crowd, still on his mat, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Son, your sins are forgiven.""* I am fascinated by this - "seeing **their** faith" - I don't know if this is a quirk of the New Living Translation or if indeed Jesus literally saw the faith of the paralyzed man's friends. My hunch is that he did. And this makes me realize that sometimes when our faith is at a low point, maybe our friends can help carry us along and bring us closer to Jesus. And maybe we should act like these friends for someone in our life who is "paralyzed" by something.... Is there someone in your life that you can help "carry the mat for" and in doing so bring them closer to Jesus? Wow. I pray I have friends like this - and I pray I can be a friend like this to others... **Q: Have you ever had someone "carry you on a mat" when you were in a time of need? Have you ever had friends that demonstrated great faith in you? Conversely, have you ever carried friends on their mat when they were in need? Do you think we are called to carry each others burdens?**

3/23 - Today in Luke chapter 5 verses 31 & 32 we read this teaching from Jesus: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Are you healthy or sick? Are you righteous or a sinner? Do you need Jesus? Are you heeding his call to repentance? Do you believe that Jesus is the one true Doctor who can heal you for eternity?**

3/24 - In Luke chapter 6 verses 12 & 13 today we read - *"One day soon afterward Jesus went to a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles."* Every time I read about Jesus' calling of the apostles, I always think about myself. **Q: What would I have done if I was called by Jesus to be an apostle back then? What would I do if I was called to follow Jesus in this way today? What would you do? Would you leave everything behind and follow Jesus?**

3/24 - Today we read 3 amazing verses that I don't think we can hear often enough. And my hunch is that we don't follow these teachings often enough... they can seem initially so counter-intuitive - just like leaping for joy is when you are persecuted for loving Jesus. But these 3 verses are clearly such an important part of living the Christian life. And when you really meditate upon them, you'll see that they really are not counter-intuitive at all, but completely wise. Verse 28 - *"Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you."* And verses 35 & 36 - *"Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! And don't be concerned that they might not repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."* **Q: How are you doing on praying for the happiness of those who curse you or hurt you? How are you doing in loving your enemies and doing good to them? Do you believe we should be compassionate in these ways?**

3/25 - The passages on the faith of the centurion today are powerful - especially his words in verse 7 - *"Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed."* **Q: Can we learn something from the faith of the centurion in our lives today?**

3/26- Wow.... Verse 35 in Luke chapter 7 is such a profound teaching of Jesus' for each of us to consider: *"But wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it."* Take a few moments to really meditate on this verse and what it means. For me this verse is a reminder that sometimes in life we have to move forward in faith on something "wise" we've heard, but maybe not experienced - and then later see that the wisdom is true. I'm not sure if I'm going to explain myself well here... but my thought is that as followers of Jesus, I think we can get lazy in our faith at times. As just one example - maybe we don't think we really need to give financially to our church. We know the wisdom of [Malachi 3:10](#), but maybe we haven't really experienced the wisdom of giving. So, maybe we need to follow the wisdom first - and then we will later know the full truth and beauty of the wisdom. Hope this makes sense? I'd just say that if there is a struggle in your life that God is calling you to leave behind or move forward on - go for it! If you know you should be doing or not doing something - go with that wisdom you know and then it will "shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it."

Please follow Wisdom! Please follow Jesus! **Q: How has Wisdom shown itself to be right in your life?**

### **PSALM 63:1 - 68:35**

3/20 - Psalm 63 is beautiful! So many amazing verses... The imagery in verse 1 is fantastic - *"O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water."* **Q: Do you earnestly search for God in your life? Each and every day? Does your soul literally thirst for God? Does your whole body long for God in this dry and weary land...?**

3/21 - Psalm 64 verse 10 is beautiful - *"The godly will rejoice in the LORD and find shelter in him."* **Q: Do you consider God a shelter for your life? When storms come into your life, do you find shelter in God? How about the Bible? Is the Bible a sort of shelter in your life? Do you find refuge in the Bible?**

3/22 - Psalm 65 has some amazing verses about nature! I love verse 8 - *"Those who live at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your wonders. From where the sun rises to where it sets, you inspire shouts of joy."* **Q: When is the last time you have been inspired to shout for joy to God for the beautiful sunset he created?** Verse 7 of the Psalm says this - *"You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations."* **When is the last time you have stood in complete silence before God because of his beautiful Creation?**

3/23 - Today in Luke chapter 5 verses 31 & 32 we read this teaching from Jesus: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Are you healthy or sick? Are you righteous or a sinner? Do you need Jesus? Are you heeding his call to repentance? Do you believe that Jesus is the one true Doctor who can heal you for eternity?**

3/24 - Psalm 67 verse 2 today sounds very Great Commission-ish: *"May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere."* It's interesting to read this verse when just recently I was reading a review in my local newspaper about a book that "exposes" evangelical Christians. (of which I am one) This book really dives into how "successful" evangelical Christians are in "recruiting" young adults ages 20 to 35 with their ministries. And this book reviewer - and the book author - were very disdainful of Christianity. Saying it threatened secular society... and this just made me realize that the more we do indeed make God's ways known throughout the earth - the more we introduce people to God's saving power among people everywhere - well, then the secular world will push back big time with books and reviews like the one I read. And the secular world will even push back in more severe ways as well. This makes me realize that indeed our efforts to make God's ways known - God's love, grace, mercy, salvation, call to repentance - are being noticed by others. But hopefully more than just being noticed by others, let us pray that our Kingdom work actually introduces others to God's only son Jesus, who transforms hearts and lives for eternity! **Q: How are you helping to make God's ways be known throughout the earth? Are you sharing with other's God's saving power? Do you want the life you live to reflect God's glory to others?**

3/25 - I always like the idea and reminder to sing to God! Do you sing to God at places other than church? Maybe in your car? Maybe at home with the headphones on? Do you "sing" to God with the way you live your life? Here's verse 4 in Psalm 68 today which I love - *"Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the LORD-- rejoice in his presence!"* **Q: How do you sing your praises to the Lord each day? How many folks out there belt out worship tunes while driving in your car?? :) Feel free to fess up in the Comments below. I will confess here and now that I do belt out tunes from various worship CD's - Matt Redman, Chris Tomlin, Passion CD's, David Crowder lately. However, what's interesting is sometimes I feel a bit guilty spending so much time listening to music and singing along. I have one great friend who almost never listens to music - he thinks it's a waste of time and he wants to listen to news / preaching in the car instead. To try to learn something he says. And I can appreciate this... but I think it's still quite alright to sing our praises to the Lord on a frequent basis in the car! What say you?**

3/26 - Today in Psalm 68 verse 20 we read - *"Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death."* Do you believe God is a God who saves us? How did / does God do this saving? Do you believe that escape from death comes from God and his Son? I've been reflecting on this "death" aspect of our fallen world a bit lately, which has been sad to reflect upon. I had an experience with a few friends very recently where I was reminded of how self-destructive we can be in our lives. I think that without Jesus we can oftentimes not know where to turn for an escape from death - we do not know where to turn from an escape from our own self destructive behaviors. My friends need Jesus. I need Jesus. The world needs Jesus. Our God is a God who saves. From God and Jesus comes escape from death. May

this season of Easter bring us, our friends, and families closer to the God who saves! **Q: How do tell people about our God who saves? How do you evangelize these days?**

#### **PROVERBS 11:20 - 31**

3/20 - Proverbs chapter 11 verse 20 today teaches us: *"The LORD hates people with twisted hearts, but he delights in those who have integrity."* I find it interesting that this Proverb talks about twisted hearts. I pray that our hearts are not twisted! If they are twisted at all, I pray we allow God, Jesus & the Holy Spirit, the great surgeons, to untwist us. Only They truly can! **Q: Has your heart ever been "twisted?" How did it get untwisted?**

3/21- Proverbs 11:22 today teaches us - *"A woman who is beautiful but lacks discretion is like a gold ring in a pig's snout."* Well, I looked at the TNIV to see if "woman" might be changed to "person", but it wasn't. I think this Proverb can apply to men too. I think we are all beautiful, as sons & daughters of God! We are made in the image of God. **Q: What does it mean to you to be have discretion? Is having discretion a good thing? Is it a common thing in our world today?**

3/22 - Today's Proverb 11:23 teaches us: *"The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath."* This is a great teaching that leading a godly life will lead to happiness. And leading a wicked life.... brings wrath. This is sobering to really ponder. It's a choice each one of us must make. What type of life will we lead? And where will that life choice ultimately lead us. I pray each of us are on the Path of Life toward and with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. It's the only path that leads to eternal happiness. **Q: What are the desires of your heart today? Where are your desires leading you?**

3/23 - Today in Proverbs chapter 11 verse 24 we read – *"One person gives freely, yet gains even more."* **Q: Do you give freely? Do you give often? Do you believe that by giving freely you will ultimately gain even more?** I do believe this Proverb is so true. I heard a very inspirational speaker recently talk about how she was diagnosed with a chronic disease and how she became completely depressed. But, she somehow found the courage to begin giving to others in need in her community and she found that her life was completely transformed by simply giving. She was no longer depressed about living with the chronic disease, but found herself happier than ever before. Simply because she chose to give freely. **Q: How might God be calling you in your life to give more freely than ever before? Is it maybe by tithing to your church? Is it maybe by volunteering at a local charity once a month? Is it maybe by going to serve in another part of the world? Can you find the courage to give freely?**

3/25 - Proverbs 11:28 today teaches us: *"Trust in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring."* Great proverb! It tells us that trusting in money is not godly and "down" we will go. Why? Because if we are trusting in money then we are not trusting in God. **Q: And who can ultimately hold us "up" - now and for eternity? God or money?**

3/26 - I love the imagery in Proverbs chapter 11 verse 30 today - *"The godly are like trees that bear life-giving fruit, and those who save lives are wise."* That is a powerful last half of the verse. Those who save lives are wise... Are you saving lives? How? How might you be able to save lives? My one quick thought on this is to get involved in ministries that are serving the poorest of the poor. I honestly believe \$1 a day can save a life, if not many lives. Sponsoring a child through [World Vision](#) or [Compassion](#) or another worthy organization is an amazing way to save a life. \$1 a day. **Q: Will you invest in a child who needs you today? Would this be wise? What are some of your favorite charities that serve the poorest of the poor worldwide? And in your own hometown? Do you think we should care that 1.2 billion people in our world today live on less than \$1 a day? Do you think we should get involved in this issue? Do you think we should serve those living in poverty both internationally and in our own hometown?**

#### **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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