

**Notes & Group Questions for April 17 - April 23 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

**JOSHUA 15:1 - JUDGES 2:9**

4/17 - It is interesting to read about the allotment of land to the tribe of Judah today! It reminds me of how different these days are for the Israelites, compared to the 40 years of wandering in the desert - or the slavery in Egypt prior to that. Times have changed! God's Promise is being fulfilled. I think this is important for us to remember in our lives as well. Maybe we're in a "slavery" period in our own life where we are looking for a Savior to free us. Jesus is of course that Savior to free us from our slavery to sin. Or, maybe we're in a desert period of our lives. We've decided to follow Jesus, but maybe we're really trudging through some hard times. If we're in this type of period, hopefully we can be encouraged by knowing that God's Promises to us will not fail. God will bring us peace that surpasses all understanding. God will bring us to the true Promised Land for eternity. Let us be encouraged in our own lives by our past few months of readings about the Israelites and their journey from slavery to now the Promised Land. God's Promises will not fail. They are eternal. And they are the only thing in this passing world that is eternal. **Q: Do you believe that God's promises are True and won't fail you? If you are in some sort of slavery to sin or perhaps in a desert place in your life right now, will you reach out to Jesus to save you and lead you into the Promised Land? Do you believe Jesus can Save you and Lead you? And will you follow?**

4/18 - In Joshua chapter 18 verse 1 today we read - *"Now that the land was under Israelite control, the entire Israelite assembly gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tabernacle."* Shiloh was located about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. The tabernacle remained in Shiloh throughout the period of the Judges, or about 300 years. We will later read about Samuel traveling to Shiloh with his family. [Click here for some interesting facts on Shiloh.](#) **Q: Have you ever traveled to Israel and visited Shiloh? Did the visit to Israel strengthen your faith? Do you want to travel to Israel someday?**

4/19 - Today we finish up reading about the Promised Land being divided among the tribes! In Joshua chapter 20 we read about the Cities of Refuge. I like that concept - a city of refuge. A place of refuge. This is what I think about Jesus today - He is our City of Refuge! No matter what our past sins are, Jesus can be our City of Refuge if we will run to Him, believe, confess & repent. **Q: How is Jesus your City of Refuge?**

4/20 - In Joshua chapter 21 we read about the towns given to the Levites, the priestly tribe appointed in the Mosaic Law for the service of the Tabernacle and of the Temple. It seems very wise that the Levites are given towns throughout the various tribes of the Israelites. In my mind this is spreading out the priestly tribe strategically. Can you imagine if the Levites were all in just 1 location? It seems to me that there would be a vacuum of spiritual leadership in the tribes if the Levites were not dispersed in the manner which they were. **Q: How does reading about the Levites being dispersed remind you of the church today? Is the church dispersed throughout the world today a good thing? What are your thoughts on the benefits or drawbacks of denominations?**

4/22 - Today we finish up the book of Joshua! What a book. I have definitely learned much from this book this year. And today's readings are no exception. Chapter 24 is a wonderful closing to this book where the Israelites renew their covenant with God. Verses 25 through 27 are awesome - *"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to a permanent and binding contract between themselves and the LORD. Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the oak tree beside the Tabernacle of the LORD. Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God."* **Q: How has the book of Joshua been for you this year? What have you learned?**

4/23 - Today we begin the book of Judges! Coming up in this book, we'll be reading about Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Delilah, and Micah - to drop a few names.

**Judges**

Author: Unknown

Date: Eleventh century B.C.

Content: The book of Judges covers a period of several hundred years following the conquest of Canaan, during which

time the people were ruled by individual leaders called judges or saviors. Their task was primarily military, being to expel the enemy from the land. Throughout this period of Israel's history there is a tragic cycle to be observed - that of rebellion against God, followed by the judgment of God, usually in the form of foreign invasion. The children of Israel then cry to God for help and a "judge" is sent to save them. This cycle is repeated numerous times throughout the book. Tragically, the people never seem to learn that rebellion against God is a sure road to disaster.

Theme: The grim lesson of Judges is that "the wages of sin is death: (see Romans 6:23). Sin takes many forms, from the sophisticated sins of kings to the barbaric events that close the book, but the net results is always the same: when everyone does his own thing, chaos and destruction are the inevitable outcome. Through it all, however, God in his faithfulness saves the people when they truly repent and turn to him. (Above commentary is from "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 4)

4/23 - Today in Judges Chapter 2 verses 1 & 2 we will read these words from the angel of the Lord – "I said, "I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars. Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?" The Israelites disobeyed God back then. **Why? Do we disobey God in our lives today? Why do we do this?** I have a hunch that maybe sometimes we are simply afraid. Afraid of fully following and trusting God. We may think that God really won't live up to his promises. At these moments our faith is weak. And we end up disobeying God. Fortunately our inconsistencies do not affect God's perfect consistency. God never changes. We do. And we can allow ourselves to either be changed by God such that we live in obedience to him – or, we can continue to disobey God and live tumultuous lives. It's a pretty simple choice. One decision brings an amazing peace that surpasses all understanding and the other decision – grief and frustration. **Q: Do you ever disobey God in your life today? Why do you do this? How can we instead choose to obey God in our lives?**

#### **LUKE 18:18 - 22:13**

4/17 - Today we read the story of the Rich Man in Luke chapter 18! There are tons of commentaries on how to interpret this story - including this commentary from Bob Deffinbaugh at Bible.org titled "**Blessed Babes and a Miserable Millionaire**" [at this link](#). The verses that always speak to me the most are verses 29 & 30 where Jesus teaches - "I assure you, everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, as well as receiving eternal life in the world to come." These are really some powerful verses for us to consider. Basically, I read - and I know from experience - that truly following Jesus comes with some costs. The costs may be loss of wealth, or worldliness, or power, or glamour, or friends, or even family perhaps. But, if we are accepting these costs for the sake of the Kingdom, then they are in my estimation our crosses that we must bear to truly follow Jesus. Following Jesus is not always easy. The world's temptations will do everything they can for us to not follow Jesus. "It's too hard to follow Jesus." "Come have fun." "It's too much cost to follow Jesus." But... we really need to stay in constant prayer and stay close to God to realize that following Jesus - along w/ all the costs that may be associated with following Jesus - is the only True way to live life. All other paths will lead to misery. Following Jesus and accepting the costs or our crosses ultimately leads to life in abundance. And life for eternity. **Q: Are there costs in your life that you are willing to accept to follow Jesus? What are they? Is there any cost you won't accept?**

4/18 - Today in Luke chapter 19 we read the awesome story of Jesus' interactions with Zacchaeus the Tax Collector. As we read through this story about Zacchaeus "the sinner," does anything maybe correlate with our life story today? Consider verse 9 – "Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." **Q: What does this mean that Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost? Did Jesus seek Zacchaeus? Did Jesus save Zacchaeus? Now, take a moment if you will to reflect back on your life and your interactions with Jesus. Like Zacchaeus, were you a "sinner?" Like Zacchaeus, did Jesus seek you? Are there moments in your life where you really have felt that Jesus literally has been "pursuing" you? (I know I have had these moments in my life – thank God for them!) And, most importantly – like Zacchaeus – has Jesus saved you?**

4/18 - Interesting! The Story of the Ten Servants is something I reflected on back in our readings of Matthew. But what stood out to me today was verse 11 - "The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away." This is very interesting to note that Jesus told this story to correct the impression that the Kingdom would begin right away! The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah that would overthrow the Roman political structure. A fighting / revolutionary Messiah that would free Jerusalem from Rome. Instead, as we all know, Jesus died on a cross with nails that were driven into his hands and feet by Roman soldier. Not quite what the Jews at this time were expecting in a Messiah... And here

we have this story that's purpose is to show the Kingdom would not begin right away. This makes sense. It is the paradox of the Kingdom of God being already / not yet. And while Jesus first came to usher in the Kingdom, its fulfillment is not complete until his Second Coming. **Q: And - while we are awaiting the fulfillment of the Kingdom, how are we utilizing the talents God has given us? How are we utilizing our time, treasure, and talents? Is it for the Kingdom's benefit?**

4/19 - In Luke chapter 19 today we read about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem - and of course, this scene of people shouting "Hosanna!" will far too soon turn toward people spitting on and mocking Jesus on the road to Golgotha as he carries his cross. Bible.org's commentary on our Luke chapter 19 readings today titled "**The Untriumphal Entry**" is [at this link](#). Verses 41 through 44 are so beautiful as Jesus looks upon Jerusalem and cries. It makes sense because he knows that the destruction of Jerusalem is coming in 70 A.D. Per Tyndale's commentary today, "In 66 A.D. the Jews revolted against Roman control. Three years later Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, was sent to crush the rebellion. Roman soldiers attacked Jerusalem and broke through the northern wall but still couldn't take the city. Finally they laid siege to it, and in A.D. 70 they were able to enter the severely weakened city and burn it. Six hundred thousand Jews were killed during Titus' onslaught." And so, Jesus wept over Jerusalem... **Q: Have you like Jesus ever wept over a city's condition? Should we be weeping over the condition of our cities today?**

4/20 - Okay, so it's every so often that I post up about the non-Biblical (not the original text) sub-headings that translations put into our daily readings. For some reason I got a kick out of the NLT's subheading above Luke chapter 20 verse 9, "Story of the Evil Farmers!" (okay, I added the exclamation point). Is it just me, or is that kinda funny? I mean, the evil farmers in the story are not funny - and what they did is certainly not funny... hmmm... I think I've dug myself into a hole here. :) I'm sure everyone probably picked up on that the point of the farmer story is that Jesus is the son who was murdered in the story. And Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders - who has now become the cornerstone of our Christian faith. Nice quote by Jesus of Psalm 118 verse 22 there in Luke 20 verse 17: *'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.'* **Q: How is Jesus the cornerstone of your life?**

4/21 - Bible.org's commentary on Luke chapter 20's readings today titled "**One Bride for Seven Brothers**" is [at this link](#) and commentary titled "**David's Son**" is [at this link](#).

4/22 - Bible.org's commentary on our Luke chapter 21 readings today titled "Jerusalem in the Last Days" is [at this link](#).

4/23 - Today in Luke chapter 22 we read in verses 3-6: *"Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around."* Sad... Bible.org has a powerful essay on "**The Biography of the Betrayer**" [at this link](#). **Q: Do you think Satan can enter people today?**

#### **PSALM 86:1 - 91:16**

4/17 - Wow. Today in Psalm 86 we read an amazingly wise prayer of David to God in verse 11 – *"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name."* **Q: How do you think this verse works as a prayer? Can you imagine praying it to God? Do you want God to teach you his way? Do you want to walk in God's Truth? What does it mean to you to have an undivided heart? It is possible that your heart is now divided in some way? Will you pray to God for an undivided heart? What does it mean to fear God's name? Why would David pray to fear God's name?** I read an interesting commentary on this verse saying that David is wisely praying for God to save him from his frailty within himself. Oftentimes in the Psalms we will read about David praying for God to deliver him from his enemies. In this verse David is praying for deliverance from what is within. This is a critical point to consider. I think sometimes we always look toward "external" circumstances as the cause of all of our problems. When perhaps we need to look at some "internal" things going on inside of us as causes of some of our problems? And in realizing that there are some internal things that need to be fixed, perhaps we can humbly pray Psalm 86 verse 11 like David did thousands of years ago? *"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name."*

4/18 - Psalm 87 is a celebration of Jerusalem as the City of God, as we read in verse 3 - *"O city of God, what glorious things are said of you!"* As we continue to read through the One Year Bible this year it is amazing to reflect upon how much focus there is on Jerusalem as the city of God. Truly, so many of the Psalms glorify Jerusalem, often as a foreshadowing of the Heavenly City of God. Indeed, as this verse suggests, many glorious things are said of Jerusalem in

the Bible! **Q: Have you been to Jerusalem? Did it strengthen your faith? Would you recommend others visit Jerusalem?**

4/19 - Psalm 88 is quite a Psalm! Interestingly many churches read this Psalm during their Good Friday liturgies, interpreting this Psalm as a prayer of Jesus suffering on the road to Golgotha. Take a read through this Psalm again with this perspective...

4/20 - Psalm 89 verse 11 is so powerful for us to remember - *"The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours; everything in the world is yours--you created it all."* Everything in this world is God's. Everything. This means every single person we meet is God's. However... they might not realize it. But, I think it is important for us to remember that every single person we meet - no matter how "bad" they may seem or whatever - is still made in the image of God. And there is the possibility of that person getting to know they are God's. There is the possibility of redemption - not by our human power, but by the power of God. I think sometimes we go through our day thinking the world is bad. People are bad. It all is bad. And certainly, it is a fallen world. But it is still God's world - and yes, the devil is thrashing around his temptations as rapidly as he can in the hearts of men and women. This is the great spiritual battle. But, God is so much stronger than the devil. The name of Jesus expels the devil quicker than anything. So, know that while we are in a fallen world, it is God's world. Everything in this world is God's. **Q: What are you and I doing to let others know that they are God's - particularly if they don't know it? What are we doing to bless others with the knowledge that there is another Way than the devil's temptations in this world? What are we doing? Really. What are we doing with our lives to let others know about Jesus? Whew... this one gets to me for some reason. There are people suffering so much in our world. If only they knew there was another way.... Will you help to show them to the Way?**

4/21- I love Psalm 89:15 today: *"Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord."* **Q: Do you hear the joyful call to worship in your life? Do you worship God with a community of believers each week? (i.e. at a church...) Will you choose to walk in the light of God's presence each week?**

4/22 - Psalm 89 verse 48 is something important to keep in mind as I think it does help us think about how we are really living our short earthly lives - *"No one can live forever; all will die. No one can escape the power of the grave."* **Q: Knowing this, how are you living your life? Are you living your life with love? Are you loving God and loving other people with all that you are? Are you living your life intentionally? Are you living your life as God would want you to live your life?** I heard someone once state: "Just keep in mind that we're not going to live forever. 100 years from now on this planet? It will be all new people." That is an interesting thing to keep in mind... 100 years from now... all new people. Hopefully this is a fact that encourages each of us not to waste our precious time here on things that are not of God! No one escapes the grave. Our condition is terminal. (But of course our condition can be eternal through faith in Jesus!)

4/23 - Today in Psalm 91:11-12 we read the words quoted by Satan to Jesus during the temptation in the desert: *"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."* As you read this Psalm, do these words apply to Jesus only? Or to those who trust in the Lord as well? Do you believe that the Lord is guarding you in all your ways? Do you believe this is possible? (I hope your answer is yes) Do you recall Jesus' response to Satan in Matthew 4:7: *"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* **Q: What do Jesus' words to Satan tell you about these words in the Psalm? Can we believe these words of the Psalmist, and also not put God to the test at the same time? As an example, maybe to just myself :) , is driving over the speed limit putting God to the test? Is deciding to skip church one week (or for many weeks) because we have some chores to catch up on / or fun stuff to do / or because we're just tired, putting God to the test?**

#### **PROVERBS 13:9 - 25**

4/17 - Another wow... Proverbs chapter 13 verse 9 is so beautiful to reflect upon - *"The life of the godly is full of light and joy."* Ultimately, this is so true. As I posted above, yes, there will be times of trial and times of being in the desert. But, ultimately a godly life will bring light and joy - and if not in this life, then in eternity. There are of course martyrs who may not experience this light and joy externally in this life - but, my hunch is that they are experiencing the light and joy internally - and ultimately, they will experience light and joy forever in God's Kingdom. **Q: Is your life full of light and joy? Do you believe it will be someday? For eternity?**

4/18 - Proverbs 13 verse 11 is a great verse to consider as we watch those late night TV infomercials... :) - *"Wealth from*

*get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows."* Are we focusing our working lives on working hard or trying to get rich quick... **Q: Have you every fallen prey to the idea of "getting rich quick"? Do you see the wisdom of hard work over get-rich-quick schemes? From which avenue does true wealth ultimately come from? And, really, what is true wealth? Is it what the world offers or perhaps something God offers?**

4/19 - Proverbs chapter 13 verse 12 teaches us today: *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when dreams come true, there is life and joy."* Do you see the wisdom in this Psalm? I do hope that each of us realizes that faith in Jesus is not hope deferred. It is a dream come true in the here and now. Faith in Jesus brings life & joy now. And yes, faith in Jesus also brings the hope of glory for eternity. But, salvation is not all just hope deferred... It is life & joy now too! **Q: How has faith brought life and joy into your life? Do you believe faith in Jesus brings eternal life and joy as well? Are you looking forward to eternal life and joy in heaven, our eternal "city of refuge"?**

4/20 - Proverbs 13 verse 16 is great - *"Wise people think before they act."* And I agree with this. My one additional thought is don't think for too too long! I know some folks that like to think... and think.... and think.... and this is good.... but there is also a time for action. There is a time to move and get involved in the advancement of God's Kingdom. Yes, let's think about how we'll do this - but then let us act! **Q: Are you someone that thinks before you act? Or do you sometimes act before you think? :) If so, can you meditate on this Proverb, memorize it, and put it into practice?**

4/21 - Proverbs 13:18 is so so so true: *"If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept criticism, you will be honored."* I know this may sound strange, but I'm trying to get to the point in my life where I actually appreciate criticism and appreciate making mistakes. It means I'm learning. And the key to receiving criticism is indeed to not ignore it. Reflect on it. Pray on it. And yes, sometimes the criticism will be unfounded. But sometimes it may literally save your life... Let us be open and appreciative to constructive criticism! And let us not ignore it! Nor try to escape from it... **Q: How are you doing in accepting criticism in your life today? Do you accept it? Receive it? Learn from it? Or perhaps... ignore it? Why do you think this Proverb says if you ignore criticism you'll end up in poverty and disgrace? Do you think many people in our world today ignore criticism? Is ignoring criticism perhaps a selfish act?**

4/22 - Wow. Today in Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20 we read – *"He who walks with the wise grows wise."* There is so much wisdom in this verse. Basically, you can boil this down to "choose your friends with care" – but I think there is more going on here. This life we each live really is so short. And there are so many people in our lives that we can choose to spend our time with. And I think it would be very wise on our part to attempt to spend quality time with quality people. Wise people. Otherwise, we can get swept up in a myriad of pop-cultural distractions and cares. And who we choose to hang around with a lot is who we too shall become. Don't get me wrong – there are clearly times that we are called to minister or serve or love or spend time with people that may not appear "wise" – at first glance. I think if you truly are ministering or serving or loving someone who is down and out, you may be surprised how wise a down and out person can be – sometimes I think they can be closer to God in some ways. So – I'm just saying don't insulate yourself with only spending time with people who appear worldly & wise. :) Wisdom and wise people truly can be found in the most unlikely of places. Last point I'll make on this verse. When I read this verse – "He who walks with the wise grows wise" – it makes me think of how important it is for each of us to be attending a church each and every week. The church is the body of Christ. The church is truly "wise." And if we ourselves are not walking with other believers in the body of Christ by investing in a church on a weekly basis, then I think we are at risk of getting swept up in the pop-cultural cares of this fleeting world. Church is wise. Attending church on a weekly basis is wise. I believe attending church on a weekly basis will make you wise. **Q: Based on our Proverb today, how are you walking with the wise? Do you want to walk with the wise?**

4/23 - Proverbs 13:24 is true - *"If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them."* The one thing that makes me a bit nervous about this Proverb is that I have a hunch us humans can over-do our discipline. I think there is obviously a difference between loving / godly discipline of our kids and mean / destructive discipline. I pray that we are led by God to know the difference. Yes, discipline is good. Godly / loving discipline. Mean / destructive discipline is not good. **Q: Do you agree with our Proverbs today that if you love your children you will be prompt to discipline them? Do you think this same logic applies to our relationship with God, our Father? If God loves us, do you think He will be prompt to discipline us?**

**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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