

Notes & Group Questions for May 1 - May 7 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

JUDGES 13:1 - 1 SAMUEL 2:21

5/1 - Today we begin reading four chapters about Samson, the last of the judges. You'll notice that the author of Judges often compares the story of Samson's birth and life with the story of Israel. Samson was a Nazirite, which meant he could drink no alcohol, could not cut his hair, and could have no contact with the dead. I found it interesting that Samson's mother was commanded by the angel in Judges 13 today to not drink any alcohol during her pregnancy. Obviously this is important for health reasons, but also it seems it is important because Samson was a Nazirite - whose life began in his mother's womb. More info on Nazirite's is [at this link](#). Interesting story today about Samson & the lion! Pretty gross that he ate the honey made in the lion's carcass on the way to his wedding! :) You'll note in our readings of Samson that he is drawn to Philistine women, which was against God's law and the Philistine's were Israel's enemies then. Hence, his parents did not approve of the marriage early in chapter 14. **Q: How did the readings about Samson stand out to you?**

5/2 - Judges 15 today is quite a chapter! Whew... Samson is a whirlwind in this chapter... I know I probably should not chuckle about this - but a donkey's jawbone?? Who would have ever thought this could be a lethal weapon. Well, now we all know it can be indeed. In Judges chapter 16 verse 3 we continue to see Samson's strength - *"But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the city gates with its two posts, and lifted them, bar and all, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron."* And then we get to the famous story of Samson & Delilah. In verse 21 the Philistines finally overpower Samson by cutting his hair - a symbol of Samson's relationship with God. **Q: What stood out to you in reading about the life of Samson and Samson & Delilah? Have you ever been in an unhealthy relationship that God brought you out of?**

5/3 - Judges chapter 17 & 18 are sad chapters to read! In these chapters we see how far a Levitical priest had wandered from his original call to serve God - by accepting money, idols, and position in Micah's house. And we see how far the tribe of Dan had wandered from God's plan for the tribes of Israel by killing the citizens of Laish - a city that did not fall under God's judgment due to serving idols or wickedness - and Laish was outside the geographical boundaries of the tribe of Dan. Unfortunately, we see Dan's tribe worshiping idols. Verse 6 in chapter 17 stood out to me - *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* This verse certainly seems to be building up to the kings of Israel that will soon be coming. But, this verse also indicates to me the importance for each of us to have a king - so that we don't just do whatever seems right in our own eyes. Fortunately, today, we have Jesus Christ as our king. He is the best king we could ever hope for. **Q: Do you consider Jesus to be your king? In what ways is Jesus King over your life?**

5/4 - Hmm... notice the similarities between Judges chapter 19 and Genesis chapter 19? In [Genesis chapter 19](#) two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening and they planned to spend the night in the town square. But Lot insisted they go with him and spend the night at his house. Then, in the middle of the night the men of Sodom came to Lot's house to have sex with the two angels. Lot offered his two virgin daughters instead... see the unfortunate similarities? Social protocol of the time - protecting a house guest at any cost - unfortunately carried more authority in Judges chapter 19 than God's law and moral convictions. Obviously this is an extreme case in Judges chapter 19.... **Q: yet, is it possible that in today's world social protocol of our time can sometimes carry more authority than moral convictions? How do we stand tall today and protect someone when this is the case? How have you stood up for moral convictions over social protocol today?**

5/5 - Today we finish the book of Judges! What a powerful and telling verse the book closes with in chapter 21 verse 25: *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* Unfortunately, so true then. And perhaps so true for us today if we don't have a king. Fortunately, we do have the opportunity to have a king - through faith in Jesus. Otherwise, without Jesus as our king, we will surely do whatever seems right in our own eyes. I know I did for many years... sad years they were. **Q: How has been reading the book of Judges been for you this year? What new insights or revelations did you pick up while reading through Judges?**

5/5 - Today we are starting up – and tomorrow finishing - the wonderful book of Ruth and then moving into First Samuel. The book of Ruth is a wonderful look at faithful love in human relationships, and in a family in particular. I like how Zondervan describes this book – “The book of Ruth is a Hebrew short story, told with consummate skill. Among historical narratives in Scripture it is unexcelled in its compactness, vividness, warmth, beauty, and dramatic effectiveness – an exquisitely wrought jewel of Hebrew narrative art.” I hope you are ready for this jewel!

Ruth

Author: Unknown

Date: During the time of the Judges

Content: The book of Ruth portrays another side to the chaotic time of the judges. In it there is a welcome relief from the bloodshed and mayhem that seemed to engulf the land because of Israel's sin. It is the story of Ruth, who decided to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi, after tragedy struck that unfortunate woman. God returned good to Ruth in the form of a husband (Boaz) and a child, and also to Naomi in the form of grandchildren. From this family, eventually, came David the king.

Theme: The central point of this book is that even in times of crisis and despair, life may be lived according to the precepts of God and that God abundantly blesses those who do so live. The fundamental values of love, faith, trust, and goodness are greater than the hatred and violence of men, and continue from generation to generation as a light to guide those who look for the true meaning of life. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers “The One Year Bible Companion” pp. 4-5*) More commentary on Ruth is at these 3 links –

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=888

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=952

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=1292

5/5 - Today in Ruth chapter 1 verses 16 & 17 we will read these beautiful words of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi, whose husband & two sons had died - *“Ruth replied, “Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”* How's that for love & commitment! **Q: Can you imagine saying these words to someone in your life today?** I pray that each of us have this type of love & commitment for our families – or that we will have this in the future with our families. It seems like nowadays families are getting more and more distanced from one another – separated sometimes by geography and I think oftentimes by individualism or other selfish reasons. **Perhaps each of us can learn something from Ruth and her dedication to her mother-in-law Naomi about what family love & commitment could and should really look like?**

5/7 - Today we begin the book of First Samuel! This is an amazing book of the Bible. I cannot wait to read about Hannah, Samuel, Saul & David!

First Samuel

Author: Unknown

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: The books of First and Second Samuel comprise one book in the Hebrew Bible because they form one continuous history covering the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David. They were separated into two books for convenience for reading. First Samuel deals with the Philistine wars and Saul's ultimate failure to deal with the enemy. The book opens with Israel's being oppressed by the Philistines (a war-like neighboring nation) and the emergence of the two early leaders, Samuel and Saul. Samuel was the religious leader and Saul ultimately became the king. Saul's early victories are described, followed by his moral decline and tragic end. Balancing the decline of Saul is the rise of the youthful David who will assume leadership after the death of Saul.

Theme: The basic idea that pervades this book is that God does not make his people immune to the changes of human life, but give them grace to see things through to a satisfactory conclusion. The rise and fall of kings, times of peace and war – throughout it all God stays the same and controls human events in such a way that those who trust him will find comfort and the courage to endure. (*Above commentary is from “The One Year Bible Companion” p. 5*) **More commentary on First Samuel from Bible.org is [at this link.](#)**

Here's a great quote from this link: “One might conclude from reading the Book of Judges that the problem was the absence of a king in Israel: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). In First Samuel, Israel will get her king. Saul, Israel's first king, will be the kind of king the people want, and prove to be the king Israel deserves. David, Israel's second king, will replace Saul. He is God's kind of king, a man after God's heart. First Samuel tells the story of fascinating people like Hannah and Samuel, like Saul and David. There is never a dull moment in this masterfully well written history. The book closes with the death of Saul, and thus the end of

David's flight from the hand of Saul, who seeks to kill him as an enemy."

5/7 - Today in First Samuel chapter 2 we read the incredible Prayer of Hannah! In verse 2 we read: *"There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."* This prayer of praise from Hannah really stands out to me these days. Oftentimes I think I "forget" that there is no one holy like the Lord – and I start to seek from other sources what I should only be seeking from God. I have come to realize more than ever lately that if I am feeling a strong emotion or need, I need to really reflect on that emotion or need and ask myself if God can satisfy or quench or dispel that emotion or need. The answer is always an unfailing and beautiful YES. There is no other person, place or being that will always be there for us – that will always be our Rock – that is perfectly consistent – besides God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is holy and his holiness can take care of any emotion or need that comes up in our lives. We need to turn it over to him and trust in Him. **Q: How about you? Do you sometimes "forget" that God is holy? Do you sometimes seek from other sources what you should only be seeking from God? Do you believe that God can satisfy or quench or dispel any emotion or need that comes up in your life? Is God your Rock? Do you believe there is no one holy like the Lord?**

JOHN 1:29 - 5:23

5/1 - I absolutely love John chapter 1 verse 29 - *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* **Q: Do you believe Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? Has Jesus taken away your sin? How?**

5/1 - Verses 45 & 46 I find so truthful, along with Nathanael's reply being amusing - but mostly Nathanael's reply demonstrates how very humble of a background Jesus came from - *"Philip went off to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from there?"* **Q: Are we ever like Nathanael - having preconceived notions about places or things or maybe even Jesus? Can we leave our preconceived notions about things behind us and move forward in the spirit of truth, particularly when it comes to Jesus and who He is?**

5/2 - John chapter 2 verse 11 is of note - *"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first display of his glory. And his disciples believed in him."* It is interesting that John refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs." Signs seem to indicate the significance of Jesus' actions, rather than the marvel. **Q: What do you think Jesus' miracles might have been "signs" of? What do they mean to you today?**

5/2 - Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has a very interesting commentary on John chapter 2 verse 14 - *"In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; and he saw money changers behind their counters."* Tyndale answered the question of why there were merchants & money changers in the temple as follows: *"The temple tax had to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. But the moneychangers would often charge exorbitant exchange rates. The people were also required to make sacrifices for sins. Because of the long journey, many could not bring their own animals. The price of sacrificial animals was much higher in the temple than elsewhere."* It is understandable why Jesus was upset with all of this. Thank goodness we do not have this system still in place for us today - with moneychangers & merchants for tax & animal sacrifices... thank you Jesus! **Q: What's your reaction to Jesus' "cleansing of the temple?" Was He justified in this? Have our churches today turned away from being a house of prayer and turned into being a market in any ways?**

5/3 - Today in John chapter 3 we will read about Jesus' interactions with Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees. This is obviously a powerful chapter, as Jesus' words in this chapter include the famous John 3:16. In verse 3 we will read this from Jesus – *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* And to this Nicodemus asks in verse 4 – *"How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born?"* **Q: What do these verses mean to you? Do you understand Jesus' statement in verse 3? Do you understand Nicodemus' confusion and why he asked the question like he did in verse 4?** Jesus later goes on in chapter 3 to say that he is referring to being born again in "the Spirit." It is not a physical rebirth Jesus is referring to in verse 3, but a Spiritual rebirth. I do think this is an appropriate time in our One Year Bible readings – the gospel of John and John chapter 3 in particular – **for each of us to ask ourselves if we have been born again in the Spirit? If not, do you want to be born again in the Spirit? Will you pray today to God and Jesus for this Spiritual rebirth?**

5/4 - Wow... I love John the Baptist's words about Jesus in John chapter 3 today! Great stuff. Please read these verses again and meditate upon them in your life today. The verse that really stood out to me today was verse 30 when John

said this about Jesus - *"He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less."* How very true and how very applicable to our lives today. We must let Jesus become greater and greater in our lives, hearts, and actions, and our individualism / selfishness must become less and less. **Q: How are you doing on this? How are you allowing Jesus to become greater and greater in your life and are "you" becoming less and less?**

5/5 - Wow. The Jacob's Well story in John chapter 4 today is beautiful on so many levels. I definitely recommend you check out Bible.org's commentary on this chapter [at this link](#) if you aren't familiar with all of the meanings of this story. I love Jesus's words in verse 34 - *"My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."* **Q: If this is true for Jesus - think this might be true for us too? Do you believe that our nourishment comes from doing the will of God?**

5/7 - I'm not sure if you noticed this unique thing about Jesus' healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda today - the man did not seem to have faith in Jesus or know who Jesus was! You'll recall with many of the healings we read about in the Gospels people yell out to Jesus for healing, or reach for Jesus' garment, and show some sort of faith or recognition of who Jesus truly is. Well, here in John chapter 5 verse 6 Jesus asks this man at the pool: *"Do you want to get well?"* And then in the following verses the man still doesn't realize who Jesus is and doesn't ask Jesus for healing, but instead frets about not getting into the waters of the pool where he thinks the waters will heal him. Well, come verse 8 Jesus says, *"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."* I find this whole scene awesome and a great example of God's grace! Perhaps sometimes in our lives when we miss seeing what Jesus is doing, He will still often heal us or care for us! Even sometimes (though I don't think always...) when we seem to looking for the other "waters" that we think will heal us. Even sometimes when we don't ask Jesus for healing, he'll still do it for us. **Q: Has Jesus ever done something amazing for you without you asking for it? Perhaps even when you were looking for somebody or something else to fix or heal something for you, is there a time when God's grace showed up on the scene instead and made the situation right?**

PSALM 102:1 - 105:45

5/1 - Psalm 102 is a great reminder to us on the importance to pray. To bring our troubles to the Lord. Psalm 102 can also definitely be a comfort for us during a time of sorrow. I love the reminder about God in verse 27 (which Hebrews also reminded us of today in the verses above...) - *"But you are always the same; your years never end."* God does not change. He is perfectly consistent. We are oftentimes inconsistent. But, our inconsistencies do not change God's consistency. He is always the same - yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever. God is the one sure thing in life that you can count on - forever. **Q: Do you believe God is the same yesterday, today and forever? Do you believe God is the same God in the Old Testament and the New Testament?**

5/2 - Psalm 103 is a great Psalm today! Each verse is a powerful reminder of God's character and our relationship to God. Verse 8 definitely stands out today - *"The LORD is merciful and gracious. He is slow to get angry and full of unending love."* **Q: Do you believe that God is merciful and gracious? How have you experienced God's mercy? His grace? Do you believe that God is slow to get angry? When was the last time you experienced God's unending love?**

5/2 - Today in Psalm 103 verses 11 & 12 we read these verses about God - *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."* I think these verses are a wonderful look at what it means to be spiritually reborn and living in relationship with God. These verses are a glimpse of the true freedom that is found in relationship with God - freedom of living in God's perfect love, and freedom from our slavery to sin. **Q: Do you believe that God's love for you is as high as the heavens are above the earth? Do you believe that God has removed your sins (transgressions) from you as far as the east is from the west? Do you thank God often for His love for you? Do you thank Jesus often for saving you from the bondage of sin?**

5/3- Psalm 104 is a beautiful hymn to the Creator! I like all of the verses - verse 19 stands out to me because I can find some cool images related to this verse on the web! :) *"You made the moon to mark the seasons and the sun that knows when to set."* **Q: How does nature remind you of our Creator God? Do you ever praise God when you are outdoors?**

5/4- Today we finish up Psalm 104, which we started yesterday. I mentioned in yesterday's post, that this is a great Psalm of praising God's creation. And indeed it is. What I didn't realize yesterday, but I picked up today, is that this Psalm overall goes through Genesis 1 and the story of creation. Not quite in the same order of creation, or the same details. But,

essentially this Psalm is a retelling of Genesis 1. I love Psalm 104 verse 33 today - *"I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath!"* I so pray that this verse will be true for both you and me. I pray we will sing to God as long as we live. I pray we will praise God to our very last breath. And in particular at our very last breath I pray we are praising God! **Q: How are you singing to God in your life today? What are some new ways you are praising God these days?**

5/5 - Psalm 105 verse 4 stood out to me today - *"Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching."* I like that - search! If you search for God, he will indeed be found. **Q: Have you ever searched for God? And for his strength? Are you maybe searching now? Do you believe he will be found? Will you keep on searching?**

PROVERBS 14:15 - 29

5/1 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 16 is a bit convicting for me - *"The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with great confidence."* As I look at my life I think that I often plunge ahead with great confidence... and recently I was called out on this - wisely I think. I do see the wisdom of being cautious and avoiding danger. But, I also think that we shouldn't avoid some risks of failure - particularly when it comes to God's Kingdom work... but... I do see that it is foolish to plunge ahead only with great confidence. We should only move forward with God. **Q: How about you? Are you cautious and do you avoid danger? (maybe too cautious sometimes?) Or, do you plunge ahead with great confidence? With too much confidence? Is this foolish?**

5/2 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 17 is convicting for me... wow... the Proverbs have been convicting me a bit more than I'm used to lately... I do take this as an overall good thing! It is good to get convicted by God's Word. Verse 17 - *"Those who are short-tempered do foolish things, and schemers are hated."* No, it's not the short-tempered piece that is convicting me, but that last piece - schemers are hated.. I don't like to admit it, but I think on occasion I am a schemer. I don't mean to be... but I think sometimes it seems as if I am. And when I am busted in a "scheme" - that I may not have really consciously thought was a scheme - there are some hurt feelings, anger and maybe even hatred toward me in that moment. Wow... bummer. I pray that I can move beyond being a schemer in every way. Life is too short to scheme! **Q: How about you? Are you ever a schemer? Even if you don't "mean to be one", are you still sometimes? Why do we scheme? Who are we trying to fool with our "schemes"? Ourselves?**

5/3 - Today in Proverbs chapter 14 verse 21 we read - *"He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy."* **Q: How does today's Proverb speak to you? Do you love your neighbor? Who is your neighbor? Do you believe despising your neighbor is a sin? Are you kind to the needy? What are some ways that you are consistently kind to the needy? Do you believe that you are blessed when you are kind to the needy?**

5/4- Proverbs verse 14 chapter 22 is awesome - *"If you plan good, you will be granted unfailing love and faithfulness."* Great stuff! And so true. **Q: Do you plan good in your life? Do you consciously think of ways you can bless others? Do you love others well? Do you surprise others with grace? Often? Do you believe that if you plan good, you will be granted unfailing love and faithfulness?**

5/7 - Proverbs 14:29 teaches us today: *"People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness."* **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb? Have you ever struggled with anger? Do you agree that controlling your anger demonstrates understanding, and that letting your anger control you shows great foolishness? Will you seek only understanding in this area of your life, and let all foolishness go?**

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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