

Notes & Group Questions from May 30-June 6 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

2 SAMUEL 15:23-23:23

5/30 - We have more sad readings today in Second Samuel! However, it is impressive to see David's countenance in the midst of all of the chaos going on around him. I love David's words in verses 10 through 12 when Shimei is cursing David: *"If the LORD has told him to curse me, who am I to stop him? My own son is trying to kill me. Shouldn't this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to do it. And perhaps the LORD will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses."* That is incredible faith and humility! David says first that perhaps God has told Shimei to curse him, so why try to stop it. Then at the end David basically says if God has not told Shimei to curse him, then perhaps David will be blessed by God because of these wrongful curses. Great stuff! **Q: How do you act in your life today if someone is cursing you or wronging you? Do you act like David does here? With patience and wisdom? Or, do you "react" with anger and spite? Which is the better way to go?**

5/30 - At the end of today's readings we read about Ahithophel advising Absalom to sleep with David's concubines. To sleep with a king's wives or concubines was to make a claim to the throne. It is sad to read about this advice to commit a horrible act that is *"beyond hope of reconciliation"*, as verse 21 says in today's readings. I read a commentary that said Ahithophel advises Absalom to do this horrible act so that all of Israel will hear about it. Well, Absalom is in such a deep state of sin and wickedness at this point that he wanted Israel to also see that he was committing this sin by setting the tent up on the palace roof. It is striking to me to see David's humility toward Shimei's curses in today's readings versus Absalom's complete pride and rebellion. **Q: See what unchecked sin can do in a life? Do you think Absalom knew he was going the Wrong Way? Or was he blinded by sin?** In a couple of days we'll read about where the Wrong Way leads Absalom...

5/31 - Interesting readings in Second Samuel today! The dynamics between Ahithophel's advice and Hushai's advice is fascinating. Hushai plays smartly to Absalom's ego and insecurity with the advice he gives. Ahithophel seems to realize that he's lost his status in Absalom's kingdom - and I wonder if maybe perhaps Ahithophel realized this kingdom of Absalom's would soon fall? And thus decided to kill himself? It was probably more of an ego / pride / status thing though that played into Ahithophel's tragic decision. Ahithophel, a betrayer of David, ended up taking his life in the same manner Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, does. (Not to be morbid here, but just fyi that there are 7 suicides documented in the Bible - you can view this list of 7 on bible.org [at this link](#).) It does make me very sad to read about suicide, even in the case of Ahithophel or Judas. I know obviously suicide happens still in our world today at alarming rates, which makes me incredibly sad. I just feel like all of us can have some serious down times in our life and maybe sometimes feel like just giving it up completely. I pray that if ever we really do get that down in our life, that we always remember there is redemption. There is hope. There is love. There is forgiveness. There is Jesus. No matter what we've done or what we've failed to do, let us not every give up on the everlasting hope that is Jesus in our lives. Jesus saves. Jesus even saves us from ourselves. **Q: Have you ever worked with someone to move them away from suicide? Are there any ministries, books or organizations you can recommend related to suicide prevention and assistance?**

6/1 - Wow. Intense readings today. As could be expected from Absalom's pursuit of his ego and pride the past few chapters, his sin catches up with him. One commentary had the interesting point that Absalom's "pretty head & long hair" (as you'll recall from [2 Samuel 14:25-26](#)) ironically ended up being his undoing as his long hair got caught up in a tree. This seems very symbolic of how pride and ego can be it's own undoing. While on one hand I do appreciate David's grace and love for his son Absalom, I have to say that I really do appreciate Joab's boldness & wisdom in rebuking David in verses 5 through 8: *"We saved your life today and the lives of your sons, your daughters, and your wives and concubines. Yet you act like this, making us feel ashamed, as though we had done something wrong. You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that we mean nothing to you. If Absalom had lived and all of us had died, you would be pleased. Now go out there and congratulate the troops, for I swear by the LORD that if you don't, not a single one of them will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than you have ever been."* That is quite a speech by Joab to David! And I believe he was right. David's love for his son was admirable in one sense - but it also could be seen as selfish in another sense. David seemed to care more for his son than for the nation of Israel, and Joab called him out on this. It is interesting how sometimes our love for one person can cloud everything else going on in our lives. Love for one person is a beautiful thing. But it seems that we should also be cognizant of others around us too - and love them. And sometimes, like David, we may need to

realize that there is a greater good - a greater love - than the singular love we have been focusing on. This is not easy to discern of course... hopefully this makes some sort of sense or doesn't sound too harsh? **Q: What is your reaction to David's grief over his son Absalom today? Why do you think he grieved so much?**

6/2 - Today is a great day of readings in Second Samuel! David returns to Jerusalem! I love the entire flow of today's readings as David crosses the Jordan River toward Jerusalem and shows incredible kindness to Shimei, Mephibosheth, and Barzillai along the way. However, don't forget the name Shimei just yet - the "rock thrower & curser" when David fled Jerusalem a few chapters back... On David's deathbed, later in our readings in [First Kings 2:9](#), David will pass along to his son Solomon these instructions: *"Bring his (Shimei's) gray head down to the grave in blood..."* But, this day was not a day of bloodshed, but a day of amnesty, as David exclaimed in 2 Samuel 19:22 today: *"This is not a day for execution but for celebration! I am once again the king of Israel!"* In Second Samuel chapter 20 today we read about the revolt of Sheba from the tribe of Benjamin. Zondervan's commentary today points out that an important thing to keep in mind here is that tribal jealousy still was brewing over the transfer of the kingship from Benjamin (Saul's tribe) to Judah (David's tribe). Sheba appeals to the Israelite suspicion that David favored his own tribe over the other tribes. As this chapter progresses Joab again shows his true colors by murdering Amasa. I'm beginning to wonder about Joab... he's ruthless. I suppose as being the commander of the army for so long, this was his "job" to be ruthless? Let me know your thoughts on Joab in the Comments section below. R., thanks for the comment in yesterday's readings saying "Joab operated out of Justice with no Love." Great point! In Amasa's case, Amasa was part of the rebellion against David led by Absalom, so again here Joab is acting out "Justice"... (and certainly no Love...) **Q: I wonder if we ever fall into this trap in our lives today as well? Operate in an unbalanced way showing nothing but Justice, and yet no Love? Or, on the other hand do we sometimes operate with just Love, and no Justice? Should we be operating with a balance of Love and Justice? Or should one (Love or Justice) outweigh the other in our life?**

6/3 - Well... Sheba's grand rebellion against David doesn't last very long! And Sheba's own clan doesn't treat him well at all... Below are 2 images from today's readings. First image is from a 13th Century Maciejowski Bible showing Joab and his men besieging the city of Abel. Next image is of Sheba's head being thrown over the wall to Joab. Rebellion over. Second Samuel chapter 21 begins 4 chapters that are thought to essentially be an "appendix" to First and Second Samuel. These 4 chapters contain additional information about David's reign, without regard to chronology of events. The first event we read about in today's readings about David handing over 7 of Saul's relatives to the Gibeonites is believed to have taken place after David extended his kindness initially to Mephibosheth in chapter 9 and before Absalom's rebellion. The triumphs over 4 Philistine giants is at unknown times / chronology, although verse 15 seems to indicate to me that these took place perhaps later in David's life when he was older: *"And when David and his men were in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted."* Somehow I can't imagine a young David becoming weak and exhausted in battle... These 4 episodes are thought to have been included to show the heroics of David's men.

6/4 - Today in Second Samuel chapter 22 we read David's Song of Praise to God! This is an incredible chapter and certainly reminds us why David composed so many powerful Psalms as well. In fact, you will notice that this song of praise from David today is, oh, the same as [Psalm 18](#)... :) It is thought that this Song was composed shortly after David's victory over an enemy, but before his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. The Song starts off with David using the metaphor of a rock in verses 2 & 3: *"The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection."* The metaphor of a rock is very appropriate for David, as he often had taken refuge among the rocks of the desert (when fleeing from Saul, for example), but David realized that his true security was found only in God. In verses 31 through 33 of David's Song of Praise to God in today's readings we read these incredible words: *"As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect."* Can you imagine yourself saying these words to God in praise? Can you say these words now to God? It is interesting to think about the word "perfect" – used twice in these verses. I don't know about you, but sometimes I have been accused of being a "perfectionist." But, really, can you or I be perfect or create anything perfect? I don't think so. I do think we can live in a loving, growing relationship with God who will arm us with strength and make our way "perfect." But, it is not us making us perfect. It is God. God's way is perfect. His word – the Bible – is flawless. This is why we study the Bible. We are flawed people looking for flawlessness. God and the Bible deliver this to us. **Q: Is God a shield for you? When the storms of life come, do you take refuge in God? Do you believe there is any other God besides the Living God of the Bible? Is there anything else out there?** I don't think so. I've looked. I have never found anything else besides our Heavenly Father, Son & Holy Spirit. He is the Rock whose way is perfect. Who arms us with strength and makes our way perfect.

6/5 - We finish up the book of Second Samuel today and begin First Kings tomorrow! Are you ready to dive into our next Old Testament book?? Today in Second Samuel we continue to read about David's mighty men. It is sad to read the name of Uriah the Hittite in verse 39. Another reminder of David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah - one of David's own mighty men... And, yes, another reminder of God's forgiveness of David - and God's offer of forgiveness to you and me today. **Q: Have there been any "mighty men (or women!)" in your life that you have sinned against? Will you go to God for forgiveness for that sin today? And will you apologize and reconcile with the mighty man/woman in your life that you need to apologize to / reconcile with?** Interestingly, I think this whole forgiveness/mercy talk ties in very nicely into Psalm 123 today. As Psalm 123 sings to us today: *"Have mercy on us Lord, have mercy."*

6/5 - Second Samuel 24 today finishes up with David taking a census, then judgment upon Israel for this sin, and then closing up the book with David building an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. A few things to point out here. First, you'll note verse 1 starts out with: *"Once again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel.."* Commentaries suggest that God was likely upset with Israel because of their support of Absalom's & Sheba's rebellions. This is why it is thought the plague in this chapter affected Israel and not just David's house for the sin of the census. The census was a sin because it was not needed at this time in Israel's history. Censuses were taken in the past for military conscription & review of number of men before a war. But this was not a time of war. The census was a sin because David may have been taking this census just for his own glory & pride - to see how many people were under his reign. Even Joab asked David why he was doing this as we see in verse 3. The overall interesting thing to me about this chapter is that many commentaries suggest that it was placed at the end of the book of Second Samuel for the primary reason of setting the stage for the building of the Temple by Solomon in First Kings. The very interesting note about Araunah's threshing floor that we read about today is that it is believed to have been located on Mount Moriah! Yes, the same Mt. Moriah where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac. And the same spot where the Temple was to be built by Solomon! So, this brings to light the importance of David actually buying the threshing floor from Araunah and not just taking it for free, as was offered. David not only bought the threshing floor to build the altar for the burnt & peace offerings, but he bought the land for the Temple of the Lord to soon be built on by his son Solomon! Pretty interesting to note as we close out this amazing book of Second Samuel. I am very excited to begin our readings about David's son Solomon in First Kings beginning tomorrow!

JOHN 18:25-ACTS 2:47

5/30 - Today in John chapter 18 verse 38 we come across what many say is the most ironic question asked in all of history, as Jesus stands before Pilate: *"What is truth?" Pilate asked.* Why is this ironic? Because Pilate asks what is truth, when Truth is standing right before him! Jesus is Truth! And Pilate couldn't see it. Wow. . . think there are people in our world today who see Jesus so dimly, like Pilate does in this painting? I pray you and I see Jesus much more clearly, and much more as the Light! What is truth. This is a question that is still asked today of you and me. **Q: What is truth? Who is truth?**

5/31 - I read an interesting commentary on John 19 verse 25: *"Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene."* Zondervan's commentary says that Mary Magdalene appears in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives of all four Gospels, but outside of these narratives we only read about her in Luke 8:2-3. It is interesting to note that these are the only places in the Gospels where we find Mary Magdalene - though crucially important places in the Gospels! It is amazing to read about the actions of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two secret followers of Jesus on the Jewish council, in verses 38 through 40 - *"Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body down. When Pilate gave him permission, he came and took the body away. Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night, also came, bringing about seventy-five pounds of embalming ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Together they wrapped Jesus' body in a long linen cloth with the spices, as is the Jewish custom of burial."* That is a beautiful scene - these 2 men. They were risking much to do this. They were risking this for Jesus. **Q: What about you and me? Would we have taken this type of risk back then? Would we take this type of risk even today? What might be a risk - for Jesus - that we could take but that we are not taking today?**

6/1 - Today we read about Jesus' glorious resurrection! Verse 18 is awesome - *"Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!"* Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion gives a great list today of the order of Jesus' 11 appearances after his resurrection:

1. Mary Magdalene and the other women
2. the disciples on the road to Emmaus
3. Peter

4. the ten disciples in the upper room
5. the eleven in the upper room with Thomas present (Below is an oil painting by Carravaggio from the year 1601 titled "The Incredulity of Saint Thomas")
6. the disciples at the Sea of Tiberius
7. the eleven on a mountain in Galilee
8. five hundred of the brethren
9. James
10. all of the apostles
11. those present when he ascended into heaven

Q: What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you, personally? How has Jesus' resurrection changed your life?

6/2 - John 21 is one of my favorite chapters of the Bible in so many ways! In some ways it is because of a beautiful modern day book written by the late Henri Nouwen titled "[In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership](#)", which is based on this chapter and Jesus asking Peter 3 times if he loves him. Has anyone else read this book by Nouwen? If so, please post up reviews in the Comments section below. I know I make a lot of book recommendations on this blog over the course of a year, but if there is just 1 book you read based on my recommendations (other than the One Year Bible of course :), "In the Name of Jesus" by Henri Nouwen would be the book. In this book Henri writes about the end of his life ministry where he is a spiritual director at a L'Arche Daybreak community in Toronto, working amongst mentally handicapped. It is so incredible to read about how Henri learns from what the world would see as "the least of these" and how Henri realizes in his Christian ministry throughout his life he's been fighting 3 temptations:

1. the temptation to be relevant.
2. the temptation to be spectacular.
3. the temptation to be powerful.

I could go on and on about this book, but the last thing I will say is that it is so beautiful how Henri ties his learnings in this book to Jesus and Peter's Q & A here in John 21. If you serve in any way, shape, or form in Christian ministry (or even if you don't :), please pick this book up. You will be blessed by it immensely!

6/2 - One of my absolute favorite red letter quotes from Jesus in the Gospels arrives today in John 21. Verse 12: *"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said.* There is something about the simplicity and beauty and everyday-ness of this command from Jesus to the 7 disciples that I just absolutely love! **Q: Can you image Jesus saying this to you? Can you imagine Jesus making breakfast for you on the beach?**

6/2 - Okay, now onto the big question probably for many of us from today's readings is why did Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loved him? Many commentaries call these passages "the reinstatement of Peter" - meaning that he was reinstated as the rock / confessor of the foundation of Jesus' church based on [Matthew 16:16](#). And that he needed this reinstatement after denying knowing the Lord 3 times before his crucifixion (and the then rooster crowing, as we know...). Interestingly, Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has the following suggestions on the original Greek used when John wrote about this Q & A exchange between Jesus and Peter: "Two different Greek words are used for "love." The first two times the word *agapo*, which means devoted love, is used. When Peter refuses to use the same word, Jesus turns to the word *phileo*, which indicates the love of friendship. Peter accepts this word and admits that he loves Jesus in this way. Peter was humbler now than earlier in his life, and was making no claim to superior love (see [John 13:36-37](#))." In verse 18 Jesus says to Peter: *"The truth is, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked and go wherever you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will direct you and take you where you don't want to go."* The early church understood this as a prophecy of crucifixion. Peter would be a martyr and tradition suggests that he was crucified upside down. **Q: What are your thoughts on our readings in John today with Jesus asking Peter 3 times if he loved him? Why do you think this was asked of Peter 3 times? Was this a "reinstatement" of Peter? What are your thoughts overall on this closing chapter of John today? (Acts begins tomorrow!! :)**

6/2 - Okay, I realize this has been a long post today... but the last thing I want to point out is that I love Jesus' response to Peter when Peter asks about what will happen to John and Jesus says this is verse 22: *"Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You follow me."* I think this is a great word from Jesus to both you and me today as well! **Q: How often do we worry about others and their relationship with the Lord? How often do we perhaps think that we are so saved, and "they" are so not...? Or how often do we wonder why someone seems like they are so blessed, and perhaps we think that we are not? Well, what does Jesus say to all of this to you and me today?** I believe he would say the same words from verse 22: "What is that to you? You follow me." Indeed, let us not worry so very much about others. But let us worry instead about ourselves simply following Jesus!

6/3 - Today we begin the book of Acts! I am sad to be leaving the Gospels behind, but am definitely looking forward to reading Luke's writings in Acts. (And there is always early next year to read the Gospels again! Hint... hint... :) We'll soon be introduced to Paul in Acts, and his Epistles will be coming up in the months ahead. It is always so exciting to read about the early church and its genesis. I hope you are ready for Acts! Let's go!

Author: Luke

Date: A.D. 65-70

Content: The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke where Luke intends to show that what Jesus began on earth, he continues to do in the life of the church. The book begins with the apostles being filled with the power of God and preaching to great effect, three thousand being saved in one day (Acts 2:41). The life of the church in Jerusalem, the spread of the gospel to Samaria, the activities of the apostle Peter, and the persecution of the early Christians are then described. The focus then shifts to the apostle Paul and his missionary activity in Gentile territory. His three missionary journeys are treated in some detail, ending with Paul's trip to Rome where the book ends. Some scholars suggest that Luke intended to write a third volume that would have described Paul's release, further travels, arrest, and death.

Theme: Acts was written to show the spread of the gospel from Jewish to Gentile territory (Acts 1:8). The good news that Jesus dies and rose again could not be confined to one corner of the world, but was intended by God for all. To that end God empowered his people so that they could accomplish their task. The Holy Spirit is that empowering agent. The sovereign control of God over all things is seen in the triumph of the gospel over paganism and persecution; and although it may cost many their very lives (even Peter and Paul, whose lives are described in Acts), ultimate victory is assured through Jesus our Lord. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 23)

6/3 - It's intriguing to note that Luke begins Acts 1:1 with "Dear Theophilus." You will recall from Luke's Gospel in chapter 1 verses 3 & 4 Luke addresses the Gospel to Theophilus as well: "Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." So, just who is Theophilus? There is a lot of speculation on this question, and not a lot of certainty. Theophilus' name means "one who loves God." Not a bad name, eh? Some speculate that Theophilus was someone of high position and wealth, and perhaps even a Roman official. Some speculate Theophilus was actually Luke's publisher, funding his writings distribution! In whatever case, it appears that both Acts and Luke were written for Theophilus' own instruction, as well as the instruction of those whom these writings would be distributed, which includes you and me! Let us simply thank God for the unknown man Theophilus to whom Luke felt compelled to write the books of instructions for us in Acts & Luke! Verse 8 from Jesus is basically a Cliff Notes version of the book of Acts: "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In chapters 1 through 7 the apostles will be witnesses in Jerusalem. Judea & Samarian in chapters 8 & 9. And then to the ends of the earth in chapters 10 through 28. Well, ends of the earth in terms of Caesarea, Rome, Greece, Antioch and Asia Minor. But, they wouldn't begin this witnessing until they are equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit in chapter 2. **Q: How are you living out Act 1:8 in your life? Have you received the Holy Spirit's power? How are you telling people about Jesus everywhere?**

6/4 - Today we read the incredible Acts chapter 2 where the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost! We also read in Acts 2 today about how the early church flourishes. You may hear some churches today say that they are "Acts 2:42" churches. Today we read these incredible words about the early church in verses 42 through 47 – "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." **Q: How do these verses speak to you? Do you think this is how church today should be as well? Do you see aspects of these verses in your church today? Do you see aspects of these verses in your life today? Is your church an "Acts 2:42" church? Do you think it should be? How will you yourself help it to be an Acts 2:42 church?**

6/5 - Acts chapter 3 is a wonderful look at the power of Jesus' name and faith in Jesus as Peter heals a lame man. **Q: I am curious about how you might say or pray the name of Jesus in your life today? Do you close out your prayers in the name of Jesus? Do you do other things in your life in the name of Jesus? Do you have any stories or examples of the power of the name of Jesus that you have experienced in your life?**

6/5 - I love verse 6: *"But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"* It is awesome to see how Peter follows up this healing with preaching at Solomon's Porch! He sees an opportunity to let others know about Jesus and he does not let this opportunity pass him by. **Q: How often in your life do you come across opportunities to let others know about Jesus? How often do you move forward with that opportunity? Or how often do you let that opportunity pass you by?**

PSALM 119:113-122:9

5/30 - Psalm 119 verse 114 is beautiful a beautiful reflection on our relationship with God and his Word, the Bible - *"You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my only source of hope."* This ties in so well with the reflections on false teachers above. The Bible is clearly a refuge and shield from false teaching! **Q: Is God's Word your only source of hope?** And remember, Jesus is the very Word made flesh, so Jesus would clearly be your only source of hope too, if the Word truly is. Let us take refuge in God's Word each day of our lives!

5/30 - Verse 127 today is powerful - *"Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold."* I think this is something each of us needs to ask ourselves. **Q: Do we love God's commands - his Word - the Bible - more than we love any and all material possessions? Do we value the Bible above all the money this world could ever offer us?** This is an important decision to make... I pray we realize the eternal worth of God's commands compared to the passing and transitory nature of "even the finest gold." Let us always remember the great peril of ignoring God's Word and instead chasing after the world's "fool's gold..."

5/31 - Psalm 119 is continuing with its amazing verses about God's holy Word, the Bible, and how it can transform our lives. Verse 138 is just one more small example from this incredible Psalm - *"Your decrees are perfect; they are entirely worthy of our trust."* **Q: Do you believe that God's Word, the Bible, is perfect? Is it entirely worthy of our trust? Would you consider the Bible to be a perfect book of counsel for your life?**

5/31 - I love verse 130, which I used to have at the top of this blog in the NIV translation: *"The unfolding of your words gives light..."* **Q: Do you believe this is true? Does reading God's Word, the Bible, bring light into your life? If you did not read God's Word would you be in darkness?**

6/1 - We finish Psalm 119 today... :(I am sad. I loved reading through this Psalm again! For some reason it meant so much to me these past few days. I pray this Psalm has been good for you as well this go round. I think the last 3 verses of this Psalm are worth us camping out on here for a moment. In verses 174, 175 & 176 the author of Psalm 119 closes out the Psalm with what I think is a prayer and a confession all in one - *"O LORD, I have longed for your salvation, and your law is my delight. Let me live so I can praise you, and may your laws sustain me. I have wandered away like a lost sheep; come and find me, for I have not forgotten your commands."* Wow... not a bad prayer and confession, eh? **Q: Is God's Word your delight? Do you wish to live so you can praise God? Does His Word sustain you?**

6/2 - Psalm 120 is the beginning of 15 Psalms known as "songs of ascent!" This could mean the ascent of the stairs to the Temple in Jerusalem - or more likely the annual religious pilgrimages and the ascent to Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Are you ready for the next 15 Psalms of Ascent? Verse 1 in this Psalm should be encouraging to each of us: *"I took my troubles to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer."* **Q: Do you have troubles in your life? Have you brought them to God in prayer? Will you? Will you allow him to answer your prayer?**

6/3 - Psalm 121 is the second in this series of 15 Psalms of ascent that were likely written for religious festivals when people were making their pilgrimages to Israel. I love verses 3 & 4 today - *"He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep. Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps."* How about that! God does not sleep! This reminds me of other parts of the Bible where it talks about God being pure light and having no shadows. God is also so perfect that he does not sleep! I like that... Allows me to sleep better at night. I'll no longer need to count sheep now! :) And the closing verse 8... wow... *"The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever."* **Q: Do you believe this is true? Do you believe that God watches over you - always?**

6/4 - Psalm 122 is the third in this series of Psalms of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This is a joyful Psalm today! Today in Psalm 122 verse 1 we read - *"I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord.""* **Q: Have you ever had this experience? Have you ever rejoiced when someone invited you to attend church? Have you ever given this experience to others? Have you said to others in your life, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"? Do you make it a regular habit to invite people to church? Does church bring joy to you? Do you think it might then also bring joy to others? Others who are waiting for you to simply invite them? Will you? Will you rejoice**

with those around you through the simple & graceful act of an invitation? Are you yourself part of a church community? Are you attending church on a regular basis? Do you believe that being in community with other Christians each week will help grow your relationship with God? If you are not part of a church community, will you seek one out this upcoming week?

6/4 - And verse 6 is so true then - and still true now - *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."* **Q: Will you join me in praying for the peace of Jerusalem? How often do you pray for the peace of Jerusalem?**

6/5 - Psalm 123 continues the songs of Ascent. Psalm 123 is a short one, but a great one. I love these portions of verses 2 and 3 - *"We look to the LORD our God for his mercy....Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy..."* **Q: Do you look to the Lord for his mercy? What does God's mercy to you look like? Why would you need God's mercy? Do you pray to the Lord this simple prayer - "Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy"?**

PROVERBS 16:10-20

5/30 - Proverbs 16 verse 11 is important for each of us to keep in mind in our daily work lives - *"The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard."* God cares about our work. He cares about our business deals. He knows if we are conducting our work fairly or not. If we are not fair in our business deals - if we are cheating our employer of our full and diligent work during our hours worked - then we are sinning. God sets the standard. Work fairly and honestly as if you were working for God as your boss. Because, truly, you are working for God in all that you do. No matter where you work. **Q: Do you believe that God cares about your work? Every single detail of your work?**

5/31 - Proverbs 16:13 today teaches us: *"The king is pleased with righteous lips; he loves those who speak honestly."* This Proverb reminds me of a worship song we sing in my church on occasion that goes: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight." Which, now that I type this I realize is Psalm 19:14. **Q: How are the words of your mouth these days? Are your lips righteous? Is speaking honestly pleasing to your King? Today, who is your King? Is your king yourself? Is your king Jesus?**

6/1 - Proverbs 16:15 today is nice: *"When the king smiles, there is life; his favor refreshes like a gentle rain."* **Q: What else in our life today refreshes like a gentle rain? When a baby smiles at you? When you smile at someone else? When someone else smiles at you when you're having a rough day?** Let us be like gentle rain for each other!

6/2 - Proverbs 16:16 today teaches us: *"How much better to get wisdom than gold, and understanding than silver!"* **Q: Do you believe this Proverb to be true? How do you spend the majority of your time in your life - pursuing wisdom & understanding or pursuing money? What are some ways in your life you can spend more time pursuing wisdom & understanding and less time pursuing money?**

6/3 - Today in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 18 we read this convicting proverb: *"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."* I don't know about you, but I struggle with pride. Honestly, I have a hunch that most of us do to some degree. It is part of our human condition I'm afraid. I do believe that Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God can save us of our pride. But, we have to really be willing to give it up to them - to let it go. I honestly do not think I have let go of my pride. The thing I've noticed that I've been doing lately - which I think is a symptom of pride - is judging others. I really have been judging others harshly. And it's a horrible thing to do. I caught myself saying something horrible to a friend recently about another group of acquaintances. And I felt so horrible after saying it - but I realized that indeed what I said is exactly what I had been thinking. I had been judging others! I had been prideful! And that is a scary thing. . . if this proverb is true. And I know that it is true. Pride goes before destruction. A haughty spirit before a fall. I realize I'm on a bad course right now of judging others and being prideful. I am thankful that God has shown to me this is a sin I need to repent of. I am praying constantly now for healing and redemption from it. I am confident it will come. But, I am also wise enough to realize that I will need to be diligent and continually pray for healing in this area in my life - judging others and pride. I am afraid that I will struggle with this my whole life. But, that's okay. It makes me realize I cannot do this life on my own. I need God. I need Jesus. I need the Holy Spirit. Otherwise - without them - I would be a prideful & judgmental person. And I would surely fall. . . How about you? Do you struggle with pride? Do you judge others? (really, think about this one. . . it was scary for me to realize that not only do I judge others - but I do it constantly. . .) If so, will you join me in repentance and prayer in these areas? Will you give these sins over to Jesus and pray constantly for redemption and healing in these areas? He will heal you. Surely he will. No one else can. We cannot heal ourselves of pride & judging others on our own. **Q: What are some ways you have dealt with pride in your life in the past? Have you been able to overcome issues of judging others? Have you been able to overcome thinking you are "all that"? How did you overcome these pride issues?**

6/4 - Proverbs 16 verse 20 closes with an amazing little teaching that really stood out to me today: *"Those who listen to instruction will prosper; those who trust the LORD will be happy."* The first half of this Proverb is great / makes sense. Listen to instruction. Allow some discipline in your life - wait, I mean, *embrace* godly discipline in your life... :) Really. And then you'll prosper. If we ignore instruction. Ignore discipline. No prosperity - financially, emotionally, etc. Fine. Makes sense. But check out that second half of the Proverb - *"Those who trust the Lord will be happy."* How amazingly simple & true is that?? And how often is this Truth completely missed in our culture today? We look for happiness everywhere else *besides* God!! Yes, we want happiness. But trusting in the Lord for happiness? Forget about it. That seems too easy / boring / etc.. I'd prefer to pursue this addiction, or that greed, or that idol... and our list of looking for happiness from everything besides God can go on and on and on. I am sure you know what I mean. But let's look at this teaching one more time and perhaps we'll really start to let this sink in today: *"Those who trust the Lord will be happy."* **Q: Do you believe this to be true? Do you trust the Lord? I mean, really. Do you really trust the Lord? With everything? With all that you are? In every moment?** Let us seek true happiness where only true happiness can be found! Let us live every moment of our lives trusting in the Lord. **How do you trust in the Lord each day in your life? Meaning, how do you make sure you stay focused on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in your life every day? Is it through prayer, fasting, community, Bible study, etc.? Do you ever find yourself having some days where you have lost sight of trusting in the Lord? Where you are looking elsewhere for happiness? How do you bring yourself back to trusting in God on those days instead of trusting in worldly things?**

6/5 - Proverbs 16:23 today is fantastic: *"From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive."* **Q: Do you want a wise mind? Do you want wise speech to come forth from your mouth? Where in this world do you think you can find wisdom? Wisdom that will transform your mind? Wisdom that will transform your speech? And then, with that wisdom, how will you persuade others? What would you even want to persuade others toward? Below are a couple of images of Jesus. First image is of Jesus studying as a boy. What can we learn from this image of Jesus and apply to our lives today? Next image is an overview of Jesus' wisdom. Would you agree that Jesus fulfilled this Proverb perfectly? *"From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive."***

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.