

Notes & Group Questions for May 8 - May 14 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

1 SAMUEL 2:22 - 16:23

5/8 - First Samuel chapter 2 verse 25 stood out to me today when Eli says to his sons - *"If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede?"* This is an interesting thing to consider. When we sin, are we sinning against other people and/or against God? I think generally speaking the answer is both. I have heard a pastor teach that "nobody sins in a vacuum." Not a literal vacuum of course :), but a "vacuum" meaning that your sin only affects you and you alone. This pastor went on to say that when we sin - even when we are alone - we end up affecting everyone else around us in our lives in some way. We may not consciously see how this happens, but our sin affects how we will treat others in the near future. So, it seems to me that when we sin we pretty much always sin against others, because we're in one sense letting down the community of people around us and we will behave differently to our community around us because of our sin. Now, in terms of sinning against God, I always think of Psalm 51 where David writes to God - "against you and you alone have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." I think this is true as well - any sin we commit is a sin against God. It is interesting that David uses the term "you alone" about his sin. But, obviously, David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba affected the community around him in a big way. So, all this to say - I believe that when we sin we are sinning against God and the community of people in our lives at the same time. Eli asks in this verse above, "who can intercede for our sins against God?" Well, at that time, that was a very good question. However, in our time Jesus can and does intercede for our sins against God - if we'll ask him. We simply need to confess our sins to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and repent - in faith that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We are so very fortunate that we have someone - Jesus - who can intercede for our sins... This is why Jesus is called Savior. Jesus Saves us from our sins. **Q: Has Jesus saved you from your sins? How is Jesus' mediating for your sins today? Do you confess your sins to Jesus? Do you repent?**

5/9 - Interesting chapters in First Samuel today! The idol Dagon was no match for the Ark of the Covenant! You'll notice in verse 4 that Dagon ends up in a worship position before the Ark: *"And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD."* Dagon was the "god" of the Philistines, and was thought to have been some sort of man / fish combo. It's fascinating to see the Philistine's send back to Israel a "guilt offering" of golden tumors and rats with the Ark. Not quite what was prescribed for guilt offerings in Leviticus... but, I guess you can give them an E for effort. :) Then we arrive at the people of Beth-shemesh who look in the ark and perish - and then the ark is sent off again to another town. We then arrive at some wonderful words from Samuel in chapter 7 verses 3 & 4: *"Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the LORD, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the LORD; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." So the Israelites destroyed their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the LORD."* And later in verse 10 we read - *"Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them."* **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the Ark of the Covenant in Philistine territory and its return to the Israelites? Has their ever been a time in your life when you worshiped an "idol" of sorts, like the Israelites worshipped foreign gods, and that you realized you must give up the idol and return to the Lord? What are some idols in our modern world that we might not realize are idols?**

5/10 - We have some great dramatic reading today in First Samuel! Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion today has some good food for thought to the question of Why did Israel want a king? - "1. Samuel's sons were not fit to lead Israel 2. The 12 tribes of Israel continually had problems working together because each tribe had its own leader and territory. It was hoped that a king would unite the tribes into one nation and one army. 3. The people wanted to be like the neighboring nations. This is exactly what God didn't want. Having a king would make it easy for them to forget that God was their read leader." In First Samuel Chapter 8 we hear Samuel passing on God's warning to how the king will treat the people... **Q: Why do you think Israel wanted a King? Do you we want "kings" today as well? Who is your King? Is Jesus your King? What does his Lordship look like in your life?**

5/10 - Can you imagine hearing these words of Samuel if you were Saul in First Samuel 9:20 today: *"And I am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes."* All you are doing is looking for your dad's lost donkeys

and all of the sudden you hear this from the seer! Whew... You know though - I will say this. Being in relationship with God is always an adventure. I think oftentimes we will start out on a journey to do one thing and God ends up taking us some place completely different. Saul is about to embark on an adventure. You and I have the opportunity to embark on an adventure with God each and every day. I know that there are many times that God sends me into places & situations I would have never thought imaginable. That's the adventure of faith. It truly is not boring! I honestly think that life apart from God is truly boring. The secular life is boring. The materialistic life is boring. **Q: If you are feeling bored these days, will you break free and wholeheartedly pursue an adventurous relationship with the Lord? How do you think the life of faith is either boring or adventurous?**

5/11 - Okay - I have a temporary new favorite verse in the Bible! Today in First Samuel chapter 10 verse 22 when they were about to name Saul king, but they couldn't find him: *"So they asked the LORD, "Where is he?" And the LORD replied, "He is hiding among the baggage.""* That is awesome! I really appreciate the fact that Saul was hiding among the baggage. :) I think that's where I would be too. I hope I would be in any case. I think it's a bit scary when someone is too lustful for power. Better to have your future king hiding in the baggage... :) In First Samuel chapter 11 we see Saul really step into his role as king by defending the city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites attack. Verse 2 was sad to consider when the Ammonite king said this to the citizens of Jabesh-gilead - *"All right," Nahash said, "but only on one condition. I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you as a disgrace to all Israel!"* Gouging out the right eye would be done for humiliation purposes - but also to destroy the military ability of the archers. After this point, Saul gets word back in his hometown that Jabesh-gilead is under attack. I was impressed with Saul's graciousness in verses 12 & 13 of this chapter: *"Then the people exclaimed to Samuel, "Now where are those men who said Saul shouldn't rule over us? Bring them here, and we will kill them!" But Saul replied, "No one will be executed today, for today the LORD has rescued Israel!"* Impressive. You could see where after defeating the Ammonites, Israel's adrenaline might be running high to go after dissenters. Saul put a stop to it, which was impressive. **Q: What about us today? When we are riding high on a victory of some sort and the group around us says we should forge ahead on something that does not seem right, can we stand up and say "No" to the group as Saul did on this day?**

5/12 - I like First Samuel 12 verse 7 today when Samuel says this to the Israelites: *"Now stand here quietly before the LORD as I remind you of all the great things the LORD has done for you and your ancestors"* Just like the Israelites needed reminding all the great things God has done, we need reminding today as well. We are a forgetful people. I honestly believe reading God's Word, the Bible, each day is a great way to "remember" all that God has done for each of us and our spiritual ancestors. I know that I need this daily reminder... How about you? Verse 23 is intriguing when Samuel says - *"As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right."* It sounds like if Samuel stopped his prayers for the Israelites, he would be sinning. Interesting. What about us today? Does God call us at times to pray for others? And if we do not respond to this call and do not pray for others, are we sinning? Interesting food for thought. I guess it's just a safer bet to continue praying for others! :) In 1 Samuel 13 we see Saul's disobedience toward God, through his impatience. **Q: I wonder again about us today - are we patient people? Or are we impatient? Do we wait on God when things are not moving as quickly as we would like them to...? Should we be waiting on God or trying to hurry things up like Saul did...?**

5/13- Interesting First Samuel readings today! Jonathan was quite brave going to the Philistine camp like he did. Verse 6 was impressive: *"Jonathan said to his armor bearer. "Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!"* Fortunately God helped him with an earthquake and what looked to be some unique strength in verse 13: *"So they climbed up using both hands and feet, and the Philistines fell back as Jonathan and his armor bearer killed them right and left."* Then, Saul seems to be having some power & ego & oath issues in today's readings... First he makes an oath that the men cannot eat until evening - not so wise when in the midst of battle. Then he says in verse 39 - *"I vow by the name of the LORD who rescued Israel that the sinner will surely die, even if it is my own son Jonathan!"* Well... it was Jonathan. Fortunately the people were smarter than Saul and saved Jonathan. **Q: Why do you think Saul started having power & ego & oath issues? What happened to Saul? Do we too have power & ego & oath issues in our modern day?**

5/14 - Wow. Big reading day today! David is anointed by Samuel. Saul meets David for the first time! The story of David begins! I am excited! In First Samuel 15 we read about Saul destroying most - but not all... - of the Amalekite nation. God's commands were clear to destroy all. Saul, simply put, disobeyed. Verses 22 and 23 sum up this chapter powerfully when Samuel says this to Saul: *"What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have*

rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king.'" **Q: Obedience is far better than sacrifice... think this is still true today? Are you more of an obedient person or a sacrificial person before God? Do you believe that rebellion is as bad as witchcraft and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols?**

JOHN 5:24 - 8:20

5/8 - I am intrigued by Jesus' words in John chapter 5 verse 30 today, particularly in light of the book of Judges that we recently read, which was a dark time in Israel's history - *"But I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own."* I love that Jesus says his judgment is absolutely just. And I believe this is true - 1. that Jesus will judge us and that 2. his judgment is just. I think this is both something to be celebrated - there is no one else I would want to judge me... - and I think this can be sobering - if his judgment is absolutely just, then it is obvious that we cannot "sneak" anything by Jesus. Everything we have ever done or will do will be judged by Jesus. I think ultimately it is very healthy to recognize this. Maybe initially this realization will keep us from sinning because of some fear of judgment - but ideally this realization matures into a love for Jesus that encourages us not to sin because we would not want to disappoint Jesus whom we love with all that we are. **Q: Do you believe that Jesus is your judge? Do you believe that Jesus will judge you absolutely justly? Do you believe that God is a just God? A God of justice?**

5/9 - It is very interesting to note that Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle, along with the resurrection, that is described in all 4 gospels! In John chapter 6 verse 14 we read - *"When the people saw this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, 'Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!'"* The Prophet the crowds are referring to comes from Deuteronomy chapter 18 verses 15 & 18 - *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."* **Q: What do you think the significance is of the miracle of feeding the 5,000? Do you think Jesus is concerned for our physical needs? What is a time in your life Jesus took care of your physical needs?**

5/10 - Wow... verses 28 & 29 in John chapter 6 are so beautiful and simple that I think it is easy to miss the strong meaning behind this conversation between the crowd & Jesus - *"They replied, 'What does God want us to do?' Jesus told them, 'This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the one he has sent.'"* Check out that very last sentence. This is what God wants you to do. Believe. That's it. It's that simple. Believe. Not give away all your money to the poor. Not do thousands of good deeds. Not become a perfect person over night. Just believe. Believe. Yeah, okay, maybe God will ask you to give away some money and do good and become better person after you believe... :) But the key is first and foremost to Believe. **Q: Do you Believe in Jesus, the One whom God sent? When did you first Believe? Feel free to share your testimony with the group!**

5/10 - And verse 35 is so powerful as well - *"Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in me will never thirst.'"* Jesus saying he is the bread of life is similar to him saying he is the Door or the Vine. Bread is a beautiful metaphor that Jesus supplies divine nourishment to us spiritually. For me, this verse also reminds me of The Lord's Supper in our churches today. **Q: How is Jesus your bread of life? How has Jesus quenched your thirst?**

5/11 - Okay, so John chapter 6 verses 53 through 58 are some verses that get interpreted several different ways - some saying these verses speak of the Lord's Supper and some saying they speak only of faith in Jesus because the Lord's Supper had not yet been instituted by Jesus at this time. I think the key for us to focus on is that Jesus is our nourishment - our literal spiritual food if we have faith in him. It is interesting to note that many disciples turned away from Jesus after this teaching. I love Peter's reply to Jesus in verses 68 & 69 after Jesus asks if the Twelve will leave too - *"Simon Peter replied, 'Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God.'"* True words indeed Peter. True words indeed. **Q: If not Jesus, to whom would you go? Does anyone else have the words that give eternal life? Are you looking forward to eternal life with Jesus?**

5/12 - Hmm... I found John chapter 7 verse 12 intriguing today as it said this about Jesus - *"There was a lot of discussion about him among the crowds. Some said, 'He's a wonderful man,' while others said, 'He's nothing but a fraud, deceiving the people.'"* **Q: Does this verse sound familiar to you at all? Maybe like something we would hear about Jesus or Christianity in our modern world today?** "Jesus & Christianity is wonderful. Jesus & Christianity is nothing but a fraud, deceiving people." Times really have not changed much have they?

5/12 - Jesus' words in verse 17 are powerful - *"Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own."* I like that - if we want to do the will of God, we will **know** whether Jesus' teaching is from God or is his own. **Q: Do you want to do the will of God? When you read Jesus' teachings in John, do you know that his teaching is from God?**

5/13 - John chapter 7 verses 37 & 38 are powerful verses for each of us to meditate upon - *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of those who believe in me."* Wow... these are powerful words from Jesus. And so true. I know that I have been very spiritually thirsty in my life in the past and Jesus has most certainly quenched that thirst in my life. And I do believe that rivers of living water flow from the heart of those that believe in Jesus. This is the Holy Spirit, which indwells within us when we are in relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. This living water flowing from our hearts - the Holy Spirit - is an intriguing topic. I know different folks experience the Holy Spirit in different ways. I do hope that each of us do tangibly experience the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives each and every day. I do know there are some days where I really sense and experience the Holy Spirit in my heart and life. And there are some days where I may not - but I don't believe the Holy Spirit has departed. It's more likely that I'm just caught up in the hustle / bustle of this life and focused on the flesh / world and not the Spirit. **Q: Do you believe that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of those that believe in Jesus? Are you thirsty? Are those around you thirsty?**

5/14 - I love John chapter 8 verse 12 today: *"Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'"* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus is the light of the world? Why would we want or need a light in this world? Do you believe there is darkness in this world? Do you need the light that leads to life?**

PSALM 106:1 - 110:7

5/8 - Psalm 106 is a repentive Psalm, likely written by a Levitical priest after returning to Jerusalem after its destruction. Verse 2 stood out to me today - *"Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him half enough?"* **Q: Can you list all of the glorious miracles of God? Can anyone? Are you praising God today? Every day?**

5/8 - Verse 3 is powerful- *"Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right."* I think this is such an important thing to know - we will be happy when we deal justly with others and when we do what is right. This is happiness. Not money or fame or power or luxuries. Dealing justly with others and doing what is right is happiness. **Q: So, Biblically, are you happy?**

5/9 - Today in Psalm 106:19-21 we read: *"At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt."* This of course sounds very familiar to Romans chapter 1 verses 22 and 23: *"Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."* **Q: Was this wise that the Israelites exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull? Why did they do this? What should have been their Glory? What is your Glory today? Do you, at times, exchange your true Glory for something else? Is this wise? Are you forgetting the God who saved you? The God who has done great things for you?**

5/9 - Verse 13 in this Psalm also stands out: *"Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done! They wouldn't wait for his counsel!"* **Q: Is this true of us? Do we forget or take for granted all of the blessings God has poured out into our lives? In doing so, do we decide to take matters into our own hands - not waiting on God's counsel for our direction? Will we remember? Will we wait? Patiently...?**

5/10 - Psalm 106 verse 39 stood out to me today, speaking about the Israelites: *"They defiled themselves by their evil deeds, and their love of idols was adultery in the LORD's sight."* I think this Psalm verse stands the test of time with our modern world today. **Q: Do you believe that we still defile ourselves with our evil deeds today? Do you believe that our love of idols is adultery in God's sight? How can we stop defiling ourselves with evil deeds and stop loving idols in our modern world today? Who can save us from ourselves?**

5/11 - Psalm 107 repeats a verse four times - starting with verse 6 here - *"LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress.*" (then see verse 13, verse 19, and verse 28 - same verse) This is a great reminder to pray - and yes, it's great to pray during times of distress of course. **Q: But, how about praying during times of**

happiness & joy? Or even times of just regular blahs? I recently read much of the book "The Life You've Always Wanted" by John Ortberg (great book!), and it has a great chapter on prayer. It is so true that one of the best ways to truly know and love God is through prayer. Simple prayer. 5 minutes a day. **Do you pray to God 5 minutes a day? When the storms of life come, do you cry out for help to Jesus? Do you know that he will always be there for you in the midst of the storm?**

5/12- I love Psalm 108 verse 1 today: *"My heart is confident in you, O God; no wonder I can sing your praises! Wake up, my soul!"* **Q: Is your heart confident in God? Do you sing God's praises? Is your soul awake? Or does your soul need a wake up call? Where do you suppose you can find that wake up call for your soul? The Bible? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? God? Will you answer the call today? Will your soul wake up?**

5/13 - Today in Psalm 109 verse 4 in the NIV we read these words of David – *"I am a man of prayer."* Wow. I like that. And I'm not sure I can honestly say that about myself right now. Sure, I will roll out of bed and offer up some prayers. Yeah, I'll try to say a prayer before meals. And yes, I'll pray briefly before going to sleep. Oh yeah, maybe in church once a week too I'll offer up some prayers. But, for me to say "I am a person of prayer" would probably not be truthful. Ouch. Don't worry – I'm not beating myself up too badly over it. But - if I really want to realize that God is holy and a Rock and if I really want to love God and other people, then I have a hunch that being a person of prayer is a critical part of the equation. I don't think that prayer is so much talking to God as it is really slowing down and listening to God. Sure, it's a conversation, but I think in our fast pace world today we would do well to really slow down in prayer and listen to God. Listen for that still small voice within our hearts leading us to God's kingdom and glory and peace. It's there. I think it takes prayer to really hear it oftentimes. **Q: How about you? Are you a person of prayer? Do you want to be a person of prayer? When you pray, do you talk more or listen more to God? Do you want to live your life as a person of prayer?**

PROVERBS 14:30 - 15:10

5/8 - Today in Proverbs chapter 14 verse 31 we read – *"He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."* Those of you that have been journeying through the One Year Bible with me this year know that I like to point out verses like these. I believe it is crystal clear in the Bible that God cares about the poor and instructs us to care for the poor. I'm sure we all have differing views on what this might look like logistically, and that's fine. But, I think it's really an issue of the heart. **Q: Do you care for the poor? Really – "care," in your heart, for the poor? What are some ways in your life that you are caring for the poor on a consistent basis? Do you believe that God cares for the poor? Do you believe that God instructs us to care for the poor? Why?**

5/9 - I really like Proverbs 14 verse 33 today - *"Wisdom is enshrined in an understanding heart."* I pray we all develop understanding hearts that are full of godly wisdom! **Q: What do you think this Proverb means when it says "understanding heart"? What is an "understanding heart"? How is it different from other hearts? Maybe hardened hearts or foolish hearts? Have you ever prayed to God for an understanding heart? Would this be a good prayer?**

5/10 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 34 today teaches us today: *"Godliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people."* This is a great reminder that godliness is not just an individual issue, but a community and even national issue. **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb that godliness makes a nation great? In our recent readings in Judges, was Israel a godly nation? Or was there sin in the nation bringing disgrace? How about today? Do you live in a godly nation? Or is there sin bringing disgrace to the people?**

5/11 - Proverbs chapter 15 verse 1 is so so so very true... we would all do well to practice this every day - *"A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare."* How beautifully true & wise this is? Let us be gentle people... **Q: If someone were to describe you, would they describe you as a "gentle" person? Would you want to be described as a gentle person? Should we be gentle all of the time? Was Jesus gentle all of the time? Was Jesus gentle most of the time? To whom or in what circumstances was Jesus not gentle? Should we follow Jesus in this regard?**

5/12- I also love Proverbs 15 verse 4 today - *"Gentle words bring life and health."* **Q: Based on our Proverb today, do you bring life and health to those around you each day with gentle words?**

5/13 - Proverbs chapter 15 verse 5 today makes me think about the godly discipline our Heavenly Father gives us... -

"Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise." **Q: Are you learning from God's discipline of you? Or, do you despise God's discipline at times? Which is the better road to go?**

5/14 - Proverbs chapter 15 verses 8 & 9 today teach us: *"The LORD hates the sacrifice of the wicked, but he delights in the prayers of the upright. The LORD despises the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue godliness."* **Q: Today's Proverb is a great opportunity to ask yourself - 1. How's your prayer life? and 2. Are you pursuing godliness in your life each and every day? Also, what verses or insights stand out to you in today's readings?**

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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