

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

1 KINGS 22:1-2 Kings 10:31

6/20 - Today we finish the book of First Kings! Second Kings begins tomorrow! Ahab is not happy about the Arameans occupying Ramoth-gilead at the beginning of today's readings. King Jehoshaphat of Judah wisely suggests that they should consult God before going into battle against the Arameans. At which time King Ahab of Israel trots out his 400 yes-men "prophets" who say they should definitely go to war and that they will be victorious. I love Jehoshaphat's reaction to these 400 yes-men in verse 7: *"But Jehoshaphat asked, 'Isn't there a prophet of the LORD around, too? I would like to ask him the same question.'"* Ahab's reaction in verse 8 is quite telling... *"There is still one prophet of the LORD, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah."* This verse really stands out for me in a big way in our world today. I wonder if sometimes we - you and me - look for supposed "prophets" of the Lord that are yes-people to our particular likings - instead of looking for Truth. Meaning... and I'm just putting this out there, so bear with me. **Q: Do we sometimes maybe even decide to attend a particular church because it tells us basically what we want to hear?** It keeps us in our comfortable place... we get yes-messages... When, instead, should we be okay with attending a church that will give us some challenging and convicting messages on occasion? Biblical messages mind you - which surely can be challenging to our modern ears at times. I heard somewhere once before that church should be a place that "comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable." I like that... Now, don't get me wrong. I am not saying we need to be in super-strict churches per se. I just think we should really watch for churches that are giving a yes-message all the time to our particular likings verses churches that teach the Truth. I don't think church is the only area of where we might default to looking for yes-messages. I think this can happen in books we read, TV we watch, or even with friends or with work. **Are we listening to 400 yes-people in our lives or are we okay with 1 Micaiah coming in and sharing a perceived "bad-news" message?** (which may ultimately be very good news if we'll just listen to it... if Ahab had really listened to Micaiah's message in today's readings, think he still would have rushed out to battle?)

6/21 - Today we begin the book of Second Kings!

Author: Unknown

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: Second Kings covers a period of approximately 250 years during which time two national tragedies occurred. In 722 B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, and in 586 B.C. the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians. The reigns of the various kings are described in some detail with care being taken to show the spiritual significance of what they were doing. Throughout this whole time of good and bad kings, war and peace, prosperity and ruin, God is seen to be at work, in particular sending prophets to preach his word and warn of judgment to come.

Theme: God's control over the affairs of men and nations is constantly seen throughout this book. The rulers of men may think they are in control, but even the enemies of God's people fit into God's plan by executing judgment upon the wayward nations of Israel and Judah. It must be stressed that sin invariably brings judgment upon the people and righteousness brings God's blessing. Second Kings also shows that God never sends his judgment without a warning first; in this instance, the warning came through the prophets who were sent. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 6-7)*

6/21 - 2 Kings 1 today... wow... Elijah is not to be messed with when he is sitting on top of that hill! Elijah asks a very poignant question twice in this chapter - *"Is there no God in Israel?"* **Q: This is a question each of us will need to ask in our lives at some point - "Is there or is there no God in my life?"** Hopefully we've already answered this question affirmatively. It's a sad state of affairs to imagine a country without God. It is a sad state of affairs to imagine our own lives without God. Today in 2 Kings 2 we read about Elijah going up to heaven in the whirlwind! Elijah was taken to heaven without dying. He is the 2nd person in scripture to do so - Enoch was the first (see [Genesis 5:21-24](#)). Jesus of course was also taken to heaven in bodily form after His resurrection from the dead (see [Acts 1:9](#)). **Q: How did the life of the prophet Elijah stand out to you? What can we learn from Elijah?**

6/21 - Okay, so 2 Kings 2 verses 23 & 24 are some of the most unique verses in the Bible no doubt... *"Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys from the town began mocking and making fun of him. "Go away, you baldhead!" they chanted. "Go away, you baldhead!" Elisha turned around and looked at them, and*

he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them." Zondervan's NIV Study Bible has some good commentary on these verses as follows: "The youths from Bethel no doubt assumed that Elisha was going up to Samaria to continue Elijah's struggle against royal apostasy. Some believe that the youths, in their mocking, were telling Elisha to ascend to heaven as Elijah had done. By calling Elisha "baldhead" the youths from Bethel expressed that city's utter disdain for the Lord's representative, who, they felt, had no power. Elisha pronounced a curse that gave warning of the judgment that would come on the entire nation of Israel should it persist in disobedience and apostasy." **Q: Have you ever been mocked? How might Jesus suggest we react to mocking? Curses or turning the other cheek? Might there be an appropriate time for curses and a time for turning the other cheek?**

6/22 - In 2 Kings 3 verse 3 today we are reminded that King Jeroboam's legacy is held out as a unfavorable legacy... *"Nevertheless he (Joram) continued in the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led the people of Israel to commit."* That is an interesting thing to think about - a legacy. Jeroboam's legacy was obviously not one we'd like to have. **Q: So, what type of legacy would you like to have? And what type of legacy are you in fact leaving these days?** The more I think about my legacy, the more I simply hope and pray that my legacy is something along the lines of "one who loved God and loved people." Pretty simple really. But also really tough in our modern world full of so many distractions! And I am not so sure that I am really leaving this legacy some days. I don't want to pursue this type of legacy for the wrong reasons - for any sort of appearing "righteous" or prideful reasons. But I in fact I really do want to spend the rest of my days simply loving God and loving people. Whatever else I do - career, ministry, whatever - pales in comparison to loving God and loving people. I even hesitate to write this hope for a legacy on this blog - I feel like I should go back and delete everything I just wrote. Except - I think this might be the type of legacy we are called to as Christians. Remember the two great commands Jesus gave us in Matthew 22:37 & 39 - *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself."* Love God and love people. **So - whaddya think? Is this a good legacy for us to aim for? Should we be aiming for a legacy at all? What will your legacy be?**

6/23 - Interesting readings in 2 Kings 4 about the Shumanite woman, her son and the prophet Elisha today! You'll note that in verse 20 her son dies, and in verse 21 she places her son on Elisha's bed - in part so that no one will know that her son died. As she gets to verse 22-24 she is saddling up on a donkey to go straight to Elisha without anyone in her family knowing her son had died. As the Shumanite woman nears Mount Carmel Gehazi, Elisha's servant, comes out to greet her and still she won't even tell him that her son has died! She says everything is fine. She wants to deliver the news first and directly to Elisha! I like this woman's focused faith. She knew that Elisha delivered the Word that she would have a son in previous day's readings, and now that her son had died, I think she had faith that Elisha, being a prophet in relationship with God, would be able to revive her son. **Q: Do you have a focused faith like this when it comes to your relationship with God and Jesus? Do you always take your problems directly to the One who can truly revive you?** In chapter 5 we get to the story of the healing of Naaman. I found it very interesting that Naaman needed to humble himself and wash up in the waters of the lowly river Jordan! Know anyone else that did some "washing up" in the river Jordan?? :) **Maybe all of us somehow need to humble ourselves and symbolically be washed up in the river Jordan to receive true healing?**

6/24 - 2 Kings 6 today opens up with a very interesting little story about the floating ax head! :) Apparently in those days the iron in an ax head was very costly - far too costly for prophets to have been able to afford. Hence, they had to borrow it. If the prophet who lost the ax head had not been able to recover it, he would have then had to have become an indentured servant for a period of time to the person he borrowed it from to pay back the cost. So, Elisha's recovery of the ax head I think demonstrates a simple moral of this opening story in today's readings: God cares for the welfare of those who love God. **Q: Whaddya think on this moral of the floating ax head story? Have you had experiences in your life where God has done some small things - or maybe even big things - that don't seem super spiritual at first glance, but simply saved you a lot of heartache/costs/time?** I know I have... Praise God that He floats ax heads and even "floats" you and me too!

6/24 - Today in 2 Kings 6 verse 27 we will read this verse that King Joram says to an Israelite during a time of a severe famine - *"If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you?"* I think the thing to note in this verse is that the King realized he could not end the famine on his own, but that only God could end the famine. (I think the King may have actually been trying to blame God for the famine - and certainly Elisha he blames later in the chapter). **Q: I wonder about this in our lives today - do we try to help others and even try to help ourselves using our own power and without relying on God at all? And maybe sometimes even blame God for problems we see, like this King? Do we think we can end a "famine" or whatever problems we see at work, in our community, in our family, or in our world all**

on our own? Or should we be asking for God's help in these areas of our lives? I've been thinking about this more and more lately – about how little I truly pray for others. I see areas of my life, my family, my community, my work, my church, my favorite charities, our world, that need some help. Need some changing. Need some love. And sometimes I think that I can institute these changes all on my own! Which is foolish. Instead, I should be praying for God's providence and work in these areas of my life where I see a "famine." Yes, I do think that God will oftentimes answer our prayers by encouraging us to "do something" to work on a change. But, we'd be wise to prayerfully approach all areas of our life and to pay attention to where God is asking us to "do something" – and to pay attention to where God is flat-out doing the work! **Q: Are there any "famine" areas in your life? In your personal relationship with God or others? In your work, church, community? Are there "famine" areas you see in our world? Will you today begin praying to God about these "famines" in the knowledge that famines can truly only end if God is involved in the work? Will you allow God to get involved in the famine areas of your life? Will you pray more consistently than ever before for the famine areas you see in your life?**

6/25 - Second Kings 8 begins with a wonderful example of God's "perfect timing." It was no coincidence that the king was talking with Gehazi about the time Elisha brought a boy back to life when the woman from Shunem walked in with her son! God knew that the Shumanite woman was faithful and obedient to Him, so He orchestrated the timing so that she would get her house and land back - after God perfectly timed her to be out of the country for 7 years to avoid the famine! **Have you ever had the experience of God's "perfect timing" in your life?** My hunch is that you have - even if you haven't realized it. I have had some experiences where I have consciously realized that God's perfect timing was at work - and sometimes I've quickly said the prayer under my breath of "thank you God!" But, I also now can look back on my life and now see so many instances of God's perfect timing. Hindsight is 20/20. **Q: When is the last time you experienced God's perfect timing? Think it could have been today - even if you don't realize it right now?** Elisha's interaction with Hazael demonstrates Elisha was certainly a prophet of God's! Elisha was not condoning what Hazael is going to violently do, but he was just stating the facts of what was going to happen. Verses 11 & 12 are sad to read - *"Elisha stared at Hazael with a fixed gaze until Hazael became uneasy. Then the man of God started weeping. "What's the matter, my lord?" Hazael asked him. Elisha replied, "I know the terrible things you will do to the people of Israel. You will burn their fortified cities, kill their young men, dash their children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women!"* Verse 13 is also sad because you will notice that Hazael doesn't get upset by the violent predictions in Elisha's proclamation, but only wonders how someone like him would pull off something like this... *"Then Hazael replied, "How could a nobody like me ever accomplish such a great feat?"* I love Elisha's final instructions to the young prophet concerning his anointing of Jehu as King of Israel in 2 Kings 9 verse 3 - *"Then open the door and run for your life!"* Not your typical instructions from a prophet, you wouldn't think - but if a prophet gives you instructions like these, you better follow them! :)

6/26- Well... Jehu kills a lot of people in today's readings. I realize that the violence in the Old Testament can often bring up a lot of questions. Rather than me diving into why there is violence in the Bible - I'll defer to a couple of theologians [at this link](#) and [at this link](#) - and I'll give you 3 images below from a very young theologian. :) Unfortunately, our human history is full of violence - from Cain and Abel until this very day. The Bible does record human history. There will come a day where there is a new heaven and a new earth, free from violence. That day has not come yet - but will with Jesus' Second Coming. Most Biblical commentaries agree that Jehu was carrying out justice for the sins of the Kings of Israel and the worship of Baal. Jezebel's death was predicted by the prophet Elijah because of her sins. A brutal death that it was. I think one thing for us to keep in mind is that sin does bring death. As Paul teaches in Romans 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death." Jesus saves us from this deserved death when we come to him in faith and surrender our lives to him. But, let us not forget the severity and risk of sin and the risk of not being in relationship with Jesus. Without Jesus saving us, the wages of sin truly is eternal death. 2 Kings 10 verses 25-27 seem to demonstrate Jehu's initial apparent zeal for God - *"Then Jehu's men went into the fortress of the temple of Baal. They dragged out the sacred pillar used in the worship of Baal and destroyed it. They broke down the sacred pillar of Baal and wrecked the temple of Baal, converting it into a public toilet. That is what it is used for to this day."* But we soon learn in verse 31 - *"But Jehu did not obey the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit."* It is thus thought that Jehu's action of destroying the idols of Baal was more political than spiritual - as Baal worship was associated with the dynasty of Ahab, whereas the golden calves had a longer history in the northern kingdom of Israel and were valued by most people. And keeping the golden calves would keep people from Israel traveling to the southern kingdom of Judah to worship God in Jerusalem. **Q: What is your reaction to reading about violence in the Old Testament? Are there any parallels to violence in our world today?**

ACTS 13:16-17:34

6/20 - Acts 13 is a great sermon from Paul today! Really... this is about as good as it gets for a solid Gospel presentation. Go Paul. I love how he starts off in verse 16: *"So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. "People of Israel," he said, "and you devout Gentiles who fear the God of Israel, listen to me."* You'll note that Paul delivers this message to both Jews and Gentiles - he is preaching the Gospel for the world! **Q: Are you really listening to Paul's message to you in today's readings in Acts? What are you learning from the book of Acts?**

6/21 - Great readings today about how Paul and Barnabas' ministry to the Gentiles was growing! Verse 52 is awesome: *"And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."* **Q: Are you filled with joy? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? How does this joy & the Spirit manifest itself in your life?**

6/22 - Do you see the depth and strength and love of Paul's faith in Acts 14 verses 19 & 20 - *"Now some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and turned the crowds into a murderous mob. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, apparently dead. But as the believers stood around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe."* Paul is stoned and then gets back up and keeps going forward in his ministry for God! Next thing you know he is praying and fasting for elders in churches - after nearly getting stoned to death! I want a faith like that... Also, it is wonderful to read in today's readings how Paul and Barnabas tear their garments because they are so distressed that people were worshiping them as if they were gods! **Would we react so quickly to stop people from worshiping us today I wonder... ?**

6/23 - Peter's teaching at The Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 verse 11 is one of the most important verses that all of us should really meditate upon and know and believe: *"We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the special favor of the Lord Jesus."* **Q: Do you believe Peter here? Do you believe this to be true? Does this simple message of this little button below ring true to you?**

6/24- In Acts 15 today we read about Paul not wanting to bring along John Mark on the next missionary journey. Good news is that Paul and Mark were eventually reunited in missionary efforts. Some speculate that it was because Barnabas went with Mark at this juncture, Barnabas' patient encouragement helped Mark's eventual effective ministry. In fact, John Mark is the very same Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark! **Q: How's that for encouragement changing the world?? Is there anyone in your life today who you think could be a great worker for God's kingdom with some encouragement? Will you be like Barnabas was for John Mark and work with and encourage that person?**

6/24 - Today in Acts 16 we read about Paul's 2nd missionary journey, which took place around AD 49-52. Great readings about the conversion of Lydia of Philippi today! She was a business woman and a Gentile (like Cornelius) who loved God. And the Lord opened her heart and she believed! Praise God for his continual ministry of opening people's hearts to the Gospel. **Q: Has your heart been opened like Lydia's was opened?**

6/25 - Today in Acts 16 we will read about the earthquake that comes while Paul and Silas are imprisoned! As a trembling jailer comes to Paul and Silas we will read this in verses 30 through 34 – *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family."* This is a wonderful look at how many of us become and grow as Christians! We first hear the Good News of how Jesus came to this earth fully human and fully God – how he lived a sinless life and died on the cross for our sins – and how he rose from the dead and will come again. Then, through God's grace, we believe! We simply believe. From there we learn more about God from others and through studying his Word, the Bible – we can call this discipleship. Then comes a decision to be baptized – to publicly profess our faith in Jesus as our Savior. Then comes living a joyful life of community with others. Now – yes – this is a very abbreviated example of how one becomes and grows as a Christian. :) And our various denominations will probably put the order of how all this happens in various ways. **Q: But, can you see similarities in your own faith journey with the jailer's conversion, baptism, and growth as a Christian? Do you remember first hearing the Good News of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection? Do you remember the day you first Believed? Do you remember learning more about the Word, the Bible? (hopefully you'll remember this year's One Year Bible journey! :) Do you remember being baptized (or maybe you'll have photos or stories from your younger years)? Do you now joyfully live life in community with other Christians through your local church? If you haven't yet experienced all of these things, will you pray to God asking him for the experiences He has planned for you? And, when others in your life come to you like the jailer, asking "What must I do to be saved?" are you prepared to give them the joyful answer?**

6/26- Great reading about Paul's travels and preaching in Acts 17 today! I absolutely love the quote in verse 6 where the Jewish leaders of Thessalonica say: *"Paul and Silas have turned the rest of the world upside down, and now they are here disturbing our city," they shouted.* **Q: Have you ever heard that the Kingdom of God is an "upside down" kingdom? That the values of the Kingdom of God are upside down compared to worldly values? Paul and Silas turned the world upside down. How are you turning the world upside down in your life today?**

6/26 - Today in Acts 17 verses 22 & 23 we read - *"Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you."* Paul then went on to introduce to the Greeks our personal Creator, in contrast with their views of pantheistic Stoicism. **Q: Are there people in your life today that are perhaps like the Greeks Paul was speaking to? People who are religious but do not yet know our personal Creator? Are there people in your life who are seeking the Unknown God? Will you begin conversations with these people that God has placed in your life and let them know about the living God that you know and love? Will you let them know, as Paul let the Greeks know in verse 28 – *"For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."*?"**

PSALM 138:1-144:15

6/20 - Psalm 138 is an awesome Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to God from David! You'll note that the word Temple is used in verse 2 - and of course the Temple was built by David's son Solomon. It is thought that David used the word Temple in reference to the tent holding the Ark of the Covenant. Some have also thought that this Psalm possibly was written after David's time, in the post-exile period. Either way, it is a beautiful Psalm of praise. Psalm 138 begins a final collection of eight "Davidic" Psalms, which are framed by songs of Praise in Psalm 138 & Psalm 145 - and Psalms 139 through 144 are six prayers. In Psalm 138 today, verse 3 stood out to me - *"When I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me the strength I need."* **Q: Do you believe that God answers your prayers? Maybe not exactly in the way you'd expect, but that they are answered? Do you believe that God answers your prayers through encouragement and by giving you strength?** Verse 7 stood out to me as well - *"Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will preserve me against the anger of my enemies. You will clench your fist against my angry enemies! Your power will save me."* **Do you believe that Jesus' power will save you in times of trouble? Or do you rely on your own power and maybe forget about Jesus during times of trouble? Will you rely on Jesus, realizing that only His power will ultimately save you?**

6/21 - Today we read Psalm 139! I LOVE this Psalm... and had somehow forgotten about it. Is this Psalm anyone's favorite Psalm out there? I would not doubt it if was. This is just an incredibly beautiful Psalm about how much God loves and cares for us. And just how well God knows us. Please read and re-read this Psalm this week if you can. And rejoice in how much God loves you and how much he knows you. Each of the verses in this Psalm are incredible. I'll highlight a few. Verse 3 - *"You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am."* **Q: Do you believe that God charts out your path for you? Do you believe that God gives you true rest? Do you believe God knows where you are every single moment of your life?** Verses 13 & 14 - *"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous--and how well I know it."* **Do you believe that God was loving and caring and creating you in your mother's womb? Are you amazed by the complexity and wonder of the human body? Could it be anything other than the marvelous workmanship of a loving and creative and living God?** And verses 23 & 24 to close out the Psalm: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."* **Do you consistently ask God to search your heart and mind? Do you confess to God what is not right in your heart and mind? What needs healing? Do you ask God to even point out to you things that you may not realize are destructive to you and others in your heart and mind? Do you believe that this process of confessing your sins to God and asking for forgiveness and healing will lead you along the path of everlasting life?**

6/22 - Psalm 140 is a prayer for deliverance from evil. And this Psalm certainly should be a good reminder of the Lord's Prayer, where we pray – "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." **Q: What is the one thing that can truly deliver us from evil? Can we deliver ourselves from evil on our own? Or do we need something beyond ourselves for this deliverance?** Verse 7 in this Psalm gives each of us something to consider and should be an encouragement: *"O Sovereign LORD, my strong savior, you protected me on the day of battle."* **Do you believe God is your strong savior who will protect you from evil on the day of battle? Do you believe that perhaps every day is a**

day of battle? Do you believe that Satan or evil ever rests in attempting to tempt people? Should we pray for protection from evil on a very regular basis? The Lord's Prayer / Our Father is one great way to do this each day...

6/23 - Psalm 141 is a beautiful prayer of David's - praying for deliverance from the wicked and their ways. Verse 4 is powerful - *"Don't let me lust for evil things; don't let me participate in acts of wickedness. Don't let me share in the delicacies of those who do evil."* **Q: Is this a prayer you could incorporate into your prayer life? What might be some examples of "delicacies of those who do evil"? Will you pray to God to avoid these "delicacies" and "treasures" that will ultimately fail you?**

6/24 - Psalm 142 is a prayer of David's when he was fleeing Saul and was hiding in a cave. David is praying for deliverance to God from his enemies. I thought verse 3 was powerful - *"For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me."* **Q: Have you ever felt this way? Overwhelmed? And traps every which way you look? And you have no idea which way to go? At a time like this, will you cry out to God as David did in this Psalm? Will you "pour out your complaints before him and tell him all your troubles"? (v. 2) Do you believe that God knows which way you should turn? Will you allow God to "be your place of refuge"? In times like these, will you allow God to be "all you really want in life"? (v. 5)**

6/25 - Psalm 143 verse 8 stood out to me today - *"Let me hear of your unfailing love to me in the morning, for I am trusting you. Show me where to walk, for I have come to you in prayer."* I read somewhere before - I think it was [Bruce Wilkinson's book "Secrets of the Vine"](#) - that many great men and women of our Christian faith connect with God in the morning through prayer, reading the Bible, and other quiet time activities. Bruce even suggested that this is the preferential way to go - to start your day by spending time with God in the morning, rather than at night. Because he said this would then transform the rest of your day - in terms of being more conscientious of our relationship with God. This does make sense to me - and in fact, I have started reading the One Year Bible now in the mornings, and it is a beautiful way to start the day! I like what this Psalmist says - "Let me hear of your unfailing love to me in the morning." And it reminds me that somehow, somehow, it almost seems easier to me to connect with God in the morning. Actually - one other thing I used to do in the morning is read a page or two from [Oswald Chambers "My Utmost For His Highest."](#) And I am thankful that I did this in the morning for a season. **Q: How about you? Do you have some way that you connect with God in the morning? Are you able in some way to hear of God's unfailing love for you in the morning?**

6/26 - Psalm 144 verses 3 & 4 are well known! *"O LORD, what are mortals that you should notice us, mere humans that you should care for us? For we are like a breath of air; our days are like a passing shadow."* **Q: If our days are like a passing shadow, how then should we be spending our days? What types of things should we be investing our time & money into? What should we be investing our very hearts and minds into? Are you wisely spending your passing days in godly ways?**

PROVERBS 17:17-28

6/20 - Proverbs 17 verse 17 is fantastic: *"A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need."* The thing I think about here is that Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John that we are his friends. That is an amazing thing to think about. **Q: As a friend, do you believe Jesus is always loyal to us? Conversely, are we as Jesus' friends, always loyal to Him?** Then, in the second half of the Proverb, as brothers and sisters in Christ, I do believe that we are to help each other in a time of need - much like a family brother or sister would help us. Through Jesus, we become a spiritual family. A family of brothers and sisters that is born to help each other in a time of need. **Are you available to help your brothers and sisters - both in your birth and spiritual family - during their time of need?**

6/21 - Proverbs 17 verse 20 stood out to me today - *"The crooked heart will not prosper."* **Q: Do you believe this is true? What would make a heart crooked? Whom can heal a crooked heart? Jesus? Has Jesus healed your heart yet? Will you let Him do so?**

6/22 - Proverbs 17 verse 22 for some reason reminds me of Paul again from today's Acts readings: *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength."* Think back again to Paul being nearly stoned to death in today's readings. Think he would have a good "reason" to have a broken spirit after something like that happened to him? But.... we see what he goes and does for the Kingdom just after that tragic incident! My hunch is that Paul had a very cheerful heart - because he was in such close relationship with Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. And his cheerful heart was certainly good medicine for him. He did not allow himself to have a broken spirit - even after nearly being stoned to death! Seriously, Paul is amazing - but don't worry, I'm not worshiping him... :) I am just amazed at how in love

he was with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit - and how he let that love guide him and propel him forward no matter what. **Q: So, back to this Proverb - do you think it is possible for us at times to "decide" whether to have a cheerful heart or a broken spirit? All of us have something bad happen at some time or another. Is it possible that we can "decide" to be cheerful or broken after something bad happens to us? If it is possible to be cheerful after something bad happens to us, why? I think we could learn from Paul's example. If we are so close in relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, I pray we can weather any storm that life might bring. Any storm. Do you believe this is true?**

6/23 - Proverbs 17:23 today teaches us: *"The wicked accept secret bribes to pervert justice."* This should be a reminder to each of us to never accept bribes! Bribes always pervert justice... **Q: Have you ever seen bribes pervert justice? What are some other actions we might take that are similar to bribes that might unfairly influence a situation?**

6/24 - Today in Proverbs chapter 17 verse 24 we will read – *"A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth."* This is a powerful little Proverb. I have been thinking about this quite a bit in recent weeks. I have found that sometimes the world can be so tempting – or maybe distracting is another way to say it. I have found that I have lately had a lot of opportunities to go out and do "fun stuff." Perhaps you could say I've been offered opportunities to "wander to the ends of the earth." And it's been tempting. But, I have realized that if I schedule myself 24 x 7, I don't spend much time thinking about God at all. Reading the Bible? Maybe I can skip it for today. . . And praying for others?? Forget about it. I'm just afraid that we can spend our lives being so distracted that we will lose sight of wisdom. We absolutely need to keep wisdom in view each and every day. That is why I love the One Year Bible format in so many ways – it provides each of us with at least 15 minutes of wisdom in our lives each day! **Q: How about you? How are your days being spent currently? Are you feeling distracted? Are you keeping wisdom in view each and every day? Do you see the wisdom in spending quality time with God each and every day? Do you see the wisdom in not taking any "spiritual vacations"?** (Spiritual vacations are a very bad idea. . . even when you go on a regular vacation, please bring God with you!) Like this Proverb teaches us today, let us keep wisdom in view and not let our eyes foolishly wander to the ends of the earth!

6/25 - Proverbs 17:26 today is an interesting teaching: *"It is wrong to fine the godly for being good or to punish nobles for being honest!"* **Q: Why do you suppose this teaching is in the Bible?** I'm thinking it is because unfortunately all too often the godly are fined or blamed or punished or ridiculed or this list could go on and on... Good becomes bad. And bad becomes good. **Sound like any cultural times that you might know of? ;)** Let us pray these days that the godly are not punished for being good or being honest. Let us pray the godly are not punished for simply telling the Truth! And let each of us also always remember that when we undergo any sufferings for Jesus, there is Ultimate comfort & encouragement that does come our way...

6/26 - Proverbs 17:27 is so true - *"A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered."* And with this I will quietly close out today's posting with few words. :) **Q: Are you someone that typically talks more than you listen, or do you listen more than you talk? Do you think there is wisdom in using few words?**

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.