

**Notes & Group Questions from June 6-12 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)**

**1 KINGS 1:1-10:29**

6/6 - Today we begin First Kings! First Kings is an amazing book of the Bible. We'll be diving into David's son Solomon's reign and the building of the First Temple in Jerusalem. You'll recall that Solomon wrote many of the Proverbs, and in chapter 3 of First Kings this week we will learn why Solomon had the wisdom to be able to write such amazing proverbs that have stood the test of time for some 3,000 years!

Book: First Kings

Author: Unknown

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: First and Second Kings form one book in the Hebrew Bible and are considered to be prophetic literature, probably because a prophet put the books together. The two books cover a period of approximately 350 years, when kings ruled the land, hence the name of the book. First Kings begins with the death of David, followed by a description of Solomon's reign, including the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem. The split of the kingdom into Israel (North) and Judah (South) is described, ending with the great conflict between Elijah the prophet, and Ahab, the king of Israel.

Theme: The fact that a history book is considered to be prophetic is important. It shows that God speaks to us from the past, as well as from the present experience of others. These events are recorded so that we will not make the same mistakes again. The conflict between Elijah and Ahab shows God's immediate involvement in human life and his concern for human affairs. First Kings particularly shows the disastrous effects of social evil upon the spiritual life of a nation. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 6*)

6/6 - First Kings chapter 1 is quite a chapter today! David is old! Adonijah claims the throne! David makes Solomon King! Quite a dramatic chapter, eh? Adonijah was David's 4th oldest son, and probably the eldest son living at this time. First son Amnon was killed by Absalom. Second son Daniel was probably not living at this time. Third son Absalom was killed in his rebellion. So, fourth son Adonijah thought now was his moment to shine. Well, as Paul Harvey would say, "now for the rest of the story..." The chapter tells us the story well. Solomon was clearly God and David's choice for the kingship. **Q: What is your reaction to reading about the struggle for the Kingship of Israel? Any similarities to our struggles for power today?**

6/7 - Dramatic readings in First Kings today! David's final instructions to Solomon include some strong words about how Joab & Shimei should die. And later in today's readings, these words come to fruition. Today we read about Adonijah's request to marry Abishag. You'll recall from yesterday's readings that Abishag took care of David in his old age. She was a virgin, but still considered part of David's harem. And, in those days, to inherit the harem was to inherit the kingdom. (I know, strange stuff to talk about harem's... it was the way it was back then - even though God's plan from Genesis with Adam & Eve was 1 man & 1 woman - not 1 man & many women... us humans - even David - do not always pay attention to God's plans...) So, Adonijah's request to marry Abishag was essentially his attempt to gain back the kingdom again. Hence, Solomon got upset... Joab proved the maxim of "those who live by the sword, die by the sword." David knew Joab had killed Abner and Amasa and passed on his disdain for Joab to Solomon. Solomon knew Joab was in cahoots w/ Adonijah. Joab was seeking sanctuary at the altar - and there was indeed sanctuary in the Law for those who accidentally killed someone else. There were sanctuary cities. However, Joab's killings of Abner and Amasa could in no way be viewed as accidental. His attempt at sanctuary at the altar did not stand up in Solomon's eyes. It is an interesting thing to read about the blood and deaths caused by some of our fathers of our faith - David & Solomon and the list will go on. I think the thing I take away from all of this is that in the B.C. age, "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" ruled the day. People "got what they deserved" so to speak... It essentially kept the peace in a barbaric age. But, we were fortunate to have Jesus Christ come into our world and be the final sacrifice and change the rules. Jesus died on a cross. Jesus got what WE deserved. He changed the whole eye for an eye Law to a higher law of love & grace. We deserve condemnation. Thanks to Jesus, we are given eternal life through the free gift of faith in his life, death and resurrection. I think it is always important for us to remember that Jesus got what we deserved... this is why Jesus is called Savior! **Q: How are you seeing the need for Jesus in our Old Testament readings? Do you see that Jesus is needed to redeem us?**

6/8 - Today in 1 Kings chapter 3 we read about King Solomon asking for wisdom from God! It is of note that Solomon is estimated to be about 20 years old in this chapter - he was born about half way through David's 40 year reign. So, he is a very young king. In verse 5 we read these words from God to Solomon – "Ask for whatever you want me to

give you." In verses 7 through 9 we will read this amazing response from Solomon to God – *"O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"* Solomon could have asked God for anything – more wealth, more power, more strength, more whatever, but he simply asked for wisdom. Why? Because he wanted to govern God's people well and distinguish between right and wrong. Amazing. **Q: How would you or I answer this question today? What if God came to you today and said the same thing to you from verse 5 - "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." What would you ask for? Would you ask for Wisdom?** If so, God offers this to you and me now. Where? I believe wisdom is offered to us through study of the Bible and by living in a loving and right relationship with God. We can receive the gift of God's wisdom today! **If we would answer this question from God differently – maybe wanting more money, or power, or whatever – do you think we might forfeit gaining wisdom? So, again, what if God were to say to you right now this same statement he said to Solomon? "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." What do you ask for?**

6/8 - As we read 1 Kings 4 verses 29, 32 & 33 I am reminded that some say Solomon was the last person on earth (well besides Jesus of course) who knew everything there was to know about any and all subjects of the day - *"God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge too vast to be measured. He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. He could speak with authority about all kinds of plants, from the great cedar of Lebanon to the tiny hyssop that grows from cracks in a wall. He could also speak about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish."* Solomon was obviously one wise person. **Q: What do you think the wisest thing about Solomon was?** I think it was this - he was in relationship with God. That was the #1 wisest decision Solomon ever made. And it's the #1 wisest decision you or I could ever make - to be in relationship with God through his son Jesus. From this wise decision flows all other wisdom in our lives. But this decision is of primary importance... **Are you as wise as Solomon in this regard? Does your heart belong to God?**

6/9 - Wow. Big readings today in First Kings. Solomon builds the Temple of the Lord! 1 Kings 6 verse 7 tells us - *"The stones used in the construction of the Temple were prefinished at the quarry, so the entire structure was built without the sound of hammer, ax, or any other iron tool at the building site."* This shows how reverent the workers were in building the temple of the Lord. They felt it was honoring to build on the temple site without the sound of an iron tool. In 1 Kings 5 verses 13 & 14 I thought Solomon's wisdom was incredible - *"Then King Solomon enlisted 30,000 laborers from all Israel. He sent them to Lebanon in shifts, 10,000 every month, so that each man would be one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of this labor force."* He wisely cared for his workforce! **Q: What is your reaction to Solomon building the temple? Do you think we should appreciate grand building projects in our world today, like this grand building project of the temple?**

6/10 - Today we read about the building of King Solomon's Palace! Here is an interesting note in Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion on the Sea discussed in chapter 7 verse 23 - *"Then Hiram cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference."* Apparently the sea was a huge tank that could hold approximately 12,000 gallons of water. It was used by the priests for their ceremonial washings. **Q: What is your reaction to reading about Solomon's palace?**

6/11 - Today we read about the Ark of the Covenant being brought into the Temple! In verses 10 & 11 we read: *"As the priests came out of the inner sanctuary, a cloud filled the Temple of the LORD. The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple."* It is thought that the cloud of the presence of God here in the Temple was the same cloud of the presence of God that guided the Israelites by day through the desert as they left Egypt for the Promised Land. Solomon's prayer in today's readings is awesome! Verses 12 & 13 at the start of the prayer are interesting to contrast with a later verse: *"Then Solomon prayed, "O LORD, you have said that you would live in thick darkness. But I have built a glorious Temple for you, where you can live forever!"* These verses seem quite bold and confident... and maybe even seem to our modern ears that Solomon is trying to put God "in a box." But, then I was very pleased to read Solomon say this in verse 27 - *"But will God really live on earth? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!"* Clearly, Solomon gets it that God is bigger than the Temple and that God does not "need" the Temple for a home. But, as we read about the cloud of God's presence coming into the Temple, it is apparent that God is certainly pleased with the Temple. I think God was pleased that the Israelites were building a Temple to honor God and his name & fame. It was a Temple for God. And though God did not "need" it, I think he appreciated it. I think God appreciated "King" Solomon and the Israelites praying to and honoring God as the true King of Israel. **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the Ark being brought into the Temple and then Solomon's prayer? Have you ever prayed a pray like Solomon prayed that day? In what way is your body today a temple?**

6/12 - Well, we can gather from today's First Kings readings that Solomon was clearly wise and rich! I have to confess... when I was reading today's readings I briefly thought to myself, "well, it was just inherited wealth from his father David..." :) How wrong was this thinking! Yes, David was certainly wealthy and Solomon inherited the throne if you will. But Solomon had to administer the Kingdom, including the building of the Temple and the Palace, which were no small tasks! He was able to do this successfully I think because he asked God for wisdom - rather than riches or wealth - earlier in First Kings. Solomon sought God first and asked for wisdom, and I do think God blessed him with riches too. You'll recall that Jesus referred to "Solomon's splendor" in the Sermon on the Mount when he talked about the lilies of the field and his teachings on not worrying, from Matthew 6:29: *"Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."* **Q: What was your reaction today to reading about "Solomon's splendor" in First Kings? Did you view this wealth of Solomon's as a blessing from God or perhaps as excess? What's your reaction to seeing this level of wealth of Solomon's versus Jesus' lack of wealth while walking the earth? What about in today's world - is there such a thing as too much wealth? Should we seek material wealth for our lives? Or should we be seeking other things? Should we seek to be like Solomon? Or like Jesus? Or perhaps like both?**

6/12 - These are very interesting readings today. The thing that I'm thinking about now, after reading about Solomon's wealth and wisdom - and also thinking back to David's warrior skills - is that it is not surprising to me that many people in Jesus' day were expecting a differing kind of Messiah. When Jesus came on the scene, people were reading these sacred texts of King David and King Solomon. They were reading about how wise and wealthy and what great warriors these Kings were. And these Kings were shown great favor by God. So - surely the coming Messiah would be all of this and more! Right?? Well... no. As we know Jesus was not a Warrior-Messiah. He did not come to set free the Jews from the Roman rule by the sword. Jesus did not come into the world with wealth - he came into the world in a stable with animals nearby. Now - in terms of wisdom, yes, obviously Jesus was wiser than David or Solomon of course. But in terms of being wealthy and being a warrior - Jesus was neither - on this earth. However - in the heavenly realm Jesus is obviously wealthy beyond all comprehension. And he is a warrior for you and for me. He is battling for the souls of men and women. He leads a legion of angels against a legion of darkness. Jesus is not meek. Nor is he eternally poor. But... what an interesting contrast of how Jesus was not a warrior nor wealthy during his time here on earth - and he warned us against both of these trappings. What to make of all of this? I'm not sure. I'm full-on going stream of consciousness writing here. :) I think the take-away for me is this - Solomon rightly sought after wisdom above all else. (He wrote many of the Proverbs!) And Jesus was of course wise beyond all measure. So, I think for you and I the key to life is first and foremost to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior - this is the wisest decision we will ever make. And after we have accepted Jesus, then we need to actually follow him. Follow his teachings. Follow his wisdom. And as we follow Jesus, we really should not be concerned about being wealthy or being a warrior. Perhaps these things will be part of our Walk in some regard. But they should not be the focus. Jesus should be the focus. Godly wisdom should be the focus. **Q: What is the focus in your life? Is it Jesus? Is it godly wisdom? Are you following Jesus with all that you are? Are taking up your cross daily? Are you following Jesus all the way up that hill?**

#### **ACTS 4:1-8:40**

6/6 - In our Acts readings today, I found it very interesting that Peter and John found themselves before the same 70 member Sanhedrin that Jesus found himself before when he was sentenced to death. Peter and John avoided death in this case, and Jesus' name and power was proclaimed before the high council in a powerful way. Caiaphas you'll recall from John 18:14: *"Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people."* Well, the Spirit of Jesus was once again before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin through the boldness of Peter and John! **Q: We read about the boldness of Peter and John in Acts chapter 4 today. Do you think we are called to be bold in our faith? Why? What are some ways that we should be bold in our faith? What are some ways in which you are bold in your faith today? What are some ways you want to become bolder in your faith?**

6/6 - I love reading about the early church praying and sharing their possessions after Peter and John were released! Have you ever prayed a prayer that was anything like verses 29 & 30? Wow... *"And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give your servants great boldness in their preaching. Send your healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* **Q: Think we could learn something about prayer from this early church community in Acts 4? How often do you pray with a group of people outside of a regular church service?**

6/7 - Today in Acts 5 we continue to read about the early church. It's important for us to note that Ananias and Sapphira's sin was that they acted as if they were giving 100% of the proceeds from the sale of their land to the

church - when in fact they weren't - so that they would be glorified for this very generous act. The sin wasn't what percentage they were or weren't giving - but that they were acting as if they were giving 100%, which was a lie. In verse 3 we read – *"Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"*" One thing of note from this verse is that Satan was active in the hearts of men and women in the early church. After Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, Satan was still on the loose. **Q: Do you believe Satan is still on the loose today tempting the hearts of men and women? Do you pray daily for God to "lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil?" Do you think this should be a daily prayer?** (maybe not in these words exactly, but they are from the Lord's Prayer, so not a bad choice of words to pray...)

6/7 - I love verse 29 in today's readings, when the apostles are yet again before the Sanhedrin: *"But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than human authority."* How powerful of a statement is this! And how often in our lives do we truly practice this? Do you obey God rather than human authority? Consistently? Verse 41 brought tears to my eyes: *"The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus."* This is an incredible thing to consider! The apostles rejoiced that they were given 39 lashes - this is no joke as we all know - because they were proclaiming Jesus. They rejoiced that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus! This is something that should definitely bring tears to all of our eyes. Let us pray that God also counts us worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus! **Q: Have you ever suffered dishonor for the name of Jesus in your life? Will you rejoice if indeed someday you do suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus? Is it proper for a Christian to want to actually suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus? Should we want this? Expect this? Seek this? Rejoice in this?**

6/8 - Acts 6 verse 2 is of interest to me today - *"We apostles should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a food program."* When I first read this, I thought, "Wait a second! What's wrong with administering a food program??" Then, upon further reflection I realized the apostles were not saying anything was wrong with administering a food program - just that they were not called to it. They were called to spend their time preaching and teaching the Word of God. Which of course is true Food in the spiritual sense. So - I think this is important for us to realize today as well. I think sometimes we might get a bit grouchy if we don't see our pastors or ministers at every single church function or event - but we have to realize they are not called to do every single thing that we, the body of the church, are called to. One of their primary roles is to preach and teach the word of God. So, they may need us to volunteer at or administer a food program while they are doing what they are called to. Each of us are important parts of the body of Christ. And each part of the body has different functions. We shouldn't get upset if one part of the body is not doing exactly what we are doing. And yes, there are times when community & fellowship will bring us all together - which typically is worship on Sundays. Let us come together as many members but one body without complaint toward others who are called to other holy tasks! **Q: How are you serving the Body of Christ today? Are you willing to serve in ways that may be more "behind the scenes"? Are you willing to administer a food program, if that's what God calls you to do?**

6/9 - Today we read the beginning of Stephen's amazing sermon to the Sanhedrin in the Temple. You'll recall from yesterday's readings in Acts 6 verses 8 through 10 - *"Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. None of them was able to stand against the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen spoke."* So, men began to lie about Stephen, and then we get into the sermon Stephen gives to the council today. It is clearly a great sermon today from Stephen! Today he is beginning to set the stage for his zinger closing statements. He's like a lawyer today laying out his opening arguments for the case. Unfortunately, things will not proceed well in the coming days readings for Stephen. After he concludes this speech, Stephen will soon be the first Christian martyr... **Q: What in Stephen's sermon stood out to you?**

6/10 - Stephen's great sermon to the temple council continues today! Great timing on his sermonizing in verses 46 through 50 related to the Temple Solomon built - *"David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who actually built it. However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says, `Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that?' asks the Lord. `Could you build a dwelling place for me? Didn't I make everything in heaven and earth?"*" The last 2 verses came from Isaiah chapter 66 verses 1 & 2 (as the prophet says..) Indeed it is true! We do not need a temple for God today. God does not live in a temple built by human hands. I have heard it said before - "If you are in relationship with God through his son Jesus, you are God's temple." **Q: Do you believe this is true? Do you believe that your body is a temple that God can live in?**

6/11 - Today is a sad day of readings as we read about the stoning of Stephen - the first Christian martyr. Verses 59 & 60 are incredible and reminiscent of Jesus on the cross: *"And as they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died."* In verse 58 we are ominously introduced to who we now know as Paul, the author of many of the epistles in the Bible: *"The official witnesses took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul."* This laying of coats at Saul's feet may be signifying that Saul was the highest official at the stoning of Stephen and may be signifying that Saul gave permission for this stoning of Stephen to occur. Saul is Paul's Hebrew name. Paul is his Greek name. (which is a significant distinction, as Paul's ministry reaches out to the Gentiles, including the Greeks - hence going from the Hebrew name Saul to the Greek name Paul is significant) In a few chapters ahead we will learn about Saul's encounter with Jesus and how his persecution of Christians will soon take a dramatic U-turn... Take a look at the cloaked figure in the image below to the left - this looks to me to be Saul watching over the stoning of Stephen with coats laid at his feet. God has an amazing conversion for Saul coming up... **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the stoning of Stephen? Do you think you could be a Christian martyr, if called to it?**

6/12 - Wow. Acts chapter 8 verses 18 & 19 should be a warning to each of us to not lose sight of where spiritual power truly comes from - *"When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given when the apostles placed their hands upon people's heads, he offered money to buy this power. "Let me have this power, too," he exclaimed, "so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!"* Scary stuff... but I have a hunch this type of thing still happens today. People want to "buy" faith or buy spiritual power. God ain't selling it. It's a free gift. Salvation is free. It ain't for sale. I pray that each of us realizes that our faith in Jesus is a free gift. We didn't buy it. We didn't earn it. And we most definitely should not exploit our free gift of faith in any way for \$. That is scary to consider. And if we are blessed with what appears to be spiritual power in any way, I pray we realize that this power comes only from God, and not from ourselves. And if we ever happen to think that spiritual power comes from ourselves, then I am sure we will quickly learn the maxim - "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." Spiritual power goes bankrupt quick if we ever try to claim it as our own...

6/12 - Today in Acts chapter 8 we read about Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch. In verses 34 and 35, just after the eunuch has finished reading verses in Isaiah 53 about Jesus, we will read - *"The eunuch asked Phillip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else? Then Phillip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."* I wonder about this in our lives today - do you think there are people that you know who are trying to understand who God is and what God is saying, just like this eunuch was trying to understand? Are there people in your life who may be seeking God and Jesus? If so, will you be like Phillip was for this eunuch for these people in your life? Will you begin with wherever these people are ("that very passage"), even if they are very far from God, and begin to share with them the good news about Jesus? Yes, this story about the Ethiopian eunuch is a very quick conversion story. Not all of our stories of having conversations with others seeking God will turn out like this. In fact, I'd venture to say that many will take many months and maybe even several years. **Q: But, even if it takes a lifetime of conversations with someone about the good news of Jesus, isn't it worth it? Who in your life is God calling you to share the good news about Jesus with? Will you begin those conversations now? And, perhaps most importantly, will you begin praying for those that God has placed in your life - praying that they will come to understand who God truly is?**

#### **PSALM 124:1-130:8**

6/6 - I read in a commentary that Psalm 124 was likely a call and response from a Levitical priest and worshipers. Verses 1 through 5 were likely spoken by the priest and verses 6 through 8 were the response of the people. Great way to read this Psalm! Even though this Psalm title says it is a "Psalm of David", some commentaries believe this Psalm is post-exile from Babylon based on verse 8: *"We escaped like a bird from a hunter's trap. The trap is broken, and we are free!"* Though, I could see that verse apply to Davidic times too. Verse 8 is a joyful response that hopefully each one of us can sing confidently: *"Our help is from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth."* Amen and Amen! **Q: How is God your help today?**

6/7 - Psalm 125 has great verses in 4 & 5: *"O LORD, do good to those who are good, whose hearts are in tune with you. But banish those who turn to crooked ways, O LORD. Take them away with those who do evil. And let Israel have quietness and peace."* I love that closing line - let us have quietness and peace! What a great prayer. Don't we all wish for quietness and peace in our lives? One thing I'll recommend - which I am trying so hard to learn myself - is to take a Sabbath day of rest each week. Just rest. Just be peaceful. Just be with God. One day a week. It will dramatically change the other 6 days of your week without a doubt. Will you join me on this quest for quietness and peace in our lives by taking a Sabbath day of rest once each week?

6/8 - Psalm 126 has a great verse today. I always love the verses in Psalms that speak about water! I don't know what it is about these verses, but here's verse 4: *"Restore our fortunes, LORD, as streams renew the desert."* **Q: Do you believe that God can restore your life like water restores the desert? Will you allow God's water into all the nooks & crannies in your life that are in need of renewal? Do you believe that God is living water? Are you thirsty for that living water in your life? Will you drink the Water?**

6/9 - It is interesting to note that Psalm 127 today is written by Solomon. Think he might have written this around the time of building the temple? It would be very fitting! Psalm 127 verse 1 I think I heard for the first time verbally a couple of years ago on a Habitat for Humanity job site. Each morning the volunteers would take turns leading devotions before the day's build. One morning a volunteer read Psalm 127 verse 1 to all of us, which was absolutely fitting for working on a Habitat house - *"Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is useless. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good."* Great stuff and I believe this verse is not only applicable to working on Habitat houses, but is very applicable in our own lives as well. **Q: Are there things we are building or creating in our life that might be outside of God's will for our life? Are we building these things on our own? If so, should we be building these things? Will we take to prayer all that we build in our lives and seek God's guidance and blessing upon our work? Is God building our life or are we attempting to build with our own power? Is God protecting our life or are we attempting to protect ourselves with our own power?**

6/9 - Speaking of work, I also love verse 2 in this Psalm: *"It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones."* Great verse to combat our workaholic tendencies, no? :) **Q: Do you overwork yourself these days? What for? Is this pleasing to God? Are you taking a Sabbath day of rest once a week to simply be in relationship with God? To enjoy God's rest?**

6/10 - Psalm 128 verse 1 stands out today: *"How happy are those who fear the LORD-- all who follow his ways!"* **Q: Do you think it is possible to be happy and to fear God at the same time? Do you believe a healthy fear of God is, well, healthy? Why would we fear God - God who loves us immensely? What is this Psalmist saying to us today in our lives? What are some ways that you are literally "fearing the Lord" in your life today? Do you agree with the Psalmist that those who fear the Lord are happy? Why or why not? Have you gone through periods of your life where you did not fear the Lord? Were you happy then?**

6/11 - Psalm 129 is a prayer for the continuing withering of Israel's enemies and verse 4 likely represents a celebration from Babylonian captivity - *"But the LORD is good; he has cut the cords used by the ungodly to bind me."* **Q: How about in our lives today? Has Jesus cut any cords used by the ungodly to bind you? Are there still some cords being used by the ungodly to bind you? Will you let Jesus cut those cords? Will you let Jesus free you from that captivity? Do you believe that Jesus is good and that he wants to cut the cords that bind you? Do you believe that Jesus cares for you?**

6/12- Psalm 130 is amazing today! Each verse is jam packed with good stuff to think about.... Actually - if you get a chance - please read through each of these verses again, and meditate for a moment on each one and what each verse might be speaking into your life and your heart. I think you will find tons of relevant meditations in this Psalm for your life. Today in Psalm 130 verse 5 we read - *"I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word."* **Q: Are you counting on God in your life? Really counting on him? Have you put your hope in his Word, the Bible? Do you believe that reading and meditating and reflecting on the Bible can transform your life and your relationship with God? What is your plan to stay in God's Word each and every day for the rest of your life? (I hope it is the One Year Bible! :) Should you have a plan to be in God's Word each and every day?**

#### **PROVERBS 16:24-17:3**

6/6 - Today in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 24 we read: *"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Do you believe that words have power? Do you speak to others with pleasant words? Do you realize that your words literally can be sweet to the soul of others and healing to their bones? Knowing this, would this maybe change how you speak to others? Do you also believe that there is a time and place to speak to someone with words that may not be pleasant, but that are needed discipline? I do think there is a time and place for disciplinary words to be spoken directly to someone - with love. And though these words may seem harsh at first, over time they may be seen as very pleasant words that someone needed to hear. Generally speaking I do think we can probably do the most good and encourage others to change through pleasant words. Is there someone in your life today who might be going through a hard time**

that you can bless with pleasant words? Will you encourage that person today with words that are sweet to the soul and healing to the bones?

6/7 - Proverbs 16 verse 25 today teaches us: *"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."* This is a great reminder that it is so important for us to pay attention to what path we are on! **Q: Really, examine the path you are on this very day... where is it ultimately leading you? To Life or death?**

6/8 - I like Proverbs 16 verse 26 today! *"It is good for workers to have an appetite; an empty stomach drives them on."* This wisdom reminds me of the old adage - "Lord, don't make me too rich that I forget you or too poor that I curse you." **It's better to be a bit "hungry" I think... What are you hungry or thirsty for in your life right now? Are you hungry for wisdom like young Solomon was hungry for wisdom? Are you thirsty to know God more? Are you hungry to love Jesus more? Are you thirsty to read the Bible every day? Are there people around you in your life who may also be hungry? What are they hungry for? Will you help feed them? Spiritually, mentally, physically? Like the food program we read about in Acts today, when was the last time you volunteered at your local food bank or soup kitchen or homeless shelter? If you are called to it, will you sign up to volunteer out there again in this next month? Will you get in the monthly habit of volunteering to feed someone in some way?**

6/9 - Proverbs 16:28 today teaches us: *"A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends."* I do have to admit here that I have been guilty of gossip all too frequently. I think it's one of the easiest sins for many of us to fall into. Everyone else is doing it, we might think, so why shouldn't we? Well, we know why we shouldn't. It's a sin. And it's a sin that I'm afraid sometimes can be found all too often in churches. I would take this Proverb a step further and say that gossip separates not only the best of friends, but separates the best of churches. Let us stop the gossip in our lives and realize it is a sin! **Q: Like me, have you ever struggled with gossip? How have you been able to stop yourself from gossiping about others? Have you ever stopped gossip from happening within a church? Or have you ever just let it happen and fester? Should we be more vigilant about stopping gossip within our churches and within our hearts and minds and on our own tongues?**

6/10 - I love Proverbs 16 verse 31 today! *"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by living a godly life."* Let us pray that we all get gray hair - and be thankful for it! Don't dye it away. It is a crown of glory! **Q: How are you appreciating people in your life that are older than you? How are you learning from them? Serving them?**

6/11 - Proverbs 17 verse 1 is so very wise... *"A dry crust eaten in peace is better than a great feast with strife."* I don't know about you, but this Proverb hits home. I have eaten very simple meals in peace that have been so beautiful. And I have also eaten at great feasts filled with drama and angst and strife. The world may preach to us that the latter is better - the feast with all its drama. But, I think the still small quiet voice of God through the Bible indicates the former is better. **Q: Which do you think is better? The peaceful crust or the strifeful feast?**

6/12 - I love Proverbs chapter 17 verse 3 today - *"Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart."* I think sometimes in our lives we tend to forget to live from our hearts. We live from our minds I think so often - and we can tend to silence our hearts. But God wants our hearts. He wants our hearts to be fully his. God oftentimes will speak to us through our hearts - sometimes I find that God's "still small voice" or God's whisper can only be discerned through my heart. So, let us live from our hearts. And let us realize that God is very interested in our hearts - and will test the purity of our hearts. The heart is so critically important for our spiritual life... **Q: How is the landscape of your heart today? What would God find inside your heart right now? Is your heart pure? Is your heart for God?**

#### **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](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com) this next week for daily commentary and questions for reflection.**