

Notes & Group Questions for July 1 - July 31 readings (*Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below*)

2 KINGS 18:13 - 2 CHRONICLES 29:36

7/1 - Well, it was bound to happen. Assyria conquered Israel. They were bound to go after Judah & Jerusalem soon enough. Tough to stop an ego & power like that. It's "never enough". So, we get the bold boasts before the walls of Jerusalem by King Sennacherib of Assyria's representatives in 2 Kings 18. Verse 35 includes this boast, which didn't make God too happy - *"What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the LORD can rescue Jerusalem?"* It is wonderful to see that in 2 Kings 19 Hezekiah takes all of this to God in prayer. Good move! **Q: How often in our lives today, when challenges come our way, do we take the challenges everywhere else BUT to God? Wouldn't it be easier to take them directly to God? Why do we turn to alcohol or drugs or food or worrying or whatever - can we simply take our challenges to the one true living God who can actually do something with them?** Can we model what Hezekiah did when he received distressing news from the King of Assyria, in verses 14 through 16 - *"After Hezekiah received the letter and read it, he went up to the LORD's Temple and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth. Listen to me, O LORD, and hear! Open your eyes, O LORD, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God."*

7/2 - In 2 Kings 20 today we read about King Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. The thing that stood out to me in these passages is that after Hezekiah heard from Isaiah that he was going to die, Hezekiah did not just wallow in sorrow and let what was supposed to happen, happen. No! What does Hezekiah do? He prays to the living God! This is convicting and encouraging for me. I am afraid that sometimes I will just wallow in my sorrow over a situation, when I should be praying about the situation to God! **Q: If we don't take it to God in prayer, how can God really help us? I know that oftentimes God does show amazing mercy to us and do things for us when we do not pray. But, why don't we pray to God in times of sorrow? How about you – when sorrow comes to your doorstep, do you take the situation to God in prayer?**

7/2 - Hezekiah later in this chapter receives envoys from Babylon. Unfortunately, he is a bit too hospitable with these envoys... He believes showing off his wealth will prove that he has worldly power and that the Babylonians will respect him and Judah. Isaiah sees that Hezekiah is relying on worldly wealth and not God, and Isaiah delivers a word from God that Judah will be exiled to Babylon. Indeed, this comes true in 115 years from when Isaiah delivers this word in this chapter. We will read more about the Babylonian exile later in this year's One Year Bible readings. **Q: How about us, in our lives today – do we try to impress people with our worldly wealth or toys or stuff, like Hezekiah was trying to impress the Babylonians? And further, do we actually try to rely on this worldly stuff rather than rely on God? Is this dangerous?**

7/3 - Wow... I thought today's readings in Second Kings are some of the best readings we've had in a while! King Josiah cleaned up house for God! He went to town on all the idols, pagan altars and high places. Unfortunately, as we'll see in tomorrow's readings, the southern kingdom of Judah is about to meet a similar fate as the northern kingdom of Israel did in recent days readings. But King Josiah goes down with a fight for the Lord in today's readings! **Q: I wonder about this in our lives today - are we willing to fight for the Lord and his values in the way that Josiah did today? Or, perhaps "fight" isn't quite the right word, as Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek.... but, then, considering this, should we simply be meek and mild and not fight for things of the Lord? I don't think Jesus modeled this entirely either. Jesus turned over some tables in the Temple and turned over some ideas about God during His life... What can we learn about a zeal for God from Josiah and Jesus' lives?**

7/3 - 2 Kings 22 verse 8 reminds me of the old adage - "Dusty Bibles lead to dirty lives..." :) - *"Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD's Temple!' Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it."* That is amazing to think about - that finding the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple was a big find! Most commentaries suggest that the scroll was either the entire Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) or possibly just Deuteronomy. Imagine if you will that the Bible was "forgotten" about for generations and then finally discovered today! King Josiah's words in verse 13 are wonderful repentful words - *"Go to the Temple and speak to the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah. Ask him about the words written in this scroll that has been found. The LORD's anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the words in this scroll. We have not been doing what this scroll says we must do."* **Q: Have you ever had ah-ha experiences like this in your life? Where you realize finally what God wants you to do - and you realize that you have not been doing it?** Well, fortunately God is a God that Psalm 145 verse 8 tells us, *"is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love."* There is room for repentance with God! **When you have these ah-ha moments like King Josiah did, will you turn in repentance and humble yourself before God?**

7/4 - Today we finish up the book of Second Kings! First Chronicles begins tomorrow! It is an incredibly sad day of readings in 2 Kings today... literally, it's the end of the Kings. We finish up the day's readings with a "governor" of Judah - who was quickly assassinated - and the former King of Judah living in exile in Babylon. Yes, Babylon has taken the stage. Babylon, which we will read much more about in the book of Daniel and some of the books of the prophets later this year. In today's readings we are introduced to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The readings move at a fast pace in 2 Kings 24 & 25. However, later this year in the Bible we'll get many more details leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Very sad readings today in 2 Kings 25 verse 9 when the Temple of the Lord is burned in Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, and the Babylonian army! So, why did the exile happen? Judah's exile from the Promised Land was the most dire of the covenant curses for disobedience from [Leviticus 26:14-39](#) (see verse 33 in particular) and [Deuteronomy 28:15-68](#) (see verse 36 in particular). The book of Second Kings closes out today with hope for Israel's royal line to continue through King Jehoiachin, who is exiled in Babylon. With God there is always hope! More to come on the fall, exile, and restoration of Israel in our readings later this year. **Q: What stood out to you in reading Second Kings this year? Did it make sense to you that the exile happened by the end of the book? Do you think the exile was just and fair, considering the circumstances?**

7/5 - Today we begin the book of First Chronicles!

~First Chronicles~

Author: Unknown

Date: Fifth century B.C.

Content: First and Second Chronicles form one book in the Hebrew Bible and are written from a priest's point of view. In this way they supplement the Book of Kings, which were written from a prophet's point of view. First Chronicles begins with a series of genealogies that record the family histories of David the king and the descendants of Levi the priest. This is followed by the death of Saul and the reign of David, with special emphasis being placed upon the religious affairs of the nation. It closes with Solomon's being made king.

Theme: Because First Chronicles was written from a priestly point of view, many details about Judah's religion are given to supplement the history found in the Book of Kings. The stress is upon the supreme importance of worshiping God and the positive effect that has upon the life of a nation. God blesses those nations that trust in him. The mention of so many unfamiliar names, while seemingly irrelevant, actually shows that God forgets no one. Those who go to their graves unknown by men are personally remembered by God. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 7)*

7/5 - Today in First Chronicles chapter 1 we begin a genealogy that will take us through to chapter 9. I know you may have the temptation to skim or skip these genealogy readings, but I encourage you to read them! They are fascinating if you really take the time to read through them. You will notice, for example, that most of today's genealogies come from the book of Genesis. The author of Chronicles is essentially

writing this genealogy for the nation of Israel, after their return from Babylonian exile. The Chronicler is taking the nation of Israel back to Adam - to very creation! - to demonstrate God's care for the Israelites since the creation of humankind. You will also notice in today's genealogies that the Chronicler is paying special attention to the tribe of Judah from whence King David will come. This genealogy from Abraham to Judah to David ultimately leads to Jesus, as we can read in the [1st chapter of the Gospel of Matthew](#).
Q: Are you enjoying reading genealogies in the Bible? Why or why not?

7/6 - Okay, so how are the genealogies treating you today? No skimming! :) Chronicles chapter 2 verse 20 today mentions a man that you might easily overlook at a quick read: "*Hur was the father of Uri. Uri was the father of Bezalel.*" Bezalel is the master craftsman who supervised the building of the tabernacle in [Exodus 31:1-5](#). Bezalel is only mentioned here in Chronicles and in Exodus, but it is believed that the Chronicler is attempting in this genealogy to show Bezalel as a model for Solomon in the building of the temple. Just a little Bible minutiae here for you. It is fun to look for minutiae like this when reading through the genealogies!

7/7 - Today in 1 Chronicles 4 verses 9 & 10 we will read 2 verses that modern-day author Bruce Wilkinson wrote a best selling book upon called "The Prayer of Jabez: *Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.*" I'll start off with a pretty high level question for you here – **Q: Why do you pray? How do you pray? What should we pray? Does God want us to pray? Did Jesus pray? Should we model Jesus in praying?** I guess I'm coming to think more and more that we of course should pray. Often. Every chance we get really. "Pray without ceasing" ideally. But I'm starting to believe that we pray primarily to discern God's will and God's heart – to hear God's still small voice – rather than to ask for stuff. I mean, I think it is certainly okay for us to ask for stuff on occasion – if it is within God's will and plan for our lives. But I don't think we should pray to God as if he was some cosmic slot machine, and that the more we pray, the more blessings & stuff we will get. I think we should be cautious to not view prayer as a "magical" thing that will produce "magical" results in our life. I believe we pray to know the heart of God. I believe we pray for intercession for others. I believe we do pray sometimes to ask for blessings within God's will and plans for our lives – and I stress "we" and "our" here, as a collective community of the body of Christ. **Why do you pray? Do you pray to "listen" to God? Do you pray to intercede on the behalf of others in need?**

7/8 - Today in First Chronicles chapter 5 we read about the tribes east of the Jordan River. Today in First Chronicles chapter 6 we read a genealogy of the Levites, the priestly tribe. I love that the temple musicians were included in the genealogy today! Check out verse 32: "*They ministered with music before the tabernacle.*" Nice touch to include the artists. **Q: Think God likes music? And how true is this - that music ministers to us?** I pray this is true for you. I know music ministers to me in such a profound way. Particularly Christian and worship music. Secular music I used to love - and it can still be interesting to listen to. But the only music these days that truly seems to "minister" to me is Christian music or praise and worship music. Certainly the music I sing in church every week! **Is music ministering to you these days?**

7/9 - We read some interesting verses to consider today in First Chronicles 8 verses 8 through 10: "*After Shaharaim divorced his wives Hushim and Baara, he had children in the land of Moab. Hodesh, his new wife, gave birth to Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, Jeuz, Sakia, and Mirmah. These sons all became the leaders of clans.*" These verses basically record polygamy & divorce by Shaharaim. However, just because these actions are recorded in the Bible, it does not mean they are condoned by God. Since the creation of Adam and Eve, God has meant for there to be one man with one wife. But, we humans don't always follow what God wants for us... (as we each well know) The Bible records both the good & the bad in human actions. If someone were to chronicle our lives today, would what the chronicle recorded be pleasing in God's sight? Don't worry so much about your past & past mistakes. God can forgive and redeem those, if you will turn to him in repentance. **Q: But right now - what would the chronicler capture in your life today? Would it be pleasing in God's sight? Would you want other people to read about your life today? Would you be comfortable with any aspect of your life showing up on the front page of tomorrow's news?**

7/10 - Chronicles chapter 9 recounts the return from exile in Babylon, which took place between 538 B.C. and 458 B.C. Then in chapter 10 we go back in time 500 years to some of our earlier readings in First Samuel when Saul was king and dies in approx. 1010 B.C. Why this dramatic shift in chronology of events? Well, the Chronicler basically wanted to take us through Israel's history from Creation to the return from exile in Babylon in chapters 1 through 9. In chapter 10 the Chronicler takes us back to the beginning of Israel's kingdom period when Saul was the first King. However... you will notice that the Chronicler spends all of only 1 chapter on Saul! (and just a 14 verse chapter at that...) And then, coming up in our readings, the Chronicler will spend the next 18 chapters on the life of David and his kingdom through the end of First Chronicles! Think this Chronicler had his favorite? Why do you suppose this is? Well, the Chronicler of course tells us very plainly why in verses 13 and 14 in chapter 10 today: *"So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. He failed to obey the LORD's command, and he even consulted a medium instead of asking the LORD for guidance. So the LORD killed him and turned his kingdom over to David son of Jesse."* This Chronicler wants to spend more time on obedience than on disobedience! **Q: How about you in your life today? Do you focus on being obedient to God? Do you seek and pray to God for guidance on what obedience to God would look like in your life? Are you like David - a person after God's own heart? Do you want to know God's heart and plan for your life? Will you remain faithful to God no matter what the world tries to tempt you with?**

7/11 - Today in First Chronicles chapter 11 we read about David's Mighty Men! I do love reading about the story of his men who went to the well in Bethlehem to bring David that water that he so loved - when Bethlehem was occupied by the Philistines! These men were no joke. They risked everything to please David. I wonder about this in our lives today. **Q: Are we as dedicated to Jesus as these Mighty Men were dedicated to David? Are you willing to risk everything for Jesus?** However, keep in mind that we don't need to do un-called for risky things for Jesus - like these Mighty Men didn't have to get that water from the well. But their zeal for David is impressive. I just pray we are at least that zealous for Jesus.

7/11 - Today in 1 Chronicles 12 verse 18 we read - *"Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who later became a leader among the Thirty, and he said, 'We are yours, David! We are on your side, son of Jesse. Peace and prosperity be with you, and success to all who help you, for your God is the one who helps you.'"* Related to this verse, Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has the following answer to the question of 'How did the Holy Spirit work in Old Testament times?' - "When there was an important job to be done, God chose a person to do it, and the Spirit gave that person the needed power and ability. The Spirit gave Bezalel artistic ability, Jephthah military prowess, David power to rule, and Zechariah an authoritative word of prophecy. Here the Holy Spirit came upon David's warriors. The Spirit came upon individuals in order to accomplish specific goals. Beginning at Pentecost, however, the Spirit came upon all believers, not only to empower them to do God's will, but also to dwell in them day by day." **Q: How is your relationship with the Holy Spirit these days?**

7/12 - I think today's readings in First Chronicles could be called "Famous Dave!" As indeed, David moves into his role as the King of Israel in today's readings and we read about his growing fame and support amongst the tribes!

In chapter 13 we read about David bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem - which was good in intention, but poor in execution... God is clear in [Numbers 4:5-15](#) that the Ark was to be moved only by the Levites and only by using carrying poles. No one, not even the Levites were to touch the Ark itself. David ended up following the Philistines example of moving the Ark on a cart, rather than following God's command. Thus, in verses 9 & 10 we read - *"But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark. Then the LORD's anger blazed out against Uzzah, and he struck him dead because he had laid his hand on the Ark. So Uzzah died there in the presence of God."* **Q: I wonder if we are like David was in this chapter in our lives today - how often do we have "good intentions", but poor execution? How often do we take shortcuts on things God has been very clear on? Even if these shortcuts seem like they are good ideas, why do we take them? Why do we take the risk?**

7/13 - Today in First Chronicles chapter 15 we read about David dancing before the Ark as it enters Jerusalem! David's song of praise in 1 Chronicles 16 is phenomenal. Verse 8 begins his praise with: *"Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness."* These are two things that I'm afraid I do not do enough - give thanks to God & proclaim his greatness. I am amazed really at how little I give thanks to God. I mean, yes, I say grace and thanks before meals. And I'll maybe give a little prayer of thanksgiving here or there to God on occasion - but it is just very occasionally. Why am I not giving thanks to God frequently?? I am not sure. I think it maybe has to do with the human condition - we always want more. Things are never really good enough. But if we really stop and think about it, we are so fortunate to have lived the # of years we have lived in our lives! Each day in our life has been and is a gift from God. **Q: How about you? Do you give thanks to God frequently?** Now, as for proclaiming God's greatness, I think I stumble in this area too. I think sometimes I forget the wise saying of - "God is God, and I am not." I think sometimes I try to fall back on my own power and might and strength and spirit - when really all that I have comes from God. I pray that I begin to proclaim God's greatness more and more often.

7/14 - The theme of David being a "war" king stands out today in our First Chronicles readings. In fact, we'll get a couple more chapters of David's wars coming up in tomorrow's readings. The wars are what kept David from building the Temple of the Lord. This duty will be passed on to his son Solomon, a "peace" king if you will. There are some great readings today in First Chronicles 17 about the Lord's covenant promise to David via the prophet Nathan! Today in 1 Chronicles chapter 17 verse 30 we read this prayer of King David – *"There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God but you."* **Q: Have you ever searched for other "gods"? Have you ever really found those other gods? Have they ever delivered on anything? Do you believe there is no other God like the one true and living God that we read about in the Bible? Are you living your life in such a way that you are seeking to know more and more about the character, heart, and will of the one true and living God? Do you love God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit with all of your mind, soul and strength? Have you forsaken pursuing all other false gods for the remainder of your life? Will you leave the idols behind?**

7/15 - In First Chronicles 21 we read about David taking a census after being tempted by Satan. Satan didn't force David to do this - Satan tempted him and David fell prey to the temptation. This census was a sin because David was seeking to demonstrate how mighty "his" army was - when he should have realized all that he had came from God and that David's true strength came from God and not his army. The census was a sin of pride. (And it is very interesting to note that Joab, who is not one known for his scruples, realizes this census is a sin!) And so we read in verses 14 & 15 - *"So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand people died as a result. And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But just as the angel was preparing to destroy it, the LORD relented and said to the death angel, "Stop! That is enough!" At that moment the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."* **Q: Have you ever struggled with the sin of pride? Have you seen how destructive this sin can be?**

7/16 - Today's readings in First Chronicles chapter 22 reminded me that none of us does anything in life on our own. We always rely on those that came before us. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors. The thing that made me think about this was how many preparations David worked on for his son Solomon to then later build the Temple of the Lord. Solomon would not have been able to build the Temple as quickly (or probably as well) without his father David's help. Solomon was standing on the shoulders of his father David. **Q: Do you realize that many good things that have happened in your life are thanks to those that came before you? Do you realize you are standing on the shoulders of your parents, your teachers, your pastors, and your community leaders? And, to take this a step further, do you realize that in the future people will be standing on your shoulders? They are going to need your shoulders! So, like David was making preparations for his son Solomon and the future Temple of the Lord, are you making preparations for others in your life for their future? Perhaps even for people you may never meet?** Let us always remember we are standing on the shoulders of those that came before us - and that there will be others who will need to stand on our shoulders in the future!

7/16 - Okay, quick flashback to yesterday's readings - you'll recall we finished up the readings with David buying Araunah's threshing floor to build an altar to the Lord to offer sacrifices on to stop the plague

(which occurred due to the sin of the census). Well, to continue the story, today in First Chronicles 22 verse 1 we read this: *"Then David said, 'This will be the location for the Temple of the LORD God and the place of the altar for Israel's burnt offerings!'"* This is Araunah's threshing floor that is going to be the location for the Temple. The very interesting note about Araunah's threshing floor is that it is believed to have been located on Mount Moriah! Yes, the same Mt. Moriah where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac. And the same spot where the Temple was to be built by Solomon! So, this brings to light the importance of David actually buying the threshing floor from Araunah and not just taking it for free, as was offered in yesterday's readings. David not only bought the threshing floor to build the altar for the burnt & peace offerings, but he bought the land for the Temple of the Lord to soon be built on by his son Solomon!

7/17 - In First Chronicles chapter 24 today we read about the divisions of the priests and the Levites. It is important to note that the priests and Levites had differing roles. The priests actually performed the sacrifices whereas the Levites assisted the priests in their duties - including assisting in the sacrifices, playing music, baking goods, and care of the Tabernacle/Temple (to name a few things the Levites did). Both priests and Levites were from the tribe of Levi, but the priests also had to be descendants of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. More details on the duties of the priests and Levites are [at this link](#). Ever wonder why we have music in church today? First Chronicles 25 verse 1 could be where the stage is set for the tradition of music in our worship services! *"David and the army commanders then appointed men from the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to proclaim God's messages to the accompaniment of harps, lyres, and cymbals."* **Q: Do you find music in church to be inspiring? Do you worship God with music in church? Why do you suppose music moves people so profoundly in church? Do you think music can bring people closer to Jesus? Has music brought you closer to Jesus?**

7/18 - It is interesting to read about the various gatekeepers, treasurers, officials, military commanders and leaders in today's First Chronicle readings! In some ways it is sad to read about how well organized things were - knowing that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the exile to Babylon is coming up. All of this organization will be destroyed. Why? Because of sin. Sin destroys. Sin kills. So sad. It is true that the lineage from Abraham to Judah to David will of course continue through to Jesus and now to us as spiritual descendants. But, the nation of Israel at this time of First Chronicles, with all of its great organization, will later fall because the leaders and people will turn their backs on God in sin. In disobedience. **Q: Is there a lesson for us in this today? Do you see the dangers of sin? Of how it can destroy everything you hold dear?** Please - flee from sin. Jesus can set you free from the bondage of sin. Don't lose everything you hold dear to something as stupid as sin. Sin will sell you lies and leave you with nothing.

7/19 - We finish up the book of First Chronicles today! Second Chronicles begins tomorrow! Today's readings are a nice transition from the reign of King David to his son Solomon. Our readings today set the transition scene nicely in First Chronicles 28 verses 1 & 2: *"David summoned all his officials to Jerusalem--the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the twelve army divisions, the other generals and captains, the overseers of the royal property and livestock, the palace officials, the mighty men, and all the other warriors in the kingdom. David rose and stood before them and addressed them as follows: 'My brothers and my people!'"* One thing that really stood out to me in David's address to his officials today was his absolute passion for God's Temple! David was so passionate about making sure the Temple was prepared for his son Solomon to build it. Yes, true, God gave David the plans for the Temple. :) **Q: But... what about us in our lives today... does God give us any "plans" for our lives today? What about the Bible? Is the Bible a "plan" for our lives today that we should follow?**

7/19 - I love David's prayer of praise to God today in 1 Chronicles 29 verses 10 through 12: *"O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, may you be praised forever and ever! Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people are made great and given strength."* **Q: Have you ever prayed a prayer of praise like this to God? Would you like to?** You could do so right now!

7/20 - Today we begin the book of Second Chronicles! Are you ready to read about the reign of King

Solomon? Let's go!

~Second Chronicles~

Author: Unknown

Date: Fifth century B.C.

Content: Second Chronicles contains the history of Judah that was begun in First Chronicles. It deals with the glory of Solomon's reign, with a special emphasis being placed upon the glory of the temple. This emphasis is made because a priest point of view pervades the book. The remaining kings of Judah are discussed, with a stress upon how the religious affairs of the nation were going. Hezekiah is given mention because during his reign an extended revival took place. The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon are described, and the book ends with the Persian king's decree to let the people return home.

Theme: Judah's history is described from a religious point of view in this book. The righteous kings are commented on and the evil kings are named so that all can see who is responsible for the rise and fall of the nation. The religious leaders and their ultimate failure to remain true to God added to the sin of Judah - until God allowed his own chosen people to plunge themselves into ruin, as an example for all time that God will not tolerate sin. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 7-8*)

7/20 - Today in 2 Chronicles chapter 1 we read about King Solomon asking for wisdom and knowledge from God. In verse 7 we read these words from God to Solomon - *"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."* In verse 10 we will read this amazing response from Solomon to God: *"Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, 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 and knowledge. Why? Because he wanted to lead 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? Would you ask for Knowledge? If so, God offers these to you and me right now. Where?** I believe wisdom and knowledge 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 fame, 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?

7/21 - Today in Second Chronicles we read about the furnishings for the Temple, including the completion of the Sea in chapter 4 verses 4 & 5 - *"The Sea rested on a base of twelve bronze oxen, all facing outward. Three faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east. The walls of the Sea were about three inches thick, and its rim flared out like a cup and resembled a lily blossom. It could hold about 16,500 gallons of water."* The Sea was used by the priests for their ceremonial washings. Interestingly, the New Testament views these washing rituals as a foreshadowing of the cleansing provided to us by Jesus, as we will read later this year in Hebrews chapter 9 verses 11-14. **Q: Has Jesus cleansed you of your sins? When? How?**

7/22 - Today in Second Chronicles we read about Solomon's dedication of the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem! I'd like to show an exterior and interior image below of what's now often referred to as "Solomon's Temple." Even though it was clearly the Temple of the Lord, it's referred to as Solomon's Temple based on Solomon building it - and we'll read about some more Temple's later on in our readings in the One Year Bible this year, including Ezekiel's Temple, which is fascinating! Let me also highly encourage you to take a few moments to check out all of the cool images of the interior and exterior of Solomon's Temple [at this link](#). (make sure you scroll down quite a bit on this link to see all the images) I think this link will help you visualize the Temple much better! Also, at the [home page](#) of that link above, you can read up on the Temple Mount area of Jerusalem today where Solomon's Temple was believed to have been located, along with the Second Temple. And now where the Dome of the Rock mosque is located. Very interesting stuff on that web page! And tons of links. Can't say I agree with it all... but it's a website worth exploring. **Q: Have you ever been to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem? What stood out to you? If not, do you want to visit it?**

7/23 - Today in Second Chronicles chapter 8 we learn that Solomon married the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter, which was not pleasing to God and was contrary to God's Law of not marrying foreigners (in large part because they worshiped foreign gods) as you'll recall from [Deuteronomy 7:3-4](#). The Chronicler overall paints a very rosy portrait of both David and Solomon, ignoring many aspects of their sins that we read about in Samuel and Kings. But, it's interesting the Chronicler mentioned this marriage. Solomon married likely for a military alliance with Egypt. Solomon's marrying of foreign wives ultimately led to his turning his heart away from God, as we read in [1 Kings 11:1-11](#). Interestingly, we see that Solomon won't allow his Egyptian wife to live in David's palace in verse 11: *"Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her. He said, "My wife must not live in King David's palace, for the Ark of the LORD has been there, and it is holy ground.""* And so he builds her a brand new palace! **Q: Think Solomon knew something was amiss with this situation before God if he wouldn't let his Egyptian wife live in David's palace? What about us in our lives today - when we sin, do we try to "cover it up" or "build a pretty palace" to maybe try to distract ourselves or God from our sin? Should we instead just simply confess our sin to God and repent?**

7/24 - In Second Chronicles chapter 11 today we read about Jeroboam appointing his own priests who served at pagan shrines and encouraged idol worship! Think this was a smart idea...? This led the Levites to abandon their homes in Israel and head south to Judah. Just imagine the spiritual vacuum this departure of the Levites left in Judah... **Q: maybe this is kind of like the spiritual vacuum that happens in our lives today when we don't go to church for a while??** :) This sin of Jeroboam unfortunately plays itself out over and over in the northern Kingdom until its destruction. Today in Second Chronicles chapter 12 we read about Egypt invading Judah. Why? Because Rehoboam and all of Israel abandoned God's Law. You will notice often in Chronicles the patterns of obedience= blessing and disobedience=punishment. In chapter 12 we're going into punishment... Verse 9 tells us: *"So King Shishak of Egypt came to Jerusalem and took away all the treasures of the Temple of the LORD and of the royal palace, including all of Solomon's gold shields."* Bible History Online says this about Shishak: "Shishak's invasion of Judah has been confirmed by archaeologists. Shishak's own record of his campaign is inscribed on the south wall of the Great Temple of Amon at Karnak. In his campaign he presents 156 cities of Judea to his god Amon."

7/25 - Today in 2 Chronicles chapter 14 we read about the early years of King Asa's reign, including his incredible prayer to God in verse 11! *"Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God, "O LORD, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O LORD, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"* Unfortunately by the end of our readings today, in chapter 16, we read about Asa falling away from God and relying on a foreign king and physicians without any prayer for healing from God. He replaced God in his life with mere men. **Q: I wonder how often we do this in our lives today? Can you think of any times in your life where you have relied on people in the place of relying on God? How did that work out?** I do think we can rely on people certainly - if we are also relying on God more so and if God is in the midst of the relationship with the people we are relying on. I think all would have gone well with King Asa in his later years if he had only been taught this motto that we teach our kids today: "Be a FROG!" :) **Fully Rely On God! What about you in your life today? Are you a FROG?** :) Let us all be FROG's!

7/26 - Today in 2 Chronicles 18, King Ahab of Israel is not happy about the Arameans occupying Ramoth-gilead! Unfortunately for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, he entered into a political alliance with Ahab by having his son marry Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. This basically bound him into going into battle with Ahab - but even worse, as we'll read in the coming day's readings, Ahab's daughter Athaliah nearly kills all of the descendants of David in Judah.... more on this sad drama is coming up in chapter 22. A good location-profile of Ramoth-gilead is [at this link](#). 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 6 - *"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 7 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?)

7/27 - Today in Second Chronicles chapter 19 verse 7 we read: "*Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you.*" It is important to realize that this verse was said not as a curse upon someone, but really as a blessing and perhaps a warning. Jehoshaphat says these words to judges he is appointing. **Q: Why would Jehoshaphat say these words to judges? Why should judges have the fear of the Lord upon them? What is the fear of the Lord?** I believe it is a healthy and strong sense of God's presence - a sense so strong that it would prevent these judges from administering any injustices. Because they know God is in the room. **How about for you and me in our lives today? What if I were to say to you right now - "Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you."? Would you accept this as a blessing? Or would you think of this as some sort of curse? Do you want the fear of the Lord to be upon you? Why or why not? Right now in your life - is the fear of the Lord upon you? Will you consider praying for the fear of the Lord to be upon you?**

7/29 - Today in Second Chronicles 24 verse 1 we read - "*Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years.*" This is quite a young age to be crowned king! **Q: Can you imagine such a young king running your country?** Did you notice in today's readings that Joash followed God in his early years, when Jehoiada the priest was alive (verses 1-16), and then turned to evil and idolatry after Jehoiada's death (verses 17-27)? One of the saddest parts was Joash's murder of Jehoiada's grandson Zechariah in verse 20. (Note that the text says son, but scholars believe Jehoiada's son was Berekiah, and Zechariah was Berekiah's son - Biblical genealogies sometimes skip a generation.) Jesus Himself references the atrocity of this murder when facing His own murderers in Matthew 23:35! This quote of Jesus' comes just after delivering his seven woes in [Matthew 23](#): "*And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*" **Like Joash, have you seen people start their lives strong in their faith, and then fade away from their faith as they grow older? Why do you think this happens?**

7/30 - Today in Second Chronicles chapter 26 we read about Uzziah ruling in Judah - along with his sin and punishment. Uzziah, like other kings of Judah we've read about recently honored God in his early years, but then fell away in his later years. Sad! I pray that none of us fall into the trap of honoring God now and then dishonoring him later in our lives. **How do you suppose we can avoid this trap?** I think one of the key things is to read the Bible daily. But I also am realizing more and more that we need to be in community with other Christians consistently. Yes, church every weekend. But more than that - small groups, Bible studies, accountability groups, etc. We need to encourage and challenge each other in community to continue running our race strong! **Q: Are you in consistent community with other Christians in your life today? If not, will you consider joining a small group or Bible study at your church? If you're not going to church, will you start going to church this weekend? Do you see the danger of not being in community with other Christians, and ending up perhaps like some of the kings of Judah who dishonored God later in their lives?** Please, please, please - be in

a consistent community with other Christians!

7/31 - We are re-introduced to King Hezekiah of Judah in today's readings! The quantity of the Chronicler's writings about the reign of Hezekiah is second only to the reigns of David & Solomon. We'll be reading about Hezekiah again in the coming days. Reading about Hezekiah today was such a breath of fresh air after the atrocities of King Ahaz in yesterday's readings... Hezekiah is a hero! He re-opens the Temple! He reinstates the sacrifices to God! You'll recall from our readings in Second Kings chapter 18 verses 5 through 7 we got an overview of who Hezekiah was - *"Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was never another king like him in the land of Judah, either before or after his time. He remained faithful to the LORD in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the LORD had given Moses. So the LORD was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did."* **Q: Do you think it matters if our government leaders trust in God and carefully obey the LORD's commands?**

ACTS 21:1 - ROMANS 14:23

7/1- Wow. Check out Paul's words in Acts 21 verse 13 after it was prophesied that he would be jailed in Jerusalem: *"But Paul said, 'Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus.'"* **Q: What about you? Are you ready to be jailed for your faith? Are you willing to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus? These are challenging questions to consider I realize. But, I think they are useful for us to ask. If we are not ready to be jailed for our faith or not willing to die for the sake of Jesus, are we truly following Jesus? Or are we just pretending?**

7/2 - Wow... tough week for Paul in today's readings. Scary how the readings end today – with the mob chanting "Kill Him! Kill Him!" Does this remind you of anyone else? Perhaps Paul's Savior? You might be asking why did Paul agree to take part in the Jewish purification ceremony in today's readings? I think you'll find the answer to this question in Paul's own words from his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 21 verses 19 through 23 – *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."* **Q: How about you in your life today? Do you make yourself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible? Do you become all things to all people so that by all possible means you might save some?**

7/3 - We get some classic Paul in today's Acts chapter 22 readings! You'll recall from yesterday's readings, the crowd in Jerusalem got riled up against Paul and the crowd was beating on Paul. Then, some Roman soldiers come to try to keep the peace and end up arresting Paul and putting him in chains. But what does Paul do? Go quietly into that good night? No way! He speaks to the Roman commander in Greek - which surprises the commander. (It is thought that Paul spoke 4 languages - Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew & Latin) And then he speaks to the crowd in Aramaic. The crowd that was just beating on him! He turns around and speaks with Love and Truth. So amazing... **Q: What do you think you or I would do in this type of situation today? Could we continue to speak Love and Truth to people that were just beating on us?** I am not so sure that I could... I pray that I could! I pray that I would..

7/4 - Today at the end of Acts 22 Paul threw out this incendiary statement that shocked the crowd: *"'But the Lord said to me, 'Leave Jerusalem, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'"* This reminds me that the Gospel today still shocks people. The Gospel is still moving forward in our world to people that we sometimes may not think "deserve" it, like this crowd didn't think the Gentiles deserved relationship with "their" God of Israel. God is bigger than we think He is. God is pursuing the whole world. Let us pray he continues to shock crowds like he did in Acts 22... It's so interesting - looking at this image below of Paul's presence and words creating chaos in a crowd and the Roman guards being there in the midst. This is so reminiscent of Jesus' final day in Jerusalem before he walked up the hill to Golgotha. **Q: Think Paul was emulating his Savior? How about you? Are you emulating your Savior? Or are you**

playing it safe?

7/5 - Our readings in Acts 23 today open up with a very encouraging word to Paul from Jesus in verse 11 - *"That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have told the people about me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome.""* That is awesome that this occurred in the midst of all of Paul's trials and imprisonment. Jesus was there with him. **Q: How about in our lives today - think Jesus is always with us? Is there any circumstance you can find yourself in that Jesus won't be there? Is there anywhere on this earth you can go where Jesus won't be there?**

7/5 - An interesting note on Acts 23 verses 12 & 13 in today's readings - *"The next morning a group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an oath to neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty of them."* It is believed by some scholars that these 40 men may have been part of the Zealots - the group that later led the [revolt against Rome in A.D. 66-70](#). Paul is taken to Governor Felix at the end of today's readings in Acts. Felix is in the same position that Pontius Pilate was. I find it kind of interesting that both Jesus and Paul were brought before the same-positioned Roman ruler. It reminds me of Jesus' words in John 15 verse 20 to his disciples - *"Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."* If Jesus was brought before a Roman governor, it's no surprise that Paul was too. I think you and I should remember Jesus' words in the Gospel of John as well. I know oftentimes we don't seem persecuted at all - maybe most of the time really. But, I think we need to remember, it can happen. If we are truly living our faith and truly following Jesus, persecution will come in some form or another. No servant is greater than his master... **Q: Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? Are you willing to be persecuted for your faith?**

7/6 - Today we read about Paul before the Roman Governor Felix in Acts 24. I love this image below of Paul expertly laying out his case! The close of today's readings are interesting. It seems to me that Felix has a double-edged reason for keeping Paul in prison for two years. 1. Felix enjoys talking to Paul! **Q: Why do you suppose this is? Do you suppose Felix was hearing the Truth from Paul?** I'm sure that he was... 2. Verse 27 tells us: *"And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish leaders, he left Paul in prison."* So, Felix gets to hear the Truth from Paul and hopefully keep his job by appeasing the Jewish leaders. **Sounds reasonable, right? However... it is interesting to see that he is balancing the Truth with the World. How often in our lives do we try to balance the Truth with the World?** I am afraid this is a tough balance to keep... Remember always that we are to be "in the world, but not of it." Don't let the World outweigh the Truth in your life...

7/7 - We see continued incredible wisdom displayed by Paul in today's readings in Acts 25! His appeal to Caesar may look like on first glance he was trying to save his life. Many commentators believe that Paul was actually doing this strategically to get to Rome so he could preach the Gospel in Rome! Yes, he'd be arriving in Rome as a prisoner, but, if we know Paul at all, we know that being a prisoner will not stop him from preaching the Gospel! I love this whole scenario. Paul certainly seems a bit "down and out" on the ways things are going in his life. He's been imprisoned for two years, he is barely avoiding being killed or beaten, and yet he's continuing to think of every way to preach the Gospel and advance the Kingdom of God! **Q: I wonder about this in our lives today? Are we like Paul in this regard? Are we constantly thinking of ways to preach the Gospel and advance the kingdom? My hunch is that most of us are living very nice lives - no real threat of being killed or imprisoned. And I sometimes wonder if our comfort is maybe the real enemy? Are we not focused on preaching the Gospel or advancing the Kingdom of God because we are simply too comfortable? I do think one of the devil's greatest tricks is to simply distract us. Not to get us to do evil. But to distract us. Make us too comfortable perhaps?** I don't know... I'm just so impressed with how Paul was so focused on the Gospel and building the Kingdom, in the midst of all his challenges. And I worry about why we are not so focused - and I think it might be our comfortable distractions...

7/8 - Today in Acts 26 verses 24 & 25 we read: *"At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.""* Have you ever questioned

your sanity when thinking about Christianity? :) Don't worry – I think it is okay if you have. I honestly think that Christianity is the most logical thing of all time – but, I do understand why many in the world may view Christianity as crazy. (or that maybe even we ourselves at times have thought “this is crazy”) The bottom line is this – I believe every human being has faith in something. We may have faith in Jesus. Or we may have faith in a “cosmic being.” Or we may have faith in crystals. Or we may have faith in atheism. (yes, I believe atheism is too a faith – in nothingness – but a faith nonetheless.) Or we may have faith in altruism or government or nature. We all have faith in something. Faith is our human nature. I believe the statistic is that 85%+ of the world's population believes in something beyond themselves. We are spiritual beings. And if then we are spiritual beings, then I think it is perfectly logical for us to seek out who our Maker truly is. And to seek out whom our Savior truly is. And to seek out what will lead us to Eternal life. I've gone through this seeking phase big time in my early life. And I do believe it was the Holy Spirit that led me to Jesus ultimately. And now, once in relationship with Jesus, I believe that Christianity is the most logical faith there is. **Q: Do you believe what Paul says to Festus in these verses? Do you believe that Christianity is true and reasonable?**

7/9 - Today in Acts 27 verses 1 & 2 we read: *"When the time came, we set sail for Italy. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of an army officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment. And Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was also with us. We left on a boat whose home port was Adramyttium; it was scheduled to make several stops at ports along the coast of the province of Asia."* In verses 10 & 11 Paul's wise advice about the storm is not heeded: *"Sirs," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on--shipwreck, loss of cargo, injuries, and danger to our lives." But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.* **Q: I wonder about this in our lives today - are we like the officer in charge of the prisoners and ignoring Paul's advice? Do we hear Paul's advice to us in his Epistles, and yet are we ignoring it? Are we instead paying attention to the ship's captain, or the world, rather than Paul, when a storm is indeed bearing down upon us?**

7/10 - In stark contrast to Saul in our First Chronicles readings, I love seeing Paul's leadership in action in today's readings in Acts 27! He shows big-time leadership through his encouragement in verse 22: *"But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down."* And then Paul also shows some leadership in a very simple thing, namely eating, in verses 33 & 34: *"As the darkness gave way to the early morning light, Paul begged everyone to eat. "You haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. "Please eat something now for your own good."* The best demonstration though of Paul's leadership I think was when he did what reminded me of his Savior's Last Supper in verse 35... *"Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it."* **Q: Does this action of Paul's remind you of anyone else you might know?**

7/11 - Today we finish the book of Acts! Romans begins tomorrow! Interesting segment in today's readings when Paul encounters the snake on the island of Malta. Everyone first believes that justice is being done, and that Paul will die by the snake. When he doesn't die, they then decide he is a god. Interesting... They were first cursing him, then suddenly worshiping him. **Q: I wonder if we do this in our lives too? Do we sometimes curse things one minute and then worship them the next? Do we sometimes even do this with God?** Let us pray for consistency in our lives and actions, in particular in the area of Who we worship.

7/11 - We then read in today's readings about Paul arriving in Rome and beginning to preach the Gospel just 3 days after he arrives! Paul wastes no time. He is so focused on preaching the Gospel that he makes it happen no matter what. I think we would do well to pay attention to Paul's zeal for the Gospel. **Q: Why do you suppose Paul was so zealous for the Gospel? Should we be zealous for the Gospel today like Paul was back then? Are you zealous for the Gospel today like Paul was back then?**

7/11 - Okay, in Acts chapter 28 we have a very important verse for all of us to pay attention to. Verse 28. These are Paul's last words recorded in Acts. Commentaries suggest that this verse is actually the main point of the book of Acts. So if you remember nothing else from the book of Acts, remember the book was about this: *"So I want you to realize that this salvation from God is also available to the Gentiles,*

and they will accept it." Seems like such a simple verse... **Q: But do you see the weight of it? Do you believe that salvation from God is available to all? Have you accepted this salvation?**

7/12 - Today we begin the book of Romans! What a great book we have coming up! We've been reading about Paul's missionary journeys, the storm at sea, and being in chains for the Gospel in Acts. Now get ready to read and study some of Paul's teachings first-hand! Some commentaries say that the book of Romans is a "Bible within the Bible." And others: "The most profound book in existence." Personally, I think we need to obviously consider all 66 books of the Bible to be the Bible and the entirety of the Bible to be the most profound book in existence. But, yes, Romans is a profound book of the Bible no doubt! Martin Luther said this about Romans: "It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with, the more precious it becomes." Not a bad quote for us to jump into the book of Romans this week! Let's go!

Romans

Author: Paul

Place: Corinth

Date: A.D. 57/58

Content: Paul was in Corinth on his third missionary journey and was planning to go to Rome, but had never been there before. This letter was written to introduce himself to the church and to summarize his theological teachings. For the latter reason, it is the most systematically organized letter of Paul. He begins by showing the universal sin of man. Neither Gentile nor Jew has any legitimate claim upon God because sin has invalidated any appeal. But God in his mercy stepped in, while we were still sinners, and opened the way back to himself (Romans 5:8). From this may come a victorious Christian life. Paul then deals with the place of the Jews in God's plan (Romans 9-11), concluding with a series of ethical exhortations.

Theme: The righteousness of God, his righteous dealings with the world, and the righteous plan of salvation are the focus of this book. God is seen to be the great and holy God of the universe who cannot relax his laws because they are based upon his nature. But consistent with those laws, he devised a plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike that sent his Son down from heaven to die for the sins of the world. Now anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved (Romans 10:9) and be given the power of God over sin in his life. From God and his love nothing can separate the believer. (Romans 8:38-39) *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 24)*

More commentary on Romans is at these 3 links –

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=843

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1153

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1165

Bob Deffinbaugh says at this link directly above – "If you can reason your way through Romans, you will have the Gospel under your belt. . . . As you begin this study, I would challenge you to review the Book of Romans often in your mind, seeking to trace its argument from the very first chapter to wherever your study has brought you. It is my hope that you will then seek to apply what you have learned in your own life, and to share the message of the Gospel it contains with those who are lost and without hope, apart from the faith this Epistle describes and defines. May God bless you in your study of this portion of His Word."

7/12 - How powerfully strong are Paul's words in Romans chapter 1 verses 16 & 17 today! In fact, the NIV Study Bible's commentary says that these two verses are the theme of the entire book of Romans: *"For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes--Jews first and also Gentiles. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life.""* **Q: Do you believe these two verses to be true? Are you not ashamed of the Good News about Jesus Christ? Do you believe that God makes us right in his sight by faith?**

7/13 - Wow... Paul's writings today in Romans are such a true and stern warning about the dangers of sin. I really can't imagine how sin can be written about much more truthfully. Verse 21 is a strong warning: *"Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and*

confused." I do believe that this is such an accurate description of what sin does to our minds - it makes our minds dark and confused! Things can get so fuzzy and hazy in our mind due to unchecked sin that we can even get to the point of where we do not realize we are sinning. How sad to live life knowing God, but not worshiping him or even giving him thanks. And then to come up with wacky ideas of what God is like.... **Q: ever hear any wacky ideas about God out there?** :) The result is that people's minds become dark and confused because of sin... sad. Let us live our lives so that we share the Light of the Gospel of Jesus in the dark places in the world.

7/13 - Today's readings in Romans chapter 1 verses 18 through 32 consist of Paul describing the sin of the Gentiles, which is probably most of us. In chapters 2 & 3 Paul will describe the sin of the Jews. So, these chapters set the stage that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God - Gentile and Jew alike. Yep, that covers each of us. An interesting thing to note from today's readings is that Paul writes about "**general**" revelation - meaning, God is revealed to all people in all times generally through nature. In addition to general revelation, there is also "**specific**" revelation - God is specifically revealed to us through his Word and his son Jesus. But, as Paul writes today, general revelation is enough for all people to not have any excuse to not believe in God and to continue on in our sin. And yet, sin we do... Thank God for sending us the specific revelation each of us knows about - and hopefully we each personally know - God's own son Jesus!

7/14 - Again... wow.. Paul's writings in Romans are so convicting and true. So many verses in today's readings bring out so much. One verse that stood out to me was 16 - *"The day will surely come when God, by Jesus Christ, will judge everyone's secret life. This is my message."* This is powerful to consider. **Q: Do you have a secret life? Do you realize that Jesus will judge your secret life? So, really, is there such a thing as a secret life after all? It will all surely come out into the Light and be judged. Do you have skeletons in your closet? Will you confess those skeletons/sins to God right now and repent of them immediately?**

7/15 - Paul's writings in Romans 3 verses 7 & 8 today are so powerful for us to remember always: *"But, some might still argue, "how can God judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" If you follow that kind of thinking, however, you might as well say that the more we sin the better it is! Those who say such things deserve to be condemned, yet some slander me by saying this is what I preach!"* Have you ever thought in any way along the lines of "well, it doesn't really matter if I sin?" This is such risky thinking. Let me highly encourage you to read the Bible to see what it says about sin and in particular these early chapters in Romans. **Q: In reading these chapters in Romans do you see the risk, and really the stupidity, in continuing in unchecked sin?**

7/16 - Today in Romans chapter 3 verses 22 through 24 we read – *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* Please take a moment to re-read these verses and meditate upon them. **Q: How do they speak to you? Do you believe that humans are righteous on our own? (One way to consider this is to imagine what a city would look like without a police force, for example – think we would just naturally be good and kind and righteous to each other? Or might there be crime and maybe even anarchy and survival of the fittest – ala Lord of the Flies. . .) Do you believe God is righteous? Do you believe we can be made righteous before God through faith in Jesus? Have you sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? Are you justified freely by God's grace and through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ?**

7/16 - I want to focus a bit more on verse 24 because I think this is one of the most important concepts for us to understand: we *"are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* Justified. That's an important word to understand! Per the NIV Study Bible, Paul uses the Greek verb for justified 27 times, mostly in the letters of Romans and Galatians. The term describes what happens when people believe in Jesus as their Savior. God declares them to not be guilty and credits (or imputes) righteousness to them. Jesus' righteousness is credited to believers as their own, with a few key characteristics that we read in verse 24 (look at this verse above again): 1. It is freely given as a

gift, 2. by God's grace, 3. through the redemptive act of Jesus on the Cross, where He paid the price for our sins and redeemed us, 4. and through faith. Got all this? :) **Q: Have you been justified with the free gift of grace and faith through Christ's redemption? If not, today will you dive into the river of everlasting justification through faith in our Lord Jesus?** Please jump into the river of faith!

7/17 - We have great writings by Paul today in Romans how we are declared righteous before God! Verse 4 is powerful - *"When people work, their wages are not a gift. Workers earn what they receive. But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work."* Our right relationship with Jesus is a gift. We do not work to earn it. It is given to us as a gift. Our right relationship with God is not because of our work - but because of Jesus' work on our behalf on the cross. **Q: Have you accepted the gift? If not, will you accept Jesus' invitation to receive this free gift today?**

7/17 - Paul's writings about Abraham's faith are wonderful in today's readings. Verses 9 & 10 stands out: *"Well, what about Abraham? We have been saying he was declared righteous by God because of his faith. But how did his faith help him? Was he declared righteous only after he had been circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? The answer is that God accepted him first, and then he was circumcised later!"* These verses are an example of Abraham being accepted into a right relationship with God through faith - not works (circumcision in this case). I do believe our good works are desired and appreciated by God - he wants us to ultimately live holy & loving lives where we love God and love people. But, faith in Jesus and acceptance by God comes first, then our good works for the Kingdom come as fruits of our faith. Abraham was an example of this as we read in verse 3 - *"For the Scriptures tell us, 'Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous.'"*

7/18 - Wow. Romans 5 verses 1 & 2 are so true: *"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory."* It is important to note that these verses are talking about more than just a "sense of peace." They are talking about literal "peace with God"! Peace with God is gifted to us through faith in Jesus' life, death and resurrection to redeem us from the depravity and consequences of our sin. **Q: Have you experienced literal peace with God?** I know that we do not always "sense the peace" with God - but I do not think it leaves us once we've entered into an eternal right relationship with Jesus. I think we can certainly distract ourselves enough or make ourselves worried or frantic enough that we might think the peace is gone. But eternal peace doesn't ever leave us. I do think we need to take time to connect with and rediscover Christ's peace within us each and every day. Reading, prayer and meditation on Scripture are great ways to do this. I have also found getting outdoors and taking a walk in nature helps me connect with Christ's peace again. **Q: What are other ways that you connect with Christ's peace within you?**

7/18 - Verses 3 through 5 are incredible today as well: *"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us--they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."* Note that these verses are not saying to rejoice "because" of problems and trials (that would be morbid), but that we can still rejoice even "when we run into" the problems and trials. It is often difficult for us to remember to rejoice when problems and trials come our way - but please do remember these words of Paul in Romans about rejoicing during a time of trial. Remember our readings in Acts? Paul was ridiculed, beaten, jailed and shipwrecked - and yet, he never gave into a defeatist attitude. He kept preaching God's love! If anyone knows about trials and problems, it is Paul. And he tells us to rejoice through problems and trials because in this we learn to endure. I love that Paul says that character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation! And that this expectation will not disappoint! **Q: Do you believe this? Do you have a confident expectation of salvation?**

7/19 - Wow... I don't know what it is about Romans this year, but it is speaking to me like never before. For those of you that have gone through the One Year Bible multiple times, you probably know how this is. One year a book will kinda sorta speak to you - God's Word always does. And then the next year a book will just blow you away with its wisdom. Romans is one of those books for me this year... Paul's

words in Romans 5 verses 6 through 8 today spoke to me right away: *"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* This is so powerful to think about. Jesus died for us sinners. Think about how selfless this is. **Q: Would you die for someone right now? Perhaps your family or maybe someone who is especially good, as this Psalm says. But would you die for a liar, a thief, a cheat, or a hopeless addict?** Maybe so... but probably not. Jesus came for us. He died for us. Us thieves. Us liars. Us cheat. Us addicts. He came to save us! **Have you been saved by Jesus?**

7/19 - We are now called friends of God as Paul tells us in verse 11: *"So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God--all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God."* **Q: Do you rejoice in knowing that you are a friend of God? If someone were to look at how you interact with others and how you spend your time and your days, would they know that you are a friend of God? Do you often spend quality time with God like you would with any other friend? Do you think spending time with God is more valuable than anything else you could do in this world?**

7/20 - Today in Romans chapter 6 verses 17 & 18 we read: *"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."* **Q: Do you believe that you were ever a slave to sin? Is it possible that you are still a slave to sin now? How can you be freed from being a slave to sin? Or, better yet, Who do you think can free you from being a slave to sin? Are you wholeheartedly obeying the teaching to which you have been entrusted? Where can you consistently find the teaching to which you have been entrusted? Do you consider yourself a slave to righteousness? Do you like the idea of being a slave to righteousness?**

7/21 - Great writings by Paul in Romans 7 today about the Law! I love how he wraps up today's readings in verses 12 & 13 by saying: *"But still, the law itself is holy and right and good. But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes."* Great theology in this chapter today! Indeed - the law itself is holy and right and good. But, we couldn't keep the law and sin tempted us to break the law. And thanks to Jesus, Paul tells us in verse 6 today: *"But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit."* We now serve God by the Spirit! We are free indeed! **Q: How are you living your life in the Spirit? How do you recognize the Spirit in your life today?**

7/22 - Romans chapter 7 today has some amazing teachings about struggling with sin. I imagine that all of us at one point or another have concurred with Paul - and remember this is the apostle Paul writing this! - in verses 15 through 17: *"I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things."* These verses get at Original Sin in a big way. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin can live inside of us and make us do evil things that we hate doing. What do you suppose - or Whom do you suppose - frees us from this bondage to sin? Jesus. Yes, Jesus frees us. How? He paid the penalty on the cross for our sins. And he gives us the free gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit to free us from the bondage of sin. Take a look at these verses again above from Paul. **Q: Is sin living inside of you making you do things you hate? Do you want to be free from this slavery to sin? Will you pray to accept Jesus as your savior today and allow him to free you from you bondage to sin?** Please do. It's the best decision you will ever make. Please spend a few minutes prayerfully at this website - <http://needhim.org/>

7/23 - Wow... I love Paul's writings today in Romans 8 verses 12 through 14! *"So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its*

evil deeds, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." **Q: How do these verses speak to you? Can you imagine that these words were written for you and your life today? Do you believe that you have no obligation whatsoever to do what sin urges you to do? Are you led in your life today by the Spirit of God?**

7/24 - Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has a very interesting Q & A today on Romans 8 verses 24-25: *"Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently."* Tyndale's commentary says: "In Romans, Paul presents the idea that salvation is past, present, and future. It is past because we were saved the moment we believed in Jesus Christ as Savior; our new life (eternal life) begins at that moment. And it is present because we are being saved. But at the same time, we have not yet fully received all the benefits and blessings of salvation that will be ours when Christ's new kingdom is completely established. That's our future salvation." This is pretty amazing to consider that our salvation is past, present and future! **Q: Do you appreciate being saved from your past? Are you living fully for God in the present? Are you waiting patiently and confidently for the future?**

7/24 - Today in Romans chapter 8 verses 27 through 29 we read these famous words of Paul's: *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* **Q: Do you believe that we are more than conquerors through our relationship with Jesus? Does it encourage you to know this? Are you living your life in such a way that truly reflects that you know that you are more than a conqueror? Do you believe that there is absolutely nothing in this world that can separate you from the love of God because of your relationship with Jesus as your Lord and Savior?**

7/25 - Powerful readings from Paul today in Romans chapter 9! In verse 5 we read one of the clearest statements in the New Testament about the deity of Jesus! *"Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen."* Paul says here that Jesus is God! **Q: So, what say you? Is Jesus God?**

7/25 - A portion of verse 6 made me think about Christians today: *"Not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew!"* **Do you think that everyone born into a Christian family today is truly a Christian?** I know our various denominations will have various degrees / times / ceremonies that will mark becoming a Christian. But I think many of us would agree that just because you are born into a Christian family doesn't mean that you are necessarily Christian. Meaning, I think there has to come a time in each of our lives where we consciously believe in faith that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We need to own our faith at some point - not just be a "cultural" Christian because that's what our family and friends are. I believe at some point in our life we need to enter into relationship with God through his son Jesus through faith. Let us pray for our friends and family members who are perhaps currently "cultural" Christians. Let us pray that they will enter into a loving and growing relationship with God through Jesus. Side note - I was prayed into the Kingdom by some amazing friends! (thanks Chad & Becky & Becky & others!) It is true. Prayer for your friends and family is powerful. Please pray for them tonight... **Q: Who are you praying for today to become a Christian?**

7/26 - In Romans chapter 10 verse 1 today, Paul reminded me of the modern-day ministry called [Jews for Jesus](#): *"Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is that the Jewish people might be saved."* Paul was certainly a Jew for Jesus! **Q: How about you - are you a Gentile for Jesus? Or perhaps you are also a Jew for Jesus? Whoever you are - are you for Jesus?**

7/26 - Without a doubt, Romans chapter 10 verses 9 & 10 are the most important verses some of us will read this year and really take to heart: *"For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved."* **Q: Do you**

believe these verses to be true? Have you prayed these verses with your heart and your mouth to God? If not, will you today?

7/27 - Romans 10 verses 14 & 15 are a powerful call to share the Gospel with a world that so desperately needs it! *"But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*" **Q: Are you bringing good news to people in your life? Do you realize that you do not necessarily need to go abroad to share the Gospel with people who really have probably never heard it before? Yeah, sure, maybe in our hometowns people have heard the name Jesus. But have they really heard about the love and life and forgiveness and healing that Jesus offers? Do they really know who Jesus truly is? How will they know unless you tell them? Will you utilize the gift of your beautiful feet?**

7/28 - Paul bursts out in some great praise and worship of God today in Romans 11 verses 33 through 36: *"Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back? For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen."* Great stuff! I love that second to last full sentence that tells us that everything is intended for God's glory. So true. And yet so easy for us to forget. You my friend are intended for God's glory! It is a beautiful truth to consider. **Q: Are you living your life fully for God's glory? Are there any areas of your life that would not be seen as giving glory to God? Will you let those un-glorious aspects of your life go? Will you walk fully in the LIGHT of God's glory?**

7/29 - Wow! Could Romans chapter 12 be one of the most powerful chapters in the Bible?? I love this chapter... Please take a moment to re-read this chapter if you can. Verses 1 through 3 have been so powerful for me personally since the early days of my Christian walk - *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* I really don't know what commentary I could add to these words of Paul's. I love the thought of our bodies being living sacrifices to God. (There is of course the old joke that the only problem with a living sacrifice is that it tends to crawl off the altar... :) And the warning to not conform any longer to the pattern of this world is so so so true.... and we all know it. But I find myself still falling prey to the pattern of this world. Its temptations do not cease. But! We can be transformed by the renewing of our minds to test and approve what God's will is. Through a loving and growing relationship with Jesus, we can overcome the temptations and the death this world will offer us all too frequently. **Q: In view of God's mercy, will you offer your body today as God as a living sacrifice? How will you do this?**

7/30 - Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has a great overview of three historical interpretations of how Christians are to submit to the government per Paul's writings in Romans chapter 13 verse 1 today: "1. Some Christians believe the state is so corrupt that Christians should have as little to do with it as possible. 2. Others believe that God has given the state authority in certain areas and the church authority in others. Christians can be loyal to both and can work for either. They should not however confuse the two. 3. Still others believe that Christians have a responsibility to make the state better. They can do this politically by electing high-principled leaders. None of these 3 views advocate rebelling against or refusing to obey the government's laws or regulations unless those laws clearly require you to violate the moral standards revealed by God." Bible.org's commentary on this subject titled **"The Christian and Civil Government"** is [at this link](#). I lean toward a mix of #2 and #3 these days. I think there is much value in Christians paying attention to local and national and international governments, and getting involved. **Q: How are you involved in your local and national government?**

7/30 - How incredibly powerful are Paul's words in Romans 13 verses 8 through 10 - *"Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will*

fulfill all the requirements of God's law. For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting--and any other commandment--are all summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements." Wow... great stuff. Love satisfies all of God's requirements. **Q: Do you believe this to be true? What type of love do you think Paul is talking about here? A passive love? An active love? Who is the last person you paid the debt of love to? Who is the next person you will pay the debt of love to? Will you pay the debt of love to somebody in your life each and every day?**

7/31- Paul's writings in Roman's chapter 14 about the dangers of criticizing and judging others are powerful! I love verses 12 & 13: "Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God. So don't condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path." Wow... that is something for each of us to consider. That we ourselves can actually put obstacles in another Christian's path toward God! **Q: Do you think that you have ever done this in your life?** I do think that I have. Never intentionally. But, when I have stopped loving and serving others and instead began judging and criticizing others, I do believe I have placed obstacles in other people's paths! Not to mention my own path! Let us pray that we are not obstacles to others by judging and criticizing...

PSALM 149:1 - 24:10

7/1 - Psalm 149 is a beautiful song of praise today! Verse 3 I love: "Praise his name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp." **Q: Do you praise God's name with dancing and music?** Yes, I confess, I am a huge fan of the praise and worship thing going on in churches and with CCM artists and their concerts these days. I know this is not the only way to praise or worship God by any means. **Are you praising God's name each day with the very "dance" of your life??**

7/2 - Psalm 150 is a wonderful end to the Psalter filled with a call to Praise God with all that we are! Give it up for God and God only! **Q: How have you praised God today? Do you praise God daily? How?**

7/3 - Psalm 1 today begins the 150 Psalms of the Psalter again! You'll note that in the One Year Bible we actually read through the Psalms twice during the course of the year. I think this is good because the Psalms have taken some time to really sink in for me personally. Once they sink in, they are phenomenal. I have a great friend who has shared with me that she "Prays the Psalms" every morning. I pray that during the course of this year you will have the experience of Praying the Psalms as you go through the One Year Bible. Today we read this reflection on the godly in Psalm 1 verse 2: "But they delight in doing everything the LORD wants; day and night they think about his law." **Q: How well does this verse ring true with your life today? Do you delight in being obedient to God? Do you think about God's Word, the Bible, day and night? Should you? This year, will you?**

7/4 - Psalm 2 today is a prophetic and Messianic Psalm! This Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament in reference to Jesus as God's Anointed and the great son of King David. The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word for "anointed one." And the word "Christ" comes from the Greek word for "anointed one." (as we read Anointed One in verse 2 of this Psalm today) Verses 11 & 12 in this Psalm are encouraging and also a strong warning for us at the same time: "Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling. Submit to God's royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of your pursuits--for his anger can flare up in an instant. But what joy for all who find protection in him!" I think the closing sentence should be a huge encouragement to us. If we are seeking to love God and Jesus and other people with all of our hearts, mind, strength and souls - God knows it. And he will provide eternal protection for us. Yes, there will be suffering in this life - but joy can be found in knowing that we will have an eternity to spend with God and his royal son! **Q: How are you serving the LORD with reverent fear? Do you find joy and protection in Jesus?**

7/5 - Psalm 3 is a wonderful Psalm of David's, when he was fleeing his own son Absalom - details of which we read about earlier this year. Verse 5 stood out to me today: "I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me." God watches over us as we sleep! I like that a lot! I hope this verse comforts you as you sleep tonight! **Q: Have you ever seen any correlation in how well (or not well) you sleep and where you are spiritually with the LORD?**

7/6 - Psalm 4 is a wonderful Davidic Psalm. Verse 7 stood out to me today: *"You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and wine."* **Q: Do you believe that God's Spirit can give you greater joy than any amount of money or material goods or even human love can give? Will you seek a deeper relationship with God this year and ask God for this holy joy?**

7/7 - I love Psalm 5 verse 3: *"Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly."* This is a great reminder to pray in the mornings - before we start the hustle and bustle of the day. I know that many of you are reading the One Year Bible readings in the morning, which I think is a great way to start your day! I do see a huge positive difference in my day if I do pray to God in the morning and pray specifically about the upcoming day - and pray for others that I will interact with that day as well. Praise God for the morning! Actually, while I'm talking about the morning here, let me go off on a tangent if you don't mind... :) I honestly have lived much of my life as a "night owl." I went to bed late and woke up late. And I had all kinds of good "reasons" of why I was a night owl. But, I will be honest here - I don't think being a night owl was good for me. I honestly believe there is so much wisdom in the old adage of "early to bed, early to rise, helps make a person healthy, wealthy and wise." I personally think that being a night owl was a lack of discipline on my part. I don't mean to say all this to make you other night owls out there feel guilty... :) But, I do want to encourage you, in that if you think you are stuck being a night owl the rest of your life, I don't think it is true. I believe you can make the transition to being a morning person. I am an example of someone who has transitioned from being a late-night person to an early-to-bed person. (well, yes, I'm still a bit in the transition phase sometimes it seems...) And I am here to tell you, mornings rock! Early mornings are so beautiful and peaceful! They really are an amazing time of the day to connect with God... Praise God for the morning! **Q: Are you a morning person? Do you connect with God in a different way in the mornings than later in the day?**

7/8 - As I read Psalm 6, it seems very penitential to me - like David was making a confession of sins and praying for forgiveness from God. **Q: As you read through these verses, have you ever felt like this?** I have. And it ain't fun. But, it's part of the healing process. I do think we need to allow ourselves to get fully broken before God before we get fully healed. We can't mask over or hide from God what's really going on - we have got to put it all out there on the table before God, for him to be able to truly fix it. However - there is great encouragement and confidence from David in this Psalm in verse 9: *"The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD will answer my prayer."* The Lord will hear your plea! The Lord will answer your prayer! Please plea and pray to him if you need to. He will listen and answer.

7/9 - Today in Psalm 7 verse 10 we read: *"God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right."* What stood out to me here is that it does not say that God saves those who "do" what is true and right. It says that God saves those whose "hearts are" true and right. As discussed in yesterday's Matthew 5 post, below, this is getting toward our interior motives and thoughts and hearts - the important thing is not what we do on the "exterior", but who we are on the "interior". And then certainly if our hearts are true and right, a natural outflow of this is doing good things on the exterior. But, it's the interior - our hearts - that matter most. **Q: How is your heart these days? Is it true and right? And do you believe that God is indeed your shield?**

7/10 - Today we read Psalm 8! Verses 3 & 4 I love: *"When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers-- the moon and the stars you have set in place-- what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us?"* What I love about this verse is that before I had faith in Jesus, and even God, I used to always look toward the night sky and just be amazed by the stars! I would always think to myself - there is no way that this all just happened by chance. There's gotta be something bigger going on making all of this happen. The night sky was evangelizing me!! :) What a beautiful thing. **Q: Have you ever had the experience of nature, God's creation, evangelizing you? When you are out in nature, do you offer up praise and thanks to God for His amazingly beautiful creation?**

7/11 - Psalm 9 verse 9 stood out to me today - *"The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."* **Q: When you are in trouble, do you run to God for shelter? Or do you look elsewhere? Where will you ultimately find true peace and rest from the storms of life? Do you**

believe that the Bible can be a haven for you in the midst of the storms of life?

7/12 - Psalm 9 verse 18 is so true and powerful: *"For the needy will not be forgotten forever; the hopes of the poor will not always be crushed."* This is a great reminder that God's heart is for the poor in this world! **Q: If God's heart is for the poor - should our heart be for the poor too? How is your heart for the poor these days? How do you remember the poor and their hopes?**

7/13 - Psalm 10 is a prayer for rescue from attacks from the proud and wicked. Wisely, you'll note that this Psalmist is not taking punishment into his own hands - but asking God for punishment. We would do well to remember that punishment is the Lord's... For some reason much of this Psalm reminded me way too much of our world today - and I realized that not much has changed over 3,000 years! Verse 4 in particular rang true to me about much of our world today: *"These wicked people are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead."* Only about 100 years ago the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche uttered those exact words - "God is dead." And I know that this viewpoint of many expressed in this Psalm 3,000 years, and 100 years ago by Nietzsche, is still a viewpoint of many in our world today. What a sad thing. **Q: What can we do in our lives today to show the world that God is not dead? How can we live our lives to demonstrate that God is alive? Let us share with this hurting and dying world with all that we are that God is not dead. Obviously, He Lives. What are you doing with your life today to show others that He Lives?**

7/13 - Psalm 10 verse 1 also stood out to me today: *"O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I need you the most?"* **Q: Have you ever felt like this?** I know I have. However, I also have realized later on that just when I thought God was no where near me, he was actually as close as could be taking care of me. Even though it may have seemed that God was "hiding" from me, he was actually right there with me all along!

7/14 - I love Psalm 10 verses 17 & 18 today: *"LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them."* The Psalmist here tells us that God knows the hopes of the helpless. **Q: Do we? Do we care? The Psalmist says God will listen to their cries and comfort them. Are we listening? Are we comforting? God will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them. Should we do this as well? Will we? Will you?**

7/15 - Today we read Psalm 11, which is one that you might miss the full meaning of if you didn't know some of the commentary behind this Psalm. Basically in this Psalm King David is expressing his unshakable trust in God to other people around him who are very scared of enemy attacks. Knowing this - check out verse 1: *"I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, 'Fly to the mountains for safety!'"* **Q: Like David, do we really trust in God for our protection? Or do we sometimes rely on others or our own cunning - or, our own fear - for protection? Are there times when we are faced with a challenging situation that we feel like running away from it? "Fleeing to the mountains" for safety? When, instead, should we simply trust in God for our protection and move forward in spite of the fear within us? Is there an area of your life where you need to turn over more trust in God for ultimate protection? Will you flee to God only instead of fleeing to the mountains?**

7/16 - Psalm 12 verses 1 & 2 are intriguing verses for me - *"Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth! Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and insincere hearts."* Are there days when you feel like this? I think there are some days when I do... but not too many. I guess I sometimes wonder about the state of my heart - or if I've gotten enough sleep the night before :) - when I feel like this Psalmist does. It is interesting how this verse goes into people talking with "flattering lips and insincere hearts". I do notice right away when that's happening... particularly the insincerity. **Q: Maybe this is something we should ask of ourselves - do we talk at times with flattering lips or insincere hearts? Or are we sincere people? I like that thought... being a sincere person. I pray that we all are and can become more and more "sincere" in our dealings with each other and that we would just simply be sincere people. Are you a sincere person? Do you want to be sincere? Was Jesus a sincere person?**

7/17 - Psalm 13 is thought to be a prayer by David for recovery from a grave illness, based on verse 3: *"Restore the light to my eyes, or I will die."* Yet, even in the midst of this serious illness, David amazingly proclaims in verse 5: *"But I trust in your unfailing love."* **Q: How about you? When you are sick or in the midst of a very challenging or sad situation, do you trust in God's unfailing love? Always? No matter what is going on around you? Do you trust that God will ultimately restore the light to your eyes?**

7/18 - Psalm 14 could be seen at first glance as a discouraging Psalm for us as we look at verse 3: *"But no, all have turned away from God; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not even one!"* I think it is important to keep in mind that there is truth in this verse (particularly if we ever start thinking we're "good" and others around us are not...). But also I think it's good to keep in mind that this verse was written before Jesus came to the earth. Jesus was perfect. And through His resurrection we are called toward greater holiness and ultimately perfect goodness once we meet Jesus face to face in heaven. Jesus gives us the hope spoken of in the closing of this Psalm in verse 7: *"Oh, that salvation would come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel! For when the LORD restores his people, Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice."* **Q: Do you recognize the salvation that has come to us? Are you shouting for joy for this salvation? Are you rejoicing!**

7/19 - Psalm 15 verses 1 & 2 today are awesome: *"Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts."* Psalm 15 was written for those that wished to have access to God in his Temple in Jerusalem. However, I do believe that today, through Jesus, anyone can worship God anywhere - in a church or in our homes or wherever we find ourselves. However, I do think there is truth in these Psalm verses in that we can worship God beautifully by living a blameless life (not perfect life - only Jesus was perfect this side of heaven - we will need to confess sins & repent), doing what is right, and speaking the truth from sincere hearts. I do believe these are acts of worship that demonstrate our friendship with God and our growth in becoming more like his son Jesus in our lifetimes. **Q: Do you seek to lead a blameless life? Do you seek to do what is right? Do you speak the truth from a sincere heart? Do you seek to worship God in some way each and every day? How?**

7/20 - Today we read Psalm 16, which I absolutely love! I could probably share with you some thoughts on just about every verse in this Psalm. Verse 1 tells us: *"Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge."* Do you believe that God will keep you safe if you come to Him for refuge? And verse 2 is so true: *"I said to the LORD, 'You are my Master! All the good things I have are from you.'"* Everything good thing in our life - absolutely everything good thing in our life - comes from God. Do you believe this? Verse 3 reminds me to rejoice for and pray for our pastors and spiritual mentors: *"The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!"* Do you appreciate your pastors / ministers / priests and spiritual mentors? And do you appreciate other godly people you know too? Are they true heroes? Do you pray for these folks regularly? If not, will you?

7/20 - And verse 11 is a powerful closing to this Psalm 16 and perhaps a prayer for us to pray fervently: *"You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever."* **Q: Do you want to be shown the way of life from God? Do you want to be granted the joy of God's presence? Do you want the pleasure of living with God forever? Have you prayed to God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit to give you these things in your life? Will you pray this prayer?**

7/21 - In Psalm 17 David appeals to God as Judge when he is being attacked by foes. Verse 7 is a great prayer and comfort! *"Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways. You save with your strength those who seek refuge from their enemies."* **Q: Do you seek refuge with God from whatever might attacking you? Do you believe that God will show you his unfailing love in wonderful ways? Have you been saved by God's strength? Have you sought refuge with God from your "enemies"?**

7/22 - Psalm 18 is an amazing one! We'll get this Psalm for the next 3 days of readings, which is great. And then comes Psalm 19 which is off the charts awesome! Verse 1 today is so beautiful: *"I love you,*

LORD; you are my strength." **Q: How often do you tell God that you love him?** One thing that one of my former pastors does when he prays publicly, which absolutely moves me, is that he closes out just about every prayer with "God we love you. And we pray all of this in the name of your son Jesus." The last line of course is the powerful line! But, that second to last line... is just beautiful. Just telling God that we love him. I'm not sure I tell God that I love him often enough. God may not "need" to hear it. But I think that I need to say it more often. **I love you God!**

7/23 - There are so many great verses today for us to meditate upon in Psalm 18! I love verses 25 through 27: "*To the faithful you show yourself faithful; to those with integrity you show integrity. To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the wicked you show yourself hostile. You rescue those who are humble, but you humiliate the proud.*" **Q: Are you showing yourself to be faithful to God? Are you living with integrity? Are you showing yourself to be pure? Is God showing you these things as well?**

7/24 - Today we finish up Psalm 18. (Psalm 19 tomorrow! So excited! :) The closing verse 50 of Psalm 18 today is powerful - and I believe can apply to both David and Jesus: "*You give great victories to your king; you show unfailing love to your anointed, to David and all his descendants forever.*" **Q: Are you a spiritual descendent of David? Do you believe that God shows you unfailing love? Do you think that God's Word, the Bible, shows His unfailing love for you?**

7/25 - Today we read Psalm 19, which is one of my favorite Psalms! In large part this Psalm is one of my favorites because one of my former pastors taught from this Psalm 3 a few years ago in such a powerful way. **Have you had this type of experience? Where you hear a sermon on a chapter of the Bible and then that chapter becomes one of your favorites?** I do hope that this One Year Bible experience will allow you to tune-in a little bit more whenever you hear your pastors or ministers or priests teaching you from the Bible in church. I know this is the case with me. Thanks to reading the Bible each day, I now have better context of what is being taught from the pulpit and it makes going to church a richer experience overall. I also now often catch some Bible verses in the worship songs or hymns we sing as well. And this adds a lot to my worship of God now through music. **Q: This year, as you go through the One Year Bible and as you go to church, are you tuning in to the sermons and the songs in church more than ever and looking for and appreciating how they tie in to the Bible?**

7/25 - Psalm 19 – I do encourage everyone to really read through and meditate on every verse in this Psalm of David and how this Psalm might be speaking to you this week. Please do take a few minutes to go through the Psalm twice if possible and really reflect upon it. You may even want to journal to God some thoughts or ideas or prayers that come to you through reading this Psalm. I find verse 14 in this Psalm to be so powerful – again in large part because one of my former pastors often sang a worship song that simply repeats this verse over and over again – and what a beautiful prayer it is for each of us to repeat over and over again as well: "*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*" **Q: Are the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart pleasing in God's sight? Is God your Rock? Is God your Redeemer?**

7/26 - Psalm 20 is a prayer for a king as he goes out into battle - check out verses 1 through 5 again and you can imagine a group of people saying these words to the king. Maybe another way to read this Psalm, personally, is as a prayer for yourself as you go out into battle against a sin or a struggle in your life. And this verse 5 then is for you as you go into this battle: "*May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory, flying banners to honor our God. May the LORD answer all your prayers.*" Amen! Let the banners fly soon in your life! **Q: What banners for the LORD are you flying in your life today?**

7/27 - Psalm 21 today follows up Psalm 20 from yesterday - yesterday's being a prayer for victory for the king as he goes out to battle - and today's being a psalm of praise for victories granted to the king. I like the credit given to God in verse 1: "*How the king rejoices in your strength, O LORD! He shouts with joy because of your victory.*" **Q: The king is not rejoicing in his own strength. He is not claiming victory as his. He is giving credit to God! How about you in your life today? Do you give credit to God for the blessings and gifts he has given you? Do you shout for joy and rejoice simply because God is in your life?**

7/28 - Psalm 22 is an amazing Psalm. This Psalm is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. **Q: Re-read this Psalm again and see if you see parallels to Jesus' crucifixion?** There are a lot in this Psalm. I'll list a few - Psalm 22:1a was quoted by Jesus on the cross - "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?" As we see in Matthew 27:46 - "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Psalm 22 Verse 8: ""Is this the one who relies on the LORD? Then let the LORD save him! If the LORD loves him so much, let the LORD rescue him!"" We see in similar fashion in Matthew 27:42-43: ""He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Psalm 22 verses 16 & 17 make me want to cry... "They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count every bone in my body." The piercing of the hands and feet of Jesus are apparent with how the crucifixion took place. And these Psalm 22 verses are similar to John 19:33-37: "But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."" And verse 18: "They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments." Compare to John 19:23-24 - "When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."" **Q: How does Psalm 22 stand out to you?**

7/29 - What's one good reason to go to church at all? Check out Psalm 22 verse 22: "Then I will declare the wonder of your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among all your people." Praising God with other brothers and sisters through worship, tithing, learning, serving and being in community in church is a great reason to go to church! To declare the wonder of God's name! To praise God among all his people. Wow... yes... this is church! **Q: Why do you go to church?**

7/30 - Psalm 23! What a Psalm!! This is the first Psalm for sure that I ever really read and was comforted by without a doubt. Psalm 23 is a profession of joyful trust in God as the good Shepherd-King by David. I like The Message's take on Psalm 23 [at this link](#). Bible.org has a wonderful commentary on Psalm 23 titled "A Psalm that calms the soul" [at this link](#). **Q: What has Psalm 23 meant to you throughout your life? What does it mean to you today? And for your future?**

7/31 - Psalm 24 is a beautiful Psalm! Check out this brief snippet of commentary on this Psalm from bible.org: "The Israelites have returned from a battle with the Canaanites. They are proceeding up to the sanctuary on the holy mount to give praise to Yahweh for the great and mighty victory in battle, carrying with them the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Yahweh's presence with them. As they approach the gate, they are met by the Levites who function as gatekeepers. It is their part to ask who may enter the sanctuary of the Lord; and it is the priests' part to answer with the stipulations from the Law. Whoever meets these qualifications may enter and fellowship with Yahweh... The psalm then concludes with the worshipers calling to the gates to make way for Yahweh to come in to His sanctuary, for why should the King of Glory stoop to go under a doorway?" This quote is from, and there is much more commentary on Psalm 24, at bible.org [at this link](#). **Q: How has reading Psalms like this stood out to you this year? Do the Psalms lift your spirit toward the LORD?**

PROVERBS 18:8 - 20:12

7/1 - Please note that Proverbs 18 verse 8 is not advocating spreading rumors! :) "What dainty morsels rumors are--but they sink deep into one's heart." So true... rumors may seem like "dainty morsels" at first... but if you buy into receiving them and spreading them, they will infect your very heart! **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb that rumors will affect our hearts? How do you avoid hearing or spreading rumors?**

7/2 - Today we read one of my favorite Proverbs - Proverbs 18 verse 10 – "The name of the LORD is a

strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." Do you believe that the name Jesus is a strong tower that can keep us safe? I honestly do. I actually went through a period of nightmares several years ago – and somehow, in those nightmares, I began to call out the name "Jesus" in my sleep, and the nightmares ended instantly! Seriously. It was incredible. Whenever a nightmare began, I was able to call upon Jesus' name and they kept ending right away. Ever since then I have come to realize how incredibly powerful the name of Jesus truly is. **Q: Do you believe that the name of Jesus is a strong tower? Will you run to Jesus for safety in times of trouble? Will you call upon the name of Jesus in your hour of need?**

7/3 - Proverbs 18 verse 12 is one of the wisest Proverbs around in my opinion - "*Haughtiness goes before destruction; humility precedes honor.*" The Message puts it this way - "*Pride first, then the crash, but humility is precursor to honor.*" Pride is such a deadly condition... I pray that we ask God for humility very often. Maybe daily? Maybe hourly? **Q: How often do you ask God for humility? Have you ever struggled with pride? How have you cultivated humility in your life?**

7/4 - Proverbs 18 verse 13 today teaches us: "*What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!*" This is a great reminder to actually listen to people instead of immediately espousing our own wise advice! :) Listening... it sometimes seems to be a lost human skill these days... **Q: Are you listening? Who are you listening to? How are you listening to God? Are you listening with love to others in your life?**

7/5 - Today in Proverbs 18 verse 15 we read – "*The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.*" **Q: Are you acquiring knowledge in your life today? Are you actively seeking out knowledge in your life through a "quiet time" with the Bible every day? Why would you want to acquire knowledge? Do you realize that acquiring knowledge may compel you to change many of your current behavior patterns? Are you prepared to change? Do you believe that reading, studying, and reflecting upon the Bible will bring you godly knowledge? Will you then allow your life and behavior and heart to be transformed by this godly knowledge?**

7/6 - Proverbs 18 verse 17 is so important for us to remember: "*Any story sounds true until someone sets the record straight.*" I think so often we forget that there are indeed two sides to every story. And oftentimes we'll believe what we hear about a situation or person based on the very first story we hear. When, we really need to make sure we have the straight story. Keep this in mind in particular if you ever hear something about someone else. This would be gossip - which hopefully you aren't partaking in. But, nonetheless, I am sure there will be times when you do indeed have gossip delivered to you by someone else. Don't believe that gossip story at face value. That person very likely does not have the story straight... And most important - please don't be the one passing forward gossip - you may very well be passing forward a false story - which is a lie! **Q: Have you ever believed a story that sounded true, but then later turned out to be false? How do you discern true stories from false?**

7/7 - Proverbs 18 verse 19 is very timely in my life... "*It's harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars.*" Recently I received a voicemail from a friend that made me so angry when I listened to it! And I thought to myself, "that is absolutely no way to talk to me. I'm gonna call him back right now and set him straight on this!" And then after settling down a bit, I decided this voicemail was not worth the argument. I had every apparent "right" to take up an argument because of tone of the voicemail, but something inside of me (thanks God!) encouraged me not to do so. And I ended up calling this friend back later and didn't address the voicemail tone, and things have been great ever since. Did I do the right thing? Should I have called him out on the voicemail tone? Should I have started up an argument? For some reason I didn't. And this Proverb seems to make me think I did the right thing. If I had taken up the argument about the voicemail, I just might have been clicking a "lock" that would have separated us for a season... **Q: Have you ever had an experience like this where you didn't allow your anger or frustration with a friend flare up in order to protect the friendship? Is this wise to do? Is there a time to allow the anger or frustration to not be held back?**

7/8 - I love Proverbs 18 verse 20 today: "*Words satisfy the soul as food satisfies the stomach; the right words on a person's lips bring satisfaction.*" This is so true. I of course first think of God's Word, the

Bible, in the first part of this Proverb. God's Word truly does satisfy, nourish and feed our souls! And then the 2nd part of this Proverb reminds me of Psalm 19 verse 14: *"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."* **Q: How are the words coming out of your mouth these days? Are they pleasing in God's sight?**

7/9 - Proverbs 18 verse 22 I believe is a two way street: *"The man who finds a wife finds a treasure and receives favor from the LORD."* And the woman who finds a husband finds a treasure and receives favor from the Lord! I think all of us are fortunate to find a wife or husband. The sad thing of course in our world today is that marriages statistically are not lasting. I believe the divorce rate is around 50% now? Pretty high to say the least... My thought is that God needs to be the center of any marriage for it to really last. Really, God needs to be in the center of anything we do in our lives for it to truly last... **Q: Is God in the center of all areas of your life today?**

7/10 - Proverbs 18:23 today teaches us: *"The poor plead for mercy; the rich answer with insults."* Wow... this Proverb should make us stop and think. Who are the poor in our world today? And who are the rich? Do you think that the poor are pleading for mercy today? And how are the rich answering this plea? Have times changed from the days of when this Proverb was written to today? Meaning, are we now answering the poor with love and justice and care consistently today? Or are we still basically answering the poor with insults? Please know that over 1.2 billion people in the world today are living on less than \$1 a day. That's abject poverty. My hunch is that most people reading this blog posting right now are very rich in comparison to this 1.2 billion in abject poverty. The poor are indeed pleading for mercy in our world today. **Q: How will you answer their plea today? And tomorrow? And the day after that?**

7/11 - Today in Proverbs 19 verse 2 we read: *"It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way."* How does this Proverb speak to you? I know it is very convicting to me – particularly the part about being hasty. I am someone who oftentimes finds myself "hurrying." And when I am hurrying, I am usually worrying. And at this point I am missing everything else going on around me. I'm living in my "own private Idaho". I am missing the Way. I do believe that God is a passionate God and wants us to be passionate people – particularly for things that are of importance to God, such as serving the poor. But, I don't think that God wants us to be zealous and hasty people who do not really know what we are zealous and hasty about. We need godly knowledge. **Q: Where do you suppose we can obtain godly knowledge? (hint – the Holy Book. . . :) How about you? Are you zealous? What are you zealous for? Are you seeking godly knowledge in your life each and every day? Are you hasty? Are you ever missing the Way because of your haste?**

7/12 - It is interesting to consider the Psalm verse about compared to Proverbs 19 verse 4 today: *"Wealth makes many "friends"; poverty drives them away."* This is a true Proverb. **Q: I am intrigued by "friends" being in parentheses - what type of friends do we attract with wealth? Will they still be there when the wealth is gone? I do think it's true that poverty drives "friends" away. If the poor do not have many friends, then should we be a friend to the poor? How could we be a friend to the poor? Was Jesus a friend to the poor? What type of poor was Jesus a friend too - poor in spirit; poor in wealth; poor in health; all of the above? Should we emulate Jesus in his friendship to the poor?**

7/13 - The second half of Proverbs 19 verse 6 really stands out to me today: *"Everyone is the friend of a person who gives gifts!"* This is obviously very true when we think about our human relations. **Q: But what about with God? Who anywhere gives better gifts than God? Who else literally gives us the gift of life? Who gives us every good and perfect gift in our lives? And yet... does everyone rush to be God's friend? I would guess that many of us reading this blog would consider God to be our friend. But what about the rest of the world? Why isn't all of the world rushing to be friends with the giver of all good and perfect gifts? And even us who consider God to be our friend - do we consistently treat God like we do our other friends? Do we spend time with God? Do we laugh, cry, and enjoy life with God? Are you a true and consistent friend of the Giver of every good and perfect gift?**

7/14 - We have a great Proverb in chapter 19 verse 8 today - *"To acquire wisdom is to love oneself; people who cherish understanding will prosper."* **Q: Do you love yourself? Are you continually acquiring wisdom in your life? Do you want to prosper? Do you cherish understanding? Where are you seeking wisdom and understanding in your life today?**

7/15 - Proverbs 19 verse 11 is a bit challenging for me: *"People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs."* I can see the point of restraining our anger. But overlooking wrongs... I guess I'm having a hard time with this one. I believe there is a point where we do need to speak the truth in love to someone about their wrongs. **If we simply overlooked their wrongs, then would we really be doing them any favors?** I mean, I guess we would be keeping the peace by overlooking wrongs, but I'm just thinking there is a time and place to speak the truth in love. In love. Not in anger. **Let me know what you think on this one?** I know just recently I posted up about not getting into an argument with a friend over the way he left a voicemail to me with a bad tone. And that seemed to be the right thing to do, and correlated with a recent Proverb we read. And today's Proverb indicates we earn esteem by overlooking wrongs. **Q: I see where this Proverb is often / generally true - but is it always true?**

7/16 - Proverbs 19:14 today teaches us: *"Parents can provide their sons with an inheritance of houses and wealth, but only the LORD can give an understanding wife."* This is interesting to consider in light of my "standing on the shoulders" comments in First Chronicles above. Parents may try to give us material things, but they can't provide us with an understanding spouse! A wise wife or husband is a gift from God. Praise God for the gift of understanding spouses in our lives!

7/17 - Proverbs 19 verse 15 is quite true - *"A lazy person sleeps soundly--and goes hungry."* **Q: Have you ever had lazy periods of your life? Are you maybe in one now? Do you realize that when you are lazy you are slowly starving yourself? That you are going hungry? I believe this can apply to being lazy about our physical world - as well as our spiritual world. When we are lazy in our faith, yes, I believe we can appear to "sleep soundly." But - meanwhile we are starving ourselves spiritually, which is a grave risk. Are you in a physically or spiritually lazy place right now? If so, will you turn to Jesus for your work orders - and for your very food? If you are in a lazy place right now, please do not continue to sleep quite so soundly...**

7/18 - Today in Proverbs 19 verse 17 we read - *"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done."* **Q: Do you believe that when you are kind to the poor you are actually lending to God? Are you someone who is consistently kind to the poor? Are you kind to the spiritually, emotionally, materially poor that God has brought into your life? Are you also kind to spiritually, emotionally, materially poor that you do not know? Do you believe this kindness is noticed by God? Do you believe it is rewarded?**

7/19 - Proverbs chapter 19 verse 19 teaches us today: *"Short-tempered people must pay their own penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again."* This is an interesting Proverb to think about. What it says to me is that sometimes people can only learn things on their own. They have to make their own mistakes. Pay their own penalty. And then they'll learn. If we don't let them go through this process, and we "rescue them" once, we'll have to rescue them again. Interesting to consider this in light of verse 18: *"Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives."* This verse to me indicates that we can actually "rescue" people with godly discipline early in their lives. We can "rescue" our children through godly discipline and save them much ruin later in their lives. **Q: Do you agree with both of these Proverbs? Do you see the wisdom in godly discipline for our children?**

7/20 - Proverbs 19 verse 21 is so true : *"You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail."* I am so amazed by how God's purpose continues to steer the course of my life - tossing to the side my frivolous plans that were not part of His purpose. I think we do well to realize that God absolutely has a purpose for our lives - and that we very likely do not know what it is. :) Well, that's not always true. I do think many of us have a good indication of what God's purpose is for our lives. But I think perhaps more of us do not. And that's okay. I believe that if we stay close to God in a loving relationship and seek to live godly lives, God's purpose can't help but take over the course of our life. Without our even

realizing it at times. There was that movie several years back called Mr. Holland's Opus, where the lead character realized that "Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans." I submit that "God's purpose is what happens if you are seeking after Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." Let us pray that God is the Master Planner in our life today! And let us also pray that God will reveal to us if we are ignoring His plans for us in any way and if we are perhaps in danger of planning to build a "tower of Babel" in our life in the place of God... **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb? Does the LORD's purpose prevail over our plans?**

7/21 - I like Proverbs 19 verse 22 today! *"Loyalty makes a person attractive. And it is better to be poor than dishonest."* It is an interesting combination of proverbs in one verse. I do agree that loyalty is an attractive quality in people. **Q: How are you loyal to God?** And I wholeheartedly agree that it is better to be poor than dishonest. Dishonestly is a sin that breeds so many other sins and wrong-thinkings in our life. It's to be avoided - even if it means being materially poor. You will be wealthy in God's eyes because of your honesty!

7/22 - I hope you don't relate too well to Proverbs 19 verse 24... but I'll confess that I have been able to relate to this in my past - *"Some people are so lazy that they won't even lift a finger to feed themselves."* There were days in my past were I was literally this lazy. What a sad state of affairs. It's hard to say exactly why I was being so lazy - other than one clear reason: I was not in a relationship with Jesus. I was living for myself and myself only. So I thought it was fine to sleep and watch TV 24 x 7. What did it matter? Well... it mattered a lot. Being lazy like this is a scary place to be. I think it allows the Enemy to move into our lives in big ways. So - thankfully - as we know from our recent Romans readings, we can be free from our lazy ways! Being in relationship with Jesus has literally cured me of my laziness. Don't get me wrong - I still chill out and rest on occasion - we really need to take a Sabbath day of rest once a week.... but let us not live our lives as couch potatoes! Let us get in the game of Life! **Q: Have you ever struggled with laziness? How did you overcome it?**

7/23 - Proverbs 19 verse 26 is a great reminder of the commandment to honor thy father and mother: *"Children who mistreat their father or chase away their mother are a public disgrace and an embarrassment."* **Q: So.... have you called your Mom lately??** :) Of course I'm being facetious here with this question as it might (doesn't) relate to this Proverb, but hey, I'll let it stand...

7/24 - I love Proverbs 19 verse 27 today: *"If you stop listening to instruction, my child, you have turned your back on knowledge."* I am afraid that listening seems to be a lost skill in our world oftentimes today. We have a hard time slowing down enough to actually listen to someone else. To stop thinking about our own self and to listen to someone else. **Q: And, if this is the case, then how much harder do you suppose it is for us to actually quiet the distractions around us to listen to God? Have we stopped listening to instruction? Are we turning our back on knowledge?** Now - I do think the discipline of reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word, the Bible, is something that helps us get our listening skills back in fine-tuned shape. I do applaud you for going through the One Year Bible, so that you can listen to God on a daily basis. But let us be ever vigilant to keep listening to instruction. Let us not turn our backs on knowledge!

7/25 - Proverbs 20 verse 1 today reminds me of the need for and success of modern day [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) - *"Wine produces mockers; liquor leads to brawls. Whoever is led astray by drink cannot be wise."* I don't have personal experience with AA, but have heard very good things about it from several friends. I do love the AA Serenity Prayer - I think this prayer is a great prayer for all of us - "God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference." Amen. **Q: What is your relationship to alcohol? Do you think Christians should drink alcohol?**

7/26 - Proverbs chapter 20 verse 3 is such great wisdom: *"Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling."* I once was a fool who insisted on quarreling with Tony back in about 3rd grade :) after either I beat him or he beat me in the 50 yard dash at Field Day. Tony kept trying to avoid the fight with me. But I kept on pressing it. And I got whopped! It was really a great learning experience for me. I have avoided fights ever since! Don't get me wrong. I don't think we are called to be submissive and

let people walk all over us. I think we can confidently and strongly hold our ground on important issues - without fighting or quarrelling. **Q: How about you? Do you avoid fights? Do you realize this is a mark of honor? Or do you insist on quarrelling? Think this is a good idea...?**

7/27 - Proverbs 20 verse 6 definitely gives me something to think about: *"Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is really faithful?"* This is a challenging Proverb for me because I feel like I have many good friends. Many who are loyal. And some who even seem faithful. But... yet... there are still times on occasion when these friends do let me down. Or I know for a fact I let them down on occasion. It's our human nature. Fortunately for us, long after this Proverb was written, we were given the most faithful friend we could ever dream up or imagine in Jesus. Jesus really should be our best friend. I had a friend kind of shock me with this thought by continually referring to Jesus as his best friend at a lunch we had a few years ago. For some reason I was very comfortable with Jesus being my savior. But my friend? My best friend? Well, it was a new concept to me. And maybe this is a new concept to you. I do honestly believe Jesus wants to be our best friend. And he will undoubtedly be the one true and loyal and faithful friend we all can have - now and forever. **Q: So, is Jesus your best friend?**

7/28 - Proverbs 20 verse 7 today is a wonderful reminder that the way we live our lives today sets an example for children: *"The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children after them."* **Q: What type of example are you setting for children in your life? Are you walking with integrity? Do you believe children will be blessed after you because you walked with integrity?**

7/29 - Proverbs 20 verse 10 is convicting - *"The LORD despises double standards of every kind."* I am afraid that I often do have double standards in the way I live my own life. I am afraid perhaps we all do to a degree. We hold ourselves to one standard when we are at church and among our friends and maybe even typing on this blog... :) But, then, late at night or early in the morning or during the day perhaps we let this standard - this Christian standard - simply go. We become judgmental. We gossip. We complain. We lust. We give in to our old addictions. We fall prey to a double standard. Please don't ever forget that God calls us to the highest standard! And he sent us his Son Jesus to set us free from the bondage of sin from the bondage of double standards. Through faith in Jesus we are gifted with the Holy Spirit living within our very bodies, which is an amazing blessing to consider! God gives us everything that we need to live a life of high moral standards. **Q: Will we pray unceasingly to let our double standards go? Will we leave the double standards behind once and for all? Will we stop living our lives with two faces?**

7/30 - Today in Proverbs 20 verse 11 we read – *"Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right."* This is an interesting Proverb for me to meditate upon. I focus in on the word "actions" here. Basically this Proverb to me is saying that actions matter. Our actions don't save us or make us right with God, but they matter. Even children are known by their actions. **Do you think that you and I are known by our actions? If so, what are our actions saying to others? Is our conduct pure and right?** I have some friends who seem to think that actions do not matter – particularly once we are in relationship with Jesus. I get very nervous with this line of thinking. I think particularly once we are in a relationship with Jesus, we are called to follow Jesus and we are called to holiness. We are called to be saints. Yes, saints. Now, don't get me wrong – we will stumble. We will fall. We will not be perfect this side of heaven. Even after being in relationship with Jesus we will make mistakes. But, I believe we are called to live our lives such that we incrementally start to look more and more like God's own son, Jesus. I believe we are called to love like Jesus. Forgive like Jesus. Give like Jesus. And this list goes on – check out the Beatitudes in [Matthew 5](#) for a nice list of actions for us to emulate. So – even a child is known by his actions. **Q: What would people say about you based on your actions these days? Would they see that you are becoming more and more like Jesus with each passing day, week, month, and year? Do you think your actions matter?**

7/31 - Proverbs 20:12 today teaches us: *"Ears to hear and eyes to see--both are gifts from the LORD."* Amen! It is interesting that this Proverb doesn't mention our mouths to talk... Seems like this Proverb is really a good reminder that listening and seeing are amazing gifts. Gifts that allow us to listen to others and enjoy God's beautifully created world. And yes, I do believe our mouths are gifts too for communication to others. But it is interesting that we have 2 ears and 2 eyes, and just 1 mouth. **Q:**

Think there is a message in this math equation for us? :)

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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