

Notes & Group Questions from July 4 - 10 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

2 KINGS 23:31-1 CHRONICLES 10:14

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?**

ACTS 22:17-27:44

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 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 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. 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! 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?**

PSALM 2:1-8:9

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?**

PROVERBS 18:13-24

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?**

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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