

Notes & Group Questions from August 29 - September 4 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

JOB 31:1 - ECCLESIASTES 9:18

8/29 - Great readings in Job today! In chapter 31 Job basically "rests his case." He gives his final plea. This chapter is the last time we'll read this many words from Job. Late in the book we'll get some brief words of repentance from Job after God speaks. In chapter 31 I like how Job lays out his case - and lets everyone know what his retribution should be. He basically gives a series of if / then statements. If I did this, then that should happen to me. This is similar to the book of Exodus' concept of the "law of retaliation", from Exodus chapter 21 verses 23-25: *"But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."* **Q: Do you see how Job's logic in chapter 31 is similar to this law of retaliation?** You'll recall in our readings from Matthew chapter 5 that Jesus calls us beyond the law of retaliation (which was really a law of "limited-retribution" in its day, limiting people to retaliate only based on actual harm done - meaning, eye for an eye. Not a life for an eye, etc.). Jesus called us beyond this law of retaliation and beyond limited retribution to the highest law of love. Bible.org has an in depth look at Jesus' taking on the law of retaliation in Matthew 5:38-42 [at this link](#). **What is your take on the law of retaliation in your life today? Should or shouldn't we take eye for an eye as Christians?**

8/29 - Before we move onto Elihu - today in Job chapter 31 we read what I think is one of Job's most profound pleadings. It is a 10th century B.C. pleading that is ultimately fulfilled by a little baby born in a manger in Bethlehem who is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Here is Job's prophetic plea in verse 35: *"If only I had someone who would listen to me and try to see my side!"* You and I are so very fortunate that we do not need to make such a plea as this. Jesus is in heaven seated on his throne and will receive our prayers! Jesus listens to us! Jesus sees our side! It is humbling to look back toward the time of Job, and realize that Jesus had not yet walked the earth as a man and taken on the sins of the world on the cross. Jesus had not yet risen from the grave and ascended into heaven. Job was looking for someone to listen to him and to see his side. You and I are blessed immensely in this regard. We do not need to look anywhere else other than to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. **Q: How is Jesus on your side these days? Do you believe Jesus listens to you and sees your side of things?**

8/29 - In Job chapters 32 and 33, Elihu becomes angry at Job and his friends and presents his case! Elihu was sitting on the sidelines up until this point and obviously was ready to say a few words! It was amazing to read his words in chapter 32 - it was apparent to me that he was young and energetic and felt he had some very important things to say - and we will hear all that Elihu has to say between now and chapter 37! :) Interestingly, as we get to God speaking to Job and his friends in chapter 38, you'll note God does not condemn Elihu along w/ Job's 3 other friends. **Q: How does Elihu stand out to you? Do you like his style? His passion? His message?**

8/30 - Elihu continues his strong discourse from yesterday! There is a lot of good stuff in his words today. Chapter 34 verse 12 is awesome - *"There is no truer statement than this: God will not do wrong. The Almighty cannot twist justice."* I pray you believe this verse to be very true...? In chapter 35 the beginning of verse 26 really stood out to me - *"Look, God is exalted beyond what we can understand."* This is a powerful verse to meditate upon. It is so true! Certainly in this life we can know many things about God. We can read God's Words in the Bible. We can surrender our lives to God's perfect Son, Jesus. We can allow God's Holy Spirit to live in our hearts. And yet, even after all of this, isn't God still exalted beyond what we can understand? This is beautiful to think about. Beautiful to know. We will not fully understand God this side of heaven. But I do think we can certainly begin to know more and more about God and His holy love and righteousness and grace as we go through our lives. God's glory is so immense that we have a lifetime of adventure before us as we learn and experience more and more of God's glory. And then, as we pass on to the other side of this life, there is an eternity with God! The God of all glory. Who is exalted beyond what we can fully understand this side of heaven. Preach it Elihu! **Q: Do you agree that God will not do wrong? How has this been the case in your life?**

8/31 - Today we begin reading four amazing chapters in the book of Job when God speaks to Job! We've been reading a lot so far about what Job would like to say to God. Well, stay tuned for chapters 38 through 41 in Job starting today... it appears God was indeed listening to Job and has some things to say to him! (and to us!) I love the opening words of chapter 38 verses 1 through 3 - *"Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.'"* **Q: How**

did these verses of God speaking to Job stand out to you? What can you learn from them for your life today?

9/1 - We finish up the book of Job today! King Solomon's book of Ecclesiastes begins tomorrow! **In our Job readings today, one very interesting thing that I really want to now study further is what exactly was the "behemoth" in Job Chapter 40 and what was the "leviathan" in Job Chapter 41? Were these dinosaurs??** I ask this very openly, in that I don't know. Currently my thinking is lined up with the New Living Translation saying that the behemoth is a hippopotamus and that the leviathan is a crocodile – and obviously you can view my blog entry below to see I have images up of a hippo and croc. But. . . last year some of you posted up some good questions and points on the behemoth and leviathan's being something else. . . **perhaps even dinosaurs?** I know we have some Biblical scholars and many pastors out there reading this. **What say you?**

9/1 - In our Job readings today, God talks all about Intelligent Design. :) Seriously, when I read today's chapters in Job 40 about the hippopotamus and 41 about the crocodile, I could not help but praise God for indeed being the Almighty Intelligent Designer! Great stuff. You cannot argue with Job chapter 40 verses 15 through 18 where God says to Job - *"Take a look at the mighty hippopotamus. I made it, just as I made you. It eats grass like an ox. See its powerful loins and the muscles of its belly. Its tail is as straight as a cedar. The sinews of its thighs are tightly knit together. Its bones are tubes of bronze. Its limbs are bars of iron. It is a prime example of God's amazing handiwork."* Amen. Thank you hippopotamus for reminding us today that God intelligently designed you too! And we can't forget about your intelligent and powerful design either Mr. Crocodile! :) God's words about you in Job 41 verses 31 through 34 - *"The crocodile makes the water boil with its commotion. It churns the depths. The water glistens in its wake. One would think the sea had turned white. There is nothing else so fearless anywhere on earth. Of all the creatures, it is the proudest. It is the king of beasts."* I thought the mighty Lion was the king of the beasts?? I guess not. The title goes to you Mr. and Mrs. Crocodiles! **Q: Do you believe in intelligent design?**

9/1 - Today in Job chapter 42 verse 1 we read – *"Then Job replied to the Lord: 'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.'"* This verse comes just after God speaks his mind to Job for the preceding 4 chapters. Job replies quite humbly and wisely in this verse above. This week as you read through God's words to Job in chapters 38 through 41, please some time to meditate upon who God is and how great God is. **Q: Ask yourself, do you truly know that God can do all things? Do you know that no plan of God's can be thwarted? In light of this knowledge, how then should you live your life? Will you align your entire life with God's plans and purposes? Will you consciously choose each and every day to live your life in accordance with God's will? Will you live in accordance with the will of the Creator of the universe and the very Creator of you? Or will you rebel against your Creator in some areas of your life? Will you dare to hold something back from God? Why? Why not let the rebellion toward God depart from your life? Why would you not live a fully holy and pleasing life for God?**

9/2 - Today we begin the book of Ecclesiastes! We will be reading about the vanity of life apart from God in this book. I think some people may find this to be a depressing book. I find it hopeful! Yes, indeed life is depressing apart from God. But life with God is an unending beautiful adventure. (certainly with some trials along the journey...) I pray the book of Ecclesiastes draws you into thanksgiving for the amazing life we can indeed have in relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit!

~ Ecclesiastes ~

Author: Probably Solomon, the son of David

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: This difficult book displays the dark philosophy of one who sought to find peace apart from God, but in the end realized that only futility is to be found there. The only possible solution to life's puzzle concludes this book: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Leading up to that positive statement is a series of pictures, each one portraying the futility of life without God. Wealth, wisdom, popularity, and pleasure are all put down as so much vanity. Only when a man turns from this world to God will he find true happiness.

Theme: There is a negative lesson to be learned from this book. It is a series of things not to do. It shows the emptiness of trying to live for oneself and to please oneself alone without considering the needs of others or considering God our Maker. There is a positive side, however. If one can see how not to live, perhaps then he will see what he ought to do and be spared the heartaches of living a wasted life. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 10)

Fantastic commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes titled "**On The Wings of Eternity**" is [at this link](#) and commentary titled "**The Theology of Ecclesiastes**" is [at this link](#). **Q: How has the book of Ecclesiastes stood out to you over the years? Has this been an important book to you?**

9/3 - I heard a good chunk of today's readings in the book of Ecclesiastes at a wedding a few years ago. And really, these verses work out quite nicely for a wedding if you think about it. Chapter 4 verses 9 through 12: *"Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken."* Pretty good stuff for a wedding, eh? The kicker is that last little bit about the triple-braided cord. The pastor at the wedding I was at said that God is the third strand in the triple-braided cord in marriage. I like that! Two people come together in marriage, and it's good. But, throw God into the mix of the marriage, as I'm sure we would all want to do, and you've got a very strong triple braided cord! Great stuff. **Q: If you are married, is there a triple braided cord in your marriage? Is God always part of your marriage? Part of your every day life?**

9/4 - Our readings in Ecclesiastes today reminded me of Solomon's writings in Proverbs! (It was likely the same author of both books - well, most of the Proverbs - hence the connection) It seemed like a series of Proverbs in today's readings - albeit with a more pessimistic view than the typical Proverbs we read... but still, overall great teachings and great reminders of how empty and vain life is apart from God. I love Chapter 7 verse 20, which is something we all probably need to be reminded of: *"There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins."* And certainly that was true back then and now. Jesus was the only one ever to walk the earth who never sinned. Now, to go along with verse 20 we later read verse 28, which I'm thinking probably did not make women too happy to read: *"Just one out of every thousand men I interviewed can be said to be upright, but not one woman!"* Now, first and foremost, keep in mind this is the author of Ecclesiastes' opinion or experience - not God saying this. Scripture does not declare anywhere that women are morally inferior to men. The bottom line of this verse is that basically no one is upright - men or women. The next verse 29 then says: *"I discovered that God created people to be upright, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path."* This verse again reminds us that though we were created for righteousness, we are broken. We are sinners. We are in need of a Savior. **Q: How about you? Do you know anyone who is always good and never sins? Anyone who does not need a Savior to forgive and heal them of their brokenness? Do you believe God created people to be upright? Without God and Jesus in our lives, do you think we are in severe danger of following our own downward path...?**

9/4 - Now, another verse that says "women" but that I think could just as well say "men" is chapter 7 verse 26 - *"I discovered that a seductive woman is more bitter than death. Her passion is a trap, and her soft hands will bind you. Those who please God will escape from her, but sinners will be caught in her snare."* This verse stood out to me as I read it, for one very modern and very dangerous reason: internet pornography. Now, I know I don't need to tell anyone reading this that internet pornography is an incredibly serious problem affecting far too many people. Many of whom are Christians. The reason this verse stood out to me was the reminder that internet pornography is literally a snare that so many people are caught in. They can't escape it. Well, they can, but it's not easy on their own. I have a hunch that someone reading this is addicted to internet pornography. Or, maybe isn't addicted - yet - but checks it out on occasion. Let me warn anyone who ever goes to an internet pornography site - it is a snare! A trap. Like chapter 9 verse 12 in Ecclesiastes today says: *"Like fish in a net or birds in a snare, people are often caught by sudden tragedy."* Visiting a pornography website even once is a sudden tragedy that has come to your doorstep. You will then be like a fish in a net or a bird in a snare. You will need much prayer and counseling to escape it's lure. I write this to warn folks too who have never visited an internet pornography site, but maybe someday in the future will be tempted to do so. Don't do it. Ever. Run from it. Flee. Actually, I've had to think about this because I know some of my friends (friends from many years ago - who I still try to witness to) watch pornographic movies on occasion. I know it happens at bachelor parties, etc. Honestly, I don't go to bachelor parties at all these days - unless I know for sure there won't be any of this nonsense. But, I have a hunch someday I may be surprised at some gathering where a porn movie will be shown. And guess what? I will run. Literally, I will flee that location of wherever that movie is being shown, and I won't look back. Why? I won't just sit there and let that stuff pollute my mind. Pollute my very soul. Pornography is exactly that - soul pollution. It pollutes your soul! I realize I've been typing way too long on this issue - but I do so because I know it's a major issue for our society today. It is a major issue for the church. Please let me encourage you in that if you are ever in a situation with friends that pornography or strippers or anything like that appears that you literally run. Flee. And don't look back. And don't fret about what your friends think. Your soul is so much more important. If anyone reading this is currently struggling with pornography, let me encourage you to talk to someone you trust about it immediately, and get help. Today. Go to counseling. You cannot get out of the snare on your own. You may succeed for short periods of time, but long-term you are going to need some help. But, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and his precious blood poured out on the

Cross for our sins, yes, indeed you can be freed of the snare of pornography. You quickly need to run toward your freedom in Christ now; connect with pastors, friends & counselors who can keep you accountable and give you tools to beat this; and then please don't ever look back to that which pollutes your very soul. In Christ, my brothers and sisters, we are forgiven. And Forgiveness will heal us. If we will let Him. **Q: How do you avoid the traps and tragedies of sexual temptation and sin your life today? Do you ever literally run away from it?**

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1 - 7:16

8/29 - I love Paul's words in Second Corinthians verse: "*Clearly, you are a letter from Christ prepared by us. It is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on stone, but on human hearts.*" That is a great concept! **We are living letters from Jesus sent out to the world! Have you ever thought of yourself as a letter from Jesus?** I have not, but I like it! It's also interesting to realize that the Spirit living within us as Christians professes and gives witness to the glory of God oftentimes without us even realizing it. I heard a quote once that said something like, "Who you are is so strong that I cannot hear a word you are saying." Basically this quote means that the inherent nature of who we are overshadows our very words. It's more important than our words - people notice our inherent nature! Be it good or be it not so good... So, if the Spirit of Jesus is within us I do believe that the Holy Spirit gives witness and gives glory to God to others that we come in contact with - even if we don't say a word! This is the letter that we are from Christ to the world. The letter that is written on our hearts. And of course there is St. Francis of Assisi who said: "Preach the Gospel at all times - use words only when necessary." Again, the Spirit of Jesus within us preaches the Gospel to the world even without us consciously saying words. Don't get me wrong - sometimes words are exactly what are needed. But oftentimes our very presence through the Spirit of Jesus living within us is more than enough. So, let us go forth into our world this week as living letters from Jesus to a hurting and dying world that so needs the Good News of the Gospel! **How are you like a letter from Jesus to others in your life today?**

8/30 - I love Second Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1 today. In fact, if there is nothing else you remember from today's readings I hope you will remember the last 4 words of this verse always - "*And so, since God in his mercy has given us this wonderful ministry, we never give up.*" We never give up. That is powerful for each of us to remember. Why? Because we will have good and bad days. Days when we are happy. Days when we might be feeling sad. And there will be days when we make mistakes. When we will stumble. When we will fall. But you know what has often gotten me through days like those? This simple prayer or statement or something that fortunately comes into my mind - "I'm not giving up!" We shouldn't say this as justification for our falling short of God's plan for our life. But, when we do fall short, I have found it helpful. Or, if I haven't fallen short, but bad stuff is happening to me, I say it. And I don't say it just to myself - as if my own will power will get me through the tough times. I say it to God. I say it really as a prayer. I say it almost as a statement against the devil, who would love nothing more than for us to give up. The devil would love it if we stumbled and stayed on the ground. If we decided this Christianity thing was just not for us. But you know what - don't give up! When times are tough. When you stumble, pray it to God - "I'm not giving up." Tell it to yourself. We're not giving up! We're never giving up.... **Q: How have you learned to persevere in your life and never give up? Do you still need to learn to never give up in some areas of your life?**

8/30 - Verse 7 today is indeed a wonderful reminder that we humans are but jars of clay - "*But this precious treasure--this light and power that now shine within us--is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own.*" We really do have very fragile bodies. They are wonderful! But they are fragile. They break. They will die. As one writer puts it, "our condition is terminal." And it's true. This side of heaven, our bodies will eventually wear out. But - as Paul tells us in this verse - there is light and power that shines within us when we are in relationship with Jesus! The Holy Spirit indwells our earthen vessels. Our jars of clay. And hopefully we and others recognize that the glory within us is not our own. It is of God. And it is a glory that is available to anyone. Free of charge. It is grace and it beckons us to receive God's glory in our jars of clay so that we will live eternally in heavenly bodies. But for now, we are simply in the hands of the Potter... **Q: How do you see God's light and power shining within you? Especially in your "jar of clay" body, how do you see God's power shine?**

8/31 - Paul's words in Second Corinthians chapter 4 verses 16 through 18 are incredible for each of us to take to heart: "*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.*" I don't know about you, but I confess that I all too often get caught up in the troubles we can see right now. I forget about the joys to come that will last forever. It's sad when I forget about the joys to come. There is so much hurt and disaster in our world that I am afraid all too often I focus

only on these negative things and forget that this is a world where bad things happen. Through our faith and relationship with Jesus we will one day be in heaven where there will be no more tears. No more crying. No more suffering. But, this side of heaven, we will suffer. Each of our bodies will deteriorate and these earthly bodies will die. But, as Paul says in these verses above, though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day! I pray this is the case for you. I pray this is the case for me. **Q: Are you experiencing renewal in your spirit every day? How? Why?** Let us pray for renewal!

9/1 - Today in Second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 17 and 18 we read – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”* How do these 2 verses speak to you? I have a hunch that you have probably heard the first of these 2 verses before? (Michael W. Smith has a child reciting this verse at the beginning of one of his Worship albums.) I find it interesting to consider the first verse – being a new creation – along with the second verse – because God reconciled us through Jesus. I absolutely love the first verse. If we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, we are indeed a new creation. Our old self has gone and the new self has come. And why do we receive this amazing gift? Because the Creator of All has reconciled his Creation (us) to himself through Jesus and the ministry of reconciliation. We have been reconciled to God! This is a powerful thought to consider. It is a joyful thought! It is also a thought that should make us realize that there was a time in our life when we were not reconciled with God. And it should make us realize that there are people in this world right now whom we know who are hurting and are not reconciled with God. **Q: Are you reconciled with God through Jesus? Do you rejoice frequently in the Spirit and in prayers of thanksgiving that you are a new creation? Are you working and praying for reconciliation for your family and friends and others God has brought into your life? Do you believe that they want to leave their old self behind and become a new creation?**

9/2 - I love Paul's opening words in Second Corinthians chapter 6 verses 1 and 2 today, as he quotes from the prophet Isaiah - *"As God's partners, we beg you not to reject this marvelous message of God's great kindness. For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. Today is the day of salvation."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? What does it mean to you? Do you believe that God is ready to help you right now? Do you believe that today is the day of salvation?**

9/3 - Second Corinthians chapter 7 verse 1 today is powerful - *"Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? What promises do we have as followers of Jesus Christ? In light of these promises, should we cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body? And cleanse ourselves of everything that can defile our spirit? Are you living your life in such a way that you are moving toward complete purity? Do you believe that the Cross of Jesus Christ purifies you? What does the Cross of Jesus ultimately purify you for?**

9/4 - Second Corinthians chapter 7 verses 9 & 10 teaches us a great lesson - *"It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow."* **Q: Do you believe that God can use sorrow for redemptive purposes? Do you believe there is such a thing as godly sorrow? Can sorrow turn us away from sin and toward salvation? Have you ever experienced such a sorrow?** I know that I have. There have been times in my life in the past where I was pursuing the false glamour of sin. And that pursuit of sin delivered great sorrow. But, thanks be to God for that sorrow! It was a godly sorrow that turned me away from sin and toward God's salvation. So, if you are experiencing sorrow in your life right now, or when you do, please seek God in the midst of the sorrow. Perhaps the sorrow was not caused by your sin, as it was in my case. But perhaps God can still use that sorrow ultimately for his redemptive purposes.

PSALM 43:1 - 48:14

8/29 - I think Psalm 43 verse 5 starts off with a couple of questions that then answer themselves by the end of the verse - *"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and my God!"* I would agree with what this verse is getting at. If I find myself to be discouraged or sad, it comes as no great surprise to me that I have been putting my hope in things other than God. I have been perhaps even praising false idols. And the sure fire way to be freed from the discouragement or sadness? To put my hope once again in God and God only. And to praise him again! I think this Psalm verse is a great reminder to make sure we are not placing our hope in anything other than

God. For anything other than God will only leave us empty in the end. **Q: How have you overcome discouragement or sadness? Has praising God ever lifted your spirits when you were feeling down?**

8/30 Psalm 44 verse 3 is a wise statement about where the Israelites and our true strength and victory in life comes from - *"They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strength that gave them victory. It was by your mighty power that they succeeded; it was because you favored them and smiled on them."* **Q: As you look back on your life and at the good things that have happened to you, do you think that these things occurred because of your own power or work alone? Or, do you think it is possible that God's hand was blessing your life through all of those good things - even if maybe you did not notice God was there at the time?**

8/31 - Every time I read Psalm 44 verse 23 it reminds me of one of the amazing aspects of the Psalms - that the Psalms are people like us speaking to God - and in all sorts of emotional ways: *"Wake up, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Get up! Do not reject us forever."* This type of verse reminds me that it's okay for us to not always talk to God in our "church voice." It's okay to get a little bit passionate in our prayers to God. I think God would prefer us to be real with him - where we are right now or at any given moment - rather than try to put on any special facades for God. If ever you feel like you are at a loss for words for what you might want to say to God - how you might be needing to pray to God - surf through the Psalms... you'll very likely find voice for what you are trying to say. **Q: How are the Psalms standing out to you this year as you read them? Are they giving voice to some of your prayers? Do you ever pray the Psalms?**

9/1 - Psalm 45 is very likely a song of praise to King David on his wedding day. Interestingly, after the Babylonian exile, this Psalm was applied to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the promised Son of David. I can see how some verses in this Psalm could apply to both the current king of the day and the true king yet to come. Verse 7 is a good example: *"You love what is right and hate what is wrong. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else."* **Q: Is Jesus your King?**

9/2 - Today we read Psalm 46, which is an incredible Psalm! This Psalm represents a song of hope celebrating the certain triumph of God's kingdom - even in the midst of times of severe trouble. This Psalm served as the inspiration for Martin Luther's famous Hymn, "[A Mighty Fortress is Our God](#)." Just after 9/11 I saw emails on the internet floating around with the entirety of Psalm 46. I would encourage you to keep this Psalm in your "back-pocket" as a Psalm to meditate upon whenever you personally might be going through times of severe trouble - or whenever our world might be going through times of severe trouble. Near the end of this Psalm in verse 10 we will read a tiny little verse that I think is the key to this Psalm - *"Be still, and know that I am God."* **Q: If you are going through a time of trouble in your life right now, will you take some time to meditate upon Psalm 46 and in particular verse 10? What does it mean to you to "Be still, and know that I am God?" Do you believe that being still during times of trouble can draw you closer to God? Will you be still today before God? In this stillness will you seek to know that He is indeed God? Even in the midst of whatever might be troubling you, will you seek to know that I AM is your God?**

9/3 - Psalm 47 is an awesome Psalm! I can almost hear and feel music and a drum beat as I read this Psalm today! This Psalm was used in later Jewish synagogue liturgies for Rosh Hashanah, the New Year Festival. This Psalm has also been used by the Christian church in the Celebration of Jesus' ascension, in particular with emphases on verse 5 - *"God has ascended with a mighty shout. The LORD has ascended with trumpets blaring."* **Do you hear and feel the music as you read this Psalm? Do you think God is a fan of music?**

9/4 - Psalm 48 is a celebratory Psalm of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, as verse 8 reads: *"We had heard of the city's glory, but now we have seen it ourselves- the city of the LORD Almighty. It is the city of our God; he will make it safe forever."* I like verse 10 a lot in this Psalm: *"As your name deserves, O God, you will be praised to the ends of the earth."* I have had the good fortune to travel many places on this planet, and I will admit that it always encourages me to no end when I see God being praised and worshiped in other cultures. I always try to visit churches wherever I travel on Sundays, and I love seeing how different cultures worship God. One of the most memorable experiences was in the Dominican Republic in a very impoverished community. I honestly don't know that I have ever seen a congregation worship God so wholeheartedly than I did that day in the DR. It was beautiful. The other thing I am reminded of when traveling is that when we are in relationship with Jesus, God is always with us no matter where we go. When we're 35,000 feet above the ground in an airplane, God is with us. When we're in the middle of nowhere that has no church - God is with us. So, no matter where we go, if God is with us, we have the opportunity to praise God's name to the ends of the earth! **Q: Even if you're traveling to some far off locale where no one else around you would praise God, will you? Have you ever experienced this when traveling?**

PROVERBS 22:8 - 19

8/29 - I love Proverbs 22 verse 9: "*Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.*" It reads like an additional Beatitude from the book of Matthew / Sermon on the Mount. And it's so straightforward. Blessed are those who are generous. Why? Because they feed the poor. Doesn't get more straightforward than that! Although, I will say that we can be generous not only with our money, but in so many ways that we live our lives. We can be generous in spirit - to feed the poor in spirit. We can be generous with our time - to feed those who are time-starved. We can be generous with our encouragement - to feed those who are feeling down. We can be generous in our prayers - to feed those who may not yet know how to pray. And yes, of course, we can be generous with our finances - to feed those who are physically hungry. **Q: What are some ways that you are generous with the poor? What are some ways you'd like to be more generous to the poor?**

8/30 - Proverbs 22 verse 12 is convicting - "*The LORD preserves knowledge, but he ruins the plans of the deceitful.*" This Proverb reminds me that we truly need to examine our motives. **Why do we do what we do? Why do we give? Why do we love? Why do we volunteer?** And this list goes on. And I think we need to continually pray that we are doing what we do for pure motives. Not for any hidden agendas. Let us not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Because, if we are acting with hidden agendas - selfish motives - it is deceitful. Deceitful to others and deceitful to ourselves. We may be tricking ourselves into thinking we are doing something for pure motives when truly there is a selfish agenda in the shadows. God's grace and love and knowledge can of course heal us of our impure motives. And this indeed may be a process over the course of our lifetime. I guess this Proverb jumped out at me because I am realizing that there are times when I do not act with pure motives - particularly when it comes to doing something that on the surface looks good. I am unfortunately oftentimes subconsciously looking for some glory. And ultimately, I know that selfish plans will fail. They will be ruined. **Q: How about you? Why do you do what you do? Why do you give? Why do you love? Why do you volunteer? Is it all for the glory of God? Or is there any hint of wanting your own glory?**

8/31 - Today we read in Proverbs chapter 22 verse 13 – "*The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"*" How does this Proverb speak to you? To me it is a reminder of all of the excuses I can make for not participating in God's will for my life. I strongly believe that God has an amazing purpose and an amazing plan for each of our lives. I also believe that we can often do a very good job of refusing to participate in God's plan for our life. We either think that God's plan really isn't all that good, so we'll do things our own way. Or we are simply lazy or afraid or cowardly or who knows what. We make a million excuses for why we won't get on with God's plan for our life! **Q: How about you? Do you believe that God has an amazing purpose and plan for your life? Do you know what it is? If not, will you seek it? In either case, are you actively working on Kingdom things in your life these days? Are you living out in your life the call of the Gospel to actively love and serve others each and every day? Or are you making excuses?**

9/1 - Proverbs 22 verse 14 teaches us today: "*The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; those living under the LORD's displeasure will fall into it.*" Let us all watch our mouths - though really it is our hearts we must guard, for what comes out of our mouths starts in our hearts. And let us not fall into the trap of listening to anyone's immoral talk. Immoral talk is indeed a deep pit! **Q: How do you react to immoral talk in our world today? Do you avoid it? Confront it?**

9/2 - Today Proverbs 22:15 teaches us: "*A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but discipline will drive it away.*" This is a great reminder that loving and godly discipline is of great benefit to a youngster whose heart is filled with foolishness. **Q: Do you suppose that discipline is of great benefit to even us oldsters :) who might have hearts filled with foolishness at times? Do you appreciate loving and godly discipline in your life today? Do you practice discipline in your life today? Are you disciplined? Are you a Disciple? Speaking of which, has anyone read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book "[The Cost of Discipleship](#)"? It is a great book!**

9/3 - There is an interesting "or" statement in Proverbs chapter 22 verse 16 today - "*A person who gets ahead by oppressing the poor or by showering gifts on the rich will end in poverty.*" I hadn't really ever thought that showering gifts on the rich might put one in the same boat as oppressing the poor. Oppressing the poor seems like the obvious no-no. **Q: But showering gifts on the rich... why do you suppose this is a no-no as well? What's wrong with showering the gifts on the rich? I'm wondering if it is because our gifts would be better given elsewhere? e.g. to the poor?**

9/4 - Proverbs 22 verses 17 through 19 today are a great reminder for why we read and study the Bible! *"Listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my instruction. For it is good to keep these sayings deep within yourself, always ready on your lips. I am teaching you today--yes, you--so you will trust in the LORD."* Great stuff. I love the part that says it is good to keep these saying deep within yourself - in your heart! And to memorize these sayings with your mind so that they are always ready on your lips. **Q: Are you listening to the words of the Bible? Are you applying your heart to the Bible's instruction? Is studying the Bible enhancing your trust in God? Actually - if anyone out there memorizes Scripture, please post up in the Comments section below? I would love to know which verses you have found useful in your life? And - if anyone has advice on how to best go about memorizing Scripture, please post that up too. Are you memorizing Scripture on a regular basis? Are you bringing Scripture to mind when faced with temptation or sadness or whatever ails you?**

Group discussions:

- Introductions.
- What were some of your favorite verses or passages from the past week's readings?
- What are some questions that were generated for you based on the past week's readings?
- What is something new you learned about God or the Bible from the past week's readings?
- How did God speak to you through the past week's readings?
- What is something you want to change or grow in your life based on the past week's readings?
- **Discuss the bold Questions in the Study Notes**
- Any prayer requests for the group for the coming week?

Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.

Daily questions for this next week's readings you may want to journal or pray through and discuss with your group next Sunday:

- My favorite verses or passages:
- What I learned from the readings:
- My questions for further study:
- How God spoke to me through the Word:
- Something I want to change or grow in my life based on the Word:
- My prayer points based on the Word:

Visit www.OneYearBibleBlog.com this next week for daily commentary and questions for reflection.

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