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

GENESIS 1:1 - JOB 42:17 (Daily reading schedule at: www.ChronologicalBibleBlog.com)

1/1 - BOOK OF GENESIS OVERVIEW:

Author: Moses

Date: ~1420 B.C.

Content: The book of Genesis was written to explain how everything began; in fact, the very title Genesis means “origin” or “beginning.” It explains that God created the universe, how man was created and placed in a perfect environment, how sin began, and how God provided salvation for lost man. The beginning of human history is described, the beginning of arts and crafts, how human languages began, and where the various nations came from. The focus then shifts to the beginning of the Hebrew people with Abraham, followed by the histories of Isaac, Jacob and his sons, and the book ends with Joseph in Egypt.

Theme: The main idea that runs through the book is that although God made everything good, man’s sin has spoiled it. God has not given up, but is now in search of man to save him. The overall control of God is stressed, and special attention is given to how God directs history for the good of his people and their salvation. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers “The One Year Bible Companion” p. 1)*

1/1 - Moses is the author/compiler of the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch, or the books of the Law. It is believed that these five books were written by Moses during Israel's 40 years in the desert after the exodus from Egypt - which was likely between 1446 B.C. and 1406 B.C. The book of Genesis is foundational to understanding the rest of the Bible. It is a book of relationships - between God and his creation; between God and humans; and between humans themselves. In Genesis, God pledges his love and faithfulness to humans through covenants. It is a narrative that continually demonstrates faith.

1/1 - In Genesis chapters 1 & 2 we read about the Creation account and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The 6 days of creation have main 2 lines of thought by various scholars: 1. they were 6 literal 24 hour days or 2. they were 6 figurative days of an undefined timeframe, which could even be millions of years. One quick note about the location of the Garden of Eden. It is believed to have been near where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet, in what is now southern Iraq.

1/1 - Today we read this incredibly powerful verse in Genesis chapter 1 verse 27: *“So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.”* **Q: Do you believe that you are made in the image of God? Is this a powerful thing to reflect upon? What might this mean for your life this new year, knowing that you are made in the image of God? Does this give you a sense of possibility for your life? A sense that you are made for a great purpose in this life?**

1/1 - Chapter 2 verse 3 is beautiful: *“And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.”* A day of rest. One day a week. **Q: If God did this, think we should too? :)** 6 days of work and play and 1 day each week of resting in God. I confess I like the concept a lot more than I actually put it into practice. **Perhaps 2011 can be a year of new beginnings where a Sabbath day of rest enters our lives each week? How are you doing on taking a Sabbath?**

1/1 - In Genesis chapters 3 we read about The Fall. Chapter 3 is a foundational chapter of the Bible to understand. From this chapter our history goes forward with sin passed on to every man and woman through the seed of Adam. This sets the stage for God’s pursuit of men and women in Genesis, followed by the Exodus from Egypt, the Laws, the judges, the kings, the prophets - and ultimately the final solution to the Fall: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (ultra-Cliff Notes version here... you'll get the full version of all of this over the next 363 days... :-)) It is through belief in Jesus as Messiah that we are saved from what began here in Genesis chapter 3. **Q: What is your reaction to reading about The Fall in Genesis today? Is it painful to read about The Fall after reading about The Creation yesterday? If Satan was able to deceive Adam & Eve back then, do you think he still deceives people today? What is our remedy from the lies and deception Satan might throw our way? Do you believe reading and studying God’s Word on a daily basis might be one remedy? What are some other remedies? (prayer, going to church, being in**

a small community group with others, etc.?) Do you believe Jesus has saved us from The Fall?

1/1 - In Genesis 3:1-4 in today's readings we are first introduced to the devil in the Bible, who clothes himself as a snake. The devil is often referred to as the "great deceiver", and in this chapter you can see why. I think an important thing for us to realize today is that the devil continues to work in our world. He continues to deceive men and women. And, unfortunately, he is good at what he does. I have a hunch that probably a few people reading this blog do not believe in the existence of the devil. I will admit that early in my Christian walk, I did not believe in the devil's existence. However - thankfully, I was disciplined by a godly man who counseled me through Bible passages that prove his existence - chapter 3 of Genesis certainly being one. In fact, one interesting thing my friend said to me at this early stage of my Christian walk was this - "The devil's greatest trick is to make you think that he does not exist." This is a very powerful statement. Please consider it. **Q: Why would this be his greatest trick?** Because if you believe there is no devil, then you may believe there is no evil, and you then may believe that there is really no sin or nothing you can do wrong, and then you may come to believe that there is no moral code. **You see the slippery slope of not acknowledging and realizing the existence of the devil and evil?**

1/1 - The other problem of not realizing the existence of the devil or evil is that you can more easily be tempted and enslaved to bad habits and sins. So - I know I'm going on quite a bit here about this point - **Q: I just want to encourage you to ask yourself - do you believe in the existence of the devil? Do you believe in the existence of evil? Of temptation? Of sin?** There is a remedy and solution to protect and keep you from all of this - and that is Jesus. But, it's possible that you may not run into the loving and saving arms of Jesus if you don't believe in the devil or evil. Second to last point - a book that did help open my eyes in a big way to existence of evil in our world today is [Frank Peretti's "This Present Darkness"](#). It is a Christian book and one that I believe will really bring home the seriousness of evil and temptation in our world today. You may want to check it out if you have questions on all of this. Also, C.S. Lewis, in the intro to his incredible book about evil and temptation in our lives called ["The Screwtape Letters"](#) writes this: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight." A great quote... and a great reminder to not have an excessive nor unhealthy interest in the devil or evil - this is of course extremely dangerous! And the bottom line is of course to turn your eyes and gaze toward God and Jesus for ultimate protection - and I do believe reading the Bible each day is one of the best ways to do exactly this!

1/1 - In verses 12 and 13 we see Adam and Eve passing the buck on why they sinned. Check out Adam's words in verse 12: *"but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."* At first glance you might think that Adam is just blaming Eve in this verse, but note that he is also blaming God! "the woman YOU gave me..." Adam was blaming God and Eve - anybody but himself. **Q: How often do we do this in our lives? Blame others for our mistakes?** Verse 15 is a prophetic verse that carries forward to Jesus: *"From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* This last sentence refers to Jesus ultimately defeating the devil through his life, death on the cross, and resurrection!

1/2 - In Genesis chapter 4 we read about the first murder of humankind - Cain killing his own brother Abel in a premeditative way. This is a clear demonstration of The Fall and how sin lives in the hearts of men and women - and can only be redeemed and forgiven today through faith in Jesus and through God's grace. Many of you probably asked yourselves, why didn't God look with favor on Cain's offering? Commentaries I've read suggest that Cain's offering was a careless or thoughtless offering whereas Abel's offering was a choice or generous offering. And God saw the motivation and heart attitude of both men as they brought their offering. It seems that God is looking straight into Cain's heart as he says this in verses 6 and 7: *"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."* That is a scary thought - sin waiting to attack and destroy. In the NIV it translates *"sin is crouching at your door."* Let us be watchful and prayerful to not be overtaken by sin, but to respond correctly to the grace and strength given us through Jesus. **Q: How do you combat the "sin crouching at your door" in your life?**

1/2 - Genesis 4:17 - *"Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch."* - brings up the big question of "Where did Cain's wife come from?" The short answer to this is that his wife was a sister, niece, great-niece, or family member of some sort, which brings up the next question about why was there inter-family marriage in the Bible. Let me refer you to 3 great website links to give

you more in-depth answers on these questions. Please do read the [short answer at this link](#), the [long answer at this link](#), and another [short answer at this link](#) to these questions regarding Cain's wife.

1/2 - In Genesis 4:19 polygamy enters history: *"Lamech married two women--Adah and Zillah."* Polygamy clearly went against God's divine intention of monogamy in Genesis chapter 2:24 - *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."* God's original plan early on in the Bible is monogamy in marriage. We will see many cases of polygamy this year as we read through the One Year Bible - this is humankind thwarting God's will - which we will also see in many ways throughout our readings this year. I think sometimes we can get hung up on the "strange stuff" we read about in the Bible - but one important point to make is this - The Bible records both God's will and teachings, and people's sin. So if we happen to read about people's sin in the Bible, as we do here in verse 19 with Lamech's polygamy, please don't confuse this with this being God's will. It's people's sin. And we'll see this again in the Bible - fortunately we have a loving God who sent his son, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

1/2 - In Genesis chapter 5 we read about the genealogy from Adam to Noah. You will note that there are some long life spans here in this genealogy. These life spans are often interpreted to be either literal or symbolic - and many evangelical commentaries will say either is possible. Those who believe these ages in this genealogy are literal believe this is the case because of a few reasons: 1. the human race was more genetically pure in this early time period, so diseases did not shorten life spans; 2. no rain had yet fallen on the earth - until the next chapter - so the expanse of water above the earth protected people from environmental factors; and/or 3. God gave people longer life spans so they would have time to fill the earth - per Genesis 1:28.

1/2 - In Genesis 6 we read about the Flood. Most evangelical commentaries say that this was a literal flood that covered the entire earth, while some do say that it's possible that it was a flood that covered the Mesopotamian region of the earth. More seem to go with a literal flood covering the entire earth. Chapter 6 verses 5 & 6 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart."* I think it was this last sentence that really stood out to me - It broke his heart. God's heart was broken over our behavior. I love realizing that God has this type of compassion and care for what we do. What we do matters to God! When we are obedient and faithful and loving, God rejoices! When we are not, it breaks his heart. I hope it encourages you to know that God did not just create you and doesn't really care whether you do well in this life - he is rooting for you! He wants you to run the race well and receive the prize! **Q: How does Genesis Chapter 6 verses 5 & 6 in the days of Noah stand out to you?** *"Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart."* **Is there any correlation to the days of Noah to our modern day? In what ways do you think God's heart is broken over our world today?**

1/2 - In Genesis 6:4 we read about the Nephilim. Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org says this about the Nephilim: *"According to this view, the 'sons of God' of verses 2 and 4 are fallen angels, which have taken the form of masculine human-like creatures. These angels married women of the human race (either Cainites or Sethites) and the resulting offspring were the Nephilim. The Nephilim were giants with physical superiority and therefore established themselves as men of renown for their physical prowess and military might. This race of half human creatures was wiped out by the flood, along with mankind in general, who were sinners in their own right (verse 6:11,12)."*

1/3 - Yesterday's Flood readings in Genesis were about judgment - today's readings are about redemption! Chapter 8 verse 1 stood out to me: *"But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat."* I like that phrase "But God remembered" - but I have a hunch that it is a bit understated in God's love and compassion for Noah and all of creation. Verse 11 is interesting in that if you were ever wondering where our modern day peace symbol of a dove with an olive branch comes from originally - now you know - God's peace symbol to Noah here in Genesis 8:11!

1/3 - In Genesis chapter 9 verses 8 through 17 we read about the first major covenant of God's in the Old Testament called the Noahic Covenant. There are 6 more major covenant's that we will get to later this year - The first Abrahamic covenant, The second Abrahamic covenant, The Sinaitic Covenant (Moses on Mt. Sinai), The Phinehas Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. So - Covenants are a big deal! God is a God of covenants! This one is laid out in all 10 verses but can basically be summed up in verse 11: *"I solemnly promise never to send another flood to kill all living creatures and destroy the earth."* And the rainbow is given as a sign of The Noahic Covenant. **Q: How did reading about the flood affect you? Is there any way you can see the flood as an act of mercy from God?**

1/3 - Genesis chapter 9 verse 3 is intriguing. I forgot to mention this in previous day's posts - but, I read a commentary on the Garden of Eden and even thereafter that early descendants of Adam & Eve were strictly vegetarians - God had given Adam & Eve the fruits & plants in the Garden to eat - and then Adam's son's cultivated the ground for plants / food. But here in verse 3 God is now saying that it is okay to eat animals' meat for food: *"I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables."* Very interesting. We'll get more details on clean and unclean animals per the Law in our OT readings early this year.

1/3 - In the remainder of chapter 9 we read about Noah's son's Shem, Ham and Japheth. Initially I asked myself, why is Noah so upset with Ham? The answer lies in verse 22: *"Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers."* The last 3 words of this sentence were the issue - Ham told his brothers his father was naked. Instead of discreetly just covering up his father on his own, he broadcast the issue to his brothers. **Q: Are there times in our life where we could discreetly take care of problems of others, or could confront the individual directly about the problem, but instead we broadcast what someone else's problems are? Is this the right thing to do? Is this the godly thing to do?**

1/3 - There is a lot of interesting stuff going on in the genealogy in chapter 10, which is typically called The Table of Nations, but I'll just quickly point out verses 21 & 22: *"Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber."* Shem becomes translated in the future as Semites - i.e. Semitic peoples. And Eber is translated in the future as Hebrew. So, you can see that Shem's lineage is going to be the one from where Israel comes from.

1/4 - In Genesis chapter 11 we read about the tower of Babel. I probably should not confess this, but I will - verse 4 made me smile and laugh at myself a bit, which really shouldn't be funny. This verse reminded me of myself at times: *"Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies--a monument to our greatness!"* This verse is obviously not one that made God happy, as we see in subsequent verses. And I guess I have to ask myself - are there times my life or areas of my life where I am attempting to build something that will be a "monument to my greatness"? And I'm afraid that the answer is too often yes. Or it surely has been in the past. I pray that I'm turning over the desire to "be great" over to God more and more these days. I pray that I am not seeking glory for myself - but seeking glory for God. But, I am afraid that sometimes I revert back to wanting to build a "monument to my greatness" in my work or volunteer activities or maybe even personal relationships. And this is pride. It was this pride that brought about the building of the tower of Babel - and it was because of pride that God stopped the building of the tower by giving the human race different languages. **Q: In your life – have you ever sought to build monuments of greatness for yourself? How have you refocused your life to seek to only glorify God?**

1/4 - We are introduced to Abram & Sarai in Genesis chapter 12. This is significant in that it transitions our Old Testament readings from being about the world at large to being primarily about a specific man, Abram, his family, and his descendants. Verses 2 and 3 are an amazing promise from God to Abraham: *"I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."* This is a powerful promise that we will see played out throughout the rest of our Old Testament readings - and into the New Testament this promise continues and is fulfilled in Jesus - and continues in us as spiritual descendants of Abram today. I heard somewhere once that one way to paraphrase this promise is "I will bless you, so that you will be a blessing to others." And I think about that today for our own lives. If we have been blessed by God, is it possible that we have been blessed in part so that we will be a blessing to others? **Q: How do you believe that you been blessed by God? How are you passing along that blessing to others in your life? What are some new ways in 2011 that God might be calling you to be a blessing to others?**

1/4 - The brief story of Abram and Sarai in Egypt is a foreshadowing of what we will see later in Genesis and into Exodus - the descendants of Abram going into Egypt to escape a severe famine - and then ultimately leaving Egypt to the north "with all their household and belongings" (verse 20). I also was intrigued in our Matthew readings a couple of days ago that Jesus as a child went into Egypt, when Mary & Joseph fled Herod's decree to kill all boys 2 & under around Bethlehem. Egypt plays quite a supporting role in the Bible!

1/4 - Chapter 13 verse 9 stood out to me today as Abram was trying to settle the arguments between his and Lot's herdsmen over pastureland: *"I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another"*

place." I guess what I really like about this is Abram is giving Lot the first choice of the land. It seems like Abram is confident that he will personally be okay with whatever 2nd choice is left-over to him because he is in a relationship with God. **Q: What is a time in your life that you let someone else take the first choice, and you took the "leftover" and it turned out to be a blessing overall?**

1/4 - Chapter 14 verse 14 also stood out in regards to Abram's character: *"When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them in Dan."* I don't know about you... but I'll be honest. If my nephew got captured by a band of marauding kings and their army, I'm thinking I might just let my nephew go and chalk it up to very bad luck on his part... But not Abram! When he heard the news that Lot had been captured, it looks like he did not even blink! He called together his household immediately and they were off and running after Kedorlaomer's army. Yes, they were chasing after an army... again, I'm not so sure I would do this... though, hopefully, maybe I now would if I can keep in mind Abram's character here.... **Q: What about you? Would you chase after an army? Is there maybe someone in your life who has been "captured" by something - an addiction, a sadness, some bad luck - and will you go chasing after that person and help to free them from the "army" that has ensnared them?**

1/4 - In verses 17 through 20 in chapter 14 we read about Melchizedek. And I definitely would like to get others opinions on this - Who was Melchizedek? The reason I ask this question is due to Hebrews Chapter 7. (Hebrews 7 is well worth the read at this point in our Genesis journey.) My thinking currently is that Melchizedek was a very great priest - but I don't believe he was Jesus Christ preincarnate. But, again, I'm willing to listen to others on your thoughts on this. My thoughts on this is that Hebrews 7 seems to be saying that Jesus is "like" or "in the order" of Melchizedek - but not quite saying Jesus is Melchizedek. I read there are 4 basic theories on who Melchizedek is - 1. simply a king of Salem and Abram was showing him respect, 2. Melchizedek was a standard title for the kings of Salem. 3. He was a "type of Christ" and he illustrates a lesson about Christ. or 4. He was Jesus preincarnate in a temporary body form. **Q: Who do you think Melchizedek was?**

1/5 - Genesis chapter 15:9-21 is the first Abrahamic Covenant. It was an unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of the land to Abram and his descendants. Verses 5 & 6 in chapter 15 are powerful: *"Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that--too many to count!" And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith."* It is believed that in the dark night sky of the ancient near east Abram could have seen up to 8,000 stars in the sky. And verse 6, the preceding sentence to this one I think is important for each of us to consider. **Q: How do you know that you believe God's promises in your life today? What are God's promises for you? How do we demonstrate faith that God's promises for us through his son Jesus are true?**

1/5 - In Genesis chapter 16 we get another potential Jesus sighting in the OT! :) (Similar to our "potential" with Melchizedek yesterday.) I'll keep you posted on all our "potential" Jesus sightings in the Old Testament - as seen by some commentaries. Some believe that the angel that appears to Hagar in the desert could be Christ pre-incarnate. Why? Because the angel seems to be speaking in the first person, as if the angel is God - (and Jesus is God) - but yet the angel is not described as God the Father. Check out verse 10 on this point - *"I will give you more descendants than you can count."* Next point is that later in this chapter Hagar seems to be giving the angel a bit more credit of the angel "just being an angel", as you'll see here in verse 13: *"Thereafter, Hagar referred to the LORD, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!"* I guess I can see how some commentators go down this path... **Q: Why or why not do you think Jesus could have been preincarnate in the Old Testament?**

1/5 - In Genesis chapter 17 we read about the second Abrahamic Covenant! This covenant was is a conditional divine pledge from God to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendents. The condition? Obedience and consecration to God as symbolized by circumcision. In verse 23 I think we see another example of Abraham's prompt obedience to God's will for his life: *"On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him."* Abraham does not hesitate - does not wait one more day - he and every other male in his household get circumcised that very day! **Q: How are you prompt with your obedience to God's will in your life? Are there some areas in your life where you feel like you might not be so prompt with your obedience?**

1/6 - In Genesis 18 we see some amazing hospitality from Abraham to God and two angels that appear along with God - or Jesus again preincarnate. Hospitality for strangers was important back in Abraham's day. **Q: What is an example of**

how you show hospitality toward strangers today? What are some areas in your life that God might be calling you to show more hospitality?

1/6 - In Genesis chapter's 18 & 19 we get a great look at how God responds to intercessory prayer and also clearly see God's judgment in chapter 19. Ch. 18 Verse 17 is a powerful start to our readings: *"Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked.* I think what we see here and in the following verses is that God obviously really cares for Abraham - as a friend - and as one who has been credited as righteous because of his faith. And I do think this is an important point before we read about Abraham's intercessory prayer to God - that for intercessory prayer really to have any standing before God, we need to be in right relationship with God. If we are being disobedient to God or being unrepentant of sins or bad habits that God wants us to give up, then I think our intercessory prayer for others can lose its effectiveness. Check out James 5:16 for this point: *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* Abraham was credited as righteous because of his faith (Genesis 15:6). Hence, his intercessory prayer was powerful and effective. **Q. How do you intercede for others in your prayers today? Do you believe intercessory prayer to be powerful?**

1/6 - In verse 25 we begin to see Abraham's several requests, or intercessions, to God to spare the city of Sodom for the sake of the righteous living in the city: *"Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"* And from here we see Abraham bringing down the number of righteous that would need to be in the city for it to be spared. I don't necessarily see what Abraham was doing here as haggling with God - but, I think he was acting out of compassion for the righteous few in the city - and surely Lot and his family were on his mind during these intercessions...

1/6 - In Genesis chapter 19 there is a lot going on. And I'm sure a few things that jump out at you when you read them, and create a lot of questions in your mind. (Lot offering his two virgin daughters (v. 8) & what happened in the cave (v. 30-36), for examples) **Let me recommend you take 10 minutes and read through Bob Deffinbaugh's "From City Councilman to Caveman: "What a Difference a Day Makes" (Genesis 19:1-38)" [at this link at Bible.org](#).** I think this will answer a lot of your questions on why certain things happened in this chapter, from Bob's perspective. One great quote from Bob at this link above is this: "Lot attempted to live his life in a city and then in a cave. We cannot become one with the world, but neither are we to flee from it. The proper balance between the city of Sodom and the cave is the tent of Abraham. We are to live in the world, but without becoming attached to it or conformed to it. We are to be strangers and pilgrims." I like that! **Q: How do you balance living life in the world, but not of it? What might it look like in your life to live in a "tent" like Abraham, rather than in the "city" or the "cave"?**

1/6 - One verse that immediately stood out to me in chapter 19 is verse 16: *"When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful."* What struck me in this verse is that Lot hesitated. In the previous verse, the angels say very clearly and strongly - "get out of the city! hurry! God is going to destroy it!" And yet... Lot hesitated. This jumped out at me because in our couple of previous day's readings we have seen how promptly obedient Abraham was to God's commands. When God said to get circumcised and circumcise everyone in the house - it happened that same day! And yet, here we see Lot hesitating on a very clear command from angels... **Q: Do you think we live our lives of faith and obedience to God more often like Abraham or Lot? What is an example of a time you were promptly obedient to God's will and commands for your life? And a time you hesitated? Which worked out better in the long run?**

1/6 - Today in Genesis chapter 20 we see that Abraham is not perfect (we have seen this humanness of Abraham earlier in our Genesis readings too). This should be good news for each of us! :) Abraham essentially tells Abimelech a half-truth - and yes, half-lie. The thing to remember here is that Abraham has received incredible promises from God and covenants - and yet, it is apparent that Abraham still has some fear of what will happen to him and Sarah. This imperfection of God's people is something that we will continue to see throughout our Bible readings. God uses imperfect people for his purposes. God does typically use those that love him. But, those that love God do still sin and make mistakes. God partners with imperfect people throughout history. God partners with people like you and me. **Q: Are you perfect? This side of heaven? Will you be made perfect someday? How? Or, by Whom?**

1/7 - In Genesis chapter 21 we read about Sarah joyfully giving birth to Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old! Isaac's name means "he laughs" - which in part came from when Sarah laughed when God told Abraham she would have a son a year prior. We also read about Hagar and Ishmael being sent away. Verse 13 stands out when God is speaking to

Abraham, as he was upset about having to send Ishmael away: *"But I will make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he also is your son."* Ishmael does later become the ruler of a large tribe in Paran and the Desert of Sinai, south of Israel. Then, one of Ishmael's daughter's marries Esau, Ishmael's nephew. From here the lineage of Esau becomes Arabic peoples and eventually the Muslim religion comes from this lineage. It is said that Abraham is the father of the world's three major monotheistic faiths - Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths.

1/7 - In Genesis chapter 22 Abraham's faith and obedience is tested in what most see as the climax of our readings about Abraham in Genesis. Some interesting things to note about this chapter. It is said that much of this chapter foreshadows what happens with Jesus. A father is called to sacrifice his one and only son - a son he loves so very much. The son is taken to a mountain to be sacrificed. On the mountain a "lamb" is sacrificed - a ram in place of Isaac's life - and Jesus as the "lamb" in place of our lives. Hebrews 11:19 has an interesting point to make about these readings in Genesis 22 today: *"Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead."* In verse 14 we read about the mountain where Isaac was taken and the altar was built - Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah was about 48 miles north of Beersheba, where Abraham and Isaac began their journey - so a 3 day journey at that time makes sense. Some scholars believe that Mount Moriah is the Temple Mount area of Jerusalem, where the first and second temples were located - and also where the Dome of the Rock mosque, built in 691 A.D., is now located. Tons more info on the Temple Mount area, including photos is online here - <http://www.templemount.org/> **Q: What in Genesis 22 stood out to you as you read about Abraham taking Isaac up Mount Moriah? What struck you as interesting or odd about this story? Why do you think this all happened to Abraham and what does it say to us for our lives today?**

1/7 - Today in Genesis chapter 23 we read about the burial of Sarah. I think an amazing thing to note in this chapter is that Abraham is determined to bury Sarah in Canaan, based on God's promise ([Gen 15:9-21](#)) to Abraham that Canaan would be his and his descendant's homeland. Verse 4 stands out in this chapter and I think can speak for us today as well: *"Here I am, a stranger in a foreign land, with no place to bury my wife."* We will see this type of phrase throughout the Old Testament - the idea of being an alien and a stranger. In Abraham's case, he was literally living in a tent - a very temporary structure. But yet, Abraham was confident in God's promise of the Promised Land. And for us today - we are called to be "in the world, but not of the world". In a sense, we are also aliens and strangers. **Q: How are you acting like you are an alien and stranger in this world? How are you looking forward to your promised land with God in heaven? Are there any ways you are maybe getting a bit too comfortable in this world?**

1/7 - Genesis chapter 24 is a just a wonderful narrative story about Abraham sending his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac! What I like a lot about this chapter was how God was honored by Abraham, and by the servant at the well, and by Laban and Bethuel at the end of today's readings. It was evident that everyone was making their plans and prayers based on God! And not based on their own ideas or will power. God was being consulted. Verse 15 stands out in this chapter: *"As he was still praying, a young woman named Rebekah arrived with a water jug on her shoulder. Her father was Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah."* As the servant was just finishing his prayer, God was answering it! **Q: Describe a time to the group when you had a similar experience of a prayer being answered? Under what circumstances do you pray to God for His involvement in your life? Do you think that prayer changes things?**

1/7 - Rebekah and Isaac meet and marry in today's readings! Before the meeting & marriage - I love the very opening verse 52 in Genesis chapter 24 today: *"At this reply, Abraham's servant bowed to the ground and worshiped the LORD."* This just made me think - when was the last time that I actually bowed to the ground and worshiped the Lord? I have to confess it was a long time ago. This may sound strange, but one time I was listening to the David Crowder song "Deliver Me" and for some reason I literally fell to the ground, bowed, and worshiped God. It was an experience that's hard to forget. But why is it so hard for me to get back down on the ground and worship God once again? **Q: Can you share with the group a time you bowed to the ground and worshiped the Lord? Do you think our body posture makes any sort of difference when worshipping or praying to God?**

1/8 - Genesis chapter 25 has a lot going on in it today! We read about Keturah, the death of Abraham and the descendants of Ishmael. In verse 19 we begin reading about Jacob and Esau. Jacob we will read about for a large portion of the remainder of Genesis - there is actually not that many chapters we will read about Isaac. In verse 34 we read this about Jacob & Esau: *"Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank and went on about his business, indifferent to the fact that he had given up his birthright."* In Genesis chapter 26 we can see where the old adage, "like father, like son" could have come from. Isaac like his father Abraham told foreigners that his wife was his

sister. **Q: What are your thoughts when reading about Jacob and Esau's birth and lives? Do you see any parallels in their behaviors to our behaviors today?**

1/9 - Genesis chapter 25 has a lot going on in it today! We read about Keturah, the death of Abraham and the descendants of Ishmael. In verse 19 we begin reading about Jacob and Esau. Jacob we will read about for a large portion of the remainder of Genesis - there is actually not that many chapters we will read about Isaac. In verse 34 we read this about Jacob & Esau: *"Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank and went on about his business, indifferent to the fact that he had given up his birthright."* In Genesis chapter 26 we can see where the old adage, "like father, like son" could have come from. Isaac like his father Abraham told foreigners that his wife was his sister. **Q: What are your thoughts when reading about Jacob and Esau's birth and lives? Do you see any parallels in their behaviors to our behaviors today?**

1/9 - Today's Genesis chapter 26 readings open up with Isaac digging wells - and then moving on when the Philistine's contest the wells. This shows an incredible amount of patience on Isaac's behalf. In this arid region of Gerar, water was like gold and people often battled over water. Filling in someone's well was akin to declaring war. Verse 22 stood out to me in these readings about the wells: *"Abandoning that one, he dug another well, and the local people finally left him alone. So Isaac called it "Room Enough," for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be able to thrive.""* For me this was reminiscent of Abraham giving Lot the choice of lands when there was disputes between their herdsmen. Abraham was confident that God would provide even with "2nd choice" of the lands - and Isaac here seems to be following in his father's footsteps of wisdom. I also like the naming of the well - "Room Enough." I think sometimes in our world today we can get so competitive with each other, thinking that there is a limited sized pie and we have to get our piece of it! "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" author Steven Covey calls this the "scarcity mentality" - and he encourages us to instead operate with an "abundance mentality" - that there is ultimately enough pie for everyone. That there is Room Enough. (perhaps we do need to do a better job sometimes of sharing our pieces of the pie however... see our Psalms & Proverbs today on this point) **Q: How do you find yourself operating in your own life - more often out of the scarcity mentality or the abundance mentality? Do you see the risk of the scarcity mentality? And the blessing of the abundance mentality? Do you believe that there is Room Enough?**

1/9 - Genesis chapter 27 today is a very interesting and challenging chapter... both Jacob and Rebekah are deceitful. And Isaac is suspicious of the whole charade. And yet, Jacob receives the verbal blessing from Isaac, which was binding back in those days. I think this chapter is challenging in that it can bring up the question of sin - and can sin be used to fulfill God's will? You know I'm going to defer to our resident-expert on Genesis - Bob Deffinbaugh from bible.org. :) Check out this quote from Bob in his summary of this chapter: "The purpose of God as expressed to Rebekah in [Genesis 25:23](#) was perfectly accomplished without one alteration. The sins of Isaac and Esau and Rebekah and Jacob did not in any way thwart God's will from being done. In fact, their sins were employed by God in such a way as to achieve the will of God. God's sovereignty is never thwarted by man's sin. To the contrary, God is able to achieve His purposes by employing man's sinful acts to further His plans." **Q: Do you believe God is able to achieve His purposes by employing our sinful acts to further his plans? Have you seen God work through sin or redeem a sinful situation in your life?**

1/10 - Today's Genesis chapter 28 readings begin Jacob's adventure as he leaves the land promised to Abraham and Isaac and heads for Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle. Jacob's dream at Bethel is awesome in this chapter! While this dream is often referred to as "Jacob's Ladder," many commentaries say it was probably stairs that Jacob dreamt of - similar to the stairs of a ziggurat (think tower of Babel) that winded around the outside of the tower on the way up. **Q: Have you ever had a dream anything like this one? :) Have dreams played a part in your spiritual journey at all? Can you share a dream with the group that was part of your spiritual journey?**

1/10 - I do have to admit - Jacob's story and the parallel stories of his uncle Laban, Jacob's wives, and his sons - culminating with Joseph in Egypt - is one of my favorite parts of the Old Testament. This is just good narrative! I think one thing that really opened my eyes to all of the small details of the story of Jacob is that I was in an amazing Bible study for about a year going through this part of Genesis. **I don't know if you've been in a group Bible study before?** If not, let me encourage you to join one! They are incredible. You get so many different perspectives from each person in the group - similar in some ways to what you are getting here on this blog - but more personal and I think far better. You get to go through the text with other people and really dive into things - and even have some fun joking around about things. **Q: If the church you attend has some sort of Bible study, will you consider checking it out this month of January?**

1/10 - I found verses 21 & 22 intriguing: *"Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the LORD my God."* Do you notice the "if" / "then" statement in this vow from Jacob? Jacob is putting some conditions on what it will take for him to make God his God. **Q: Do we do this in our lives sometimes? Do we try to put "conditions" on God? Does this really make sense to do? What if our conditions are not met? What if things don't go as planned? Will we still love God as our God, even if the "conditions" in our life are not met or are not ideal?**

1/10 - In Genesis chapter 29 Jacob arrives at Paddan-Aram, which was close to Haran. See a map on the Bible blog for where Jacob will spend the next 20 years of his life. All 12 of his children besides Benjamin will be born in this land! In this chapter Jacob meets Rachel and Laban, and works for 7 years to marry Rachel - except for the fact that Jacob was deceived by Laban on the wedding night! Which is a bit ironic, as we have seen in recent chapters that Jacob did some deceiving himself... I read one commentary that said for most of his life Jacob was so focused on getting the rights of the first born from his father Isaac - and now he must accept the rights of the first born in this surprise marriage to Leah! At the end of today's readings we see that Leah is beginning to have sons - including Levi who will be the ancestor of the Aaronic priestly line of Israel, and Judah who will be the ancestor of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ.

1/11 - Today's Genesis chapter 30 readings bring us the account of several of Jacob's sons and a daughter being born to Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, and Rachel. We also read about Jacob gaining wealth and wanting to leave his father-in-law Laban's house to go back home in Genesis chapter 30. In verse 37 we read: *"Now Jacob took fresh shoots from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of the bark to make white streaks on them."* It seems in this verse and the ones that follow that Jacob is getting a bit superstitious - and not really asking God for help. Later Jacob does admit that God did do the work of increasing his wealth, and that he didn't do it on his own with his superstitions, as we see in Chapter 31 verse 9 when Jacob is speaking to his wives Rachel & Leah: *"In this way, God has made me wealthy at your father's expense."* I think it's great to see that Jacob starts to realize more and more that God is in control. **Q: I wonder for us, today, do we sometimes act like Jacob with the sticks - and rely on superstition or our own power, when we should be relying solely on God? Are there maybe areas in our work life or personal life where we think we are running the show? Are we really? Or is God? Will we let our superstitions go, and embrace the reality that God is in control?** And - who better is there to be in control, really? :) Actually - I'll share with you a quote someone shared with me once when I was really trying to micromanage a situation - and was worrying and fretting way too much about the situation. The quote is simply this: "Let go and Let God." Let us let go of what we are hanging on so tightly to if it is not of God - and let us instead let God run the show. **Are there areas in your life where you need to "Let go and let God"?**

1/11 - Today's Genesis chapter 31 readings take us through Laban's pursuit of Jacob and his family and Laban & Jacob's treaty. In this chapter we read about Rachel taking Laban's "household gods", which were worthless idols - and yet both Laban and Rachel were very attached to idols, which was common in pagan religions of that time. Idols were often family heirlooms that were passed down from generation to generation and could sometimes signify that someone would receive their family's estate if they received the idols. People believed idols could bring blessings - and Laban obviously wanted them back. Though, I think he wanted more than just his idols back - I think he also wanted control over Jacob and his family back. In verses 33 & 34 we read: *"Finally, Laban went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household gods and had stuffed them into her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. So although Laban searched all the tents, he couldn't find them."* Rachel was cunning like her husband Jacob! Verse 42 stood out to me in today's readings as Jacob spoke to Laban: *"In fact, except for the grace of God--the God of my grandfather Abraham, the awe-inspiring God of my father, Isaac--you would have sent me off without a penny to my name."* I like seeing that Jacob is realizing that the grace of God has blessed him! **Q: Do you think that sometimes in our lives the grace of God is blessing us, and we don't realize it? Do you ever have those moments when you look back on a day, or a week, or even a year and realize that God's grace was so there - and yet... you didn't realize it at the time? How can you live more like Jacob in this verse - and recognize awe-inspiring God's grace more and more frequently in your life? And how will you give praise to God for this ever-present ever-dependable gift of grace that is available to you?**

1/12 - In Chapter 32 we see Jacob preparing to meet his brother Esau. And - we see Jacob praying to God an amazing prayer! Verse 10 is beautiful: *"I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unending love you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!"* **Q: Do you believe that God has been showing faithfulness and unending love to Jacob in our readings? Do you believe that**

God is showing faithfulness and unfailing love to you today?

1/12 - Genesis Chapter 32 closes out with Jacob in a wrestling match! With God? Or an angel? Or God in the form of an angel? Or Jesus preincarnate? Or Michael the archangel? Biblical commentaries offer a few different views on just who Jacob was wrestling with. Clearly, God ordained whomever was wrestling with Jacob and I do think it could have been God himself in an angelic form. It was obviously not God himself in all of his glory - because He would have whooped Jacob in a wrestling match! :) We do see the quick & fierce power of whom Jacob was wrestling in verse 25 when *"he struck Jacob's hip and knocked it out of joint at the socket."* **Q: What is your take on Jacob wrestling with the angel and then being blessed by the angel? Should Jacob have not wrestled / struggled with the angel / God? Should we in our lives today not wrestle / struggle with God? Or should we wrestle with matters of faith sometimes? As long as we know God will win the wrestling match - is it okay for us to enter into a wrestling match with God or no? Is there a faith-journey wrestling match in your past that you'd be willing to share with others?**

1/12 - This is what I love about the chapters of Genesis that we are entering into with our readings now – we read about imperfect humans, not so unlike us, trying to make sense of their lives and their relationships with God. Sound like anyone you know? :) In this early part of the Bible we are shown a God who is willing to wrestle with us, if we need to wrestle. A God who gives us dreams that end up saving a family that will soon become a nation that will save the world. A God who moves us into places and lands and situations to where we need to be to fulfill His perfect will. And in the midst of all of this – we read about imperfect humans that make mistakes. And God still can work through those mistakes and redeem mankind. This is incredible narrative in our readings coming up this next week in Genesis! Chapter 32 verse 28 is an incredibly important verse: *"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel, because you have struggled with both God and men and have won."* This is interesting to know! Israel means "God struggles" or "one who struggles with God." It is also interesting I think to see that God gives people new names at times in the Bible, and the names are reflective of their new lives with God. Abram becomes Abraham. Sarai becomes Sarah. Jacob becomes Israel. Simon becomes Peter. **Q: Have you ever "struggled" with God?**

1/12 - Today's Genesis chapter 32 starts off with Jacob preparing presents for Esau. Overall, I thought this was pretty smart. I suppose in some ways you could look at all this as bribery... :) But, I guess I thought Jacob was demonstrating some good business / political principles here. This is something that I do struggle with at times in my own life - a balance of utilizing good business principles versus relying completely on God. I suppose you could argue that Jacob should have simply relied on God to prepare the way for Jacob's meeting with Esau. And this would be a good argument - Esau had become wealthy over the years himself, and seemed to have forgiven Jacob before they met up here again. Though, if you were in Jacob's shoes, think about how you would have had no way of knowing this... and think about the last time you saw your brother 20 years earlier and how that ended... I do think that while clearly our reliance should be on God and His work and providence first and foremost, I believe God also wants us to be actively partnering with him. So, I think after we first pray to God about a situation, we should also do the work that we are called to do by God for the situation as well. This is where I think good business / political principles can come into play - as long as they are clearly aligned with the will of God. Again - a fine line to walk, and a line that can only be blessed by the Holy Spirit. We cannot walk this line on our own power or smarts. **Q: Do you pray to God to show you the work He wants you to do in your life? Do you also ask God to show you the work to be done in various situations that arise in your life? Do you enjoy working with God? How do you integrate faith into your work?**

1/12 - In Genesis chapter 34 Jacob and Esau meet again! I found verses 5 through 7 interesting. Jacob presents his concubines and sons first - then Leah and sons - and then Rachel and Joseph. I read a commentary that he was keeping his favorite wife and son back, as the last presentation to Esau - just in case anything should go wrong with Esau and the introductions of his family... Meaning, if any violence erupted - Rachel and Joseph would hopefully be removed from it. In verse 14 of this chapter we see Jacob likely being deceitful again: *"So go on ahead of us. We will follow at our own pace and meet you at Seir."* He did not follow Esau and meet him at Seir, as we will see in the next chapter. And commentaries suggest Jacob never intended to go to Seir. Genesis chapter 34 is a chapter where we see a lot of violence... It is interesting to note that the name of God ends chapter 33 and begins chapter 35, but is completely absent from this chapter! The NIV Study Bible has this note about this chapter: "Jacob is now confronted in the promised land with the danger of being absorbed by the native Canaanites (verses 9 & 16), and then with the threat of their hostility after his sons' vengeful act (verse 30). These were dangers Israel constantly faced from the peoples around them - either absorption or hostility, both of which are perpetual threats to God's people."

1/12 - Today is a big day for Jacob in that he finally returns to Bethel - the same place where his pilgrimage began with God in [Genesis 28:10-22](#)! Bethel is where Jacob had his dream of the angels ascending and descending the staircase, when he was leaving the promised land for 20 years in Haran. Bethel was the place where God first gave to Jacob His covenant promise that was also given to Abraham and Isaac - and the covenant promise is reconfirmed in today's readings in chapter 35 verses 11 and 12: *"Then God said, "I am God Almighty. Multiply and fill the earth! Become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! And I will pass on to you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants."* These 2 verses are essentially thought to be the climax of the Isaac-Jacob portion of Genesis. In tomorrow's readings we begin the Jacob-Joseph portion of Genesis. (which is an amazing narrative that begins tomorrow...) The covenant continues! **Q: How do the covenants to Abraham's family stand out to you? Do you believe God is a God of covenants? How do you see God in covenant with you today?**

1/13 - Today we read about genealogies! :) In chapter 36 we read about Esau's descendants. One interesting note on verse 11 per Zondervan's NIV Study Bible - "Eliphaz: Teman - One of Job's friends was named Eliphaz the Temanite ([Job 2:11](#)), and Job himself was from the land of Uz ([Job 1:1](#)). Thus Job probably lived in Edom (see verses 28 & 34 in Genesis readings today)." **Q: How does reading the genealogies stand out to you? How do genealogies or family tree's play a role in your family? Do you have any family historians? Why is this important?**

1/14 - Today in Genesis chapter 37 we begin the incredible last portion of the book of Genesis where we read about Joseph! This portion of the story that starts in today's readings will carry us through the rest of the book of Genesis and will set the stage for the exodus from Egypt. In chapter 37 today we read about Joseph's dreams and how these dreams make his brothers jealous. A couple of things came to mind to me today as reading through this. First is that it is clear that God does some communicating through dreams in the Old Testament. We've already seen this in our previous readings - via a dream Abimelech had or a dream Laban had. And here we see some powerful prophetic dreams that Joseph has. Actually, while I am on this topic of dreams, let me share this. I did used to have nightmares periodically. However, when I started reading the One Year Bible each night before going to bed a few years ago the nightmares basically went away. Seriously. I honestly believe because of the Light & life-giving power of the Word of God that the nightmares went away. Just a little testimony here for you on the power of reading the Bible each day. It is spiritual food and nourishment and protection for you in ways that you may not consciously realize. For me, there has been maybe a time or two in recent years where a nightmare has still come to fruition - and I don't remember the details of the nightmares, but somehow I know that in the midst of my dream I called out the name of Jesus and the nightmare stopped immediately! I am not kidding. I don't know how I got myself to call out Jesus' name in the nightmare, but I am so thankful that I did! Maybe this is something that prayer brings - or maybe this is something that happens when we really understand and believe in the all-powerful name of Jesus? If you suffer from nightmares, my two prescriptions are to 1. read the Bible before going to bed, 2. somehow somehow say the name of Jesus in your nightmare. Pray about this before you go to bed. Maybe this will help you do this in your dream. I hope so! **Q: My first question I had was whether Joseph should have shared these dreams with his family? And I asked this question because I wonder if sometimes we also maybe get an insight or what we believe to be a word from God - and if we should share these things with others? Or keep them between God and ourselves? The other thing that came to mind for me here is what role do dreams play for us today? Does God still communicate to people via dreams today?**

1/14 - Genesis chapter 38 brings us the story of Judah and Tamar. Keep in mind that Judah, Tamar, and Perez from this chapter are all part of the genealogy of King David and Jesus as we recently read in Matthew chapter 1 verse 3: *"Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron."* Verse 24 stood out to me in this chapter as sad irony: *"About three months later, word reached Judah that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was pregnant as a result of prostitution. "Bring her out and burn her!" Judah shouted."* This verse reminded me quite a bit of a recent teaching we read about from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 7 verse 3: *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"* **Q: How in our lives are we too are sometimes like Judah? Do we sometimes condemn others for sins that we ourselves commit too? Even if we don't commit the same sin as someone else, should we instead leave the judging and condemning to God?**

1/14 - Today in Genesis chapter 37 we read about Joseph in Potiphar's house! Verse 5 stood out to me in this chapter: *"From the day Joseph was put in charge, the LORD began to bless Potiphar for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs began to run smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished."* I found it fascinating that God was blessing Potiphar for Joseph's sake. It reminded me of God blessing Laban for Jacob's sake earlier in Genesis. **Q: Today, how does God today continue to bless others around those who love God? Do you think God intervenes and blesses our work lives? Do you pray about your work life regularly? Do you think God blesses your work life? And like Joseph,**

does God maybe bless those around you, even if they aren't necessarily in relationship with God? And maybe does He do this for your sake?

1/14 - Verses 8 & 9 also stood out to me in today's readings, demonstrating Joseph's strong moral integrity when being approached by Potiphar's wife: *"But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do! He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I ever do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God.""* I admire this so much. Joseph was gaining more and more favor with Potiphar and more and more "power" so to speak. And here we see a situation where Joseph could have abused his favor and power. But he did not. He stood strong with his moral convictions. And I wonder about this in our lives. **Q: As we maybe gain more and more favor in our work or personal or ministry lives, do we also gain more and more "power" so to speak? And when this happens, do the temptations maybe even somehow seem to get bigger and bigger and our opportunity to abuse our favor or power get easier and easier? And in light of all this, will we stand strong by our moral convictions? Will we realize, like Joseph, that our favor or power only comes from God - and it can be taken away in an instant if we sin against God?**

1/12 - Today we read about the passing of Isaac. What was interesting to me today about the death of Isaac was that he passed away after Jacob and Esau reconciled. However, even with Jacob and Esau being reconciled at this point, going forward in the Old Testament we will see that this reconciliation didn't carry forward to their descendants. The nation of Israel (Jacob) and the kingdom of Edom (Esau) will have much strife in their coming generations toward each other, which we'll read about later this year. **Q: Do you see how the conflicts in the Middle East today tie back to Biblical times? How do you think these conflicts will ultimately be resolved? Or, Who will resolve them?**

1/15 - In Genesis chapter 41 we read about Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph is called from prison to interpret them. The cup-bearer finally remembered Joseph 2 years later! :) Verse 16 is powerful for us to consider as Pharaoh calls for Joseph to interpret his dreams: *"It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God will tell you what it means and will set you at ease."* What I like about this reply from Joseph is that he is giving credit to God for his "gift" of being able to interpret dreams! And really, it is God interpreting the dreams, and letting Joseph know what to say. I wonder about this in our lives today. **Q: Do you have some unique gifts in your life? Things that you are really good at? How do you give credit to God for these gifts in your life? Have you ever claimed them as gifts we developed on your own? Do you believe that God is truly the Gift-Giver of all your skills and talents and wisdom in your life?**

1/15 - Today in Genesis chapter 41 we read about Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams - and not just interpreting them, but offering a solution! Joseph suggests finding a wise man to administer a program to collect crops during the 7 years of plenty to save up for the 7 years of lean. Verses 39 & 40 in this chapter tell us: *"Turning to Joseph, Pharaoh said, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, you are the wisest man in the land! I hereby appoint you to direct this project. You will manage my household and organize all my people. Only I will have a rank higher than yours."* Notice that Joseph did not ask for this position. He probably could have, in light of interpreting the dream and offering a solution. But he didn't. The position was simply thrust upon him. **Q: And I wonder in our lives - are we like Joseph - humbly offering our gifts and skills with no need of a payback? Or, do we expect something in return? Do we want to be put in charge? I do wonder this about myself - if I was put in charge of all of Egypt, would I still remember God? Or would the power go to my head and would I think it is all about me? And then I wonder if there are similar, smaller temptations like this in my life - in my work or ministries or in my social circles. Are there times where I offer my skills & gifts, and expect to be put in charge of something, forget about God, and think it's all about me? How about you? Do you give freely and humbly from your God-given gifts with no need of a payback?**

1/16 - In Genesis chapter 42 Jacob sends Joseph's brothers to Egypt for grain. Verse 4 stood out: *"Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, however, for fear some harm might come to him."* As you'll recall both Benjamin and Joseph were Rachel's only sons. And Jacob loved Rachel dearly. It seems that in light of Jacob already losing one of Rachel's sons, he didn't want to lose the other. **Or - I wonder - did Jacob maybe have some sort of mistrust in the back of his mind of the other 10 brothers?** (as obviously Joseph disappeared when going to find the 10 brothers many years back) This is outside of the text I realize. Just a thought.

1/16 - Genesis 42:6 stood out: *"Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of the sale of the grain, it was to him that his brothers came. They bowed low before him, with their faces to the ground."* This fulfilled the dreams Joseph had in Genesis chapter 37 verse 6 & 7! *"He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain*

out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." And verse 6 was 21 years after Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers at the age of 17 - Joseph has spent 11 years as a slave, 2 years in prison, and 7 to 8 years in charge of Egypt (through the 7 fat years of the harvest, and now they are likely in the first year of the famine). And even after 21 years Joseph recognized his brothers immediately. I read a commentary that his brothers probably didn't recognize Joseph because he was decked out in Egyptian robes & garb, he may have been speaking through an interpreter, and he was likely clean shaven - Egyptians shaved, whereas Hebrews typically wore beards. **Q: How did it impact you, reading about Joseph and his brother reuniting and seeing Joseph's earlier dream fulfilled?**

1/16 - In Genesis chapter 44 we read about Joseph instructing his servant to place his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. I guess what struck me about all this is that it seemed to me like Joseph was possibly playing mind games with his brothers. Not to say that they didn't deserve it... but, I wonder if in all of this Joseph had a master game-plan - or if it was simply games he was playing? The weeping we see from him kind of makes me think that he was not 100% sure of what he was doing, game-plan wise. The weeping seemed to indicate that he wanted to reconnect with his brothers and his family. It seems in all of this he has kept at least 1 family member around - or has not let them get very far away. **Q: This makes me wonder – how do we play mind games with others around us? Should we? Would it have been better if Joseph was honest with his brothers from the beginning on who he was? How would it be better for us if we are simply honest with others from the beginning? And don't play mind games?**

1/16 - Verses 18 through 34 in this chapter is Judah's amazing speech to Joseph! I don't know what it is about this speech. But I love it! It seems like Judah is finally owning up to being who he was born to be - the forefather of the line of King David and Jesus Christ. Verse 33 is the verse that really stood out to me: *"Please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers."* What struck me about this is that now Judah is willing to be the slave, in the place of his brother Benjamin - whereas 22 years prior he offered up the idea of selling his brother Joseph into slavery as we read in Genesis 37 verses 26 & 27: *"Judah said to the others, "What can we gain by killing our brother? That would just give us a guilty conscience. Let's sell Joseph to those Ishmaelite traders."* It seems like Judah in chapter 44 has finally grown up and is acting like a morally responsible adult. Judah with this speech today is finally beginning to look like he might indeed deserve to be referred to as the father of the tribe of the "Lion" of Judah! **Q: Have there been big moments like this in your faith walk, where it's clear you've moved forward in your faith?**

1/16 - Genesis chapter 45 begins with Joseph weeping again - and I think that it makes perfect sense that he does so, in light of Judah's impassioned speech! **Q: Do you think that Joseph in part weeps because Judah is offering to be the slave in the place of Benjamin? Either Joseph is weeping because his brothers did not show him this same mercy 22 years prior - or he is weeping because he is happy that Judah and his brothers seem to be very different people from 22 years prior - or he's weeping for other reasons. What are your thoughts on the reasons for these tears? When have you ever cried tears in your faith walk?**

1/16 - Verse 5 in this chapter is a powerfully mature statement from Joseph to his brothers: *"But don't be angry with yourselves that you did this to me, for God did it. He sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives."* I find this very powerful that Joseph discerned this. He had been sold into slavery for 11 years! He was in a prison for 2 years! And then, yes, things got better for him thereafter - but he was still apart from his family. And yet - Joseph saw God's hand and God's plan in all of this. There was a greater good happening - the preservation of Abraham & Isaac's descendents. The preservation of God's covenant people. I then wonder about this in our lives. **Q: Are there times where we go through some hard times - maybe for many years - and in the midst of that, could God be working? Could God's hand and God's plan be moving in the midst of challenging times in our lives?** I think it's possible that if I was Joseph that maybe I would have become a bitter man toward my brothers - and maybe done worse than just mind games. But, Joseph was compassionate - he wept - he gave grain in abundance to his family - he forgave his brothers. And more than anything, he saw that God was in control. **Q: How do you believe that God is in control of your life? Right now? All the time? No matter how good or how bad circumstances seem? Is God in control?**

1/17- Today in Genesis Chapter 46 we read about Jacob and his family's journey to Egypt! I really like that God speaks to Jacob in a vision at Beersheba - the same place where both Abraham and Isaac had worshiped God earlier in Genesis. As Jacob was about to leave Canaan, God reaffirms his covenant promises. Very reassuring for Jacob I am sure! **Q: I wonder - sometimes in our lives - as you are about to embark on something big: Maybe a new ministry. Maybe a mission trip. Maybe a new job. Maybe a new marriage. Maybe a new child. Does God speak to you? Does God reaffirm his love to you? Does God tell you that he will be with you on this new thing - as he did to Jacob in this**

chapter? I can't say that I've verbally heard God speak to me during times of big change in my life. But, I have most definitely sensed amazing peace many times during big changes in my life. I do try to pray more than ever during times of change. I try to stay as absolutely close to God as I possibly can. Maybe I'm kind of like a scared child trying to huddle up to my heavenly Father during times of change. Which I am okay with. :) And - it seems almost without fail, God does "speak" to me with a peace that surpasses all understanding. If the peace is not there... then I do begin to worry if what I am doing is really God's will for my life. If the peace is there - I know without a shadow of a doubt that what I am embarking upon is God's will for my life. I will say this - that even if I cannot discern or sense the peace during a time of change, I still do not doubt that God will be with me. That he will not leave me. That he will be there. **Q: How do you believe that God is with you always? That he will go with you wherever you go?**

1/17 - Chapter 46 verses 33 & 34 stood out to me in today's readings, as Joseph gives his brothers this instruction: *"So when Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, tell him, 'We have been livestock breeders from our youth, as our ancestors have been for many generations.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the land of Goshen, for shepherds are despised in the land of Egypt."* I like Joseph's wisdom here. I guess you could look at this as Joseph being manipulative of Pharaoh. But I don't really see this. I see that Joseph is telling his brothers what to say - which is true - and that this will allow the nation of Israel to begin to grow and flourish in the land of Goshen, removed from the cities of Egypt. It seems like Joseph is definitely catering to Pharaoh's generosity - *"let your family come to Egypt!"* - and Pharaoh / Egyptians prejudices - *"shepherds are despised in the land of Egypt."* For a win / win. It's a Stephen Covey win / win business principle here! :) In Genesis chapter 47 I find it very interesting that Jacob blesses Pharaoh twice. I haven't studied why this happens. My thought is that Jacob is indeed very appreciative of this current Pharaoh - for literally saving the Israelites by allowing God to move mightily through Joseph. We will see soon that there are future Pharaoh's who are not so kind to the Israelites... So, perhaps Jacob realized that this Pharaoh was deserving of two blessings.

1/17 - In Genesis 47 we read about Joseph's leadership and business skills during the famine - as things get really bad with the famine and people are on the brink of starving. Overall, I initially thought that Joseph was making wise decisions that ultimately ended up saving lives - and in verse 25 the people said the same thing. However, I have one good friend who was in a Bible study with me who felt that Joseph was being way too harsh. I can see both sides... :) Did Joseph have other options / ways to do this? We actually got into quite a heated discussion on this point in our Bible study on this topic a couple of years ago. **Q: What do you think? During this time of extreme famine, was Joseph being too harsh or being wise and even being compassionate?**

1/18 - Today in Genesis Chapter 48 we read about Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh! One thing I thought about when reading this chapter and the next chapter was how interesting it is that blessings had so much importance and significance back in the days of the patriarchs. **Q: And I wonder - do we have blessings today that are as significant? Do fathers bless kids or grandkids these days?** Maybe so... I guess I just haven't noticed it in my family... :) I do think there are still some "blessings" today that hold some incredible significance today. Wedding vows come to mind and the blessings that come from the pastor/priest/minister during this time. Church ceremonies or rituals come to mind - Communion, Baptism, Funerals, etc. And then certainly above all else, there is the amazing and eternal blessing we receive from Jesus himself - the free blessing and free gift of salvation. **Q: What other blessings are there today that I'm missing? How have you been "blessed" by others in some way, like we read about in today's 2 chapters? How have you "blessed" others?**

1/18 - In Genesis chapter 49 we read about Jacob blessing his sons - and these are some very accurate blessings he gives as we will see as we continue through the Bible this year. Perhaps Predictions or Prophecies might be the better term for Jacob's blessings in this chapter. Verse 10 is awesome: *"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will obey."* This verse can apply to 2 descendants of Judah - King David and then ultimately and eternally to Jesus. In verse 22 we read this about Joseph: *"Joseph is a fruitful tree,"* And this is certainly true, as his descendants will include Joshua, Deborah & Gideon & Jephthah (3 judges of Israel), and Samuel the prophet.

1/18 - Genesis chapter 50 verses 19 & 20 stood out to me as Joseph spoke to his brothers: *"Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people."* Again, I am impressed with Joseph's character here. His brothers seemed to think that Joseph hadn't really forgiven them, and that he was waiting to get back at them after their father had passed away. But, I think we see here that Joseph had truly forgiven his brothers! It was water

under the bridge. And not only had Joseph forgiven them, but he saw the power of how God turned something bad into something incredibly good. I wonder about this in our lives today – **Q: How do you truly forgive other people like Joseph forgave his brothers? Have you ever held some piece of unforgiveness within you? How did you move forward to forgiveness? Is there anyone you need to forgive in your life right now?**

1/18 - One interesting side note in chapter 50 was the embalming of Jacob & Joseph. Embalming was an Egyptian custom - not a Hebrew custom. Some commentaries suggest that Jacob & Joseph were likely being respectful of the Egyptian customs of the day. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife - and believed that the embalming allowed the deceased to utilize their body in the afterlife.

1/19 - Today we begin Job! In our traditional Biblical canon, we'd read Exodus after the book of Genesis, but as this is the Chronological Bible, we read Job next!

~ Job ~

Author: Unknown

Date: Tenth century B.C.

Content: This long narrative poem deals with one of the deepest problems of man: How do we explain sin and suffering, if there exists a God powerful enough to do something about them? The book begins with the suffering of Job being given three sets of speeches by some friends of his: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, each of whom tries to explain Job's misery in a different way. A fourth man, Elihu, tries to summarize the situation, offering yet another explanation of why Job was suffering. Finally, the Lord himself speaks to Job, and Job recognizes that we do not so much need "answers" to life's problems, as we need God himself. Job is then healed and given material and spiritual blessings far beyond his former state.

Theme: The mystery that surrounds human existence and the need to trust in God runs throughout the book. Mankind simply does not have enough knowledge to explain why things happen the way they do. It is possible to rise above our limitations by faith in God, however, because God does know why everything happens and will work good for those who love him. We may thus learn the profound truth that when we have nothing left but God, God is enough. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 9-10)

1/19 - Today Job has a very interesting chapter 1 discussion between God and Satan. **Do you believe in the existence of Satan? Demons? Evil?** In the introduction to the wonderful book, "[The Screwtape Letters](#)," C.S. Lewis writes: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which the human race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." I'll be honest – in my early Christian walk, I did not really believe in the existence of Satan, demons, evil. I believed in God and Christ and Love, and thought that was enough – evil didn't need to exist in my universe. :) Unfortunately, I've heard another quote that: "Satan's greatest trick is to convince a person that Satan does not exist." I now could not agree more. If you don't believe in Satan or evil's existence then you are left open to subtle attacks, without even realizing it. God is so much more powerful than anything Satan can throw at you. But, keep in mind, Satan is throwing temptations at you. **Q: How do you combat the devil's temptations? Read [Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10-18 at this link](#). Do you believe in the existence of Satan? Demons? Evil?**

1/19 - Today in Job chapter 4 we read about Eliphaz the Temanite's first response to Job, including these words in verses 3 through 6: "*In the past you have encouraged many a troubled soul to trust in God; you have supported those who were weak. Your words have strengthened the fallen; you steadied those who wavered. But now when trouble strikes, you faint and are broken. Does your reverence for God give you no confidence? Shouldn't you believe that God will care for those who are upright?*" **Q: How do these words of Eliphaz's speak to you? Are these fair words for him to be saying to Job? Are they fair words for us to consider in our own lives today as well?**

1/20 - Then in chapter 6 Job responds to Eliphaz as follows in verse 2 through 6: "*If my sadness could be weighed and my troubles be put on the scales, they would be heavier than all the sands of the sea. That is why I spoke so rashly. For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows. He has sent his poisoned arrows deep within my spirit. All God's terrors are arrayed against me. Don't I have a right to complain? Wild donkeys bray when they find no green grass, and oxen low when they have no food. People complain when there is no salt in their food.*" **Q: How do these words of Job's speak to you? Are these fair words for him to be saying in reply to Eliphaz? Are they fair words for us to consider in our own lives today as well?**

1/21 - Okay, so I am sure that most of us have heard the old adage "patience of Job." (As in, "she has the patience of Job." etc.) Well, today's chapters 9 & 10 are probably not where this adage came from! :) Job is not showing a lot of patience in these chapters. **Q: Can you blame him? Would you speak differently if you were in Job's situation? Or perhaps would your language be worse?** It is important to note that Job does not curse God directly, as Satan said Job would do in the beginning of the book. Job is certainly complaining about his situation - and, well, not to spoil the book of Job here for you... but Job will repent of what he says to God later in the book. In Job chapter 10 today we read Job's plea to God, including this in verses 18 through 22: "*Why, then, did you bring me out of my mother's womb? Why didn't you let me die at birth? Then I would have been spared this miserable existence. I would have gone directly from the womb to the grave. I have only a little time left, so leave me alone--that I may have a little moment of comfort before I leave for the land of darkness and utter gloom, never to return. It is a land as dark as midnight, a land of utter gloom where confusion reigns and the light is as dark as midnight.*"

1/21 - The other adage, in addition to "patience of Job", that I was thinking about in today's readings is "with friends like these, who needs enemies??" :) Zophar in chapter 11 seems to really have compassion-deficiency! I do think that Zophar and Bildad in chapter 8 were trying to say the things they thought Job needed to hear. But they overstated the case I think in a few places. I don't agree w/ Zophar saying in chapter 11 verse 3 that Job mocked God: "*When you mock God, shouldn't someone make you ashamed?*" Here's my question for us today. **Q: Are we sometimes like Zophar and Bildad? Do we jump to conclusions about maybe why bad things are happening to our friends? Do we offer up our big advice and big words and big bluster before really listening to our friends and understanding their situation fully?** I am afraid that sometimes we jump to conclusions far too quickly. I always try to remember the old Stephen Covey adage (wow, 3 adages here in 1 post! :) from the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People": "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood." Let us seek first to really understand our friends or family members issues before we start offering our prescriptions for them. Let us first try walking a mile in their shoes!

1/22 - I forgot how much trash-talking goes on here in the book of Job! It occurred to me that all of this bickering back and forth between Job and his friends keeps transpiring without Satan coming up in their comments at all. Meaning, no one seems to realize that Satan is the one who has afflicted Job! **Q: And I'm wondering if this happens in our lives today as well? Do we sometimes miss it when Satan is literally attacking us? Do we blame others? Blame ourselves? Maybe even blame God? When the blame should be directed at the Deceiver?**

1/23 - I forgot how much trash-talking goes on here in the book of Job! It occurred to me that all of this bickering back and forth between Job and his friends keeps transpiring without Satan coming up in their comments at all. Meaning, no one seems to realize that Satan is the one who has afflicted Job! **Q: And I'm wondering if this happens in our lives today as well? Do we sometimes miss it when Satan is literally attacking us? Do we blame others? Blame ourselves? Maybe even blame God? When the blame should be directed at the Deceiver?**

1/24 - "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives!" Whoo-hoo! Awesome words from Job today in chapter 19 verse 25! Job chapter 19 verses 23 through 27 are some of the best known and well loved verses of the book of Job. These verses seem to be where Job hits his high point in his understanding of his relationship with God: "*Oh, that my words could be written. Oh, that they could be inscribed on a monument, carved with an iron chisel and filled with lead, engraved forever in the rock. But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!*" **Q: How powerful are these verses for you??** Great stuff. Job starts off saying that he hopes his words could be written and engraved forever - and indeed they were as we are reading them in the Bible! Then Job makes the incredible statement that even in the midst of all of his suffering and perceived distance from God, he knows that God lives! The closing two verses are powerful in that they actually indicated a belief in the resurrection by Job. He says that even after his body has decayed - after his death here on this earth - he will see God with his own eyes in his own body! How could this possibly be? Well, only if he believed in a resurrected body after death - as we've been reading about in First Corinthians chapter 15 the past couple of days! I've read some various commentaries on who is the "Redeemer" that Job is referring to in verse 25. Jesus? Could be. But it seems like most commentaries seem to suggest Job is referring to God himself, rather than Jesus. Though, of course Jesus is God so maybe this is a moot point! :) Job does talk about his desire for a mediator in other parts of this book, which could be references to Jesus as well.

1/24 - Today in Job chapter 21 verses 7 through 13 we read these words of Job: "*The truth is that the wicked live to a good old age. They grow old and wealthy. They live to see their children grow to maturity, and they enjoy their grandchildren. Their homes are safe from every fear, and God does not punish them. Their bulls never fail to breed. Their*

cows bear calves without miscarriage. Their children skip about like lambs in a flock of sheep. They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in prosperity; then they go down to the grave in peace." **Q: How do these words of Job speak to you? Is there truth in these words? If the wicked go to the grave in peace, what happens to them after the grave?** Honestly, I'm not so sure about the wicked living to a good old age and going to the grave in peace... I personally would not take this chance. I think living a wicked life leads to inner conflict and an unhealthy life and potentially an early grave. I understand why Job said these words in his circumstances (he was experiencing suffering without committing the great sins his friends accused him of), but I personally would not bet on a wicked life delivering a long lifetime of wealth or peace...

1/25 - In chapter 23 verse 12 today Job makes such a powerful statement about his relationship with God! *"I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread."* (NIV) The first statement is of course powerful - Job has not departed from the commands of God's. But the second statement is the one that really stood out to me today - Job has treasured God's words more than food! This may sound like nice high holy talk from the Old Testament... but I think each of us should stop and meditate on this one in our lives today. Do we treasure God's Word, The Bible, more or do we treasure the food we eat each day more? I'm sure most of us would say the Bible... But let me put this another way for us to really think about this. **Q: How many minutes a day do you spend eating? And how many minutes a day do you spend reading the Bible? What might make this whole equation even a little bit more interesting to consider is how many minutes a day do you think about food? Prepare food? Talk about food? And then how many minutes a day do you think about the Bible? Prepare for reading the Bible? Talk about the Bible?** I am afraid that we may be a people today who (when the rubber meets the road and we look at actual time spent in each activity) treasure our food more than we treasure God's Word. However, the first step in realizing we have a problem is admitting we have a problem! :) **When it comes to amount of time you spend with food when compared to the amount of time you spend with God's Word, do you have a problem?** Can you learn something from Job's word's today in verse 12: *"I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food."* (ESV)

1/26 - Job chapter 28 is incredible! It could be my favorite chapter of Job so far this year. I kind of forgot about this chapter from my previous readings of this book. It seems to me to a large degree this chapter builds up and gets at one of the most important points in the Old Testament Wisdom / Poetry Books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) in the closing verse 28 of this chapter: *"And this is what God says to all humanity: 'The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding.'" Beautiful! We do hear this theme over and over again in the other Wisdom / Poetry books of the Old Testament. It is a powerful and true point. I love the way Job builds up to this point early on in this chapter 28. Verses 12 through 14 I found to be particularly great: "'But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding? No one knows where to find it, for it is not found among the living. 'It is not here,' says the ocean. 'Nor is it here,' says the sea."* **Q: So, how about for you? Where do you find wisdom? Where do you find understanding? What does it mean to you that the fear of the Lord is true wisdom? Do you believe this is true? Do you believe that forsaking evil is real understanding?**

1/27 - 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?**

1/27 - 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?**

1/28 - 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?

1/28 - 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?**

1/30 - In Exodus chapter 10 today we read about the Plague of Locusts! In ancient times locust plagues were greatly feared and were often considered to be a sign of divine judgment. Next up is the plague of darkness. Some Biblical commentaries have found Pharaoh's statement to Moses to be quite appropriate and ironic that he said this during the plague of darkness in 10:28: *"The day you see my face you will die."* Apparently Moses couldn't quite fully see Pharaoh's face during the plague of darkness? Makes sense to me. Commentaries have also suggested that this verse was a death threat to Moses, and that this death threat was responded to with the coming plague on the firstborns of Egypt, including Pharaoh's son.

1/30 - Today we read in Exodus chapter 12 about God giving Moses and Aaron instructions on the First Passover. Verse 2 stands out: *"From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you."* Here we see that God is actually instituting a new religious calendar for the Hebrews with the month that Passover is in being the first month of the calendar year. This month is in the March-April spring timeframe and is called Abib or Nisan in Hebrew. The feasts that were and are celebrated in this 1st month were - Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. Here is a very interesting note on the Jewish calendar from the NIV Study Bible - "In the ancient Near East, new year festivals normally coincided with the new season of life in nature. The designation of this month as Israel's religious New Year reminded Israel that its life as the people of God was grounded in God's redemptive act in the Exodus... Israel's agricultural calendar began in the fall, and during the monarchy it dominated the nation's civil calendar. Both calendars (civil and religious) existed side by side until after the exile. Judaism today uses only the calendar that begins in the fall."

1/30 - The significance of Passover was that God was introducing the concept of a sacrifice or a substitute for a life. The lamb was sacrificed as a substitute for the Hebrews first-born sons. The blood of the lamb was placed on the doorposts as a sign that the household had sacrificed an innocent life - the lamb. By the blood of the unblemished/perfect lamb, the household was protected from death. This is a foreshadowing of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb for us. He was a substitute for us and our sins. He was an innocent unblemished/perfect lamb - sinless. By Jesus' blood, we are protected from eternal death. **Q: What are some parallels you see between Passover and Jesus' death on the cross?**

1/30 - Exodus chapter 12 verse 11 is of note: *"Wear your traveling clothes as you eat this meal, as though prepared for a long journey. Wear your sandals, and carry your walking sticks in your hands. Eat the food quickly, for this is the LORD's Passover."* By wearing their traveling clothes, the Hebrews were faithfully acknowledging God's Word that they would

very soon be freed from slavery and bondage in Egypt. The Exodus would soon begin! And the traveling clothes signified that the Hebrews were ready for the journey! **Q: How about you? Do you think that God may still call you on journeys today? What journey might God be calling you on in 2010? Are you be ready for the call? What are your "traveling clothes" that you're wearing, so that when the "Exodus" comes, you are ready for it?**

1/31 - This is a big day in our readings today - The Israelites officially begin their exodus from Egypt! Today in Exodus chapter 12 we read about God instituting the Festival of Unleavened Bread along with Passover. These both are still observed today by practicing Jews. Verse 14 states the importance of these festivals to the Israelites: *"You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD."* Verses 37 & 38 are amazing: *"That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. And they were all traveling on foot. Many people who were not Israelites went with them, along with the many flocks and herds."* 600,000 men equals probably at least 1.2 million people all together - and probably close to 2 million. This is a massive Exodus! Verse 38 is very interesting in that some Egyptians were joining the Israelites in this Exodus! **Q: Why do you think some Egyptians joined the Israelites in the Exodus? Do you think these Egyptians believed in God? When have you ever experienced a Passover meal in your life? What was it like? How does the Passover foreshadow Jesus' life?**

1/31- In Exodus chapter 13 we read about God's instructions for the dedication of the firstborn. Note that based on this law that Jesus, the firstborn of Mary & Joseph, was dedicated to God in the Temple in Jerusalem as we read in Luke chapter 2 verses 21 through 24: *"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons.""* I think it's also interesting to note that Mary & Joseph did not present a lamb, but a pair of doves or two young pigeons. This portion of the law came from Leviticus chapter 12 verse 8: *"If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering."* **Q: How have you dedicated your children to God? Or how have you seen family members or your church dedicate children to God? Why do you think we still dedicate children to God today?**

Group discussions:

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

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:

- 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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