

**Chronological Bible Blog – Monthly Notes - www.ChronologicalBibleBlog.com
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Notes & Group Questions for March 1 - 31 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

NUMBERS 6:1 - JUDGES 3:30 (Daily reading schedule at: www.ChronologicalBibleBlog.com)

3/1 - Today in Numbers chapter 6 we read about the Nazirite laws! The Nazirite vows could be taken for as little as 30 days or as long as a lifetime. It was voluntary - except parents could take the vow for their children, making them Nazirites for life. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist are all thought to have been Nazirites for life. More info on the Nazirites is [at this link](#).

3/1 - Today in Numbers chapter 6 verses 22-27 we will read the well known "Aaronic Blessing", which I've underlined in the verses – *"The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.""* **Q: How does this blessing speak to you today? Have you heard this blessing prayed aloud before? Can you imagine this ancient blessing that has been prayed innumerable times in history being prayed over you today? Take a few moments to really meditate upon the 3 sections of the blessing. Do you notice that each section begins with God's name? Do you believe that God can indeed bless you and keep you (favor & protect you)? That he can indeed make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you (be pleased & be merciful and compassionate to you)? And do you believe that God can indeed turn his face toward you and give you peace (give approval & peace to you)? It is also of note that this blessing "put God's name on the Israelites and they were blessed." Do you believe that God's name is upon you today? Do you want God's name to be upon you today?**

3/2 - Today we begin to read about the Israelites discontent with God's provision and care in Numbers chapter 11, and this discontent & disobedience we will read about through chapter 25. As we read through these chapters, I do think we would do well to not point fingers at the Israelites and say that we would have behaved differently back then. I'm not so sure that I would have. . . I think these chapters will very likely speak into our lives today and we might find that we are often not so different from the Israelites. In Numbers chapter 11 verse 1 today we read: *"Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused."* How does this verse speak to you today? I don't know about you, but for me this verse is convicting. Simply because I know that I often complain more to God than I actually thank God for the blessings he has poured out into my life. It really is incredible to stop and think about how good God is to us. In fact, one of our One Year Bible participants in the past had a blog called "God is Good All the Time." And this is so true. And yet, what is our percentage of thanksgiving to God versus our complaining to God? I'm afraid my percentage is way skewed toward complaining or worrying (worrying is really similar to complaining I think). I pray that as I go forward in my walk with God that I will do a lot more thanking and a lot less complaining & worrying. It is an amazing thing – this gift of life. Even in the midst of all of our daily challenges and storms, let us know that God is the anchor and harbor in our life. And he continues to pour out blessings upon blessings upon our life – oftentimes without us consciously being aware of the blessings. And oftentimes without us thanking God for the blessings. **Q: How about you? How is your thanksgiving of God's blessings in your life going these days? How do you give thanksgiving to God?**

3/2 - Today in Numbers chapter 11 we read about God's Spirit resting upon 70 leaders! I found verse 29 awesome when Moses responded to Joshua's protesting of Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp - *"Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them all!"* This is great humility on Moses part! He was not threatened by others using gifts of the Spirit in public. "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets." These words of Moses remind me of a more modern day quote I read somewhere that went something like - "We are all called to be saints." I like that... **Q: Do you believe that you are called to be a saint? Do you want to be a saint?**

3/3 - Today in Numbers chapter 14 we read about Joshua and Caleb's bold faith. They were ready to move into the Promised Land! **Q: Again, similar to my thoughts in yesterday's post, I wonder if sometimes in our lives, when we are on the brink of something new & something big - that is of God - are we like Caleb & Joshua, or are we like the Israelites? Are we ready to move forward quickly and decisively on toward what God is giving us? Or, are we putting on the brakes and starting to complain? Do we sabotage ourselves? This is a tough question to ask**

ourselves I realize. But I think that if I honestly look at my life, I can more often be like the Israelites in this situation chapter - putting on the breaks and really becoming the cause of my own problem... I pray that I can have faith like Caleb and Joshua. I pray that I will boldly move forward to what God is calling me toward. How about you?

3/3 - Today in Numbers chapter 15 we read about unintentional and intentional sins. Verse 30 stood out to me - *"But those who brazenly violate the LORD's will, whether native Israelites or foreigners, blaspheme the LORD."* I have thought about this in my life in the past... and thought about that old phrase, "ignorance is bliss." While this phrase may seem true at first glance - ignorance is bliss - it's obviously not "True" at all. It is so much better to know godly Truth, than to be ignorant. However... once we know godly Truth, what if we then consciously go against that Truth? What if we "brazenly violate God's will"? I'll admit - I have done this certainly. I have consciously sinned. And it eats me up inside when I do. Not because I expect myself to be perfect - but because I am simply sinning against God, whom I love so much. And I know better. I guess this verse today reminded me that once we know Truth - and as we continue to grow in our knowledge of Truth and the Bible - we really should be much more intentional in how we live. We know what godly living looks like. We should not go back to our old ways of thinking or our old habits. We know better. And we most certainly should not think that "ignorance is bliss." It isn't. **Q: Have you ever thought ignorance is bliss? Do you think it is? Why or why not?**

3/4 - "Trial By Fire" - ever hear this term? I think this term may have gotten its genesis here in Numbers chapter 16. Korah's rebellion caused Moses to explain how this true trial by fire would go down in verses 4 through 7 - *"Tomorrow morning the LORD will show us who belongs to him and who is holy. The LORD will allow those who are chosen to enter his holy presence. You, Korah, and all your followers must do this: Take incense burners, and burn incense in them tomorrow before the LORD. Then we will see whom the LORD chooses as his holy one."* A trial by fire indeed occurs subsequently in this chapter. Verses 12 & 13 stood out as completely strange, as these 2 men had somehow now thought that instead of being a prison, Egypt was now in their minds a paradise?.... *"Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, "We refuse to come! Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects?"* I wonder if we do this in our lives? Think that things that used to be so bad for us are now somehow good? I know I've done this. I've left situations or relationships or bad habits - knowing they were simply bad for me - and then later down the road I've sometimes thought to myself, "ahh... I miss xyz or doing xyz... I should go back to that." And I do. And I regret it all over once again. There is a somewhat obscure R.E.M. song that goes "Don't go back to Rockville - and waste another year." I think of this song on occasion when I am tempted to go back to something I know I shouldn't go back to - I sing to myself, "don't go back to Rockville." Perhaps Dathan and Abiram should have been singing to themselves - "don't go back to Egypt - and waste another year..." **Q: What about you? Is there an Egypt / Rockville or two in your life that you've left behind? Are you ever tempted to go back? Do you sometimes even think you might have been wrong about how bad things were back then.... that it might have really been a land flowing with milk and honey even! Well, I know we'll all have our moments of going backwards.... but I pray we see the True land of milk and honey in front of us that is only available through a relationship with Jesus and the Father - and that we won't go back to our "Egypt"...**

3/4 - Today in Numbers chapter 17 verse 8 we read how God stopped the questioning of the Israelite community about Aaron and his houses' unique priestly authority - *"When Moses went into the Tabernacle of the Covenant the next day, he found that Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, blossomed, and produced almonds!"* The 2nd sentence in Numbers chapter 18 verse 20 stood out to me today: *"And the LORD said to Aaron, "You priests will receive no inheritance of land or share of property among the people of Israel. I am your inheritance and your share."* What a beautiful thing to hear from God! I am your inheritance and your share. **Q: In your life today, is God your inheritance and your share? Do you want God to be your inheritance and share? Does anything else at all compare to this glorious inheritance?**

3/5 - Today in Numbers chapter 20 verse 12 we read about God pronouncing that Moses & Aaron would not enter the Promised Land - *"But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!"* Why did this happen? Well, it's best to stick with Scripture - God says that Moses & Aaron did not trust God enough. They did not trust God enough to demonstrate his holiness to the people of Israel. Thus they will not lead them into the Promised Land. Where was the lack of trust? Go back to verse 8 and you'll see God tell Moses to "command the rock" for water - command meaning verbally... then in verse 11 we see Moses strike the rock twice - not using the verbal command God instructed him on, but using an action. There also may have been a pride issue when Moses in verse 10 says "must we bring you water from

this rock?" You'll notice the little word WE - We being Moses & Aaron? -this is probably not the way to best recognize God for God bringing water out of the rock... It looks like Moses is taking credit. **Q: How about us in our lives today? Are there times when we disobey God's direct commands to us? Are there times when we take credit for God's work? Even if we generally follow God's instructions - as Moses clearly does for the majority of his life - should we be on constant watch that we do not disobey God?**

3/6 - Today in Numbers chapter 22 we read about Balak sending for Balaam - hoping Balaam will curse the Israelites. Balak sends messengers the 1st time and Balaam gets a message from God to not go with these messengers, as God has blessed the Israelites. What is interesting to me are verses 15-17: *"Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time. They went to Balaam and gave him this message: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Please don't let anything stop you from coming. I will pay you well and do anything you ask of me. Just come and curse these people for me!"* For some reason these verses really reminded me of temptation in our lives today. Like Balaam with the messengers on their first visit, we may realize something is not what God would want us to do - and we send the temptation away. But... then the temptation can come back! In a bigger way - with more distinguished officials than before... with more allure than before... the temptation that we resisted once so valiantly can come back. And then, the question becomes - with the opportunity to be "paid well" by the temptation, will we still resist the temptation? Can we resist the temptation a 2nd time? Through Jesus, our mediator before our Heavenly Father, yes, I know we can. If temptation has visited you once - or twice - or even many times - will you pray to God today in the name of Jesus that temptation will never overcome you? **Q: How do you resist temptation in your life? Are you still tempted today? What are some current temptations? How will you resist them?**

3/6 - Today in Numbers chapter 22 we read about Balaam's talking donkey! Yes, this is a very unique portion of scripture, and, yes, one we can learn from. In verses 27 & 28 we read: *"When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"* There is a lot going on in the verses leading up to this point, and in the verses thereafter - which you can study more [at this link](#) . I think one thing for us to pay attention to here is how we are sometimes saved from a bad situation by what at first glance appears to be an "inconvenience." A donkey laying down and starting to talk is inconvenient to Balaam. But, this talking donkey saved Balaam from an angel with a sword in hand that Balaam could not see. Are there perhaps "inconveniences" in your life today that are maybe saving you from a bad situation? Or, do you recognize inconveniences in the past that saved you from a bad situation? I know I have. If my car breaks down or I get sick or I miss a flight - all inconveniences - I try to remind myself that it might just be possible that this inconvenience was meant to be. It may have saved me from something much worse happening. The inconvenience - the "talking donkey" - may have actually saved me from something I could not see. Keep your eyes open for inconvenient "talking donkeys" in your life :) - and praise God for them when they appear! **Q: Have you ever had any "talking donkey" experiences in your life? An experience that at first glance was a huge inconvenience to you, but in retrospect was an incredible blessing from God? Basically, have you ever had a blessing in disguise? Do you think God still can use "talking donkey" experiences in our lives today to get our attention?**

3/6 - Today in Numbers chapter 24 we read about Balaam's prophecies! Verse 17 is thought to be prophetic of Jesus: *"I see him, but not in the present time. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel. It will crush the foreheads of Moab's people, cracking the skulls of the people of Sheth."* Tyndale's commentary today suggests that the star rising from Jacob may be the prophecy that convinced the wise men to travel to Israel in search of the newborn Jesus. And just when it looks like Balaam was turning out to be maybe not so bad in chapter 24... we get to chapter 25... In chapter 25 we read about Israel's sin in worshipping Baal and their sexual immorality. What we don't find out until Numbers chapter 31 verse 16 is that Balaam was the principal instigator of the idea of leading Israel toward this sexual sin & idolatry: *"They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people."* Revelation chapter 2 verse 14 also refers to Balaam's hand in the incidents that took place: *"Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality."* Reading about these incidents in chapter 25 today - **Q: do you think people today still live in this tension of serving God versus being seduced by idols? What saves us from this tension?**

3/7 - Today in Numbers chapter 26 we read about Israel's second census, which was commanded by God. (We'll read later in the Bible a census conducted by David that was not commanded by God, which was a sin.) This 2nd census in

numbers was taken approximately 38 years after the first census. The first census in Numbers chapters 1 & 2 was taken after Israel had left Egypt. This second census is being taken just before the conquest of the Promised Land. In verse 51 today we read: *"So the total number of Israelite men counted in the census numbered 601,730."* This total of the second census compares to 603,550 from the first census, so is very comparable. These second census numbers obviously reflect the 24,000 deaths we read about in chapter 25 - so this number would have been higher. To me, overall, to see the numbers so similar over 38 years in the wilderness shows that God's hand of blessing was so clearly upon the Israelites. They were flourishing in the desert. Hopefully this is encouraging to us today. If we are in right relationship with God, I believe our lives will clearly flourish in whatever circumstances we might find ourselves in - even if we are in the desert! **Q: Have you ever found yourself in a spiritual desert? How did God bring you living water and back to abundance? Do you look forward to heaven, where there will be no more deserts?**

3/8 - I read an interesting commentary today that said the giving of the instructions of the offerings for the festivals in today's readings was done as part of the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua that was coming up soon. As we saw in yesterday's readings with the census, there are 600,000 men about to enter the Promised Land - potentially 2 million or so total including women & children - who these instructions for the offerings for the festivals were given by Moses from God, as we see in chapter 29 verse 40 today: *"So Moses gave all of these instructions to the people of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded him."* **Q: How do you see transfers of power in your church take place today? Are they done well and orderly? How can you serve to help in times of transition in your church? Will be a helper?**

3/9 - Today in Numbers chapter 30 we read about the various complexities of vows, particularly related to women making vows. (and how their fathers or husbands can void them on day 1, etc.) Apparently the Jewish system and tradition of vows and what counts and didn't count got even more complex over the years between this chapter in Numbers and when Jesus was born. I love that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus simplifies the whole complex system of vows! Check out Matthew chapter 5 verses 33 through 37 where Jesus says: *"'You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.' But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one."* Let's let our yes simply mean yes and our no's simply mean no's! **Q: Do you make vows today? Do you think vows are a good or bad idea? How about legal contracts – are these a good idea in our world today? When should they be used? Or not used? Prenuptial agreements – good or bad idea? (nice hot topic of conversation... :)**

3/10 - Today in Numbers chapter 32 verse 23 we read this strong warning from Moses to the Reubenites & Gadites about their promise to fight with Israel and their desire to settle in the land east of the Jordan river: *"But if you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out."* I think this is powerful for us to keep in mind in our lives today as well! It's important for us to keep our word! If we're not sure we can keep our word, we shouldn't give it. But if we do give our word, and we fail to keep it, we have sinned. And I do believe the sin will still find us out today. **Q: How are you at keeping your word these days? Is there an area of your life where you gave your word and you now are wavering? Can you keep your word in that area? Will you pray to God to give you strength to do so?** Let us not be people who fail to keep our word or who stretch the truth!

3/10 - Today in Numbers chapter 33 we read about the other nations in Canaan. In chapter 34 we read about the boundaries of the Promised Land. In chapter 35 verses 10-12 we read about the Cities of Refuge - *"When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, designate cities of refuge for people to flee to if they have killed someone accidentally. These cities will be places of protection from a dead person's relatives who want to avenge the death. The slayer must not be killed before being tried by the community."* Reading about the Cities of Refuge reminds me of our current day laws of "innocent until proven guilty." It seems like the Cities of Refuge idea still lives on in our justice system today in some regards. **Q: How did the Cities of Refuge stand out to you? How do the Cities of Refuge foreshadow Jesus?**

3/12 - Today we begin Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch (or 5 Books of the Law)! And as we all Learned to Love Leviticus this year, my prayer is that each of us will be Diggin' Deuteronomy as we read through it this year! :)

~Deuteronomy~

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book consists of a series of addresses given by Moses in the plains of Moab prior to their entering into Canaan, as well as some specialized regulations and the appointment of Moses' successor, Joshua. In Moses' addresses

he summarized the events that led up to that day, exhorted the people to faith and obedience, called the Israelites to rededicate themselves to the task God had given them, and then led them in worship and song. After the appointment of Joshua, Moses left the people and, after viewing the Holy Land from afar one last time, he died. With Moses' death the old order passed away and the destiny of Israel moved into the hands of the next generation.

Theme: The faithfulness and power of God to save are stressed throughout the book. A look at Israel's past shows that God led his people through their darkest days and gave them hope for the future. What God did in the past he could do again. The need for faith and obedience on the part of God's people is also stressed. God's richest blessings are given only to those who will use them for his glory. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 3) Great commentary on Deuteronomy is at this link: http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=885 In Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 1 today we read: *"This book records the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River."*

3/12 - Okay, I think we've come across quite an understatement in our readings today in Deuteronomy chapter 2 verse 1 when Moses says: *"We wandered around Mount Seir for a long time."* Indeed... it was a long time of 3 decades plus of wandering... :) But, it's important for us to remember why it was such a long time of wandering - because of the Israelites' sin in not entering the Promised Land when they were first instructed to do so by God. And, I think about this in our lives today. When we sin. And particularly when we consistently sin - with a bad habit or addiction that we know we should not be indulging in - we can become just like the Israelites, wandering around in the wilderness for a long time... My fear is that we can get so used to our sin and wandering around in the wilderness that we don't ever break free from it. We stay in bondage to the sin. And then we stay in the wilderness. The wilderness for us today may simply be living life half-heartedly in a bit of a haze or a bit of a funk. With some sort of cloud hanging over us. It's no way to live life. I guess I just want to encourage you that if you are struggling with what seems to be an unreleasable sin to not give up. Don't ever give up on victory! Continue to take the sin to Jesus over and over and over again. Take it to God over and over and over again. Pray about it continuously. Seek wise counsel from friends and pastors and professional help. Freedom awaits you. You can get out of the wilderness. The Promised Land awaits you. Please don't continue to "wander around Mt. Seir for a long time".... **Q: Is there a time in your life where you felt like you were spiritually wandering? What got you back on track?**

3/13 - Today in Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 29 we read: *"But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you today? Do you believe it is true? Have you sought God with all of your heart and with all of your soul?** This verse also reminds me of Jesus' teaching of one of the two great commands - which he quoted from Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 - *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* **So - if you have sought after God and found him, do you now today love God with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all your strength? What does this look like in your life? How do you love God in your life today?**

3/13 - Today we get a nice recap of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy chapter 5! We originally read these in Exodus chapter 20 and then again in Exodus chapter 34. There are some differences in the wordings of the Ten Commandments in each of these chapters, but not enough to worry about. :) Check out a quick overview of some of the differences between these 3 chapters' presentation of the Ten Commandments [at this link](#). Bible.org has a great overview of the Ten Commandments, based on Exodus chapter 20, [at this link](#). I love Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 through 9 in our readings today! These verses are known as the **Shema** - which was named after the first word in this verse and means "Hear." [The Shema became the Jewish confession of faith](#), which was recited by pious Jews every morning and evening and it is still recited in synagogue services today. They are the last words a Jew says prior to death. More very interesting information about The Shema from a Jewish website is [at this link](#). *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."* **Q: How does the Shema stand out to you?**

3/14 - Today in Deuteronomy chapter 7, the New Living Translation has the chapter titled "The Privilege of Holiness." Keep in mind that these chapter headings - or headings within sections of chapters - are not Biblical text. They are not from the original manuscripts, but are basically brief summaries from the viewpoint of modern-day translators. Generally speaking though, you can trust what they are telling you - but just remember, they're not Biblical text. All this to say, I was intrigued by this chapter's title in today's readings. Israel was indeed privileged and called to holiness. I think an

important for us to keep in mind is that in the Old Testament, Israel was God's chosen people. So, yes, we do read in this chapter and future OT chapters God favoring Israel over all other nations. However, keep three things in mind. One, Israel is the people of God's covenant going back to Abraham and God is just forming Israel as a nation. Two, the other nations at that time were immersed in sin and idolatry to other gods. Three, through Jesus' ministry, God indeed shows love toward all nations today and wants all nations to be in relationship with him. But, prior to Jesus, we see clearly in this chapter that Israel is, per verse 6: *"a holy people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure."* **Q: Do you believe we are called to holiness in our lives today? How are you moving forward in holiness in your life?**

3/14 - Today in Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 10 we read: *"When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you."* What a great verse! Many say that it is because of this verse that we traditionally say grace at meal time. Interesting that this verse indicates that the Israelites were to praise God after eating – which, actually, is sometimes how I say grace today now too – when I forget to say grace before eating! :) I think the other thing this verse above gets at is that we humans have a tendency to “forget” God in the good times. In the bad times, maybe we do a decent job of praying to God and trying to stay close to Him. But in the good times, I know that sometimes I can forget Who really blessed me with the good times. I think it is so important for us to remember each and every day this one thing – God has given us *everything*. Every single good thing we have in our life comes from God. Our family. Our friends. Our physical abilities. Even the very air we breathe. It ALL comes from God. And, while I think it is pleasing to God for us to praise him for these good things – I also think it is ultimately healthy for us to praise God for the good things he has given us. Because, when we truly thank God each and every day for even very simple things – our eyesight, our 12 year old car that still runs fine, etc. etc. – we realize how very blessed we really are, and then I think we have less of a chance of feeling sorry for ourselves. We are blessed! **Q: How are you doing on praising God for the good things he has given you in your life? Now that we are in this Easter & Spring season, will you make a conscious effort to really praise and thank God each and every day? Think this might be pleasing to God? Think this might be healthy for you? Do you say grace or offer up some sort of prayer of thanksgiving to God at each meal? Why or why not? Do you think it is pleasing to God when we do say a prayer at mealtime?**

3/14 - Okay, I'm really appreciating the New Living Translation little commentary headers before sections of our readings - as I discussed in yesterday's post, these are not from the original manuscripts so should not be considered Biblical text. Nonetheless, I personally do find them useful. And I really do like the first header in Deuteronomy chapter 9 today in the NLT - "Victory by God's Grace." You'll note that you won't actually find the word "grace" in any of the verses that follow. However, I think we do get a good overview of how grace works in this section, and verse 6 gives an example of grace: *"I will say it again: The LORD your God is not giving you this good land because you are righteous, for you are not--you are a stubborn people."* This verse made me chuckle a bit when I read it. Because it is true. The Israelites were a stubborn people, as we've seen in our readings. And yet, God was still showing grace by giving them the Promised Land. This verse primarily made me chuckle because I think that we, today, are still oftentimes a stubborn people. Not a lot has changed in 3,000+ years. We humans are still a stubborn people. And God is still a God of grace. Then and now. God shows us humans his grace. Thank goodness! **Q: Are you righteous? Are you stubborn? How are you made righteous in Christ?**

3/14 - Later in Deuteronomy chapter 9 we read about the golden calf, and we get a great reminder of how Moses truly was a mediator between God and the Israelites - in some ways foreshadowing the mediator role that Jesus is now between God and all humankind. Verses 18 & 19 demonstrate Moses' mediator role well - *"Then for forty days and nights I lay prostrate before the LORD, neither eating bread nor drinking water. I did this because you had sinned by doing what the LORD hated, thus making him very angry. How I feared for you, for the LORD was ready to destroy you. But again he listened to me."* And check out this amazing image below of Moses laying prostrate before God on behalf the Israelites... **Q: Can you imagine doing this for 40 days and nights for someone? Particularly for someone who just sinned greatly against God? Do you pray with intercession for others?**

3/15 - Wow. I like Deuteronomy chapter 11 a lot today. There are a ton of powerful verses in this chapter! I love verse 22 - *"Be careful to obey all the commands I give you; show love to the LORD your God by walking in his ways and clinging to him."* I really like that... show Love to God by walking in his ways - and clinging to him. I think I caught that term in our readings yesterday as well - "clinging." I know in our world today it's not too cool to be too clingy. :) But, I think God indeed wants us to be clingy when it comes Him! I pray that I cling to God each and every day. **Q: How about you? When it comes to God, are you clingy?**

3/15 - Verses 26 through 28 are terrific verses on the choice the Israelites could make back then - *"Today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today. You will receive a curse if you reject the commands of the LORD your God and turn from his way by worshiping foreign gods."* I believe this choice has morphed but still continues today through the New Covenant. We can choose to follow Jesus or we can choose to follow our own ways. One way is a blessing and one way is truly a curse. Like the Israelites, we still have the choice of a blessing or a curse.... **Q: Which choice have you made? How are you choosing blessings in your life today? How are you avoiding curses?**

3/16 - Wow. Deuteronomy chapter 13 starts off with a strong warning today - *"Suppose there are prophets among you, or those who have dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, and the predicted signs or miracles take place. If the prophets then say, 'Come, let us worship the gods of foreign nations,' do not listen to them. The LORD your God is testing you to see if you love him with all your heart and soul."* **Q: Do you believe there are false prophets in our world today? Are there people in our world that tempt us to worship false gods? It is possible one of the false gods we can be tempted to worship today is even our own self? Will we reject worshiping false gods and love and worship the one true God with all of our soul and heart?**

3/16 - Verse 22 is powerful for us to meditate upon - *"You must set aside a tithe of your crops--one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year. Bring this tithe to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored."* **Q: What might "crops we harvest" be in our modern world today? Is there a place we can bring a tithe to God today? Do you believe that tithing honors God?** On a side note, my wife and I generally try to practice giving 10% and saving 10%, and live on the remaining 80%. Our 10% giving is spread among the local church, local and international ministries, and nonprofits.

3/16 - Deuteronomy chapter 15 verses 4 and 10 & 11 stood out to me today - *"There should be no poor among you, for the LORD your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession.... Give freely without begrudging it, and the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do. There will always be some among you who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share your resources freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need."* **Q: How do these verses speak to you?** I find it interesting that these verses say both - there should be no poor and that there will always be some poor among you. **I wonder why this is?** It seems kind of like a kingdom of heaven ultimate reality and our fallen world temporary reality perhaps... **Do you think the command to share our resources freely with the poor and others in need is still valid today? How are you doing in giving freely to the poor?**

3/17 - Deuteronomy chapter 16 verse 18 is of note today: *"Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in all the towns the LORD your God is giving you. They will judge the people fairly throughout the land."* After Deuteronomy comes the book of Joshua, which is followed by the book of Judges. And then... Israel won't be satisfied with just judges. Israel will want a king... **Q: Who is your King today? Why do we look for earthly Kings? Should Jesus be enough, as our King?**

3/17 - In Deuteronomy 18:15 today Moses prophesies about Jesus! *"Moses continued, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.'" These words of Moses' show that the coming of Jesus was not an afterthought, but part of God's original plan. In Acts 3:22-23 Peter quoted this verse to show that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, the prophet referred to here in Deuteronomy. Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org has a great commentary on Deuteronomy chapter 18 titled "False Prophets" [at this link](#). One good quote from this link from Bob is - "False prophets play down the majesty and holiness of God. They try, as it were, to 'bring God down' to our level. They make us feel comfortable around "God" (or the "gods"), and they even seek to convince us that we can manipulate God to our advantage. The true prophets did just the opposite."* **Q: Think there are false prophets in our world today?**

3/18 - It is interesting to read about the cleansing for an unsolved murder in Deuteronomy chapter 21. I think God makes it crystal clear here that murder is such a horrible crime that affects the entire land and community. The Ten Commandments are obviously clear on "do not murder." These verses in Deuteronomy go into a bit of what happens to the land when one is murdered. Interesting to think about these verses on murder - and then realize that Jesus, whose blood was wholly innocent, was murdered on a cross. **Q: Was Jesus' murder unsolved? Who is guilty for this murder of Jesus? Whose sins put Jesus on the cross? Thankfully, whose sins does Jesus' blood cover? Who does Jesus rescue and redeem through His innocent blood shed on a cross?**

3/19 - Later this year in the One Year Bible when we read Galatians, you'll note that Paul powerfully references today's readings in Deuteronomy chapter 27 verse 26: *"Cursed is anyone who does not affirm and obey the terms of these instructions.' And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'"* One of the best things we can ever do when studying the Bible is simply let Scripture interpret Scripture. So here we go on Galatians chapter 3 verses 10 through 12: *"But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life.'"* **Q: How do these verses from Galatians speak to you? Do you agree that we cannot be made right with God by trying to keep the law? Do you think the way of faith is very different from the way of law?**

3/19 - As we're in the Easter season and Good Friday, let me continue on with a few more verses here from Galatians chapter 10, continuing with verses 13 and 14: *"But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith."* **Q: Has Jesus rescued you from the curse pronounced by the law? Do you believe that Jesus took upon himself the curse for your wrongdoing? Have you received the promised Holy Spirit through faith?**

3/19 - I love the blessings for obedience that open up our Deuteronomy chapter 28 readings today! I actually first heard these read at a wedding several years back. The best man in the wedding read these verses as a blessing to the bride & groom. Somehow I missed the "obedience" to God's commands part of the blessing... Obedience is quite a word I think for Christians to consider. I'm not sure that it is a popular word for us sometimes. I do believe that we are called to obedience as followers of Jesus. Jesus himself was of course obedient - obedient even to death on a cross. **Q: Is there an area of your life where you feel God might be calling you to obedience? Will you obey? Do you think about "obedience" very often when it comes to your relationship with God? Do you think obedience is a very popular concept amongst Christians today? Do you think there are blessings that come along with obedience? Have you experienced blessings in your life because of obedience? Conversely, do you think there are consequences to disobedience?**

3/20 - Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 29 is intriguing today - *"There are secret things that belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we may obey these words of the law."* I think this is good for us to remember - there are secrets of God that we will not know this side of heaven. And I don't think we need to worry or speculate on what these secret things might be, because "the revealed things belong to us." God has revealed himself to us in the Bible! His very Word. He has revealed himself in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he reveals himself in the life of the body of Christ today - the church. We have everything we need to know to love & follow God. And I think God's secrets can remain secret to us this side of heaven - I don't know about you, but I like a little mystery in God! :) **Q: Are you okay not knowing every single thing about God? Are you okay with a little bit of mystery in your faith in God?**

3/20 - *"Be strong and courageous!"* is the encouragement & exhortation we hear 3 times in chapter 31 today. It was said by Moses to the Israelites in verse 6, then by Moses to Joshua in verse 7, and finally by God to Joshua in verse 23. **Q: Why do you think this was said 3 times? Why would the Israelites and Joshua need to be reminded to be strong and courageous? And if these words were needed back then, do you think perhaps we might need to hear them still today? Do we need to be reminded oftentimes to be strong and courageous? Today, this side of the Cross, where does our strength and courage truly come from?**

3/20 - Today in Deuteronomy chapter 31 verses 10-12 we read – *"Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people - men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns-so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law."* Incredible verses! I like that Moses was setting up a way for God's Word to continue to be taught & heard by God's People every 7 years! I think this gets at a couple of things – 1. We humans are very forgetful. We may hear something once, but we need to hear it over and over again – particularly if it is God's Word. 2. There is always a new generation of people coming up behind us. It is so important to educate this new generation about God's Word. So – **how do these verses above speak to you today? Are you hearing or reading God's Word**

on a consistent basis? I know the answer is yes, for this year, as you're in the Chronological Bible! And I know that many of you have been reading the Bible for many years now. However, I know not everyone will read the OYB every year. Here's a suggestion – what about committing to reading the entire Bible – in the One Year Bible or Chronological or other format – once every 7 years? Thus, if you live to be 101, you'll have read the Bible through at least 10 times (not counting those early years :). Just a thought to keep in the back of your mind – please consider reading the entire Bible at least once every 7 years. Though, I would encourage you to at least read some portion of the Word each and every day, in each and every year. Next question – **Q: are you somehow involved in teaching others the Word? Are you encouraging your friends or family members to read God's Word? Maybe consider inviting your family & friends to participate in the reading Bible next year? Are you somehow involved in teaching the younger generation coming up behind you to learn God's Word? Maybe through your church you can get involved in Sunday school ministries or maybe there is a younger person in your community that you can mentor and disciple?**

3/21 - These words of Moses today in Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 47 stood out to me - *"These instructions are not mere words--they are your life!"* Wow. **Q: Do you think this way about the Bible? Are these mere words you read in the Bible? Or are they your very life?**

3/22 - Alright, I don't know about you, but I'm getting a little teary eyed reading about Moses' final blessings of the tribes today! It reminded me of Jacob's blessings of his sons in [Genesis Chapter 49](#) - though, it seems to me that Moses' blessings were a bit more positive overall than Jacob's, no? Jacob's were a bit more realistic though perhaps... as we'll read later this year in the One Year Bible. The other thing about reading Moses' final blessings of the tribes today that makes me sad is the realization that we are in the 2nd to last chapter of the Pentateuch! (The first five books of the Bible - the books of the Law.) Tomorrow we'll read about the death of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 34 and then it's onto the Promised Land with Joshua! **Q: How does reading about the death of Moses and his final blessings stand out to you?**

3/22 - Today we come to the end of Moses' life in our readings! And - we come to the end of Moses' writings of the first five books of the Old Testament - the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. I will miss reading Moses' writings - but - we only have to wait until January 1 next year when we will all embark on the Bible in a year adventure and Moses' writings once again, right?? :) **Q: How has reading the book of Deuteronomy been for you this year? What have you learned? How has your journey through the first 5 books of the Bible, the Pentateuch or the Books of Law, been for you this year? Have you ever read all 5 of these books in a row before? Are there any new insights you have learned from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy this year?**

3/22 - Today we begin the book of Joshua!

~Joshua~

Author: Probably Joshua

Date: Either fourteenth century or twelfth century B.C.

Content: After the death of Moses, the leadership of the nation passed into the hands of Joshua and he was their commander-in-chief throughout the entire time of conquest when Israel was taking over the land. While still in the plains of Moab, Joshua mobilized his forces and prepared them for battle. There were three campaigns fought, one in the north, one in the central region, and one in the south, and all described, though not fully. After the initial victories, the land was divided among the various tribes of Israel. Joshua then exhorted the people and died in peace.

Theme: The book of Joshua shows that God is true to his promise. He had promised his people a land and they were now entering in to possess it. However, it was not automatic; God required of them that they actively engage in warfare in order to gain what he had given them. God's judgment upon the sin of the Canaanites in the form of Israel's armies is also a prominent feature. (Above commentary is from *"The One Year Bible Companion"* pp. 3-4) More commentary on Joshua is [at this link](#).

3/22 - Today in Joshua chapter 1 verse 9 we read one of my favorite verses in the Bible – *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* Incredible verse! God spoke these words to Joshua just before he was about to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. And I do believe these words can apply to us today in our lives as well. **Q: Do you believe it is possible that God has commanded you to be strong and courageous? In what areas of your life might you need to really hear this command from God? Do you believe that God will be with you wherever you go?**

3/22 - In verse 8 – just one verse prior to the verse above – we read – *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you today? Is it possible that you should not let the Bible depart from your mouth? Do you meditate on the Bible day and night, so that you are careful to do what is written in it? Do you believe meditating and following the truth of God as described in the Bible will allow you to be prosperous and successful?**

3/23 - Today is a major day in our readings as the Israelites cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land! The significance of the events in today's readings cannot be overstated. The Israelites 40 years in the Wilderness are over. God's Promise made to Abraham is being fulfilled! I am intrigued by verse 5 in Joshua chapter 3 today as the Israelites are about to cross the Jordan - *"Then Joshua told the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do great wonders among you.""* I'm wondering what the Israelites did to purify themselves? Some sort of ritual purification I'd guess - likely similar to the purification before meeting God at Mount Sinai, which included washing all their garments as well as themselves. **Q: I also wonder what we do in our lives today to purify ourselves?** The first thought comes to mind that we are of course purified today completely by the blood of Christ. But, then, I also know that once we have made the decision to follow Christ we will still sin on occasion. **And then, is purification needed? Not from a salvation standpoint - but from simply having a pure heart before God?** I'm thinking that our purification today is confessing directly to God our sins and repenting. And I think through this process God's grace arrives in a nanosecond and purifies us. I think we're purified by God's grace today. But, I think in part we need to recognize our own need for purification and confess to God our shortcomings and repent. Let me know what you think on this in the Comments below if you'd like. Again, I'm not looking at this from a salvation / justification perspective - more of the sanctification perspective. I like the thought of purification - of being pure before God. I pray for this for each of us. No dark corners. No secrets. Just a pure heart before our heavenly Father. **Q: How did reading about the Israelites crossing the Jordan river stand out to you? Were you relieved for them that the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was over? Have you ever crossed any symbolic "Jordan Rivers" in your life – from the wilderness to the Promised Land?**

3/23 - Fascinating! verses today in Joshua chapter 5 verses 13 - 15 - *"As Joshua approached the city of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man facing him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you friend or foe?" "Neither one," he replied. "I am commander of the LORD's army." At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for this is holy ground." And Joshua did as he was told."* Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion says this about these verses - "The captain of the host was no mere angel. His presence was an appearance of Christ in person. Joshua worshipped the captain; his worship was accepted and he was neither rebuked nor instructed otherwise." **Q: Whaddya think? Was this Jesus in these verses?? Do you think Jesus made appearances in the Old Testament days?**

3/24- In Joshua chapter 6 we read about the fall of Jericho to the Israelites - but... things take a turn for the worse in chapter 7 with the defeat at the city of Ai. It is interesting to note why the defeat happened in Ai, in verse 1 - *"But Israel was unfaithful concerning the things set apart for the LORD."* Think about it. Israel just had a great victory at Jericho and then they were unfaithful toward God. **Q: I wonder if perhaps we are like this in our lives today as well? Maybe something amazing happens in our life, and we get so swept up in the victory dance that we forget about God. And yet... it is God who gave us that victory. It is God who gives us every good thing we have in our lives. Are we being unfaithful in our lives concerning things set apart for God?**

3/24 - In Joshua chapter 7 today we continue to read about Achan's sin, which caused 36 Israelites to die in the first attack on the city of Ai. I realize that the destruction of Achan and his family may be tough for us to read, but I think it's important to remember Achan's sin caused other Israelites to die. I found Joshua's words interesting in verse 19 as he spoke to Achan: *"My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth."* He has a fatherly tone here - and I like the thought of giving glory to God by telling the truth. **Q: How have you learned the value of telling the truth in your life? Is there glory in telling the truth?**

3/24 - In chapter 8 verse 1 we read this today - *"Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged." This repeats what we heard God say to Joshua in chapter 1 verse 9 - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* This makes sense that in the midst of the conquest of the Promised Land that this would need to be repeated often. I'm wondering if we need to hear this in our lives today as well from God often - do not be afraid or discouraged. It is so true.

With God in our lives we do not need to be afraid or discouraged! I need to be reminded of this often... **Q: How have you ever overcome discouragement in your life? How has God encouraged you in times of need?**

3/24 - As we read about the Gibeonites deception today, Joshua chapter 9 verses 14 & 15 teach a valuable lesson for each of us: *"So the Israelite leaders examined their bread, but they did not consult the LORD. Then Joshua went ahead and signed a peace treaty with them, and the leaders of Israel ratified their agreement with a binding oath."* They did not consult the Lord - and thus signed a binding oath based on a deception. I know that I don't do this enough. I do know that more and more I have found myself praying "thy will - not mine - be done" when major decisions are before me. I am seeking God's will and guidance in my life. But, I'm not sure that I'm really consulting God all that often. And I'm afraid when I don't I can rush into quick & bad decisions... I pray each of us will consult God with all of our plans & decisions in our lives - be they major or minor. **Q: How about you in your life today? How often do you consult God on major decisions in your life? Even minor decisions?**

3/25- Today in Joshua chapter 10 we read about the day the sun stood still! Have you ever received the email about this chapter titled "NASA and the Bible?" - basically the email goes into how a man from NASA proved that the sun stood still. I have received this email a bunch of times over the past 5 years or so. This email does appear to be an Urban Legend, but it's a fun email. I have read many commentaries on this chapter and do believe that a miracle took place, as we read in verse 13 - *"So the sun and moon stood still until the Israelites had defeated their enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day."* **Q: Do you believe this miracle took place? Do you believe in miracles?**

3/25 - An interesting note on Joshua 11 verse 21 - *"During this period, Joshua destroyed all the descendants of Anak, who lived in the hill country of Hebron, Debir, Anab, and the entire hill country of Judah and Israel."* The descendants of Anak were the giants the Israelite spies feared some 40 years earlier in Numbers chapter 13 verses 32 & 33 - and you'll recall these verses kept the Israelites wandering in the desert for the next 40 years... *"The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."* Interesting to see how the fear of 40 years prior had turned into the faith and confidence here in Joshua. **Q: I wonder how this type of change can happen in our lives too? A change from fear to faith and confidence? Is there an area in your life where you might need this type of change?**

3/26 - It is interesting to read about the allotment of land to the tribe of Judah today! It reminds me of how different these days are for the Israelites, compared to the 40 years of wandering in the desert - or the slavery in Egypt prior to that. Times have changed! God's Promise is being fulfilled. I think this is important for us to remember in our lives as well. Maybe we're in a "slavery" period in our own life where we are looking for a Savior to free us. Jesus is of course that Savior to free us from our slavery to sin. Or, maybe we're in a desert period of our lives. We've decided to follow Jesus, but maybe we're really trudging through some hard times. If we're in this type of period, hopefully we can be encouraged by knowing that God's Promises to us will not fail. God will bring us peace that surpasses all understanding. God will bring us to the true Promised Land for eternity. Let us be encouraged in our own lives by our past few months of readings about the Israelites and their journey from slavery to now the Promised Land. God's Promises will not fail. They are eternal. And they are the only thing in this passing world that is eternal. **Q: Do you believe that God's promises are True and won't fail you? If you are in some sort of slavery to sin or perhaps in a desert place in your life right now, will you reach out to Jesus to save you and lead you into the Promised Land? Do you believe Jesus can Save you and Lead you? And will you follow?**

3/28 - In Joshua chapter 18 verse 1 today we read - *"Now that the land was under Israelite control, the entire Israelite assembly gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tabernacle."* Shiloh was located about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. The tabernacle remained in Shiloh throughout the period of the Judges, or about 300 years. We will later read about Samuel traveling to Shiloh with his family. [Click here for some interesting facts on Shiloh.](#) **Q: Have you ever traveled to Israel and visited Shiloh? Did the visit to Israel strengthen your faith? Do you want to travel to Israel someday?**

3/29 - Today we finish up reading about the Promised Land being divided among the tribes! In Joshua chapter 20 we read about the Cities of Refuge. I like that concept - a city of refuge. A place of refuge. This is what I think about Jesus today - He is our City of Refuge! No matter what our past sins are, Jesus can be our City of Refuge if we will run to Him, believe, confess & repent. **Q: How is Jesus your City of Refuge?**

3/29 - In Joshua chapter 21 we read about the towns given to the Levites, the priestly tribe appointed in the Mosaic Law for the service of the Tabernacle and of the Temple. It seems very wise that the Levites are given towns throughout the various tribes of the Israelites. In my mind this is spreading out the priestly tribe strategically. Can you imagine if the Levites were all in just 1 location? It seems to me that there would be a vacuum of spiritual leadership in the tribes if the Levites were not dispersed in the manner which they were. **Q: How does reading about the Levites being dispersed remind you of the church today? Is the church dispersed throughout the world today a good thing? What are your thoughts on the benefits or drawbacks of denominations?**

3/30 - Today we finish up the book of Joshua! What a book. I have definitely learned much from this book this year. And today's readings are no exception. Chapter 24 is a wonderful closing to this book where the Israelites renew their covenant with God. Verses 25 through 27 are awesome - *"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to a permanent and binding contract between themselves and the LORD. Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the oak tree beside the Tabernacle of the LORD. Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God."* **Q: How has the book of Joshua been for you this year? What have you learned?**

3/31 - Today we begin the book of Judges! Coming up in this book, we'll be reading about Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Delilah, and Micah - to drop a few names.

Judges

Author: Unknown

Date: Eleventh century B.C.

Content: The book of Judges covers a period of several hundred years following the conquest of Canaan, during which time the people were ruled by individual leaders called judges or saviors. Their task was primarily military, being to expel the enemy from the land. Throughout this period of Israel's history there is a tragic cycle to be observed - that of rebellion against God, followed by the judgment of God, usually in the form of foreign invasion. The children of Israel then cry to God for help and a "judge" is sent to save them. This cycle is repeated numerous times throughout the book. Tragically, the people never seem to learn that rebellion against God is a sure road to disaster.

Theme: The grim lesson of Judges is that "the wages of sin is death: (see Romans 6:23). Sin takes many forms, from the sophisticated sins of kings to the barbaric events that close the book, but the net results is always the same: when everyone does his own thing, chaos and destruction are the inevitable outcome. Through it all, however, God in his faithfulness saves the people when they truly repent and turn to him. (Above commentary is from "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 4)

3/31 - Today in Judges Chapter 2 verses 1 & 2 we will read these words from the angel of the Lord – *"I said, "I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars. Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?"* The Israelites disobeyed God back then. **Why? Do we disobey God in our lives today? Why do we do this?** I have a hunch that maybe sometimes we are simply afraid. Afraid of fully following and trusting God. We may think that God really won't live up to his promises. At these moments our faith is weak. And we end up disobeying God. Fortunately our inconsistencies do not affect God's perfect consistency. God never changes. We do. And we can allow ourselves to either be changed by God such that we live in obedience to him – or, we can continue to disobey God and live tumultuous lives. It's a pretty simple choice. One decision brings an amazing peace that surpasses all understanding and the other decision – grief and frustration. **Q: Do you ever disobey God in your life today? Why do you do this? How can we instead choose to obey God in our lives?**

3/31 - Today in Judges we read about Israel forgetting about God and worshiping other gods. Sad stuff! Judges chapter 2 verse 19 stood out: *"But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They followed other gods, worshiping and bowing down to them. And they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways."* **Q: I wonder if we are so different today from the Israelites in the time of the Judges? Do we maybe shape ourselves up for short amounts of time - but then go back to our corrupt ways? Do we ultimately refuse to give up our evil practices and stubborn ways? Why is this? What is the remedy to this problem? Or - perhaps I should ask - Who is the remedy to this problem? Who can literally rescue us from this problem? Who can rescue us from ourselves? Will you allow Jesus to rescue you from any evil practices and stubborn ways?**

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 month'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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