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Notes & Group Questions for April 1 - 30 readings (*Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below*)

JUDGES 3:31 - 2 SAMUEL 21:22 (Daily reading schedule at: www.ChronologicalBibleBlog.com)

4/1 - Okay, women rule in today's readings in Judges!! :) Deborah basically tells Barak that he's being a wimp, so she'll help lead the military victory, and does. And then Jael, who is likely not an Israelite, finishes off Sisera, the commander of the enemy army of the Israelites, with a tent peg! Don't mess with Deborah or Jael! In Judges chapter 5 we read the wonderful song of Deborah and Barak, and it is of note in verse 31: *"Then there was peace in the land for forty years."* Quite a song! Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org's commentary on Joshua chapters 4 & 5 today titled **"The Prophetess Deborah"** is [at this link](#). **Q: How do you see women leading in churches today? Do you think there should or shouldn't be distinctions between roles women and men have in churches?**

4/1 - Today in Judges chapter 6 verses 1 we read - *"Again the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight."* It is so interesting to see the back-and-forth relationship of the Israelites with God in the Old Testament. The Israelites did evil. They cried out to God. God saved them. Then... The Israelites did evil again... **Q: And I wonder - are we so different from the Israelites today? Should we be? Could we be? How?** I do believe that through a growing and loving relationship with Jesus, we can be spared of this back-and-forth relationship with God. I believe this is the only Way. Let us not have to spend our lives running back and forth to "caves" as we will see below... Let us only run into the arms of the Jesus!

4/1 - Today read about Gideon and the fleece. We also read about how the angel of the Lord comes to Gideon and tells Gideon he will save Israel out of Midian's hands, because he is being sent by God. In verse 15 Gideon replies, *"But Lord, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."* You'll notice how this reply of Gideon's is reminiscent of Moses' reaction to God's call to serve in Exodus chapters 3 & 4 - "Why me? How can I?" etc. etc. And I think it is very useful for each of us to note that God often calls the seemingly lowly - like Moses and Gideon - rather than the seemingly mighty to act for him. This should be encouraging to us! **Q: I wonder if you and I are sometimes like Gideon and Moses? I wonder if perhaps we are being called to do something incredible for God in our lives, and we are making excuses like Gideon and Moses made excuses? Should we instead act in obedience to God's call and trust that he will lead us? If God has called us to something, shouldn't we have enough faith to believe he will give us the strength and wisdom needed for the journey? What is God calling you to do in your life that you are not doing? Are you making excuses like Gideon and Moses did? Will you instead move forward in faith and obedience to God in this holy calling in your life?**

4/2 - Okay, the big question from today's readings in Judges is **are you the type of person that cups water in your hands and laps it up like a dog or are you someone who kneels down and puts your mouth directly in the stream to drink??** :) I confess I'm option #1, so I guess I would have gone on with Gideon for the battle. In all seriousness, a commentary suggested that God chose those that cupped water in their hands rather than kneeled down, because it meant those who didn't kneel down were always ready for any emergency situation that might come up. I guess I can buy that...

4/2 - Judges chapter 8 verses 23 & 24 are an intriguing look at beautiful humility mixed with a unique request - *"But Gideon replied, 'I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The LORD will rule over you! However, I have one request. Each of you can give me an earring out of the treasures you collected from your fallen enemies.'"* It is awesome that Gideon says he will not rule over the Israelites- but that God will. But then, his ask for a piece of gold from each person is intriguing. We read in verse 27 that Gideon made a sacred ephod from the collected gold - so, this does appear worshipful perhaps at first glance. But then verse 27 tells us: *"But soon all the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping it, and it became a trap for Gideon and his family."* Yikes! Not exactly what should have happened here... It's interesting. **Q: I wonder if we do this in our lives today as well. Perhaps we are very humble in one regards - but then maybe we make some sort of unique request of those around us... and that unique request goes awry. I don't know if I can give you a good example of this. But perhaps this will ring true for you in some area of your life? If so, can you abandon the false idol you are worshiping as quickly as possible? Particularly if this false idol was born out of something that was initially worshipful. Will you let it go?**

4/3 - Allright, I don't know about you, but I'm seeing quite a bit of pride flowing around in Judges recently - particularly in today's readings. And we all know the old saying, "Pride goeth before the fall." And indeed we are seeing people fall after their prideful fits. In fact, Satan himself was guilty of the sin of Pride. He wanted to be equal with God. He thought he was all that and a bag-o-chips. But he ain't. Never will be. So, maybe the saying in regards to Satan certainly is "Pride goeth before the Fall." And that's Fall with a capital "F" unfortunately. We saw Abimelech's deadly pride in yesterday's readings when he had killed 70 of Gideon's sons - his half brothers - so that he could rule the people of Schechem. Pride & Power. Deadly combination then - and still is today. We then read Jotham's parable in yesterday's readings and see that his words came true in today's readings. I am amazed at the depth of Abimelech's sin of pride even in his dying moment when we read in chapter 9 verses 52 through 54 today: *"Abimelech followed them to attack the tower. But as he prepared to set fire to the entrance, a woman on the roof threw down a millstone that landed on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. He said to his young armor bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me! Don't let it be said that a woman killed Abimelech!"*" Wow... Now - don't get me wrong. I think for me to say that Abimelech was completely prideful and that I am not is the same sin - pride. It would be prideful for me to put myself above Abimelech. He's not a lot different than we are today. I think pride is something we all probably struggle with at some level or at some point in our lives. I know I do. We are all sinners. And as I read about Abimelech in Judges today - or reflect upon Satan's Fall - I realize that pride is a sin that we really must vigilantly watch our entire lives. If we don't, I think we can get blinded to the fact that we're prideful - and we'll say dumb things like "don't let it be said that a woman killed (fill in your name as if you were to say this about yourself in the 3rd person, cuz that's how you refer to yourself when you are prideful)!" :) Pride kills... let us pray for humility in our lives today. God can redeem and heal us from our pride! **Q: Have you ever struggled with pride? Do you think pride might be an ongoing struggle for most of us (all of us?) for most of (all of?) our lives?**

4/4 - Today we read about Jephthah and his daughter - and the related vow. It is interesting to note that some Biblical scholars do not think that Jephthah actually killed his daughter, but that she simply died a virgin, as verse 38 says. However... verse 38 also says he kept his vow. Keep in mind that oftentimes the Bible reports "just the facts," which does not necessarily mean the "facts" or actions of what us humans did was pleasing in God's sight. Human sacrifice was not part of God's laws or plans. It is clearly forbidden in Leviticus chapter 20 verses 1-5 and in Leviticus chapter 18:21 - *"Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD."*

4/4- Today we begin reading four chapters about Samson, the last of the judges. You'll notice that the author of Judges often compares the story of Samson's birth and life with the story of Israel. Samson was a Nazirite, which meant he could drink no alcohol, could not cut his hair, and could have no contact with the dead. I found it interesting that Samson's mother was commanded by the angel in Judges 13 today to not drink any alcohol during her pregnancy. Obviously this is important for health reasons, but also it seems it is important because Samson was a Nazirite - whose life began in his mother's womb. More info on Nazirite's is [at this link](#). Interesting story today about Samson & the lion! Pretty gross that he ate the honey made in the lion's carcass on the way to his wedding! :) You'll note in our readings of Samson that he is drawn to Philistine women, which was against God's law and the Philistine's were Israel's enemies then. Hence, his parents did not approve of the marriage. **Q: How did the readings about Samson stand out to you?**

4/4 - Judges 15 today is quite a chapter! Whew... Samson is a whirlwind in this chapter... I know I probably should not chuckle about this - but a donkey's jawbone?? Who would have ever thought this could be a lethal weapon. Well, now we all know it can be indeed. In Judges chapter 16 verse 3 we continue to see Samson's strength - *"But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the city gates with its two posts, and lifted them, bar and all, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron."* And then we get to the famous story of Samson & Delilah. In verse 21 the Philistines finally overpower Samson by cutting his hair - a symbol of Samson's relationship with God. **Q: What stood out to you in reading about the life of Samson and Samson & Delilah? Have you ever been in an unhealthy relationship that God brought you out of?**

4/5 - Judges chapter 17 & 18 are sad chapters to read! In these chapters we see how far a Levitical priest had wandered from his original call to serve God - by accepting money, idols, and position in Micah's house. And we see how far the tribe of Dan had wandered from God's plan for the tribes of Israel by killing the citizens of Laish - a city that did not fall under God's judgment due to serving idols or wickedness - and Laish was outside the geographical boundaries of the tribe of Dan. Unfortunately, we see Dan's tribe worshiping idols. Verse 6 in chapter 17 stood out to me - *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* This verse certainly seems to be building up to the kings of Israel that will soon be coming. But, this verse also indicates to me the importance for each of us to have a king - so that we don't just do whatever seems right in our own eyes. Fortunately, today, we have Jesus Christ as our king. He is the best king we could ever hope for. **Q: Do you consider Jesus to be your king? In what ways is**

Jesus King over your life?

4/6 - Hmm... notice the similarities between Judges chapter 19 and Genesis chapter 19? In [Genesis chapter 19](#) two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening and they planned to spend the night in the town square. But Lot insisted they go with him and spend the night at his house. Then, in the middle of the night the men of Sodom came to Lot's house to have sex with the two angels. Lot offered his two virgin daughters instead... see the unfortunate similarities? Social protocol of the time - protecting a house guest at any cost - unfortunately carried more authority in Judges chapter 19 than God's law and moral convictions. Obviously this is an extreme case in Judges chapter 19.... **Q: yet, is it possible that in today's world social protocol of our time can sometimes carry more authority than moral convictions? How do we stand tall today and protect someone when this is the case? How have you stood up for moral convictions over social protocol today?**

4/6 - Today we finish the book of Judges! What a powerful and telling verse the book closes with in chapter 21 verse 25: *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* Unfortunately, so true then. And perhaps so true for us today if we don't have a king. Fortunately, we do have the opportunity to have a king - through faith in Jesus. Otherwise, without Jesus as our king, we will surely do whatever seems right in our own eyes. I know I did for many years... sad years they were. **Q: How has been reading the book of Judges been for you this year? What new insights or revelations did you pick up while reading through Judges?**

4/7 - Today we are starting up – and tomorrow finishing - the wonderful book of Ruth and then moving into First Samuel. The book of Ruth is a wonderful look at faithful love in human relationships, and in a family in particular. I like how Zondervan describes this book – “The book of Ruth is a Hebrew short story, told with consummate skill. Among historical narratives in Scripture it is unexcelled in its compactness, vividness, warmth, beauty, and dramatic effectiveness – an exquisitely wrought jewel of Hebrew narrative art.” I hope you are ready for this jewel!

Ruth

Author: Unknown

Date: During the time of the Judges

Content: The book of Ruth portrays another side to the chaotic time of the judges. In it there is a welcome relief from the bloodshed and mayhem that seemed to engulf the land because of Israel's sin. It is the story of Ruth, who decided to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi, after tragedy struck that unfortunate woman. God returned good to Ruth in the form of a husband (Boaz) and a child, and also to Naomi in the form of grandchildren. From this family, eventually, came David the king.

Theme: The central point of this book is that even in times of crisis and despair, life may be lived according to the precepts of God and that God abundantly blesses those who do so live. The fundamental values of love, faith, trust, and goodness are greater than the hatred and violence of men, and continue from generation to generation as a light to guide those who look for the true meaning of life. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 4-5)*

4/7 - Today in Ruth chapter 1 verses 16 & 17 we will read these beautiful words of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi, whose husband & two sons had died - *"Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."* How's that for love & commitment! **Q: Can you imagine saying these words to someone in your life today?** I pray that each of us have this type of love & commitment for our families – or that we will have this in the future with our families. It seems like nowadays families are getting more and more distanced from one another – separated sometimes by geography and I think oftentimes by individualism or other selfish reasons. **Perhaps each of us can learn something from Ruth and her dedication to her mother-in-law Naomi about what family love & commitment could and should really look like?**

4/8 - Today we begin the book of First Samuel! I cannot wait to read about Hannah, Samuel, Saul & David!

First Samuel, Author: Unknown

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: The books of First and Second Samuel comprise one book in the Hebrew Bible because they form one continuous history covering the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David. They were separated into two books for convenience for reading. First Samuel deals with the Philistine wars and Saul's ultimate failure to deal with the enemy. The book opens with Israel's being oppressed by the Philistines (a war-like neighboring nation) and the emergence of the two early

leaders, Samuel and Saul. Samuel was the religious leader and Saul ultimately became the king. Saul's early victories are described, followed by his moral decline and tragic end. Balancing the decline of Saul is the rise of the youthful David who will assume leadership after the death of Saul.

Theme: The basic idea that pervades this book is that God does not make his people immune to the changes of human life, but give them grace to see things through to a satisfactory conclusion. The rise and fall of kings, times of peace and war – throughout it all God stays the same and controls human events in such a way that those who trust him will find comfort and the courage to endure. (*Above commentary is from "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 5*) **More commentary on First Samuel from Bible.org is [at this link](#).**

Here's a great quote from this link: "One might conclude from reading the Book of Judges that the problem was the absence of a king in Israel: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). In First Samuel, Israel will get her king. Saul, Israel's first king, will be the kind of king the people want, and prove to be the king Israel deserves. David, Israel's second king, will replace Saul. He is God's kind of king, a man after God's heart. First Samuel tells the story of fascinating people like Hannah and Samuel, like Saul and David. There is never a dull moment in this masterfully well written history. The book closes with the death of Saul, and thus the end of David's flight from the hand of Saul, who seeks to kill him as an enemy."

4/9 - Today in 1 Samuel 2 we read the incredible Prayer of Hannah! In verse 2 we read: "*There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.*" This prayer of praise from Hannah really stands out to me these days. Oftentimes I think I "forget" that there is no one holy like the Lord – and I start to seek from other sources what I should only be seeking from God. I have come to realize more than ever lately that if I am feeling a strong emotion or need, I need to really reflect on that emotion or need and ask myself if God can satisfy or quench or dispel that emotion or need. The answer is always an unfailing and beautiful YES. There is no other person, place or being that will always be there for us – that will always be our Rock – that is perfectly consistent – besides God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is holy and his holiness can take care of any emotion or need that comes up in our lives. We need to turn it over to him and trust in Him. **Q: How about you? Do you sometimes "forget" that God is holy? Do you sometimes seek from other sources what you should only be seeking from God? Do you believe that God can satisfy or quench or dispel any emotion or need that comes up in your life? Is God your Rock? Do you believe there is no one holy like the Lord?**

4/9 - 1 Samuel 2:25 stood out to me today when Eli says to his sons - "*If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede?*" This is an interesting thing to consider. When we sin, are we sinning against other people and/or against God? I think generally speaking the answer is both. I have heard a pastor teach that "nobody sins in a vacuum." Not a literal vacuum of course :, but a "vacuum" meaning that your sin only affects you and you alone. This pastor went on to say that when we sin - even when we are alone - we end up affecting everyone else around us in our lives in some way. We may not consciously see how this happens, but our sin affects how we will treat others in the near future. So, it seems to me that when we sin we pretty much always sin against others, because we're in one sense letting down the community of people around us and we will behave differently to our community around us because of our sin. Now, in terms of sinning against God, I always think of Psalm 51 where David writes to God - "against you and you alone have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." I think this is true as well - any sin we commit is a sin against God. It is interesting that David uses the term "you alone" about his sin. But, obviously, David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba affected the community around him in a big way. So, all this to say - I believe that when we sin we are sinning against God and the community of people in our lives at the same time. Eli asks in this verse above, "who can intercede for our sins against God?" Well, at that time, that was a very good question. However, in our time Jesus can and does intercede for our sins against God - if we'll ask him. We simply need to confess our sins to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and repent - in faith that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We are so very fortunate that we have someone - Jesus - who can intercede for our sins... This is why Jesus is called Savior. Jesus Saves us from our sins. **Q: Has Jesus saved you from your sins? How is Jesus' mediating for your sins today? Do you confess your sins to Jesus? Do you repent?**

4/10 - Interesting chapters in First Samuel today! The idol Dagon was no match for the Ark of the Covenant! You'll notice in verse 4 that Dagon ends up in a worship position before the Ark: "*And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD.*" Dagon was the "god" of the Philistines, and was thought to have been some sort of man / fish combo. It's fascinating to see the Philistine's send back to Israel a "guilt offering" of golden tumors and rats with the Ark. Not quite what was prescribed for guilt offerings in Leviticus... but, I guess you can give them an E for effort. :) Then we arrive at the people of Beth-shemesh who look in the ark and perish - and then the ark is sent off again to another town. We then arrive at some wonderful words from

Samuel in chapter 7 verses 3 & 4: *"Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the LORD, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the LORD; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." So the Israelites destroyed their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the LORD."* And later in verse 10 we read - *"Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them."* **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the Ark of the Covenant in Philistine territory and its return to the Israelites? Has their ever been a time in your life when you worshiped an "idol" of sorts, like the Israelites worshipped foreign gods, and that you realized you must give up the idol and return to the Lord? What are some idols in our modern world that we might not realize are idols?**

4/10 - We have some great dramatic reading today in First Samuel! Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion today has some good food for thought to the question of Why did Israel want a king? - "1. Samuel's sons were not fit to lead Israel 2. The 12 tribes of Israel continually had problems working together because each tribe had its own leader and territory. It was hoped that a king would unite the tribes into one nation and one army. 3. The people wanted to be like the neighboring nations. This is exactly what God didn't want. Having a king would make it easy for them to forget that God was their real leader." In First Samuel Chapter 8 we hear Samuel passing on God's warning to how the king will treat the people... **Q: Why do you think Israel wanted a King? Do you we want "kings" today as well? Who is your King? Is Jesus your King? What does his Lordship look like in your life?**

4/11 - Can you imagine hearing these words of Samuel if you were Saul in First Samuel 9:20 today: *"And I am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes."* All you are doing is looking for your dad's lost donkeys and all of the sudden you hear this from the seer! Whew... You know though - I will say this. Being in relationship with God is always an adventure. I think oftentimes we will start out on a journey to do one thing and God ends up taking us some place completely different. Saul is about to embark on an adventure. You and I have the opportunity to embark on an adventure with God each and every day. I know that there are many times that God sends me into places & situations I would have never thought imaginable. That's the adventure of faith. It truly is not boring! I honestly think that life apart from God is truly boring. The secular life is boring. The materialistic life is boring. **Q: If you are feeling bored these days, will you break free and wholeheartedly pursue an adventurous relationship with the Lord? How do you think the life of faith is either boring or adventurous?**

4/11 - Okay - I have a temporary new favorite verse in the Bible! Today in First Samuel chapter 10 verse 22 when they were about to name Saul king, but they couldn't find him: *"So they asked the LORD, "Where is he?" And the LORD replied, "He is hiding among the baggage.""* That is awesome! I really appreciate the fact that Saul was hiding among the baggage. :) I think that's where I would be too. I hope I would be in any case. I think it's a bit scary when someone is too lustful for power. Better to have your future king hiding in the baggage... :) In First Samuel chapter 11 we see Saul really step into his role as king by defending the city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites attack. Verse 2 was sad to consider when the Ammonite king said this to the citizens of Jabesh-gilead - *"All right," Nahash said, "but only on one condition. I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you as a disgrace to all Israel!"* Gouging out the right eye would be done for humiliation purposes - but also to destroy the military ability of the archers. After this point, Saul gets word back in his hometown that Jabesh-gilead is under attack. I was impressed with Saul's graciousness in verses 12 & 13 of this chapter: *"Then the people exclaimed to Samuel, "Now where are those men who said Saul shouldn't rule over us? Bring them here, and we will kill them!" But Saul replied, "No one will be executed today, for today the LORD has rescued Israel!"* Impressive. You could see where after defeating the Ammonites, Israel's adrenaline might be running high to go after dissenters. Saul put a stop to it, which was impressive. **Q: What about us today? When we are riding high on a victory of some sort and the group around us says we should forge ahead on something that does not seem right, can we stand up and say "No" to the group as Saul did on this day?**

4/11 - I like First Samuel 12 verse 7 today when Samuel says this to the Israelites: *"Now stand here quietly before the LORD as I remind you of all the great things the LORD has done for you and your ancestors"* Just like the Israelites needed reminding all the great things God has done, we need reminding today as well. We are a forgetful people. I honestly believe reading God's Word, the Bible, each day is a great way to "remember" all that God has done for each of us and our spiritual ancestors. I know that I need this daily reminder... How about you? Verse 23 is intriguing when Samuel says - *"As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right."* It sounds like if Samuel stopped his prayers for the Israelites, he would be sinning. Interesting. What about us today? Does God call us at times to pray for others? And if we do not respond to this call and do not pray for others, are we sinning? Interesting food for thought. I guess it's just a safer bet to continue praying for

others! :) In 1 Samuel 13 we see Saul's disobedience toward God, through his impatience. **Q: I wonder again about us today - are we patient people? Or are we impatient? Do we wait on God when things are not moving as quickly as we would like them to...? Should we be waiting on God or trying to hurry things up like Saul did...?**

4/12- Interesting First Samuel readings today! Jonathan was quite brave going to the Philistine camp like he did. 1 Samuel 14, verse 6 was impressive: *"Jonathan said to his armor bearer. 'Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!'"* Fortunately God helped him with an earthquake and what looked to be some unique strength in verse 13: *"So they climbed up using both hands and feet, and the Philistines fell back as Jonathan and his armor bearer killed them right and left."* Then, Saul seems to be having some power & ego & oath issues in today's readings... First he makes an oath that the men cannot eat until evening - not so wise when in the midst of battle. Then he says in verse 39 - *"I vow by the name of the LORD who rescued Israel that the sinner will surely die, even if it is my own son Jonathan!"* Well... it was Jonathan. Fortunately the people were smarter than Saul and saved Jonathan. **Q: Why do you think Saul started having power & ego & oath issues? What happened to Saul? Do we too have power & ego & oath issues in our modern day?**

4/13 - Wow. Big reading day today! David is anointed by Samuel. Saul meets David for the first time! The story of David begins! I am excited! In First Samuel 15 we read about Saul destroying most - but not all... - of the Amalekite nation. God's commands were clear to destroy all. Saul, simply put, disobeyed. Verses 22 and 23 sum up this chapter powerfully when Samuel says this to Saul: *"What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king."* **Q: Obedience is far better than sacrifice... think this is still true today? Are you more of an obedient person or a sacrificial person before God? Do you believe that rebellion is as bad as witchcraft and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols?**

4/13 - We are beginning the story of David, which is always a blessing to read. As you know, David wrote many of the Psalms, so we've been reading some of David's writings already this year. Now we begin his story! Hang on! This is a wonderful part of the Bible – reading about David and reading the Gospel of John at the same time. . . great stuff! Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org has a terrific overview of David becoming Israel's King [at this link](#). Today in 1 Samuel chapter 17 read about David & Goliath. In verse 45 we read – *"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty.'" Q: How often in our lives today are we like Goliath, where we try to make things work or do things with our own strength or our latest technology? Goliath relied on his strength and sword and spear and javelin – and perhaps we today rely on our intellectual pride and Blackberry and career and money. David simply relied on God. David moved in the name of God. How often do you move in the name of God today? How often do you completely rely on only God today? Can you move beyond relying solely on your "strengths" and "technologies" and instead move and breathe and rely on God in every circumstance in your life?*

4/14 - This is a powerful verse in First Samuel 18:14 today: *"David continued to succeed in everything he did, for the LORD was with him."* I think that is so important to know - David succeeded in all he did because God was with him. And I believe this applies to us today as well. We will succeed in all we do if God is with us. Now - don't get me wrong - when I say succeed, I do not mean "succeed" as the world might define this word. I mean we will succeed spiritually in all we do if we are in a loving and growing and obedient relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son (who is God). This success might mean that we actually become "poor" in the world's eyes and serve overseas or in our own town in a ministry that won't make us a million. But - if we are living in right relationship with God than we have truly succeeded in life. Nothing else matters. **Q: Is God with you today? How do you know? How do you invite God to be with you in your daily life?**

4/14 - It is great to see Jonathan asking his father Saul to not murder David in First Samuel chapter 19. I read a commentary that said Jonathan had really been won over by David after David killed Goliath. It is thought that perhaps David shared with Saul and Jonathan his faith in God and why he was fearless of Goliath early in chapter 18 or late in chapter 17 (in yesterday's readings), and that Jonathan believed David's faith was true. In any case, we do see in chapter 18 verses 3 & 4 these words: *"And Jonathan made a special vow to be David's friend, and he sealed the pact by giving him his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt."* Jonathan is obviously living up to this pact here in chapter 19. **Q: How do you win friends and influence people in your life today? Is it on your own? Or is it through your faith and actions? How would you define a true friend?**

4/14 - Psalm 59 has some powerful imagery of the "night of danger" in verse 14 and the "morning of deliverance" in verse 16 - *"But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning because of your unfailing love."* I like that thought - shouting for joy each morning because of God's unfailing love. I pray that in some way I "shout" for joy each morning because of God's love. **Q: How about you? Do you in some way "shout" for joy each morning because of God?**

4/15 - Great readings about Jonathan & David today! 1 Samuel 20 verse 13 today seems to indicate that Jonathan realizes that David will be the king after his father Saul: *"May the LORD be with you as he used to be with my father."* Verse 17 is beautiful - *"For Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself."* **Q: Who are people in your life that you love as much as you love yourself? Do you think that there should be people in your life that you love as much as you love yourself? Do you love Jesus as much as you love yourself? Do you think that God loves you as much as He loves Himself?**

4/15 - Psalm 34 verse 9 in the NIV reads: *"Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing."* **Q: What does fearing God mean to you? Do you think that fearing God is a good or bad thing? Why? Do you think it is possible to both love God and fear God at the same time? What do you think of when you hear the word "saints"? Do you believe that you are a saint? Do you want to be a saint? Are you acting like a saint? Do you believe that those who fear God lack nothing? Why would this be?**

4/15 - I love Psalm 34 verses 17 & 18 today: *"The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit."* I am sure all of us have moments of needing help. Moments of trouble. Moments of being brokenhearted. Moments of being crushed in spirit. **Q: The big question is what do you do in those moments? Or, who do you turn to? Do you call to God in those moments? How do you know that he will help you? How do you know that he will rescue you? How do you know that he is close to you? How do you know that He is near?**

4/16 - Psalm 57 verse 8 is amazing - *"Wake up, my soul!"* What 4 great words. . . wake up my soul! **Do you ever feel like you need to say this to your soul?** I know that I have in my past. There have been times in my life where I have felt spiritually asleep. Just completely slumbering. . . and I have begged my soul to wake up! Fortunately, I finally learned that I could not wake up my soul on it's own. I needed the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to wake up my soul. . . and the Spirit keeps it awake today. If you feel that you need your soul to wake up, will you prayer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to indwell your soul and to wake it up? **Q: How do you wake up your soul? Have you ever felt spiritually asleep? What awakens you?**

4/16 - Psalm 142 is a prayer of David's when he was fleeing Saul and was hiding in a cave. David is praying for deliverance to God from his enemies. I thought verse 3 was powerful - *"For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me."* **Q: Have you ever felt this way? Overwhelmed? And traps every which way you look? And you have no idea which way to go? At a time like this, will you cry out to God as David did in this Psalm? Will you "pour out your complaints before him and tell him all your troubles"? (v. 2) Do you believe that God knows which way you should turn? Will you allow God to ""be your place of refuge"? In times like these, will you allow God to be "all you really want in life"? (v. 5)**

4/16 - Very sad readings today in First Samuel 22 as we read about the slaughter of the priests. Sadly fitting that Doeg betrayed the priests to Saul and then Saul commanded Doeg to kill the priests, because no one else would. This whole incident shows how far Saul has strayed away from God. He has lost his moral compass completely. It's interesting to recall earlier in our First Samuel readings how Saul looked like he might be a decent king initially. But, then he was disobedient to God. And then his sin continued and continued to where he is in today's readings. This should be a warning to each of us to not stray from God like this. If we are allowing ourselves to be disobedient to God or if we are continuing in a sin, we are slaves to that sin. And this slavery to sin can grow and grow until we lose all moral control, as Saul has. **Q: Have you ever been a slave to sin? Are you a slave to sin now that you need to repent of? Have you ever seen others enslaved to sin? How can you or they be truly free of that enslavement to sin?**

4/16 - Verse 9 in Psalm 52 stood out to me today - *"I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will wait for your mercies in the presence of your people."* **Q: Are you looking forward to praising God forever? Are you willing to wait for God? If things don't seem to be moving as quickly as you would like them to in your spiritual life, will**

you still wait for God? And will you do so in the presence of God's people? Do you believe that being part of a church community can help you during a time of waiting for the Lord? And do you believe that you can help others in your church to wait as well? Then, together you can look forward to praising God forever for what he has done and will do.

4/17 - I love the mini-reunion of Jonathan and David in First Samuel 23 verses 16 & 17 - *"Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God. "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father is well aware."* **Q: What great words of encouragement from Jonathan! Who is the last person you encouraged? Do you make it a habit to encourage people around you regularly? Who is someone you can encourage big-time today or tomorrow?**

4/17 - I like Psalm 54 verse 4 a lot - "But God is my helper. The Lord is the one who keeps me alive!" **Q: Is this true in your life? Is God the one who keeps you alive? Or are you trying to lean on other things as your source of life?** I believe it is such a blessing to surrender more and more to God until we get to the point where truly this true for us - God is the one - and only - who keeps us alive. I am not saying I am there yet - but I'm trying to get there. I'm trying to surrender more and more each day to Jesus and the Father - all that I am - all that I am living for. I pray that in your life and in mine God will be the one who keeps us alive!

4/17 - Interesting chapters today! David is essentially put to the test by God over the next 3 chapters - 2 tests today and 1 tomorrow. And the test is this - obedience. You'll recall that Saul fails the test of obedience early in his kingship. David passes the tests - he does not kill Saul and he does not kill Nabal. He could have killed both. First Samuel 24 verses 5 through 7 are a great look at David's character when Saul was in the cave - *"But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. "The LORD knows I shouldn't have done it," he said to his men. "It is a serious thing to attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him." So David sharply rebuked his men and did not let them kill Saul."* **Q: Have you ever been tested in your obedience to the LORD like David was? When have you remained obedient and faithful in the face of great temptation?**

4/17 - How impressive is Abigail in First Samuel chapter 25! Her speech to David in verses 24 through 30 is awesome. She takes all the blame. Calls out Nabal. Gives David gifts. And smartly lets him know he doesn't need this blood on his hands. David is clearly impressed. **Q: Have you ever met someone with amazing wisdom displayed like Abigail's? How might we obtain wisdom in our lives today? Does our world value wisdom today?**

4/18 - Interesting... in First Samuel 28 Saul bans mediums - wise - and then becomes desperate for one - unwise... The medium seems to get quite freaked out that she has called up Samuel. Commentaries suggest that she is used to calling up satanic / demonic forces. She (possibly) connected to Samuel somehow here and was freaked out by it. And Samuel tells Saul exactly what he probably knows in his heart. God has left him - a long time ago - because of his disobedience. Consulting a medium is just one more disobedient act in a string of them. I pray that no one reading this consults mediums or does tarot cards or gets into palm readings or any of that garbage. It is spiritually dangerous and risky to get into any of that. Unfortunately, I know that things like "tarot card reading parties" are somewhat popular today. I have been invited to them and have not gone - and told the hosts why I was not attending. Please avoid this spiritually risky stuff. It is no joke dangerous. **Q: Have you ever had to flee from risky activities like tarot card readings or psychics? How can we help our friends flee these activities?**

4/18 - First Samuel chapter 29 verse 8 read a bit strange to me: *"What have I done to deserve this treatment?" David demanded. "Why can't I fight the enemies of my lord, the king?"* It seemed odd, at first read, that David would say this to King Achish of the Philistines. Commentaries suggest that David may have purposefully made an ambiguous statement here, such that Achish (and maybe us) would think he was referring to Achish - when perhaps he was referring to God or Saul as David's "lord, the king." With David's madman acting and wisdom, this ambiguous type statement with another meaning would not be surprising... In First Samuel 31 today we read about the death of Saul. At the very end Saul did what he always did - took things into his own hands. Relied on himself. Fell on his own sword. Perhaps sometimes in our lives today we are not so different from Saul. Maybe we try to take things into our own hands. Rely on ourselves. But hopefully never fall on our own swords... We should instead be leaving things in God's hands and relying fully on God. **Q: What did you learn from reading 1 Samuel this year? What did the life of Saul teach you?**

4/18 - Psalm 56 verse 10 makes a One Year Bible blogger quite happy :) *"O God, I praise your word. Yes, LORD, I praise your word."* **Q: Does this verse make you happy? Do you praise God for the gift of the Bible? Do you praise God's very Word, the Bible?**

4/19 - Today we begin the book of Second Samuel!

Second Samuel

Author: Unknown

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: Second Samuel covers approximately forty years, which is the bulk of David's reign as king. It begins with David's being proclaimed king and consolidating his position against others who claimed the throne. David moved the capital to Jerusalem, brought the sacred Ark of the Covenant there, and ultimately defeated the Philistines for all time. David's troubled career is described in some detail, including his family problems (his son Absalom) and his personal problems (adultery with Bathsheba). A summary of David's later years concludes the book.

Theme: The life of David is given as an example of good and of evil. The sins of David are exposed – so that too much trust will not be put in men. The victories of David are recorded – so that it may be seen what God can do with someone who wholly trusts in him. God used David in spite of his faults because he found in David a willingness to repent and start again, no matter how far he had fallen. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 5-6)* More commentary on Second Samuel is at these 2 links –

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=557

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=965

4/19 - Today in 2 Samuel chapter 1 we read about David's lament for Saul & Jonathan. This year in going through the One Year Bible, I have really been intrigued by Jonathan and David's relationship. They became incredible "brothers" it seems – much like we now have "brothers" and "sisters" in Christ today. And there seems to have been an amazing love between Jonathan and David – not sexual in any way, but a pure brotherly love. In verse 26 we will read – *"I grieve for you Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful."* Personally, I have been thinking about this word "love" quite a bit in recent months. I don't know if this is going to sound strange – I hope it's a good sign :) - but I find myself using the word "love" more and more often when referring to and thinking of others in my life. I have found myself saying recently, for example, "there are so many people in my church that I love and I believe love me." I guess I'm getting to this stage in my life that may seem at first glance sentimental – but I think it is something more. I believe God is love. And yes, God is judge and many other things. But I do believe that love is a very godly thing. And I guess I'm getting to the point in life where I realize that I truly do love so many people in my life – with a brotherly or sisterly love – and maybe perhaps a few love me too. **Q: I pray this is the case in some way in your life? Are there people in your life that you love with a brotherly or sisterly love? Are there people in your life that were like Jonathan was to David? Are there people in your life where you are like Jonathan was to David? How familiar are you with love as expressed in [1 Corinthians 13](#)? Did Jonathan have this type of love? Do you?**

4/20 - Today's Second Samuel readings are quite dramatic! We start off with the beginnings of what I think you could call a civil war between Judah and Israel in chapter 2 verses 15 through 17: *"So twelve men were chosen to fight from each side—twelve men of Benjamin representing Ishbosheth son of Saul, and twelve representing David. Each one grabbed his opponent by the hair and thrust his sword into the other's side so that all of them died. So this place at Gibeon has been known ever since as the Field of Swords. A fierce battle followed that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the forces of David."* In chapter 3, it is interesting to see how David got so mad at Joab for killing Abner. Understandable for many reasons - murder being the main one - but also Abner was working to bring David's kingship to all of Israel. Joab's murder of Abner threatened the civil war between Judah and the rest of Israel to start up again. **Q: How does all the fighting and murder stand out to you in the Old Testament readings? Does fighting and murder continue in our world today? Why is this?**

4/20 - Today in Second Samuel 23 we read about David's mighty men. It is sad to read the name of Uriah the Hittite in verse 39. Another reminder of David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah - one of David's own mighty men... And, yes, another reminder of God's forgiveness of David - and God's offer of forgiveness to you and me today. **Q: Have there been any "mighty men (or women!)" in your life that you have sinned against? Will you go to God for forgiveness for that sin today? And will you apologize and reconcile with the mighty man/woman in your life that you need to apologize to / reconcile with?** Interestingly, I think this whole forgiveness/mercy talk ties in very nicely into Psalm 123 today. As Psalm 123 sings to us today: *"Have mercy on us Lord, have mercy."*

4/21 - Second Samuel chapter 4 verse 11 stood out as David said this to the 2 murderers of Ishbosheth: *"Now what reward should I give the wicked men who have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed? Should I not also demand your very lives?"* Similar to the Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul and reported this news to David, David was not happy with the news. This all reminds me of the old adage that you cannot fight evil with evil - you'll get corrupted in the process. These 2 guys murdered an innocent man, thinking they were doing a greater good for David. David disagreed. **Q: Are there times in our lives where we do something wrong / bad / lie / evil for what we think might be a greater good? Aren't we then corrupted in the process?**

4/23 - In Second Samuel chapter 6 when the Ark is brought back to Jerusalem verse 14 is phenomenal to imagine: *"And David danced before the LORD with all his might, wearing a priestly tunic."* And David's words in verse 21 are something for you and I to consider in our lives today - *"So I am willing to act like a fool in order to show my joy in the LORD."* **Q: Are you willing to act like a fool to show your joy in God? Have you ever danced before God with all your might? Think you ever could?**

4/24 - Second Samuel 7 today is a big chapter! God essentially establishes a covenant with David - it isn't expressly called a covenant, so I suppose it is more of a promise. Verse 16 is a nice sum-up of God's promise to David: *"Your dynasty and your kingdom will continue for all time before me, and your throne will be secure forever."* The throne is secure forever because from the lineage of David comes Jesus. Jesus is forever. Genealogies in [Matthew 1](#) and [Luke 3:21-38](#) will give you more details on this lineage. It is interesting that God does not want David to build him a temple, but lets David know one of his descendants will in verses 12 & 13: *"For when you die, I will raise up one of your descendants, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house--a temple--for my name."* We will later learn the reasons for this in 1 Chronicles 28 verse 3 when David says - *"But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'" David was a warrior - as is very evident in Second Samuel 8 today. David's purpose was to unite and establish Israel. David's son Solomon will build the temple for God. I love David's prayer of thanksgiving to God in 2 Samuel 7 verses 18-29 today!* **Q: How often do you pray prayers of thanksgiving like David did? Should we be thankful and express gratitude to God every day?**

4/24 - I like the imagery of Psalm 60 verse 4 a lot - *"But you have raised a banner for those who honor you -- a rallying point in the face of attack."* I do believe that if we honor God, he will in some profound way "raise up a banner" for us. A banner that will rally and encourage us in the face of attack - in the face of doubt or despair or sickness or just plain old fashioned attack from the Enemy - I believe God will give us a banner of hope. This banner could end up being one of a million different things I think, depending on the circumstances. For me, certainly a banner that rallies me each and every day is God's very Word, the Bible. I believe the Bible is indeed a banner that rallies us in the face of attack... What are some banners in your life that God is providing to rally you in the face of attack? Uh-oh, this whole banner imagery has reminded me of an old childhood song... :) Remember that children's song that goes something like this (over and over and over again...) - "Peter built the church on the rock of our faith. HIS banner over me is love."? What a great simple song! God's love very well should be a banner in our lives! **Q: How is God's "banner" over you? What are some examples of God's "banners" in your life?**

4/25-26 - Interesting set of readings these two days in Second Samuel. We start off with David showing kindness to Saul's crippled grandson Mephibosheth and we end with David committing adultery, ordering the murder of one of his warriors, and making God very unhappy. What happened to change the course of events like this?? I think this is something that each one of us should take heed of - even when things are going very well in our walk with God, things can suddenly go the wrong direction if we are not vigilant in fleeing from sin and temptation. David was obviously tempted when he saw Bathsheba from his rooftop. He should have left that temptation there, and fled from it immediately - but instead he gave into it. He asked about Bathsheba (entertaining temptation...) and invited her over and then committed adultery. Then... things got worse. That's how sin goes. Once we let it start to *run* our life it can quickly start to *ruin* our life. David thought he could trick Uriah into thinking Uriah got his wife pregnant - but Uriah in chapter 11 was behaving much more honorably than the king! He would not sleep with his own wife when he knew other warriors were sleeping on the battlefields. Uriah acted honorably. David did not. David allowed sin to run the show. Below is a powerful painting by James Tissot showing the moment on the rooftop where David allowed temptation to take over... **Q: Again - back to our lives - have you ever seen a pattern of sin running the show in your life?** I know I have in the past. It's a dangerous pattern to see taking place in our lives. It can lead to all kinds of pain and suffering for ourselves and those around us. If you are perhaps even in the midst of sin running the show in your life now, there is hope. There is confession and repentance. David does give us this example in Psalm 51. Psalm 51 David wrote after the events in chapter 11 took place with Bathsheba & Uriah. Psalm 51 is a powerful Psalm of confession and repentance. You may

be at the point where you need to pray this Psalm to God now. I think each of us does well when we pray this Psalm to God regularly. We certainly may not be at the point where David was in chapter 11 - but, we likely have sin to confess to God - even right now.

4/26 - We read a great parable from the prophet Nathan today in 2 Samuel 12! Wow. Convicting stuff for David... You'll note that David said in response to this parable in verse 6: *"He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."* Well, sure enough, David paid for the death of Uriah 4 times over through the future deaths of 4 of David's sons: the unnamed son who dies in this chapter, Amnon dies in chapter 13, Absalom in chapter 18, and Adonijah in First Kings 2:25. I read a commentary that said God forgave David of his sin, but God did not negate all the consequences of David's sin. **Q: Do you believe that even if we are forgiven of our sin that there still may be consequences of our sin?**

4/26 - Today we read one of my favorite Psalms! Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is David's humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed in battle. I believe that this Psalm can continue to be a humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing for each of us today. This Psalm is read by many liturgical churches during the season of Lent as a penitential Psalm. A brief quote about Psalm 51 from this Bible.org is this – "The application of the psalm to believers today should be obvious. We, like David, can and must have complete cleansing before we can fully and freely serve God in any capacity. Our eternal destiny may not be in doubt when we sin as believers, and neither was David's because he appealed to that covenant relationship, but our fellowship and service will be. God will not tolerate unconfessed sin, and so will hold us accountable if we do not confess." I've been trying to figure out my favorite portion or two of this Psalm to share with you. . . but I can't just pick one portion. It is all so powerful! Tell you what – I'm going to copy the full Psalm below in the NIV translation (my favorite for this Psalm). Please take a few moments to meditate upon this Psalm. **Q: My questions for reflection are these – Do you confess your sins to God? Do you confess your sins to others? And ask them to hold you accountable? When was the last time you confessed your sins to God? Do you have sins to confess to God today? Will you do so now? How does Psalm 51 speak to you? Can you imagine yourself praying any of these lines to God? Have you ever prayed Psalm 51 to God? Or have you prayed other Psalms to God?**

4/27 - Second Samuel chapter 13 is a sad chapter to read in so many ways! Amnon is David's first born son, so he is heir to the throne at this point. Absalom is David's third born son - but at this point he may have been second in line to the throne because David's 2nd born son, Kileab, was only mentioned once and may have died young. You'll note that there are unfortunately are some parallels in David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah with his 2 sons' behavior in this chapter. David sinned sexually with Bathsheba - Amnon sinned sexually against Tamar in a horrible way. David sinned by ordering the murder of Uriah. Absalom sinned by ordering the murder of Amnon. Unfortunately we see a pattern of "like father, like sons..." in this chapter. I don't think this always has to be the case in our human condition - I do believe we can be redeemed and transformed and not act in sinful ways like our parents may have acted. But, I also do believe we need Jesus to save us from ourselves - in this regard of breaking the cycle/pattern of sin and in all regards. **Q: Have you seen instances of "like father, like son" in our world today? Can we break free from cycles of sin in our family histories? How?**

4/27 - Well.. this is a tough couple of chapters to read today in 2 Samuel 13 & 14! On one hand we see David showing much grace to Absalom and meanwhile Absalom is plotting to rebel against his father and then does so! At first glance it makes me wonder what on earth was David thinking? Why did he bring Absalom back to Jerusalem? But, I believe David was doing the right thing. Absalom was his son. David was trying to restore that relationship. I think about this with people in my life who have maybe "stung" me in some way. On the one hand I want to write them off - believing that they will sting me again. And maybe they will... but, I don't think writing people off is healthy ultimately for me and I don't think it is the right thing to do. I think showing grace, forgiveness and compassion is the right thing to do. I think David did this - and then he wisely got out of town when he realized Absalom was up to no good! So, he didn't completely let Absalom walk all over him. He still used wisdom. I don't know... this is a tough couple of chapters. **Q: What do you think? Did David do the right thing by bringing Absalom back to Jerusalem? Do you see any parallels in your life where someone has stung you - and then perhaps stung you again? Was it still maybe the right thing to do to show them grace and forgiveness? And maybe even to do so again?**

4/28 - We have more sad readings today in Second Samuel! However, it is impressive to see David's countenance in the midst of all of the chaos going on around him. I love David's words in 2 Samuel 16:10-12 when Shimei is cursing David: *"If the LORD has told him to curse me, who am I to stop him? My own son is trying to kill me. Shouldn't this relative of*

Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to do it. And perhaps the LORD will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses." That is incredible faith and humility! David says first that perhaps God has told Shimei to curse him, so why try to stop it. Then at the end David basically says if God has not told Shimei to curse him, then perhaps David will be blessed by God because of these wrongful curses. Great stuff! **Q: How do you act in your life today if someone is cursing you or wronging you? Do you act like David does here? With patience and wisdom? Or, do you "react" with anger and spite? Which is the better way to go?**

4/28 - At the end of today's readings we read about Ahithophel advising Absalom to sleep with David's concubines. To sleep with a king's wives or concubines was to make a claim to the throne. It is sad to read about this advice to commit a horrible act that is "*beyond hope of reconciliation*", as 2 Samuel 16:21 says in today's readings. I read a commentary that said Ahithophel advises Absalom to do this horrible act so that all of Israel will hear about it. Well, Absalom is in such a deep state of sin and wickedness at this point that he wanted Israel to also see that he was committing this sin by setting the tent up on the palace roof. It is striking to me to see David's humility toward Shimei's curses in today's readings versus Absalom's complete pride and rebellion. **Q: See what unchecked sin can do in a life? Do you think Absalom knew he was going the Wrong Way? Or was he blinded by sin?** In a couple of days we'll read about where the Wrong Way leads Absalom...

4/28-29 - Interesting readings in Second Samuel chapter 17! The dynamics between Ahithophel's advice and Hushai's advice is fascinating. Hushai plays smartly to Absalom's ego and insecurity with the advice he gives. Ahithophel seems to realize that he's lost his status in Absalom's kingdom - and I wonder if maybe perhaps Ahithophel realized this kingdom of Absalom's would soon fall? And thus decided to kill himself? It was probably more of an ego / pride / status thing though that played into Ahithophel's tragic decision. Ahithophel, a betrayer of David, ended up taking his life in the same manner Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, does. (Not to be morbid here, but just fyi that there are 7 suicides documented in the Bible - you can view this list of 7 on bible.org [at this link](#).) It does make me very sad to read about suicide, even in the case of Ahithophel or Judas. I know obviously suicide happens still in our world today at alarming rates, which makes me incredibly sad. I just feel like all of us can have some serious down times in our life and maybe sometimes feel like just giving it up completely. I pray that if ever we really do get that down in our life, that we always remember there is redemption. There is hope. There is love. There is forgiveness. There is Jesus. No matter what we've done or what we've failed to do, let us not every give up on the everlasting hope that is Jesus in our lives. Jesus saves. Jesus even saves us from ourselves. **Q: Have you ever worked with someone to move them away from suicide? Are there any ministries, books or organizations you can recommend related to suicide prevention and assistance?**

4/29 - Psalm 3 is a wonderful Psalm of David's, when he was fleeing his own son Absalom - details of which we will read about later this year. Verse 5 stood out to me today: "*I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me.*" God watches over us as we sleep! I like that a lot! I hope this verse comforts you as you sleep tonight!

4/29 - Psalm 63 is beautiful! So many amazing verses... The imagery in verse 1 is fantastic - "*O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.*" **Q: Do you earnestly search for God in your life? Each and every day? Does your soul literally thirst for God? Does your whole body long for God in this dry and weary land...?**

4/29 - Wow. Intense readings today in 2 Samuel 18. As could be expected from Absalom's pursuit of his ego and pride the past few chapters, his sin catches up with him. One commentary had the interesting point that Absalom's "pretty head & long hair" (as you'll recall from [2 Samuel 14:25-26](#)) ironically ended up being his undoing as his long hair got caught up in a tree. This seems very symbolic of how pride and ego can be it's own undoing. While on one hand I do appreciate David's grace and love for his son Absalom, I have to say that I really do appreciate Joab's boldness & wisdom in rebuking David in verses 5 through 8: "*We saved your life today and the lives of your sons, your daughters, and your wives and concubines. Yet you act like this, making us feel ashamed, as though we had done something wrong. You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that we mean nothing to you. If Absalom had lived and all of us had died, you would be pleased. Now go out there and congratulate the troops, for I swear by the LORD that if you don't, not a single one of them will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than you have ever been.*" That is quite a speech by Joab to David! And I believe he was right. David's love for his son was admirable in one sense - but it also could be seen as selfish in another sense. David seemed to care more for his son than for the nation of Israel, and Joab called him out on this. It is interesting how sometimes our love for one person can

cloud everything else going on in our lives. Love for one person is a beautiful thing. But it seems that we should also be cognizant of others around us too - and love them. And sometimes, like David, we may need to realize that there is a greater good - a greater love - than the singular love we have been focusing on. This is not easy to discern of course... hopefully this makes some sort of sense or doesn't sound too harsh? **Q: What is your reaction to David's grief over his son Absalom today? Why do you think he grieved so much?**

4/29 - Today is a great day of readings in Second Samuel 19! David returns to Jerusalem! I love the entire flow of today's readings as David crosses the Jordan River toward Jerusalem and shows incredible kindness to Shimei, Mephibosheth, and Barzillai along the way. However, don't forget the name Shimei just yet - the "rock thrower & curser" when David fled Jerusalem a few chapters back... On David's deathbed, later in our readings in [First Kings 2:9](#), David will pass along to his son Solomon these instructions: *"Bring his (Shimei's) gray head down to the grave in blood..."* But, this day was not a day of bloodshed, but a day of amnesty, as David exclaimed in 2 Samuel 19:22 today: *"This is not a day for execution but for celebration! I am once again the king of Israel!"*

4/30 - In Second Samuel chapter 20 today we read about the revolt of Sheba from the tribe of Benjamin. Zondervan's commentary today points out that an important thing to keep in mind here is that tribal jealousy still was brewing over the transfer of the kingship from Benjamin (Saul's tribe) to Judah (David's tribe). Sheba appeals to the Israelite suspicion that David favored his own tribe over the other tribes. As this chapter progresses Joab again shows his true colors by murdering Amasa. I'm beginning to wonder about Joab... he's ruthless. I suppose as being the commander of the army for so long, this was his "job" to be ruthless? Let me know your thoughts on Joab in the Comments section below. R., thanks for the comment in yesterday's readings saying "Joab operated out of Justice with no Love." Great point! In Amasa's case, Amasa was part of the rebellion against David led by Absalom, so again here Joab is acting out "Justice"... (and certainly no Love...) **Q: I wonder if we ever fall into this trap in our lives today as well? Operate in an unbalanced way showing nothing but Justice, and yet no Love? Or, on the other hand do we sometimes operate with just Love, and no Justice? Should we be operating with a balance of Love and Justice? Or should one (Love or Justice) outweigh the other in our life?**

4/30 - Today in Psalm 7 verse 10 we read: *"God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right."* What stood out to me here is that it does not say that God saves those who "do" what is true and right. It says that God saves those whose "hearts are" true and right. As discussed in yesterday's Matthew 5 post, below, this is getting toward our interior motives and thoughts and hearts - the important thing is not what we do on the "exterior", but who we are on the "interior". And then certainly if our hearts are true and right, a natural outflow of this is doing good things on the exterior. But, it's the interior - our hearts - that matter most. **Q: How is your heart these days? Is it true and right? And do you believe that God is indeed your shield?**

4/30 - Well... Sheba's grand rebellion against David doesn't last very long! And Sheba's own clan doesn't treat him well at all... Rebellion over. Second Samuel chapter 21 begins 4 chapters that are thought to essentially be an "appendix" to First and Second Samuel. These 4 chapters contain additional information about David's reign, without regard to chronology of events. The first event we read about in today's readings about David handing over 7 of Saul's relatives to the Gibeonites is believed to have taken place after David extended his kindness initially to Mephibosheth in chapter 9 and before Absalom's rebellion. The triumphs over 4 Philistine giants is at unknown times / chronology, although verse 15 seems to indicate to me that these took place perhaps later in David's life when he was older: *"And when David and his men were in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted."* Somehow I can't imagine a young David becoming weak and exhausted in battle... These 4 episodes are thought to have been included to show the heroics of David's men.

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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