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

OLD TESTAMENT (daily reading schedule at: www.OneYearBibleBlog.com)

11/1 - Today we begin the book of the prophet Ezekiel! Ezekiel is a prophet whose name means "God strengthens" - which is clearly a good thing for those in the prophet business. We've recently wrapped up the book of Jeremiah and are well aware of the challenges facing a prophet. The interesting thing to note is that Jeremiah was prophesying in Judah, whereas Ezekiel was prophesying in Babylon to the exiles from Judah. These two were doing their work at about the same time, but in different geographies. Ezekiel gets his call to be a prophet in probably his 30th year of life - the age when most of the priestly line were called to be priests. Instead, Ezekiel was called to be a prophet - which, is probably a good thing because he is living in exile in Babylon - so wouldn't have been able to perform the priestly duties at the Temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's call comes in 593 B.C., which is 7 years prior to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Ezekiel's ministry goes until 571 B.C., at the age of 52.

~ Ezekiel ~

Author: Ezekiel

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: Ezekiel, who grew up as a priest, was carried off to Babylon with the Jewish exiles deported in 597 B.C., and there he became a prophet of God. His message was one of coming judgment for those remaining in Jerusalem, but his preaching was not well received by the Jews who were with him in captivity. When his dire predictions came true in 586 B.C. with the destruction of Jerusalem, the people listened then on with great earnestness. His message changed at this point from being one of unbending judgment to one of comfort and hope for the future. The worst had come; it was now time to make plans for beginning again. Ezekiel saw himself as a shepherd and watchman over Israel. As a shepherd, he was to protect the people, but as a watchman, he was to warn of danger ahead.

Theme: The message of Ezekiel is based upon the unchangeable holiness of God. This is both a promise and a warning. It is a warning because God has promised to remain faithful to his people and this will not change. The book of Ezekiel shows God's unbreakable promise fulfilled in both respects: the city fell according to promise because of Judah's sin, and the city would be restored according to promise because of God's faithfulness. The lives of God's people determined how God would treat them. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 14*)

11/1 - In today's readings, chapter 1 is an incredible vision and call that Ezekiel receives! Obviously the flying creatures with 4 faces and wings are a highlight of this vision. What is up with these you ask? Good question. They are called "cherubim" later in the book of Ezekiel (chapter 10) and are also thought to be the creatures in Isaiah called seraphs - and they show up again in the book of Revelation. If you get a vision, and you see these creatures, you know something big is going on... :) The interesting thing about these creatures is that their four faces representing a human, lion, ox and an eagle have many interpretations, which all basically relate to the nature of God. An interesting interpretation I read was that these 4 represent the 4 Gospels - Matthew being the lion, Mark being the ox, Luke being the human and John being the eagle. You'll have to pick up a commentary to read more on why these analogies have been made.... Ezekiel Chapter 2 is God's Call and Commission of Ezekiel. **Q: Don't we all wish that God could be this clear with us about the purpose of our lives sometimes?** :) Ezekiel Chapter 3 has the great narrative of Ezekiel eating the scroll of God. And it tasting like honey - even though it had words of doom upon it. In Ezekiel 3:3 we read: "*Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.*" **Q: Can we eat of the Word of God? Does the Word nourish us? How does the Word nourish us? Is the Word nourishing you today? Is it as sweet as honey? Is the Word literally spiritual food? Will you eat of God's Holy Word, the Bible, today – and every day of your life?** Then, in Ezekiel 3 verse 15 ends with a very appropriate line I believe- "*I sat there among them for seven days, overwhelmed.*" **Think you'd be overwhelmed if you experienced chapters 1 & 2???** Whew. I am looking forward to us starting the book of Ezekiel! Thanks for joining me on this journey!

11/2 - In Ezekiel chapter 3 today God appoints Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel! This might sound pretty good at first... but there are some serious ramifications for Ezekiel to follow through with what God asks Ezekiel to do. My thoughts based on this chapter - **Q: Are there times in our lives where God asks us to do something that may sound good at first, but then turns out to be harder than we initially thought it would be? With potential some serious ramifications? If so, do you quit? Or do you forge ahead with what God asks of you? Will you stay within God's will for your life - even when the going gets tough? If God calls you to be a watch-person, will you be obedient to**

the call?

11/2 - Ezekiel chapters 4 and 5 get into God's signs of the coming siege and judgment of Jerusalem and Israel. The thing that went through my mind when reading all of this was the 3rd commandment from Exodus chapter 20, verses 4-6: *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments."* The term in these verses "jealous God" did come to my mind when reading Ezekiel 4 and 5. And not in a bad way. But, just in the way it was. God commanded no idols. Israel/Jerusalem created idols and did not repent after repeated warnings. God was "jealous" of all of this, and the siege and judgment came. Ezekiel chapter 6 continues along the lines of chapters 4 & 5 - with judgment against the very land of Israel because of the pagan shrines. Verses 8 & 9 stood out to me in this chapter: *"But I will let a few of my people escape destruction, and they will be scattered among the nations of the world. Then when they are exiled among the nations, they will remember me. They will recognize how grieved I am by their unfaithful hearts and lustful eyes that long for other gods. Then at last they will hate themselves for all their wickedness."* Here we see that God will preserve the Davidic line - and that the Israelites will eventually repent, and the nation will eventually be restored (as we know in hindsight now). Verse 10 in this chapter also seems to sum up a lot of what's going on in God's mind in today's readings in Ezekiel: *"They will know that I alone am the LORD and that I was serious when I predicted that all this would happen to them."* **Q: Do we know that God is alone the Lord in our lives today? Do we trust his Word and his predictions without a doubt?**

11/3 - Ezekiel chapter 7 has a line that repeats twice in verses 4 & 27: *"Then you/they will know that I am the LORD!"* We are seeing here that God is not happy with Israel in large part because they do not realize that he is the Lord. They have sold out to other gods and idols and sin and don't really think God will do much about it. Well, God opens this chapter with strong words in verse 1: *"The end is here!"* God's patience has run out. But, keep in mind that God kept trying to get the Israelites to repent over and over and over again. They wouldn't. **Q: Do we sometimes test God's patience? If so, will we repent in the areas of our life where we test God's patience?**

11/3 - Ezekiel chapter 8 reminds me of a lawyer making a case in court! And God absolutely puts forth a strong case for why the end arrived for Jerusalem in the 5th/6th century B.C. It is so sad to see these sins take place in and around the Temple. In chapter 9 we see six angels of God appear from the north gates - where one of the major idols was located. In this vision, these 6 angels are carrying out God's judgment on Israel. Verse 7 gives us a hint that God is preparing to leave the Temple completely: *"Defile the Temple!" the LORD commanded.* We'll pick this up in tomorrow's readings...

11/4 - Ezekiel's vision of the Lord in Jerusalem continues today in chapters 10 and 11 as the glory of the Lord first leaves the Temple and then leaves Jerusalem completely! This is a big deal as the glory of the Lord had pretty much been in the Temple since it's construction. We are also visited by the cherubim again in these chapters. Chapter 11 verses 19 & 20 stood out to me today, with a message for the exiles in Babylon - *"I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead, so they will obey my laws and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God."* **How are our hearts today? Are they tender? Single in their focus on God? Do we have a new Spirit within us?**

11/5 - Ezekiel chapter 12 today reminds me that sometimes in my own life I believe God sends some signs and warnings and I, like the Israelites in exile in Babylon, can be a rebel. I ignore the signs and warnings or think - oh, that won't come to pass for a long time... **Q: Do you suppose this is wise? Is there a sign or a warning God may be sending your way in your life currently? Will you listen and obey? Will you pay attention to God's warning signs in your life?**

11/5 - I love the story of Ezekiel packing up his pack in broad daylight and leaving through a hole in his house during the evening in chapter 12 today! In verse 7 we read - *"So I did as I was told. In broad daylight I brought my pack outside, filled with the things I might carry into exile. Then in the evening while the people looked on, I dug through the wall with my hands and went out into the darkness with my pack on my shoulder."* It is interesting that in chapter 12 God says three times: *"Then you/they will know that I am the LORD!"* **Q: Why do you think he repeats this three times in this chapter? Should this be a statement we should consider in our own lives? Who is the Lord of your life - yourself or God? Do you know that God is the Lord? Is God consistently in the very center of your life?**

11/5 - Ezekiel chapter 13 verse 2 stood out to me today: *"Son of man, speak against the false prophets of Israel who are*

inventing their own prophecies. Tell them to listen to the word of the LORD." **Q: Do we see this in our world today? People inventing their own prophecies? Inventing their own religions? Picking and choosing what philosophies they like the best? Do we do this? Should we be listening instead to the Word of the Lord? Are you actively involved in a church where the Word is clearly taught and Jesus is clearly the cornerstone?**

11/5 - Ezekiel 14 verse 3 I believe can definitely speak to us today: *"Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that lead them into sin."* This is scary to think about... **Q: Have we set up idols in our hearts? Have we embraced things that lead us into sin? Think this is a good idea... ? Can we turn these idols in our hearts over to the Lord? It is my hunch that an idol set up in our hearts is one of the toughest things to get rid of. We need Jesus in our lives to free us idols. Will you let Jesus remove any idol that is in your heart this very day?** Please don't let that idol hang around in your heart any longer...

11/6 - I am fascinated by God's words in Ezekiel chapter 14 verses 13 & 14 today: *"Son of man, suppose the people of a country were to sin against me, and I lifted my fist to crush them, cutting off their food supply and sending a famine to destroy both people and animals. Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves, says the Sovereign Lord."* The first thing these verses tell us is that God's judgment upon Jerusalem at this time was certain. Even the righteousness of Noah, Daniel, and Job couldn't change that - only these 3 men would have been saved. However, this got me thinking. Is it possible that sometimes today we try to build up our own righteousness to ensure our own salvation and basically do nothing to try to build up others righteousness and help them toward their salvation? Meaning, do we sometimes retreat into a "Christian bubble" and ignore the rest of "the world." Leave them to their own devices. It just made me think when reading about Noah, Daniel, and Job that my hunch is that these 3 would not just chill out and relax in the glory and certitude of their own righteousness. My hunch is that they would get out there on the streets and try to save others. **Q: So, what about you and me? Are we just cocooning in our own righteousness and salvation, or are we taking salvation to the streets? Are we retreating from the battle for others' salvation or are we engaged in it? What say you?**

11/6 - Ezekiel chapter 15 is an interesting one for me today, where God basically calls Jerusalem a useless grape vine. In reading this I am also reminded that Jesus in John 15 uses the grape vine analogy again saying *"I am the vine and you are the branches."* This tells me that Jesus redeems even useless grape vines! :) **Q: However, using this Ezekiel analogy, are we growing in our lives like trees or like vines? How thick are your roots? How solid is your core?**

11/6 - Ezekiel chapter 16 is a fascinating and sad look at the city of Jerusalem. This is the first time I have really spent a little bit of time with this chapter. The question I find for myself in reading this chapter is this: **Q: has God blessed us similarly in some ways that he blessed Jerusalem? Have we, perhaps, in some ways used the blessings that God has given us in improper ways?** Verse 6 in this chapter stood out to me: *"But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, 'Live!'"* Bible commentaries suggest that this one word - **Live!** - is God's basic desire for all humans. How powerful is that realization? How very beautiful... Live! Let us Live!

11/7 - Ezekiel chapter 16 compares the sins of Jerusalem to those of Sodom! These are bold comparisons, as you know the story of Sodom and the wipeout there. The Israelites were in relationship with God - they should have known better - hence the Sodom comparison. Verse 49 stood out to me in this chapter *"Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door."* The interesting thing to note is that Sodom's social injustice sins are highlighted here - rather than their sexual sins. Sodom was not taking care of the poor. And nor was Jerusalem at this time of the 6th century B.C. **Q: What about in our world today? Are there poor and needy suffering outside our door today? Are we not taking care of them because of our pride, laziness, or gluttony? Where is our "door"? Who is our neighbor? What will you do?**

11/7 - Ezekiel chapter 17 is a great story of the two eagles! This is basically a story of the city of Jerusalem's vacillating foreign policy between Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the treaty Jerusalem makes w/ Babylon is in the story. Then, the second eagle represents a pharaoh from Egypt, whom Jerusalem makes another treaty with subsequently, which goes against Babylon. The bad part of this is that the Babylon treaty was sworn to by the king of Jerusalem/Judah in the Lord's name - then broken. This is a very bad idea to swear something in the Lord's name and then not uphold it... The close of this chapter is phenomenal when it takes a Messianic turn, foreshadowing Jesus in verses 22 and 23: *"And the Sovereign LORD says: I will take a tender shoot from the top of a tall cedar, and I will plant it on the top of Israel's highest mountain. It will become a noble cedar, sending forth its branches and producing seed. Birds of every sort will nest in it, finding shelter beneath its branches."* **Q: Do these verses sound**

like Jesus to you?

11/8 - Ezekiel chapter 18 is a powerful chapter! What we are seeing in this chapter is the Old Covenant - which I do believe was compassionate & "fair", but different from the New Covenant, which I believe is compassionate & graceful (which may not necessarily be "fair" - but which is good news - Gospel - for us sinners!). Verse 30 is a good look at the Old Covenant: *"Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn from your sins! Don't let them destroy you!"* Verse 4 of course stands out too with: *"And this is my rule: The person who sins will be the one who dies."* You read this at a high level and you'll get a bit nervous, no? :) Indeed this is the Old Covenant: your actions will dictate your death or your life. It's up to your actions. It's up to you. You'll get what you deserve. And this is certainly "fair." However, this changes through Jesus Christ's atonement for our sins once and for all on the cross. Under the New Covenant, through God's gift of grace, we now simply need to have faith that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, died for our sins and rose from the dead. As we've been reading in Hebrews currently - we simply need to have faith in Christ as our High Priest. God's grace and our faith becomes the key (regeneration). Not our actions on their own. This being said, after our salvation (justification) through grace and faith, God is very interested in our actions and wants us to live a life of holiness (sanctification). This is a lot of theology here... and more than I can blog on without goofing it up - actually I probably already have. :) **Q: What is your thoughts on the person who sins will be the one who dies? How does this relate to Jesus' ministry?**

11/8 - Verse 32 can be argued to be the single most important point in all of the book of Ezekiel - *"I don't want you to die, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn back and live!"* This is a powerful verse. **Q: Think this verse shows us that God is compassionate? Think this might be the single most important point in the book of Ezekiel? Think this verse can apply to our lives today? Are their areas of sin in your life which God is calling you to turn back from? Calling you to turn toward true Life? And to be free from the slavery of sin? Will you turn back? Will you repent?**

11/8 - Ezekiel Chapter 19 is a funeral song and allegory about the land of Judah and Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the lioness and the lions are two of her sons, two kings - one who ended up trapped and deceived by Egypt and the other by Babylon. The last sentence of verse 14 is a sad one... *"This is a funeral song, and it is now time for the funeral."* As we know, it is now time for the funeral for Jerusalem in Ezekiel's time. However, of course, there is the redemption to come and the continuation of the house of David. The promise to Abraham won't die here! There is another Lion of Judah yet to come...

11/9 - Ezekiel chapter 20 verse 12 stands out to me today: *"And I gave them my Sabbath days of rest as a sign between them and me. It was to remind them that I, the LORD, had set them apart to be holy, making them my special people."* I like learning this - the Sabbath days of rest were given as a sign between God and his people. **Q: How are you doing on taking a day of rest each week? Would taking a day of rest each week - a Sabbath day - benefit your relationship with God? And with others? Would it benefit perhaps the other 6 days of your week?**

11/9 - After verse 12 above, we read this from God in verse 13: *"But the people of Israel rebelled against me, and they refused to obey my laws there in the wilderness. They wouldn't obey my instructions even though obedience would have given them life. And they also violated my Sabbath days. So I threatened to pour out my fury on them, and I made plans to utterly consume them in the desert."* The thing that stood out to me in this verse was "they also violated my Sabbath days." I don't get too caught up on which day of the week we take a Sabbath - as some may work weekends and have Mondays off, for example. **Q: Whatever the day is for you - do you have 1 day a week that you consider a Sabbath? Why might this be a smart thing to do? A healthy thing to do? A faithful thing to do?**

11/9 - In Ezekiel 20:40 we read: *"There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices."* **Q: What are your offerings, choice gifts and holy sacrifices to the Lord? Your life, your thoughts, your finances? Do you give a percentage of your income to your local church, ministries, and nonprofits? Would this perhaps be a "holy sacrifice" if you did so? Would this be a bold act of faith?**

11/10 - In Ezekiel chapter 21 today we read about the Lord's sword of judgment! Which, in this case is Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar. I did not realize until today that there is actually a "sword song" in the Bible - a song that warriors may have sung and even danced to before going out to battle. Unfortunately, this sword song in verses 9 through 11 was being sung for Jerusalem because of her many sins... *"A sword, a sword is being sharpened and polished. It is sharpened for terrible slaughter and polished to flash like lightning! Now will you laugh? Those far stronger than you have fallen"*

beneath its power! Yes, the sword is now being sharpened and polished; it is being prepared for the executioner." Okay, so Ezekiel Chapters 21 & 22 are the types of chapters where you might think about stereotypes of the Old Testament - a "grouchy/mean" God perhaps one might say about these two chapters... However! - context of course is key to keep in mind. We must also know the book of Jeremiah or Ezekiel prior to these chapters. God has been slow to anger, compassionate, asking - no, begging - people to repent. And they have not. And things just keep getting worse and worse and worse. Check out chapter 22 verses 1 through 16 for how bad the sins of Jerusalem have gotten... *All of this reminds me that the consequences for sin are very real. Let us never forget the truth of Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* And, once again, in verse 30 of chapter 22 we see God's compassion and God seeking an opportunity to stop the coming judgment: *"I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one."* No one was found... **Q: This verse makes me think about this - sometimes I think we tell ourselves, "What difference does it make? What difference does it make if I'm good or bad? What difference does it make if I serve and love others in need?" Check out verse 30 above again. Think one person could have made a difference then? What about now? Will you make a difference today? Will you stand in the gap?**

11/11 - Ezekiel chapter 23 is interesting in its use of prostitution and lust as the metaphors for Israel's political alliances with neighboring lands. My thoughts here are that we live in a "sexualized" world in so many ways today - and perhaps things weren't so different back then. Sex is obviously something that was created as a good by God - but can so quickly and easily be twisted into something that is not good. Sex is good in the right context of marriage. Detrimental in the wrong. It seems to me that lust and the selling of sex was as prevalent back in Ezekiel's today as it is in ours. To which we may need to remember well Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:18 - *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."* And of course James 4:7 - *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* **Q: Is there an area of our lives related to sex that you must flee from? Will you flee?**

11/12 - An important note from our readings in Ezekiel chapter 24 today is that Ezekiel's wife dies on the exact same day the Temple in Jerusalem was burned! August 14, 586 B.C. As I read these verses about Ezekiel's wife and the Temple I am reminded of a verse in the book of Job - 13:15- *"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him."* Though Ezekiel's wife dies and though the Temple burned, the Lord still instructs Judah in verse 23: *"You will not mourn or weep"*. The Job situation is of course different in that Job was righteous and Judah was not at this time. And there is not clear hope for Judah at this time - though there ultimately is redemption for Jerusalem. However, again, look at Job's faith in the midst of all he was going through: *"yet I will hope in him."* **Q: When times are bad - or times are good - do you hope in Him? No matter what, will you hope in Him?**

11/13 - Ezekiel Chapter 27 indicates that Tyre was certainly good at business and trading! However chapter 28 tells us that there was also a lot of pride associated with these business skills & wealth. Verse 5 tells us: *"Yes, your wisdom has made you very rich, and your riches have made you very proud."* This verse definitely stands out to me. **Q: How often in our lives does something in our lives make us proud? Verse 2 in this chapter says this: "In your great pride you claim, 'I am a god!' If we get prideful enough, might we even consider ourselves a god?? Do you hear others in our culture today telling us that we are gods? Good idea or bad idea here....?**

11/14 - Ezekiel chapters 29 & 30 are fascinating in that we are seeing God lay out the plans for Egypt's transformation from being one of the most powerful nations in the world to one of the least powerful - but God does provide some redemption for Egypt after 40 years of hardship. However, God says that Egypt will never again reach the heights of power in the world that it had under the Pharaohs. Verse 14 in chapter 29 captures this: *"I will restore the prosperity of Egypt and bring its people back to the land of Pathros in southern Egypt from which they came. But Egypt will remain an unimportant, minor kingdom."* Very interesting to reflect on this. Verse 7 in chapter 29 stands out as to why God is unhappy with Egypt (in part - idols are another reason...) - *"Israel leaned on you, but like a cracked staff, you splintered and stabbed her in the armpit. When she put her weight on you, you gave way, and her back was thrown out of joint."* God was not happy that Israel created an alliance with Egypt as we read earlier in Ezekiel - but at the same time, God was not happy with Egypt for bailing on the alliance when Babylon attacked Jerusalem. **Q: Think God likes for us to keep our promises in our life? Do you keep your promises in your life? Are you careful to never make empty promises?** The end of chapter 29 is fascinating in that God decides to allow Babylon to take plunder from Egypt in light of its war against Tyre (see yesterday's readings below). We continue to see that God is using King Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon for His purposes - for a time. We are reminded though at the end of this chapter in verse 21 - *"And*

the day will come when I will cause the ancient glory of Israel to revive." God's still got the redemption of Israel in mind...

11/15 - I think Ezekiel chapter 31 starts out with a trick question from God to Egypt in verse 2: *"Son of man, give this message to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and all his people: "To whom would you compare your greatness?"*" The proper answer to this question is probably somewhere along the humble lines of, "no one - I am not great at all. I wouldn't dare compare myself to others. Everything I am and have comes from you God." Think Pharaoh would answer the question in this humble way? :) Better yet - maybe we should ask ourselves this question today as well. And think about how we would answer it. **Q: What if someone stops you on the street tomorrow and asks you this question. What would be your reply?** Here it is. **I ask this of you now: "To whom would you compare your greatness?"**

11/15 - Ezekiel chapters 31 & 32 are great studies on pride... pride of a nation, and pride of individuals. And the dangers of pride - where pride will ultimately lead someone. In chapter 32 verse 19 God asks the rhetorical question (not a trick question this time) - *"O Egypt, are you lovelier than the other nations? No! So go down to the pit and lie there among the outcasts."* **Q: Today in our lives, do we ever struggle with pride? Do we compare ourselves to others? Do we consider ourselves lovelier than others?** My hunch is that we too often do...

11/16 - In Ezekiel chapter 33 today we see Ezekiel appointed as the Watchman of Israel - once again. You'll recall this happened previously in chapter 3 of Ezekiel as well. The difference is that now we're in the post-destruction of Jerusalem & the Temple, so we'll quickly start to see more of a message of hope & redemption, in addition to continued calls for repentance. I think in verse 11 we start to see this shift in the Lord's wanting to restore Jerusalem & Israel again: *"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?"* The call for repentance... **Q: Are there areas in your life where God may be calling you to "Turn!"? Will you Turn?**

11/16 - Verse 32 stands out to me today when God talks about how the exiles view Ezekiel's messages: *"You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don't do it!"* This makes me think even of ourselves - maybe even in our churches... **Q: Do we sometimes go to church looking for a good "performance" from the church or musicians or pastors? And maybe miss the gospel message? Do we applaud the performance? Even hear what is said? But don't do anything about it...?**

11/16 - Ezekiel chapter 34 reminds me a lot of the famous and beautiful Psalm 23 - "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want..." However, before we get to God being the Good Shepherd - and hear about the Good Shepherd to come - there is some rebuking of the "shepherds" of Israel at that time, that may also have a message for us. In verses 3 & 4 we read: *"You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured."* **Q: Could this verse speak into our lives in some way? Is it possible that we eat fine food and wear fine clothes at the expense of others in need? Are we consistently strengthening the weak? Healing the sick? Binding up the injured? 1.2 billion people in the world live on less than \$1 a day. Are you doing something to care for these brothers and sisters on a consistent basis? What are you doing?**

11/17 - Ezekiel chapter 36 is an awesome chapter looking at the restoration of Israel, post-exile. I like that there are prophecies to the mountain and hills and valleys in this chapter! Great verses. Verses 8 & 9 stood out to me - *"But the mountains of Israel will produce heavy crops of fruit to prepare for my people's return--and they will be coming home again soon! See, I am concerned for you, and I will come to help you. Your ground will be tilled and your crops planted."* I like that God is concerned for the mountains and he wants them to be fruitful. If He is concerned for the mountains, think how much more He is concerned for each of our lives... **Q: Think He wants our lives to be fruitful as well? How so?** Verse 22 shows God's grace - *"I am bringing you back again but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name."* The first sentence shows grace in that God is bringing them back, even though they are undeserving. The second sentence you might not initially see the grace in it - but, God is protecting his holy name so that ultimately all people's in all nations will come to faith in him - and not idols, which deliver nothing and lead to the grave. If God did not bring the Israelites back and protect his name, the rest of the world would see no reason to turn from their idols. Verses 26 & 27 sound very New Testament / new covenant - *"And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command."* **Q: Do you have a new heart? With new and right desires? Do you have a new Spirit in you?**

11/18 - Ezekiel chapter 37 starts with a fascinating vision! This vision of the valley of dry bones is an allusion to the exiled Israelites. As God brings life and breath into the bones, he will do the same for the exiles, and bring them back to their home land. In a sense, bring them back to life! Verse 14 sums up the purpose of this vision nicely - *"I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I am the LORD."* Again, we hear the words, as we have so often in Ezekiel - *"then you will know that I am the Lord."* **Q: Today in our lives, do we know that the Lord is the Lord? How so?** Verses 15-23 are great - discussing the reunification of the two kingdoms of Israel since the time of Solomon. Israel will become one kingdom again. And verses 24 through 28 point toward the coming Messiah, Jesus. Verse 26 stands out - *"And I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant."* **Have you entered into this covenant of peace with God? The everlasting covenant? Have you opened the door to Jesus in your heart? Do you hear him knocking? Maybe late at night, do you hear Jesus knocking? Offering you an everlasting covenant of peace? Will you open the door of your heart?**

11/19 - Ezekiel chapter 39 continues the destruction of Gog! See yesterday's posting below for more details on who and what Gog may be. Verse 25 stands out to me in today's readings: *"So now the Sovereign LORD says: I will end the captivity of my people; I will have mercy on Israel, for I am jealous for my holy reputation!"* We see that the exile is coming near to an end. Ezekiel and Jeremiah have been two pretty heavy books with prophecies against Israel. This chapter continues to show the redemption and return of the exiles from Babylon to Israel is soon coming. It is interesting that God is jealous for his holy reputation in the verse above... **Q: are we ourselves also jealous for God's holy reputation? Should we be?**

11/19 - Ezekiel chapter 40 is very interesting! It begins the vision and description of what many call "Ezekiel's Temple." Essentially, this temple has not been built. Some say that this temple will be built in the future - during Christ's millennial reign. Some say it's a heavenly temple. Some say it was the vision for the temple that should have been built during Ezra's days in 517 B.C., but was not. It is fascinating to look at various theories on the various temples.

11/20 - Ezekiel chapters 40 and 41 in today's readings include verses where we read a lot about measurements and cubits and such! I have to admit that I sometimes zone out a bit when reading these types of details in the Old Testament. However - something that popped into my mind once when reading through these types of verses that has benefited me greatly in my appreciation of measurements and such is this - God is a God of precision. God is a God of detail. God is an organized God. Which I think is great news! I mean, look at our own human bodies and all our internal organs. We are wonderfully made by a God who is a God of precision and detail. So, remembering this when I read these types of measurements verses helps. It helps me keep my focus and interest on what I'm reading. I hope this helps you in some way as you read through detailed chapters like these in the Bible. **Q: If God showed this much organization and care for Ezekiel's Temple, do you suppose he continues to show his organization and care for our local churches today?**

11/20 - Ezekiel chapter 41 verse 3 stands out today: *"Then he went into the inner room at the end of the Holy Place."* This is interesting in that the angelic being leading Ezekiel through this vision and the temple enters the Most Holy Place - Ezekiel does not. Even though it's a vision. And even though God's presence is not in the Most Holy Place at this time (we'll see the Presence coming next chapter). Yet Ezekiel does not enter. Why? Because the law was that only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place. This shows great obedience on Ezekiel's part! Even in a vision, he's obedient. **Q: Are there areas of our life where God is calling us to be obedient? Even if we think our obedience in a specific circumstance or situation won't matter (e.g. a vision or a dream or even a small circumstance in real life) - will we still be obedient?**

11/21 - Ezekiel chapter 42 continues the description of the temple in Ezekiel's vision and the dimensions. In this chapter we learn about the rooms for the priests of the temple. The interesting thing for me, as I was reading this chapter today, is that my mind wandered a bit and wondered if maybe somehow this was / is a heavenly temple that Ezekiel was describing? I'm not sure. I have so much more to learn about the temples. **Q: But, it's interesting to think if maybe somehow we might see something like this temple in heaven?** An interesting thought at least for me to ponder. However - the tricky thing is that in chapter 43 there are descriptions of sacrifices for the altar in this temple. And of course Christ was the final sacrifice for our sins - so there is no need for the old covenant sacrifices. So, this could certainly dash my imagination of this being a heavenly temple we'll see some day. Though - I did read somewhere that if this is a heavenly temple, the sacrifices described in chapter 43 may be "memorials" or ceremonial - but not required, as they were in the old covenant. I don't know... fascinating stuff to ponder however!

11/21 - Back to how all this might apply to our lives today. Verse 20 in chapter 42 stood out to me: "*So the area was 875 feet on each side with a wall all around it to separate the holy places from the common.*" The last part of that verse stands out - to separate the holy places from the common. **Q: I wonder about that in our lives - do we do anything that separates the holy from the common in our own lives? Do we need to? My thought here is that if we don't allow for some "holy places" to appear in our lives, might we just settle for common places throughout our lives?** A Holy Place for us might be 5 minutes of prayer. Or 15 minutes of reading the Bible. Or going to a church service. Or listening to worship music. Or not scheduling anything one day a week, so we can take a Sabbath day of rest. **What are you doing to create some Holy Places in your life?**

11/21 - Chapter 43 is incredible with God's return to the temple. I love this verse - "*And this is the basic law of the Temple: absolute holiness!*" Absolute holiness. Okay - so this is not something we are going to see or "achieve" this side of heaven. It's impossible for us to be absolutely holy on this earth. Only Jesus was absolutely holy and sinless. However, I think the call for our eternal lives is absolute holiness. So, know that faith in Jesus will ultimately lead you in this direction - and I do believe we can grow in holiness in this life. God's grace gives ultimate absolute holiness in heaven. **Q: Do you want absolute holiness? Are you moving toward absolute holiness in your life today? Do you also realize you won't reach absolute holiness this side of heaven? But, yet, do you still desire absolute holiness someday?**

11/21 - Verse 21 in this chapter is a foreshadowing of Jesus' death on the Cross at Mt. Calvary: "*Then take the young bull for the sin offering and burn it at the appointed place outside the Temple area.*" How does this apply to Jesus' death on a hill outside of Jerusalem's city gates? This is best explained in Hebrews chapter 13 verses 11-13 as follows: "*The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.*" Powerful... **Q: Will you walk with Jesus outside the city gates of Jerusalem? Up to Mt. Calvary? Will you follow Jesus all the way up that hill?**

11/22 - In Ezekiel chapters 44 and 45 today we see the priesthood restored to Israel! It's interesting that the Levites are taken down a notch in how they can serve in the temple and the Zadokites are elevated. Zadok was a priest during the time of David & Solomon and a descendent of Eleazar and ultimately Aaron. Chapter 44, verse 28 really stood out to me today: "*As to property, the priests will not have any, for I alone am their inheritance.*" I like that! God alone is the priests' inheritance. **Q: What is our inheritance? Is it property? Is it things of this earth? Or could our inheritance be God as well? Should God be our inheritance? How is God our inheritance? If the Lord is not our inheritance, what then do we inherit? The wind? It's an age old debate as you'll see in the image above. Where do you stand? Can we inherit eternal life through the grace of God and faith in Jesus? Or do we simply inherit the wind? (Nothingness) What does your heart tell you? Most importantly, what does the Bible tell you?**

11/23 - Ezekiel chapters 45 & 46 describe some new regulations on how offerings are to be done, when compared to the original Pentateuch regulations - primarily from Numbers chapter 28. Apparently these chapters in Ezekiel have created some reconciliation work for rabbis in the past to figure out the proper regulations. Verse 20 in chapter 46 did stand out at me in today's readings: "*He explained, "This is where the priests will cook the meat from the guilt offerings and sin offerings and bake the flour from the grain offerings into bread. They will do it here to avoid carrying the sacrifices through the outer courtyard and harming the people by transmitting holiness to them."* Per a previous chapter this goes along the lines of the priests needing to take off their clothes in a special room after being in the Temple, to avoid transmitting holiness. This is interesting to me because you would think that transmitting holiness would be a good thing. Apparently not in this case. This does remind me of when Moses was on the mountain receiving the Laws, he had to wear a veil over his face amongst the people when he came down from the mountain because his face was so radiant from being in the presence of God. I read a commentary that said this transmission of holiness, in this case in Ezekiel, was not something for the Israelites to concern themselves with, because this was a vision of a future temple. I read another commentary that made the interesting point that these passages in Ezekiel can help demonstrate the transmission of holiness from Jesus' robe to the woman who suffered from bleeding for 12 years - see [Mark 5:22-34](#). She was healed by reaching out and touching Jesus' robe. Of course Jesus says that it was the woman's faith that healed her - not her touching his robe. It is intriguing to think about the transmission of holiness via garments or sacrifices. I'll need to do more study on the problem of "transmitting holiness" in this case in Ezekiel. **Q: Please share your thoughts on this with your table group?**

11/24 - We finish the book of Ezekiel today! The book of Daniel begins tomorrow! Ezekiel chapter 47's opening verses about the River of Healing are just beautiful. As I was reading these verses about the River of Healing I imagined myself jumping into the river and just being refreshed and renewed and restored! Great stuff... This river is very reminiscent of the river in the Garden of Eden - and the River of Life described in [Revelation chapter 22](#). Verse 9 in ch. 47 of Ezekiel sums it all up well - *"Everything that touches the water of this river will live. Fish will abound in the Dead Sea, for its waters will be healed. Wherever this water flows, everything will live."* **Q: Can you imagine this river of healing flowing from the temple? Can you imagine some rest & restoration & refreshment & healing through this river?**

11/25 - Today we start the book of Daniel, which is an incredible book! The book of Daniel takes place in approximately 605 B.C. during the first captivity of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Daniel is exiled to Babylon to Jerusalem in 605 B.C. - whereas Ezekiel, the prophet of the previous book, was exiled in 597 B.C. It is generally believed that Daniel himself wrote this entire book. Though some say that Daniel couldn't have written this book because his prophecies in the this book are spot-on. Thus, some think someone else must have written the book in retrospect. Let's forge ahead with the belief that Daniel indeed wrote this book. I do believe that God can indeed prophesy events through prophets like Daniel before they actually happen...

~ Daniel ~

Author: Daniel

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Content: Daniel was carried off into captivity in Babylon as a young boy where, although he was a captive, he received an education and ultimately rose to a high position in Babylonian, and later, Persian government. Because of his trust in God he was subjected to barbarous persecution, at one point being thrown to the lions. Three of his compatriots were thrown into a furnace, but they too survived by the power of God. The book deals with many historical events of Daniel's day, but it also contains prophecies concerning the future. Daniel saw the great world empires that were to come, but saw more than just that. He also saw the power of God and the Messiah, Jesus, who was to come and undo the evil of this world, ultimately to establish a kingdom of righteousness that would never fade away.

Theme: Daniel's major theme is the sovereignty of God. God rules over the affairs of men, directing the course of history toward his own ends, working in and through the acts of men. The kingdoms of men rise and fall but God remains forever. God's will remains forever as well, and it is God's determination to bring salvation to men by the Messiah whom he will send. Ultimately evil will be overcome and good will triumph because God has willed it so. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 14-15*)

11/25 - Daniel chapter 1 verse 7 is worth diving into to show how Nebuchadnezzar was trying to change the religious alliances of these 4 young men from Jerusalem - *"The chief official renamed them with these Babylonian names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar. Hananiah was called Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach. Azariah was called Abednego."* Daniel's name in Hebrew means "God is my Judge" - his new name Belteshazzar meant "Bel, protect his life!" Bel, or Marduk was the main Babylonian god. (you can see where Nebuchadnezzar was going with this...) Hananiah's name in Hebrew is "the Lord shows grace" and Shadrach means "under the command of Aku" - the moon god.... Mishael's name in Hebrew is "who is like God?" and his new name Meshach is "who is like Aku?" And finally Azariah's name in Hebrew is "the Lord helps" and his new name Abednego is "servant of Nego/Nebo" - the god of learning and writing. **Q: Do you think that someone's name can be reflective of who they are? Are names important?**

11/25 - Verse 8 is worth exploring - *"But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king."* Why do you think this was? Was Daniel just being picky? Snooty? Well, that was kind of my first thought. Further study shows that the food the Babylonians were going to feed Daniel and the 3 others were sacrificed to idols. Which is not a good thing in the Law... And furthermore, the wine was poured out on pagan altars. Again, not good. So, Daniel is making a very wise move here. **Q: Will we do things like this in our own lives? Things that appear to be "harmless" on the surface, will we refuse, if we know they will actually be damaging to us or our relationship with God? Even if our peers are pressuring us? Will we not defile ourselves?**

11/25 - Daniel chapter 2 verse 20 has a great start to a prayer from Daniel to God - *"Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he alone has all wisdom and power."* Check out the remainder of the verses in this chapter - this prayer. This praise. **Q: Do we pray to God in this manner? Do we open up our prayers with praise for God? Do we acknowledge that only God has all wisdom and power? Can we learn something from Daniel's prayer?**

11/26 - Today in Daniel chapter 2 we see Daniel conducting his affairs with Nebuchadnezzar with wonderful humility! In verses 27 & 28 Daniel says: *"There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can tell the king such*

things. *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future.*" Here we see that Daniel is giving God the glory for the dream about to be revealed. Daniel was taking no credit for this. **Q: Today, do you regularly give God the glory in your life? Or do you try to take the credit yourself?**

11/26 - The dream interpreted by Daniel is summed up in verses 44 & 45: *"During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed; no one will ever conquer it. It will shatter all these kingdoms into nothingness, but it will stand forever. That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain by supernatural means, crushing to dust the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold."* The dream & interpretation are prophesying the kingdom of Babylon (gold), followed by the Medo-Persian Kingdom (silver), then Greek kingdom (bronze), then the Roman empire with a mix of iron & clay - representing strong and weak states within the Roman empire. These are all B.C. kingdoms, taking us up to the time of Jesus the Messiah, when the rock cut from the mountain comes and becomes the everlasting Kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar is impressed with the dream interpretation and says to Daniel in verse 47: *"Truly, your God is the God of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."* **Q: Think Nebuchadnezzar is sincere about this? Or, think he will be the next day?** Look how quickly he changes his mind in Chapter 3...

11/26 - In chapter 3 we read the incredible story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In verses 16-18 we read: *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."* Focus on the words in verse 18 – "But even if he does not". **Q: Do you have the faith of these three men in God? Even if God does not show up in your life as you hope he might, will you still have faith? Will you not serve other gods or worship false idols? Back to verse 16 - Do you realize that you do not have to defend your faith to others? Do you believe that God can rescue you from the direst of situations? Even a fiery furnace?**

11/26 - In verse 28 we hear Nebuchadnezzar giving praise to God again - similar to chapter 2 verse 47 above: *"Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."* **Q: Are we willing to die rather than serve or worship any other "god"?** (big question I realize... but a fair one. This is happening to Christians around the world today. Please remember to pray for the persecuted church around the world.)

11/27 - Daniel chapter 4 is an incredible chapter today! There is a lot going on in this one. We open up this chapter with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon giving praise to God as verses 2 & 3 tell us: *"I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations."* **Q: Does this sound like the Nebuchadnezzar we've come to know?** We'll, we must read on as he tells us how he got to the point of praising God like this... Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree in this chapter is relatively straightforward, as is the interpretation that Daniel gives. One intriguing verse to me was verse 27 where Daniel pleads with Nebuchadnezzar to repent to avoid what will happen per the dream - *"O King Nebuchadnezzar, please listen to me. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past by being merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper."* **Do you think Nebuchadnezzar listened to Daniel? What if Daniel was telling us to do this same thing this very day? Would we listen? Will we stop sinning and do what is right? Will we be merciful to the poor?**

11/27 - We see the sin of pride bring down Nebuchadnezzar in verse 30 as follows - *"Just look at this great city of Babylon! I, by my own mighty power, have built this beautiful city as my royal residence and as an expression of my royal splendor."* **Q: Are their times in our life where we boast of what we have "done" or "created" by our "own mighty power"?** **Good idea.... ?** In this chapter today Nebuchadnezzar becomes Gollum from the Lord of the Rings! :) Yes, I did hear someone teach on this chapter recently and he placed up on screen a picture of Gollum from Lord of the Rings and suggested this is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar essentially in verse 33 - *"That very same hour the prophecy was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws."* **Can you see how sin can drive us to basic animal instincts? Like Gollum? Do you see how godly wisdom can save us from becoming like animals? Like Gollum?** Pride seems to be a very tempting sin for all of us - and not a good one to pursue - as Nebuchadnezzar tells us himself in verse 37 - *"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and*

honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble those who are proud." Do you believe this to be true?

11/28 - Daniel chapter 5 is the famous "the writing is on the wall" chapter! It is not a good sign to see writing appear on the wall in this way... This chapter is of huge importance to the Babylonian dynasty - because this chapter is the very last day of Babylon the empire. The next day everything goes to the Persians & Medes and Cyrus will be taking over the roost. Daniel chapter 5 verse 1 starts us out today with: *"A number of years later..."* This chapter takes place in 539 B.C., whereas chapter 4 with Nebuchadnezzar took place before his death in 562 B.C. So, at least 23 years have past between chapter 4 & 5 - and several leaders of Babylon have passed by, leaving Belshazzar, who has 1 day more... Verses 1 through 4 in the chapter unfortunately describe an orgy taking place, utilizing gold and silver cups taken from the Temple in Jerusalem decades earlier by Nebuchadnezzar. Unwisely, Belshazzar and the crew toast false idols with these sacred cups of God - at which point immediately the hand begins writing on the wall, and verse 6 tells us this about Belshazzar - *"Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him."* **Q: Think he had reason to be scared like this? Why?**

11/28 - As Daniel is called in to interpret the writing, verse 17 stands out as Daniel tells Belshazzar: *"Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means."* Daniel is obviously quite bold and dismissive of Belshazzar here - he does not defer to Belshazzar being the king, and the seemingly right thing to do would be to immediately say you'd appreciate the gifts. Daniel simply says - keep 'em! (though, later he's still bestowed with them) Bold... A righteous boldness, yes? Plus, you've got to think that Daniel's seen a lot in Babylon in his time and he's ready to cut to the chase and just interpret the writing. He doesn't need earthly gifts or honor... **Q: What about us in our lives today? Do we seek earthly gifts and honor for ourselves? Should we? Can we learn from Daniel's boldness and focus on what truly matters in this life?**

11/28 - Before interpreting the dream Daniel gives Belshazzar an old fashioned lecture which culminates in verse 22 as he speaks of Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by God: *"You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself."* Basically, Daniel is saying - you should have known better. You knew better. You saw Nebuchadnezzar's mistakes. You did not learn. **Q: Are we like this sometimes in our lives today? Shouldn't we know better...?**

11/28 - Verse 27 is worth reflecting upon! *"You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting."* (NIV). Very interesting to think about a godly scale. **Q: A scale that maybe looks at how we invest our time, money, love, life, worship? Are we investing in things that are eternal?** Obviously, through the opening verses Belshazzar was simply investing his life into himself, his lusts and his desires. And hence, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN was written on the wall... Pretty amazing to think that the great kingdom of Babylon went down like this in one chapter... God clearly is a kingdom-maker and a kingdom-taker!

11/29 - Daniel chapter 6 today is probably more famous than chapter 5's writing on the wall! Today Daniel goes into the lion's den... Several things, as always, are going on in this chapter. One big note is that Daniel is about 80 years old at the time of this chapter. He's not a young man. And yet he is running laps around the other kingdom administrators with his work - and for this he is honored more and more by the king. And others are getting jealous of this old man Daniel. They realize the only way to trip him up is on his religion. And - by appealing to the king's pride with a law that makes people worship the king only. **Q: Interesting thing that pride... seems an easy sin for us humans to fall into..?** Well, then the old man Daniel gets tossed into the pit of lions - and comes out alive through the grace of God. And the king realizes he was duped by the admins and tosses them & their families into the pit of lions. But enough of my Cliff Notes here... let's check out a few verses...

11/29 - Verse 4 makes me reflect on my life and the way I live it: *"Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible."* **Q: How are we in handling our affairs? Our job, our tempers, our finances, our time? Are we faithful in all of these areas? Honest? Always responsible?**

11/29 - Verse 10 helps us look at how we should act when challenging circumstances come into our lives: *"But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God."* Daniel continued to worship God as he always had in the midst of bad news of the new law. He didn't blink. He didn't

flinch. He didn't take a break from God. He kept worshipping. **Q: How do we act when bad news comes into our lives? Do we sulk? Do we decide to avoid God for a while? Or do we continue to worship God as we have always - giving thanks to God? Even in the midst of severe challenges, will we still give thanks to God for who He is?**

11/29 - Verse 20 is a wonderful verse from the mouth of the remorseful King Darius: *"When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you worship continually, able to rescue you from the lions?"*" First of all - I love the term "the living God". **Q: Do you believe that God is indeed a living God? Not a stoic God who just sets up the universe and then lets it run on its own - but a God who is in the midst of every single one of our experiences - good and bad? A living God? A God who is with us on the mountain tops - and in the lion's den? Do you believe God is indeed a living God? Do you worship the living God continually? Like Daniel, are you a servant of the Living God? Do you want to be a servant of the Living God? The Living God that will send His angels to protect you from even lions in their den?**

11/30 - Okay, so Daniel chapter 7 with the vision of 4 beasts is not exactly an easy one for me to interpret here in a daily blog! :) But I'll give it a bit of a go. Actually, if you're looking for in-depth commentary on this chapter, [please check out this link on bible.org](#), titled "Daniel's Disturbing Dream." Overall, this is a very powerful chapter to read... I definitely was feeling drawn into this chapter and the description of the beasts. Basically here in chapter 7 we're seeing a parallel with the vision of these 4 beasts in this vision of Daniel's with the dream Nebuchadnezzar had of the statue in chapter 2 of Daniel. The lion with the eagle wings represents Babylonia, just as the head of gold in ch. 2 did. The bear represents Medo-Persia, as the silver did in ch. 2. The leopard represents Greece, as did the bronze/brass in ch. 2. And the terrifying and frightening beast represents the Roman empire, as the feet of clay & iron did in ch. 2. Roughly speaking of course... :)

11/30 - The best verses in this chapter are in my mind verse 13 & 14 where we get a Messianic vision of Jesus! *"As my vision continued that night, I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed."* Wow... very powerful stuff.. **Q: Do you believe that Jesus has been given authority, honor and royal power over all the world? Do you believe that his rule is eternal and his kingdom will never be destroyed? Do you know in your heart that Jesus is your eternal King?**

11/30 - Verse 8 & 20 are intriguing to me when they talk about: *"This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly."* The thing that jumped out at me was the mouth that was boasting arrogantly. **Q: How did this read to you when you came across it? As a good or bad thing to have a mouth that boasts arrogantly?** Again, this reminds me of the sin of pride that we have been seeing over and over again here in the book of Daniel with the Babylonian kings & Darius the Mede. Essentially some commentaries suggest this little horn that boasts arrogantly represents the antichrist...

NEW TESTAMENT

11/1 - Hebrews chapter 3 today is a great look at the lives of Moses and Jesus. The text today doesn't really dive into this point, but something I heard recently that is worth remembering - Moses introduced to Israel the Old Covenant (testament) via the Ten Commandments and laws. Whereas, Jesus ushers in the New Covenant to Israel and all of the world. So, this chapter goes into why Jesus is greater than Moses. Probably this Old Cov v. New Cov point alone would prove this to be true - but, obviously Jesus is also God in the flesh. Moses was simply a man. (albeit a great man in many ways!) Today in Hebrews 3:13 we read: *"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."* **Q: When was the last time you encouraged someone in their walk of faith? Will you encourage someone today? How does encouragement help us avoid sin's deceitfulness? Do you realize that sin is indeed deceitful? (sin sells you nothing but lies) Do you realize that sin can harden your heart?** Do you realize that one of the best ways to be free of the bondage of sin and a hardened heart is through encouragement of others in your church community? Sin is too strong for us to battle on our own. We need Jesus. We need each other. We need to be actively involved in a church community each week. Don't attempt to make a go of this life alone. . . it's far too risky.

11/1 - Verse 15 is repeated twice in today's readings, so it probably is something important for us to remember - *"But never forget the warning: "Today you must listen to his voice. Don't harden your hearts against him as Israel did when*

they rebelled." **Q: Are you listening to God's voice? How is the soil of your heart toward God? Will you let him plant new life within you? Will you let him pull the weeds that need to be pulled?**

11/2 - Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 of course makes a One Year Bible blogger's heart happy :) - *"For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."* **Q: Do you believe that the Word of God is full of power? Not just power, but Living power? Does it cut deep into your innermost thoughts and desires - and expose the condition of your heart? Does the Bible expose you for who you really are? Do you believe that the Word of God can do this? Will you let the Word of God do this?**

11/2 - This chapter opens up with a beautiful verse: *"God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands."* On a busy day, doesn't God's place of rest sound nice? I like that! God has promised us a place of eternal rest if we will simply have faith in his Son. His Son whom verse 14 today tells us: *"That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him."* **Q: Are you clinging to Jesus as your High Priest? Do you trust Him? Are you longing for your eternal rest with Jesus?**

11/3 - Hebrews chapter 5 verse 10 today tells us this about Jesus: *"And God designated him to be a High Priest in the line of Melchizedek."* Who is Melchizedek? He first appeared in Scripture in Genesis 14:18-20: *"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."* Melchizedek was clearly important, as Abram gave him a tenth of everything. And Christ is a "High Priest in the line of Melchizedek." The thing to keep in mind is that most Bible scholars do not believe that Melchizedek was literally Christ. So, for us today, it's fine history to know. But, Christ is our High Priest, as this chapter of Hebrews makes clear. Verses 11 - 14 today are a great reminder that as Christians we must learn to become "self-feeders." We can't rely only on pastors and teachers and mentors to provide us with spiritual nourishment. We must learn to grow our relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit through our own study and prayer as well. I submit that the One Year Bible is one great way to feed yourself spiritually daily! **Q: How else are you feeding yourself spiritually these days?**

11/4 - Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 1 definitely stood out today: *"So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God."* I think sometimes we can get too caught up on the basics of Christianity and then never really grow in our faith. I do believe God is calling us first and foremost to come into relationship with Him through faith in his son Jesus. But, after that, let us grow! Let us no longer conform to our worldly ways and passions, even though we now have faith in Jesus. Let us become saints. Let us love and serve God, other people, and the poor more and more with each passing day. Let us go on and become mature in our understanding! Let us move forward from always being "disciples" to becoming "apostles." **Q: How is your spiritual growth these days? Are you growing? Do you want to grow?**

11/5 - Hebrews Chapter 7 is fascinating! It's basically an argument for why Jesus is our High Priest today - even though he is not from the tribe of Levi - the tribe of priests. Instead, the author of Hebrews argues that Jesus is immortal and is a priest in the line of Melchizedek. Most commentators I have read have said that Jesus is not Melchizedek nor vice versa. Basically, the author is making the case for the New Covenant - New Testament - that the Levitical priesthood line is completed by Jesus who is instituting a new covenant with Jesus as our High Priest. We need no other. We can go directly to God through Jesus. **Q: Do you believe this? Do you practice this? Do you pray in Jesus' name?** The name of our High Priest in heaven!

11/6 - Hebrews chapter 7 verse 27 teaches us today: *"Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people."* I hadn't really thought a lot about this before. In the Old Testament the Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices first for their own sins - and then they would be clean / pure enough to offer sacrifices for others sins. The good news of course in the New Testament and in this chapter is that we now have the perfectly clean and pure High Priest of Jesus Christ - who does not need to purify himself first! He never sinned. **Q: Will you take your sins to Jesus, your High Priest?**

11/7 - Hebrews chapter 8 is awesome in that it dives into some verses we read recently in the book of Jeremiah about the new covenant! Verse 3 stands out: *"And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest*

must make an offering, too." What was the offering Christ made for our sins? Verse 13 stands out too: *"When God speaks of a new covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and ready to be put aside."* Something I learned recently - the old / first covenant referred to in this chapter is the "Sinaitic" covenant and not the Abrahamic covenant - the difference being not the promise to Abraham that his descendants will outnumber the stars in the sky and God will be our God and we his people (the Abrahamic covenant) - but the "Sinaitic" covenant are the laws given to Moses on Mt. Sinai and in the desert for how the Israelites were to live - including how priests would make sacrifices for sin. The Abrahamic covenant still stands today - the Sinaitic covenant is now out of date and ready to be put aside because it was completed by the new covenant of Jesus Christ. Our High Priest who offered His life for our lives. **Q: How is Jesus your High Priest these days?**

11/8 - Hebrews chapter 9 is a fairly brief reading today on the Old Covenant rules for approaching God. We also read today about the ark of the covenant. One thing that stands out in my mind when reading this chapter today is that just after Jesus dies on the cross there is an earthquake, which shakes the Temple in Jerusalem where the Most Holy Place was located at the time of Jesus' death. The curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the rest of the Temple is torn in two. This is incredible imagery that shows that no longer is the Most Holy Place and an earthly high priest the only way to God. Jesus has torn that veil in two and Jesus is our new and eternal High Priest ushering in the New Covenant!

11/9 - Hebrews chapter 9 verses 27 & 28 today teaches us: *"And just as it is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people."* This stands in stark contrast to the old covenant where the High Priest had to atone for the people's sins over and over and over again. With faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven all at once - for eternity - and Christ does not need to forgive us of our sins over and over and over again. Faith in Christ is the one and only thing that matters. **Q: Do you believe this?**

11/10 - Hebrews chapter 10 is powerful today! I did come across a great learning, which I hadn't really picked up before. In verse 9 we read this about Jesus: *"He cancels the first covenant in order to establish the second."* At first glance you might think, wow, the old / first covenant is over. Things like the Ten Commandments don't matter anymore. Well, not so fast! Tyndale's One Year Bible companion tells us that this verse refers to the doing away (canceling) of the system of sacrifices contained in the **ceremonial** law. However, this does not mean canceling / eliminating God's **moral** law (the Ten Commandments). Only through faith in Christ we can fulfill the moral law, as Jesus lives in us. **Q: Good to know, eh? I'd never really picked up this distinction before of Jesus canceling the ceremonial law but not the moral law. Do you see this distinction?** As I've done some more reading on this, I realize this is a bit of a contentious point for many Christians. Check out this great overview of the Mosaic Law in light of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection - including a disagreement on my point above about the moral law - [at bible.org at this link](#).

11/11 - Hebrews chapter 10 today is amazing! In verse 22 we read: *"Let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water."* Great stuff! The last few words of this verse remind me of the blessing of Baptism - as an outward sign of our inner transformation and faith in Christ. **Verse 24** is just pure joy & goodness: *"Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds."* Outbursts of love & good deeds indeed! Who are you encouraging these days to outbursts of love and good deeds? Can you think of some ways to do this? And **verse 25** reminds me of the importance of finding a church community to do life with together: *"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near."* Do you meet together with others in a local church? Have you found a small group, community group, or prayer group that you can spend some quality time with outside of regular church services? A group where you can encourage, warn, and pray for each other? **Verse 26** and the following verses are strong reminders of the one option we have for our faith - the one true God to follow: *"Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins."* **Q: Is there another sacrifice besides Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that will cover our sins?**

11/12 - Today we read Hebrews Chapter 11, which is a great reflection of the faith of our spiritual ancestors in the Old Testament! Some call this chapter the "Hall of Faith" - as in the Hall of Fame. :) I would encourage you to read this chapter entirely today - and again tomorrow in its entirety. Chapter 11 opens with this critically important verse for us to memorize and take to heart: *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* **Q: Are you sure of what you hope for? Are you certain of what you do not see? As you read through this chapter, do you see the value in the faith of our spiritual ancestors? In what area of your life might God be calling you to step forward in faith?**

11/12 - Verses 13 through 16 I think are four of the most amazing verses we've read in Hebrews and I think each of us should really meditate on what these verses might mean in our lives today: *"All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."* **Q: What do you think of these verses? If these heroes of our faith died still believing what God promised them - even though they did not receive what was promised here on earth - do you think that perhaps you and I should always be faithful in our lives to God no matter what we may think we're not "receiving" here on earth? If we're not receiving perfect health. If we're not receiving a perfect job. If we're not receiving a perfect family. If we're not receiving a perfect mental state. If not, if not, if not.... will we still believe what God promised us? Will we still believe that God is not ashamed to be called our God? Will we still believe that God has prepared a heavenly city for us? Let us believe!**

11/13 - Hebrews 11 verses 25 & 26 today tell us so much about the character and faith of Moses! *"He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of the Messiah than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the great reward that God would give him."* **Q: Do these verses speak to us today as well? Will we share in the oppression of God's people? Or do we enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin? Do we suffer for the sake of Jesus? Or would we prefer to chill out and hang out with our luxuries in life? Do we look ahead to the great reward that God promises? Will we pursue the character and faith of Moses in our own lives today?**

11/14 - Hebrews chapter 11 verses today finish out this chapter on "faith" strongly! Please take a minute to re-read this entire chapter 11 if you can. It is an amazing chapter of our spiritual ancestor's faith. **Q: How does reading about our spiritual ancestor's faith speak into your life today? Are their areas of your life where you can better live with faith? Can you turn over your fears and anxieties to God, in faith? Knowing, in faith, God will ultimately provide and thus there is nothing to fear or worry about today?**

11/14 - Hebrews 11 verse 38 stands out to me today: *"They were too good for this world."* I think it is helpful to remember that this current world is not our ultimate eternal home. It is temporary. We're called to be saints and love others in this world. But, we should not become too attached to it or what it offers. God has a better home for us in mind at the end of our race - our journey through this life. This verse says that our spiritual ancestors were too good for this world - and hence, many of them suffered. But they suffered knowing it was temporary. Impermanent. I don't think that this verse should make us conceited or arrogant in any way - being "too good" for this world - but hopefully it helps us realize that this life is not necessarily going to be easy in this world if we are truly living in faith.... In fact, sometimes I wonder that if our life is really easy if we are really living our faith? I just hope we never get complacent and chill out and relax because "we are so saved".... There is a dying world out there that needs us! **Q: How are you truly living your life in faith these days?**

11/14 - Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 is phenomenal to think about - *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress."* I think sometimes we think that we are doing this Christian walk / faith thing alone. We think we are in this alone - just us & God. I think this verse helps remind us that there is a huge crowd of witnesses that are in this with us. I like to think of this cloud of witnesses cheering us on in our walk! They are rooting for us! **Q: So - in light of knowing we have these saints rooting for us, doesn't it make sense that we should strip away sin that hinders our walk? Is there sin your life that is hindering your walk? Will you allow Jesus to strip it away so that the cloud of witnesses can continue to cheer you on toward the finish line? How do we run this race toward the finish line well? I think verse 2 tells us how - "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish." Are your eyes on Jesus? Constantly? Does your faith depend solely on Jesus? Is your faith as fresh today as when you first came to faith in Jesus? Verse 3 is a powerful reflection of Jesus' passion.... "Think about all he endured when sinful people did such terrible things to him, so that you don't become weary and give up." Think about what Jesus endured at the hands of the Roman guards. Think about Jesus' resolve. He was running the race toward the finish line. Can reflecting on Jesus' passion help us resist becoming weary and giving up? How often do you reflect on Jesus' passion? Verses 5 & 6 quote Proverbs 3:11-12 and the following verses then go into explaining this wisdom of this Proverb - "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he**

corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children. "Do you believe this proverb to be true? Is the Lord perhaps disciplining you in some way today? Are you accepting or ignoring the discipline? Do you believe that the Lord disciplines those he loves? And that this "divine discipline" is ultimately good for you and everyone you come in contact with in your life?"

11/15 - Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14 starts out strong with: *"Try to live in peace with everyone, and seek to live a clean and holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord."* I love this! If we seek to live in peace with everyone and live a clean and holy life people around us will see the Lord. This is very powerful to think about... You've probably heard this said before: "You may be the only Bible anyone ever reads". Or "you may be the only Jesus anyone ever meets." (not you being Jesus of course, but Christ within you shining through you!) **Q: Are you living in peace with everyone? Are you seeking to live a clean and holy life? Are others seeing the Lord in you? Are others reading the Bible through you?**

11/15 - Verse 28 stands out to me today: *"Since we are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be destroyed, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe."* This is an interesting phrasing - worship God with holy fear and awe. It reminds me a lot of a lyric in Chris Tomlin's single, "Indescribable." He sings - "humbly we fall to our knees and say, "you are amazing God!" That one word "humbly" jumped out at me in this song. **Q: It seems to me that there should be some reverence, holy fear, awe, and humility as we worship God? And maybe not just take worship and our relationship for God lightly? But be thankful for the opportunity to worship God?** Just some questions... Because then verse 29 tells us *"For our God is a consuming fire."*

11/16 - We wrap up the book of Hebrews today, and start James tomorrow! Hebrews chapter 13 verse 2 has always stood out to me - *"Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!"* Powerful eh? When we show hospitality to strangers, we may be entertaining angels! Something to definitely keep in mind... Verse 7 I think is a great reminder for each of us to rejoice in and show some appreciation for those that helped bring us to faith and to study the Bible - *"Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and trust the Lord as they do."* **Q: Is there someone right now that this verse makes you think of? Can you send them a card or a quick email of encouragement to thank them for the impact they have had on your spiritual life?** Verse 8 is infamous and powerful and please memorize this one: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."* **This is an easy verse to memorize, yes?** Say it with me. Hebrews 13:8 - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Yep, I think you got it. :)

11/17 - Today we begin the book of James!

~ James ~

Author: James

Place: Uncertain

Date: A.D. 45-49

Content: The book of James was written to Jewish Christians in order to provide them with some practical instructions in the Christian life. It contains many short proverbial sayings and reflects in a remarkable way the teachings of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount. The problems addressed show the kind of difficulties that were troubling the church. We read of pride, discrimination, greed, lust, hypocrisy, worldliness, and backbiting. James writes to correct these evils by showing that faith without works is dead; that is, mere profession of faith is not enough. True faith will issue forth in a good life as surely as a good tree bears good fruit and not thistles.

Theme: James stresses the need for Christian living both to show the reality of one's inner faith and to show the world that the Gospel does in fact change lives. If a person says he is a Christian but is no different than when he was an unbeliever, what benefit has there been either for him or for the needy world? But in fact the Gospel does change lives and if we will commit ourselves to Jesus, we will find that from our living faith will flow living deeds of love and kindness. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 31-32*)

11/17 - Today in James chapter 1 verses 2 – 4 we read: *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* **Q: Are you facing a trial of some kind in your life today? Do you see the wisdom in considering this trial pure joy? Do you think it is possible that this trial will develop perseverance in your life? Maturity? Completeness? Will you persevere in this trial? Will you persevere with pure joy?**

11/17 - I like verse 17 today - *"Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows."* Think about this for a bit - God is a God of no shadows. Pure light. Unchanging. No shadows. I like that thought of no shadows a lot... Of course, this means we can't hide out in God's shadows either! :) Praise God for his unchanging, un-shadowed & pure Light! And verse 18 is an awesome closing to the James readings today - *"In his goodness he chose to make us his own children by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his choice possession."* Congratulations to you for diving into God's true Word today - the Bible! Please continue to accept the gift of God's true word by reading the Bible each day.... this will bless and change your life immensely. **Q: Do you realize that you are God's choice possession? Do you realize that you are a child of God? How does this affect how you live?**

11/18 - James' verses today again are all so powerful... I am enjoying this book immensely. Chapter 1 Verse 27 is a great reminder to care for the poor amongst us - *"Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us."* **Q: Are you caring for those in their time of trouble? Are you refusing to let the world corrupt us? Do you care for orphans and widows?**

11/18 - James chapter 2 verse 17 is a famous one - *"So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all--it is dead and useless."* Or, paraphrased, faith without works is dead. It's important of course to remember that works alone do not save us - only faith does through the grace of God. But, works naturally come through that saving faith. They are a natural by-product and demonstrate that we have a true and living faith. **Q: How does this verse stand out to you? What does it mean to your faith life?**

11/19 - James chapter 2 today continues in the strong words about good deeds accompanying a living faith. James' arguments are summed up in verse 26: *"Just as the body is dead without a spirit, so also faith is dead without good deeds."* Another very interesting verse in this chapter that always jumps out at me is verse 19 - *"Do you still think it's enough just to believe that there is one God? Well, even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror!"* I had someone once tell me that they believed in God - but that they realized that so do the demons. The difference of course is that the demons are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as are those who have faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. **Q: Still, a bit of a scary verse to think about, no?** Not necessarily for our own lives, perhaps, but maybe for others we know. Let us pray that we and others we know not only know God, but know Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit!

11/19 - James 3 verses 9 and 10 are powerful reminders on the danger of what can come out of our mouths: *"Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!"* How true is this... Reminds me of the old saying of being "two-faced". Or maybe having a forked-tongue? The key here to how we can control the tongue I believe is answered in verse 13 - *"If you are wise and understand God's ways, live a life of steady goodness so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don't brag about the good you do, then you will be truly wise!"* If we can focus on wisdom and what's going on inside our hearts and minds, we won't have to worry about what comes out of the mouth! **Q: How do you control your tongue?**

11/20 - James chapter 4 continues to just level me... This book is phenomenal. I need to read this book more than just once a year when I come around to it in the One Year Bible. The verse today that just made me set the Bible down for a minute and reflect was verse 4: *"You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God."* That is some heavy duty language... it pierced me in reading it today. **Q: Am I a friend of the world? Am I trying to be a friend of the world? Per this verse, where does this pursuit of the world put me with my relationship with God? Am I an "adulterer", in the sense of my relationship with God and the world?** (now, please keep in mind, I'm a huge fan and believer of grace... but sometimes we need to let verses like this really sink in. We need to reflect. And respond if need be... and let Jesus save us and heal us if need be...)

11/20 - And verse 8 is so true as well: *"Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you."* Another one to put into memory - and practice each day. **Q: Have you drawn close to God this very day? And has God drawn close to you?** Verse 14 I think is so helpful for us to remember - and to give Thanks for each day we have: *"How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog--it's here a little while, then it's gone."* Life is short. Every day is indeed a blessing and an opportunity to love and know God more. Please take advantage of each and every day God gives you. Diving into his Word each day through the One Year Bible is one amazing thing you can do every day. As is prayer of course!

11/21 - Today we wrap up the book of James. This has been such a powerful book for me to read these past few days! I am convicted and challenged by this book, which is wonderful. Today in chapter 5, verse 5 stands out: *"This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment."* This reminds me of the scene at the end of the movie "Schindler's List" where Oscar Schindler breaks down crying when the war is over - and after he has saved so many lives - and yet he cries out - "This gold pin - this pin could have saved a life! This car.... could have saved 10 lives!" **Q: This scene - and this verse - makes me ask myself if I am using my finances wisely? Am I investing in others? Are my luxuries taking away from other's very lives? Am I accumulating treasure when I could have been serving others?** I cannot encourage you enough to watch this scene in Schindler's List again if you haven't seen it in a while. Every time I watch this scene something happens to my heart that only God can explain... it changes me...

11/21 - Verse 9 stands out: *"Don't grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you."* This is such a great reminder of Jesus' call to not judge others! Don't grumble about others. **Q: How often do we grumble about others? Are we grumbling about someone currently? Is this a healthy practice?** By the way, I have been bad about grumbling about others recently - in fact, I almost got sideswiped on a freeway recently by a guy who was not paying attention to where he was going. In all honesty, I have no idea how we avoided not hitting each other, but for the grace of God. I was so shook up by the near miss I was "grumbling" big time about this guy's carelessness. Interestingly and thankfully I was not cussing at him nor giving him bad gestures, but I was grumbling in my heart about how not smart I thought he was - and I immediately caught myself and asked God to forgive me for this sin. And I believe He did. Let us not grumble in our hearts about others. It is a sin.

11/21 - The first half of verse 16 is so true - *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* **Q: Is there someone in your life you can confess your sins to? Someone you can ask to pray for you? Do you believe this practice will heal you of that sin?**

11/21 - And the last half of verse 16 also is amazing to remember - *"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results."* **Q: Are you praying for others? Earnestly? Do you believe prayer has great power and that God listens and can bring about wonderful results?**

11/22 - Today we begin the Apostle Peter's first epistle!

~ **First Peter** ~

Author: Peter the apostle

Place: Uncertain, perhaps Rome

Date: A.D. 63 or 64

Content: The apostle Peter wrote this letter near the end of his life to comfort and encourage the Jewish Christians who were living in Asia Minor. He points out that suffering is part of the Christian life and that God has an imperishable reward reserved for those who trust him. In case any were thinking of returning to Judaism to escape from persecution, Peter points out that the church is now the chosen nation and the priesthood of God. Hence any thoughts of returning to Judaism were futile. Peter then presents the example of Christ who suffered and admonished the believers to be prepared for the same experience.

Theme: The theme of First Peter is triumph through suffering. Early Christians lived difficult lives, often paying for their faith with their lives, but this letter shows us that it is worth it, no matter what the price. God knows all that is occurring and in his eternal plan will work everything out for the best. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 32)

11/22 - 1 Peter 1:4-6 are powerful verses: *"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while."* These verses tie in nicely with the Ezekiel 44:28 comments above, no? :) **Q: Are we truly glad about this priceless inheritance? Do we believe there is a priceless inheritance for us in heaven? Do we understand that we may have to endure many trials in this life before receiving this inheritance? Will you endure the many trials that will come your way, knowing that God's inheritance is awaiting you through His grace and your faith in Christ?**

11/22 - Verse 8 is a beautiful thought about Jesus and our relationship with him - *"You love him even though you have never seen him."* **Q: Even though you have never seen Jesus, do you love Him?**

11/23 - 1 Peter 2 verse 2 is awesome! *"You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness."* **Q: Do you crave pure spiritual milk? What is pure spiritual milk? Could it be the Word of God, the Bible? Do you believe the Bible can help you grow into the fullness of your salvation? Do you cry out for this nourishment? Do you drink deeply of this nourishment? Daily?**

11/23 - Verse 5 is beautiful imagery: *"And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ."* **Q: Do you believe that you are a living stone in God's spiritual temple? Do you believe you are a holy priest of God? If realizing that you are a holy priest of God is something new for you, how might this change how you live your life?**

11/23 - Today in First Peter chapter 1 verse 15 we read: *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"* **Q: Do you believe that God is holy? Do you believe that you are called to be holy? Is this a goal in your life – to be holy? What are some ways you can move forward on this goal of being holy? Have you moved forward in holiness in this year? Will you continue to move forward in holiness next year? What are some specific areas of your life that God is calling you to holiness in during this coming year?**

11/24 - 1 Peter 2 verse 11 is powerful - *"So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls."* **Q: Do you believe evil desires fight against your soul? If so, will you keep away from evil desires? Will you not entertain those desires anymore?**

11/24 - Verse 24 today about Jesus is so strong - *"He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds!"* **Q: Are you dead to sin? Are you living for what is right? Do you believe you have been healed by Jesus' wounds? Will you accept this healing? Will you kneel down at the foot of the cross and be healed?**

11/25 - 1 Peter 3 verse 13 is definitely something for each of us to consider - *"Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good?"* I think this is very true. **If you are "eager" to do good, who will want to harm you?** Well, true, maybe someone who becomes jealous or who is just plain having a bad day... but generally speaking, I think we can avoid a lot of troubles in our life if we stay focused - no, eager - to do good. All the time. **Q: Are you eager to do good?**

11/25 - Suffering. Not something we like to think about - much less experience... 1 Peter 4 verses 1 & 2 are well worth letting sink in a bit - *"So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning. And you won't spend the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God."* **Q: Do you believe these verses to be true? Are you ready to suffer for Christ? Have you decided to stop sinning? Are you anxious to do the will of God and abandon chasing evil desires? Do you believe this is the Way?**

11/26 - We finish the letter of First Peter today! Second Peter begins tomorrow. In First Peter chapter 5 verse 8 today we receive a stern warning we all must heed: *"Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith."* **Q: Do you believe the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion? Will you take a firm stand against him? How will you do this?** Memorizing scripture on a regular basis I believe is one very effective tool in this battle. As is reading and studying the Bible each and every day. I actually was sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office recently and I picked up a Christian magazine that had an article on how to fight temptation. This article basically said to "know thyself" - know what and where your weaknesses / temptations are. Then, after taking this inventory, memorize a scripture verse or two that you can easily bring to mind when you find yourself in one of those times of weakness / temptation. And to cling to that scripture verse for all its worth. I haven't personally tried this yet, but I think I will. I do think that we can cling to scripture like a life preserver in our moments of weakness / temptation. Let us not ever forget that on this side of heaven the devil is out there prowling...

11/27 - Today we start the book of Second Peter! This is another great letter from Peter to the early Christian church written in approximately 65 to 68 A.D., just before Peter was martyred during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero. 1 Peter was more of a letter of encouragement to early Christians who were facing suffering, whereas 2 Peter is written to dispel false teachings within early Christianity.

~ **Second Peter** ~

Author: Peter the apostle

Place: Uncertain, perhaps Rome

Date: A.D. 67

Content: This letter was written by Peter shortly before his death and deals with the problems that the church would face after his departure. He encourages the believers to continue in their spiritual growth, realizing the truth of the Christian gospel. It does not consist of fable but fact. He warns them of false teachers who would destroy the truth by exalting their own ideas over those of the church. Finally, he points out that Christ will return some day to destroy the old order of this world; as a result, we ought not to become too attached to it.

Theme: Second Peter is a call to steadfastness in the midst of numerous pressures to drift from the truth. The world is seeking to undo the work of God, but we must resist all such pressure by living godly lives, believing the truth, enduring persecution, trusting God, and looking for Christ's return. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 33*)

11/27 - 2 Peter 1 verse 3 brings up a couple of good questions we should ask ourselves - *"As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life."* **Q: Do you want to know Jesus better? How will you do this? (hint - reading the Bible daily is one great way...) How else? Do you want to live a godly life? What does a godly life look like? Do you believe Jesus' divine power gives you everything you need to live a godly life?**

11/28 - Second Peter chapter 2 is a strong one that looks at the danger of false teachers - both in the Old Testament times through false prophets and also in the early church during the 1st century. I have to confess that as I read this chapter I think of some current books and movies and teachers in our modern world that I am afraid apply to the warnings of this chapter. **Q: Do you believe that there are false teachers also in our world today? Teachers that distort the Gospel message? Teachers that steer people away from Truth and into Darkness? Teachers that are in it for the money?**

11/28 - Verses 2 & 3 warn us that: *"Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of them, Christ and his true way will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money."* Commentaries suggest that at the time Peter wrote this letter the shameful immorality was primarily sexual sin. The false teachers were allowing / encouraging people to basically do what they want sexually. They taught that there is no theological or spiritual or personal damage that will come with sexual do-whatever-you-wantness... (okay, that's not in the Bible - I made that up). **Q: Do we see this type of teaching today? Is this type of teaching true? Is it false? Is it shameful? Do you believe that sex can be damaging to you outside of the proper context of marriage? Verse 19 warns again: "They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves to sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you." What controls you? Is it purely love for God and his ways, which is great. Or is it something else...? Something that is dangerous and leads down a slippery slope... ? Will you instead pursue God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the True Freedom that only They can give you?** Please please be watchful of wolves in sheep's clothing. The Enemy comes in sheep's clothing to lie, steal, and kill. The lies may be attractive on the surface, but the core of the lie is deadly to you. Please cling to Jesus and God's Word, the Holy Bible, above all else.

11/29 - Today we finish the letter of Second Peter! Again, I have been so blessed reading through this letter this year. It's always a good thing to read a letter from a guy that Jesus said this about in Matthew 16:18 - *"And I tell you that you are Peter [which means rock], and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [or hell] will not overcome it."* **Q: Do you believe that the gates of hell will not overcome the church of Jesus Christ?** (church - that's us. You and me and him and her. The body of Christ. Not the buildings...)

11/29 - Verse 3 is a reminder to us all: *"First, I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire."* Keep in mind that we live in the last days - everything post-Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven is last days. So, in the time of Peter and the early church there were scoffers who laughed at the truth and did every evil thing they desire. **Q: Is this still happening today?**

11/29 - Verse 9 is helpful in knowing why Jesus has not yet returned: *"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent."* He is giving more time for everyone to repent! **Q: Will we repent?**

11/29 - Verses 15 & 16 are very interesting. They are basically Peter giving praise to Paul's writing: *"This is just as our*

beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him-- Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of Scripture." **Q: Have you ever found Paul's writing hard to understand?** I know many of my friend's have. And I have too on occasion. But, there is so much going on in Paul's letters that need to be looked at contextually and in depth. Overall, Paul's letters have been such a blessing to me personally, and I look forward to reading them and studying them again next year with you! :)

11/30 - We start First John today! First John was written by one of Jesus' 12 disciples, John son of Zebedee - who also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. First John was written between 85 and 95 A.D. when John was in Ephesus (in modern day Turkey) late in his life. The purpose of this letter was in large part to dispel Gnosticism, which was a twisting of Christianity - it basically meant salvation through knowledge (gnosis is Greek for knowledge).

~ **First John** ~

Author: John the apostle

Place: Uncertain, probably Ephesus

Date: A.D. 85-95

Content: This very personal letter was written by the apostle John in his old age to believers who were very dear to him. He addresses them as his little children and gives them practical instructions for Christian living. He begins by stressing Jesus' incarnation and builds his commands upon the truth that those who know Jesus know the Father as well. Those who do not know Jesus do not know the Father, nor do they know the love of the Father. Christians, however, have experienced the love of God in their lives, for God is love, and have no need to fear either in this life or in the life to come. Theme: John stresses the basic truths of the Christian faith in this letter in order to comfort and encourage his children in the faith. The themes of love, forgiveness, fellowship, victory over sin, assurance, purity, and eternal life are woven together in a marvelous document that shines with the light of God in the darkness of the world. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 33*)

11/30 - First John starts out strong right out of the gates in verse 1 and is very similar to the beginning of the Gospel of John: *"The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life."* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus Christ has existed from the very beginning of time with God the Father? Do you believe that Jesus is the Word of life?**

11/30 - And verse 5 is a message to us from Jesus via John: *"This is the message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all."* I love this. A month or so ago in this blog I reflected on God being a God of no shadows. All light. I love that thought. **Q: Do you believe God is light? And that there is no darkness, no shadows, in Him at all?**

11/30 - And in verses 8 & 9 we read: *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* **Q: Do you claim to be without sin? Do you confess your sins regularly and ask for forgiveness from God? Do you believe that God is faithful and just and will forgive you? And not just forgive you but purify you from your confessed sins? And heal you from your confessed sins?** Let us not deceive ourselves any longer. Let us allow the Truth to fully live in our hearts. Let us confess our sins, be forgiven, and be purified from all unrighteousness. Are you with me on this?

PSALMS

11/1 - Psalm 104 is a beautiful hymn to the Creator! I like all of the verses - verse 19 stands out to me because I can find some great images related to this verse on the web! :) *"You made the moon to mark the seasons and the sun that knows when to set."* **Q: How has God's creation ever spoken to you or evangelized you? How do you connect with God in his creation?**

11/2 - Today we finish up Psalm 104, which we started yesterday. I mentioned in yesterday's post, that this is a great Psalm of praising God's creation. And indeed it is. What I didn't realize yesterday, but I picked up today, is that this Psalm overall goes through Genesis 1 and the story of creation. Not quite in the same order of creation, or the same details. But, essentially this Psalm is a retelling of Genesis 1. Very powerful... I love Psalm 104 verse 33 today - *"I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath!"* I so pray that this verse will be true for both you and me. I pray we will sing to God as long as we live. I pray we will praise God to our very last breath. And in particular at our very last breath I pray we are praising God! **Q: How are you singing to God these days?**

11/3 - Psalm 105 verse 4 stood out to me today - *"Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching."* I like that - search! If you search for God, he will indeed be found. **Q: Have you ever searched for God? And for his strength? Are you maybe searching now? Do you believe he will be found? Will you keep on searching?**

11/4 - Psalm 105's verses today give us a good Cliff Notes version of the end of the book of Genesis and beginning of the book of Exodus!

11/5 - Psalm 105 wraps up the book of Exodus Cliff Notes version today, with a great closing verse 45 - *"All this happened so they would follow his principles and obey his laws. Praise the LORD!"* Indeed, praise the Lord! **Q: How are you praising the Lord these days?**

11/6 - Psalm 106 is a repentive Psalm, likely written by a Levitical priest after returning to Jerusalem after its destruction. Verse 2 stood out to me today - *"Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him half enough?"* **Can you list all of the glorious miracles of God? Can anyone? Are you praising God today? Every day?**

11/6 - Verse 3 is powerful- *"Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right."* I think this is such an important thing to know - we will be happy when we deal justly with others and when we do what is right. This is happiness. Not money or fame or power or luxuries. Dealing justly with others and doing what is right is happiness. **Q: So, Biblically, are you happy?**

11/7 - Today in Psalm 106:19-21 we read: *"At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt."* This of course sounds very familiar to Romans chapter 1 verses 22 and 23: *"Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."* **Q: Was this wise that the Israelites exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull? Why did they do this? What should have been their Glory? What is your Glory today? Do you, at times, exchange your true Glory for something else? Is this wise? Are you forgetting the God who saved you? The God who has done great things for you? Please don't ever exchange the true Glory for a false idol!**

11/7 - Verse 13 in this Psalm also stands out: *"Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done! They wouldn't wait for his counsel!"* **Q: Is this true of us? Do we forget or take for granted all of the blessings God has poured out into our lives? In doing so, do we decide to take matters into our own hands - not waiting on God's counsel for our direction? Will we remember? Will we wait? Patiently...?**

11/8 - Psalm 106 verse 39 stood out to me today, speaking about the Israelites: *"They defiled themselves by their evil deeds, and their love of idols was adultery in the LORD's sight."* I think this Psalm verse stands the test of time with our modern world today. **Q: Do you believe that we still defile ourselves with our evil deeds today? Do you believe that our love of idols is adultery in God's sight? How can we stop defiling ourselves with evil deeds and stop loving idols in our modern world today? Who can save us from ourselves?**

11/9 - Psalm 107 repeats a verse four times - starting with verse 6 here - *"LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress.*" (then see verse 13, verse 19, and verse 28 - same verse) This is a great reminder to pray - and yes, it's great to pray during times of distress of course. But, how about praying during times of happiness & joy? Or even times of just regular blahs? I recently read much of the book "The Life You've Always Wanted" by John Ortberg (great book!), and it has a great chapter on prayer. It is so true that one of the best ways to truly know and love God is through prayer. Simple prayer. 5 minutes a day. **Q: Do you pray to God 5 minutes a day? When the storms of life come, do you cry out for help to Jesus? Do you know that he will always be there for you in the midst of the storm?**

11/10 - I love Psalm 108 verse 1 today: *"My heart is confident in you, O God; no wonder I can sing your praises! Wake up, my soul!"* **Q: Is your heart confident in God? Do you sing God's praises? Is your soul awake? Or does your soul need a wake up call? Where do you suppose you can find that wake up call for your soul? The Bible? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? God? Will you answer the call today? Will your soul wake up?**

11/11 - Today in Psalm 109 verse 4 in the NIV we read these words of David – *“I am a man of prayer.”* Wow. I like that. And I’m not sure I can honestly say that about myself right now. Sure, I will roll out of bed and offer up some prayers. Yeah, I’ll try to say a prayer before meals. And yes, I’ll pray briefly before going to sleep. Oh yeah, maybe in church once a week too I’ll offer up some prayers. But, for me to say “I am a person of prayer” would probably not be truthful. Ouch. Don’t worry – I’m not beating myself up too badly over it. But - if I really want to realize that God is holy and a Rock and if I really want to love God and other people, then I have a hunch that being a person of prayer is a critical part of the equation. I don’t think that prayer is so much talking to God as it is really slowing down and listening to God. Sure, it’s a conversation, but I think in our fast pace world today we would do well to really slow down in prayer and listen to God. Listen for that still small voice within our hearts leading us to God’s kingdom and glory and peace. It’s there. I think it takes prayer to really hear it oftentimes. **Q: How about you? Are you a person of prayer? Do you want to be a person of prayer? When you pray, do you talk more or listen more to God? Do you want to live your life as a person of prayer?**

11/13 - Psalm 111 is a wonderful Psalm of praise! I love the way it ends in verse 10: *“Reverence for the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom. The rewards of wisdom come to all who obey him. Praise his name forever!”* **Q: Do you believe that reverence for God is the foundation of true wisdom? Do you believe that there are rewards of wisdom if you obey God? Will you praise his name forever?**

11/14 - Psalm 112 is a great look at a godly person's life. Today in verse 1 we read: *“Blessed is the person who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.”* **Q: Is fear of the Lord healthy? Why or why not? Is fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? Are you blessed if you fear the Lord? Do you find great delight in God’s commands? What are God’s commands?** And verse 9 is a great reminder - *“They give generously to those in need.”* **Are you doing something in your life to serve the poorest of the poor?** There are 1.2 billion people living in our world today on less than \$1 per day. **Is there something you can do to give generously to those in need?**

11/15 - Psalm 113 & 114 today are very interesting and important Psalms! These are 2 of 6 Psalms, 113 to 118, that form the “Egyptian Hallel.” These Psalms were used in Jewish liturgy at the great religious festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, Dedication, Weeks, New Moon. At Passover Psalm 113 & 114 were sung before the meal and Psalms 115 - 118 were sung after the meal. **Q: As you read these two Psalms today, do you sense joy in the Lord's work? Justice? Glory? Power? Does reading these two Psalms make you want to celebrate and give thanks for the Lord and all he has done throughout history and in your life?**

11/16 - Today in Psalm 115 verse 1 we will read – *“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory.”* (Chris Tomlin fans out there will recognize this as one of his many awesome worship tunes. . .) I don’t know how this verse strikes you, but it strikes me hard. Which is good. I think sometimes I do things for my own glory. And this verse, and really the entire Bible, is clear that the glory is God’s and not ours. Yeah, sure, we will live our lives full of “glorious” moments when we are loving God and loving people. But, we should not be living our lives to build up our own fame or our own glory. As Rick Warren states so well in the 1st sentence of the 1st chapter of his book “Purpose Driven Life”- “It is not about you.” And this is true. It is about God. And this is good news! Really. I have tried to live my life in the past where it was all about me. And this was a miserable way to live life. I pray that you see the incredible wisdom in this verse - *“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory.”* **Q: How are you living your life? Are you living your life to advance the fame and glory of God? Are you doing this by loving God and loving other people with all that you are? Or, are you by chance living your life to advance the fame and glory of yourself? And if so. . . how’s this going for you?**

11/17 - Psalm 116 verses 1 & 2 are amazing- *“I love the LORD because he hears and answers my prayers. Because he bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I have breath!”* **Q: How is your prayer life these days? Do you believe God bends down and listens to your prayers? And answers them? Will you pray as long as you have breath?**

11/18 - Psalm 117 is the shortest of all the Psalms - and the shortest chapter in the entire Bible. This Psalm is said to basically be one long Alleluia. :) Actually verse 1 has a very important message - *“Praise the LORD, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth.”* This demonstrates that God was very interested in the salvation of the Gentiles and all the nations in the Old Testament. And not just in the New Testament as we get to the book of Acts. This was part of the plan all along...

11/19 - I came across a wonderful speculation on Psalm 118! Commentaries suggested that Jesus and the disciples sang this psalm/hymn at the end of the Last Supper. Matthew chapter 26 verse 30 tells us - *"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."* This adds a bit of a new dimension to this Psalm! The reason for this speculation is because this is the final Psalm in the Egyptian Hallel of Psalms 113 through 118. These Psalms were used in Jewish liturgy at the great religious festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, Dedication, Weeks, New Moon. At Passover Psalm 113 & 114 were sung before the meal and Psalms 115 - 118 were sung after the meal. Perhaps, even after the Last Supper by Jesus and the disciples? Verse 8 in this Psalm stands out to me big time: *"It is better to trust the LORD than to put confidence in people."* Kind of strong words I know... but what do you think? Might people, on occasion, let you down? Obviously, we know the answer to this one. People will let us down. Even our closest friends and family at some point will let us down. However - I don't think this means we give up on investing and loving friends and family! It just means we should not be surprised when someone let's us down. That's human nature. None of us is perfect this side of heaven - you will obviously let people down too. Realizing this, I think all of us should be prepared to forgive others and to ask for forgiveness of others. **Q: However, what do you think on this question: Will God ever let you down? Will Jesus ever let you down?** Please know He won't! In fact, I believe that He's holding you up right this very moment...

11/20 - Psalm 118 is the last half of the psalm possibly sung by Jesus and the disciples after the Last Supper - see yesterday's posting below for details. What an amazing Psalm... Verse 22 was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17 and he used this verse to refer to himself - *"The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone."* **Q: Do you believe this verse applies to Jesus? Is Jesus the cornerstone in your life?**

11/21 - Today we begin Psalm 119, the longest Psalm and chapter in the Bible! This Psalm is a beautiful meditation on God's Word and how it helps us stay pure and grow in faith. Almost every verse in this Psalm mentions God's Word. I pray that this Psalm is encouraging to you as you read through the One Year Bible! Today in Psalm 119 verse 11 we read: *"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."* **Q: Have you hidden God's word in your heart? So that you might not sin against God? Do you realize that all sin is indeed a sin against God? Are you memorizing Scripture on a regular basis? And, more importantly, reflecting on Scripture?** Check out this link for some great free online resources to help you memorize Scripture - <http://www.memoryverses.org/>

11/22 - Wow. Psalm 119 verse 29 is powerful - *"Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your law."* Do you ever lie to yourself? If you answered no, are you lying to yourself now? :) I think that lying to ourselves is part of our fallen human condition. I think we're probably pretty good at it. And I think that maybe the cure for this is even found in this same verse - the prayer of *"give me the privilege of knowing your law."* It is a privilege to know God's Word. It is a free privilege, but a privilege that I think we can often take for granted or simply ignore. Through our study of God's Word let us pray that we allow God to show us any area of our life where we might be lying to ourselves. And let us allow God to redeem that area and give us the clarity of Truth. **Q: Like this Psalmist, will you pray to God and ask Him to keep you from lying to yourself? Will you pray this prayer often?**

11/23 - Today in Psalm 119 verses 47 & 48 we read – *"I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands which I love, and I meditate on your decrees."* **Q: Do you believe it is possible to delight in God's commands? Why might this be a good thing? Do you believe it is possible to actually love God's commands? What are God's commands? Where can we find them? (okay, I'll give you a hint – the answer is all over Psalm 119 :) - God's Word, the Bible is where we can find God's commands) Do you meditate upon God's decrees as found in the Bible? Do you love the Bible? This seems like a strange question to ask in some regards. . . but, maybe ask yourself this – do you love books in general? I think many of us would say we love books. (Maybe using the term loosely. . .) So, if we were to consider just one book that it would really make sense to invest our time in; to meditate upon; to read for all of our lives; to love – what would that book be? Why would it be that book? Are you a bookworm when it comes to the Bible?**

11/23 - Today in Psalm 119 verse 37 we read: *"Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word."* **Q: Are there currently things in your life that you are spending time on – focusing your eyes on – that are worthless? What are these things? Do you want to turn your eyes away from these things? Will you? Do you believe that your life can be preserved by the Word of God – the Bible? How will you continue to preserve your life according to God's Word on a daily basis next year? Do you consider the Bible literally to be a "life preserver" for you in the midst of the raging rivers of life? Will you hold onto this life preserver each and every day?**

11/24 - Wow. I love Psalm 119 verse 54 today - *"Your principles have been the music of my life throughout the years of my pilgrimage."* What a beautiful metaphor - God's principles being the music of our lives through all our years as we are on our pilgrimage. Great stuff! How might God's principles actually become the music of your life? Do you think you'd need to be reading God's Word frequently to tune into his frequency? (did you catch that - frequently & frequency? :) I commend you for reading the Bible each day this year as we go through the One Year Bible. I pray you'll continue to read the Bible daily in all of your years to come. I pray God's principles are and will be the music of your life. Verse 59 today is a great verse for each of us to consider - *"I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your statutes."* **Q: Have you ever reached a mid-life or maybe even a quarter-life crisis where you pondered the direction of your life? Do you like the direction your life is heading now? Do you want to change that direction? Will you turn to follow God's way? God's Truth? God's life for you? Do you believe that God's plans for you are so much bigger than any plans of your own that you could dream up on your own?**

11/25 - Psalm 119 verse 71 has an interesting take on suffering - *"The suffering you sent was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your principles."* **Q: Do you believe suffering can be good for you? Can it teach you to pay attention to God?**

11/26 - I am continuing to love our readings of Psalm 119! This is an incredible Psalm... I somehow am re-reminded of how amazing this Psalm is every 6 months that we read it in the One Year Bible. I could write something on each verse. For example, I love the imagery in verse 81 today - *"I faint with longing for your salvation; but I have put my hope in your word."* I faint! I long! I hope! And Verse 83 - *"I am shriveled like a wineskin in the smoke, exhausted with waiting. But I cling to your principles and obey them."* I am shriveled! I am exhausted! I wait! I cling! I obey! I love this Psalm... Verse 95 actually backs up the reflection above on 1 Peter 5:8 quite nicely - *"Though the wicked hide along the way to kill me, I will quietly keep my mind on your decrees."* **Q: How can you quietly keep your mind on God's decrees? Will you make this a habit to quietly keep your mind on God's decrees? Would this be a good habit?**

11/27 - Psalm 119 verse 105 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible! *"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path."* **Q: Do you believe God's Word, the Bible, is a lamp for your feet? A light for your path? To help put this in perspective - without God's Word, the Bible, is it possible that we would have no lamp for our feet? No light for our paths? That we'd essentially be groping in the darkness without God's Word, the Bible?** Verse 111 is incredible: *"Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight."* **What is your treasure? Where is your treasure? Is God's Word, the Bible, truly your heart's delight?**

11/28 - Psalm 119 verse 114 is beautiful a beautiful reflection on our relationship with God and his Word, the Bible - *"You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my only source of hope."* This ties in so well with the reflections on false teachers above. The Bible is clearly a refuge and shield from false teaching! **Q: Is God's Word your only source of hope?** And remember, Jesus is the very Word made flesh, so Jesus would clearly be your only source of hope too, if the Word truly is. Let us take refuge in God's Word each day of our lives!

11/28 - Verse 127 today is powerful - *"Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold."* I think this is something each of us needs to ask ourselves. **Q: Do we love God's commands - his Word - the Bible - more than we love any and all material possessions? Do we value the Bible above all the money this world could ever offer us?** This is an important decision to make... I pray we realize the eternal worth of God's commands compared to the passing and transitory nature of "even the finest gold." Let us always remember the great peril of ignoring God's Word and instead chasing after the world's "fool's gold..."

11/29 - Psalm 119 is continuing with its amazing verses about God's holy Word, the Bible, and how it can transform our lives. Verse 138 is just one more small example from this incredible Psalm - *"Your decrees are perfect; they are entirely worthy of our trust."* **Q: Do you believe that God's Word, the Bible, is perfect? Is it entirely worthy of our trust? Would you consider the Bible to be a perfect book of counsel for your life?**

11/29 - I love verse 130, which I used to have at the top of this blog in the NIV translation: *"The unfolding of your words gives light..."* **Q: Do you believe this is true? Does reading God's Word, the Bible, bring light into your life? If you did not read God's Word would you be in darkness?**

11/30 - We finish Psalm 119 today... :(I am sad. I loved reading through this Psalm again! For some reason it meant so much to me these past few days. I pray this Psalm has been good for you as well this go round. I think the last 3 verses of this Psalm are worth us camping out on here for a moment. In verses 174, 175 & 176 the author of Psalm 119 closes out the Psalm with what I think is a prayer and a confession all in one - *"O LORD, I have longed for your salvation, and your law is my delight. Let me live so I can praise you, and may your laws sustain me. I have wandered away like a lost sheep; come and find me, for I have not forgotten your commands."* **Q: Wow... not a bad prayer and confession, eh? Is God's Word your delight? Do you wish to live so you can praise God? Does His Word sustain you?**

PROVERBS

11/1 - Proverbs 26:24-26 is another good reminder to look beyond simply the "kind words" that we may hear... get to know the underlying motives... *"People with hate in their hearts may sound pleasant enough, but don't believe them. Though they pretend to be kind, their hearts are full of all kinds of evil. While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, it will finally come to light for all to see."* Someone could end up being two-faced if we're not careful. Let us also make sure that we ourselves are never two-faced toward others! **Q: How do you deal with people who are two-faced? Have you yourself ever struggled with being two-faced? How do you overcome this?**

11/2 - Proverbs 26, verse 27 today is so true: *"If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will roll back and crush you."* This is a great reminder to "do unto others as you'd have done unto you" - and if you do unto others bad stuff, you'll often fall into your own trap! **Q: How have you learned the truth of this Proverb?**

11/3 - Proverbs 26:28 teaches us: *"A lying tongue hates its victims, and flattering words cause ruin."* This is a great reminder not to lie nor to flatter! **Q: Why do you think flattering words cause ruin? Have you been flattered recently? Have you felt odd when being flattered? Do you flatter others? Should you?**

11/4 - Proverbs verse 1 today is fantastic: *"Don't brag about tomorrow, since you don't know what the day will bring."* Indeed, don't brag about tomorrow - each day is such a blessing to be thankful for. Live for today. With Jesus. And don't brag about tomorrow! **Q: Have you ever struggled with bragging? How do you overcome it?**

11/4 - Today in Proverbs 27:2 we read: *"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips."* **Q: How often do we heap praise on ourselves? Maybe even in our own minds, if not verbally? Where does our strength and wisdom and achievements truly come from? Is the Lord your strength? If we are praised by others, do we accept the praise into our own hearts? Or, do we share with the person giving the praise, where the praise truly should be directed?** Psalm 115 verse 1 wisely reminds us - *"Not to us O Lord, Not to us - but to your name be the Glory."* Amen!

11/5 - Proverbs 27:3 teaches us today: *"A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the resentment caused by a fool is even heavier."* This is a great reminder that carrying resentment in our hearts is a heavy burden we don't need to bear! **Q: Are there any burdens in your heart today that you will let Jesus take from you? Will you reach out to Jesus and let Him heal your burden?**

11/6 - Proverbs 27 verse 6 is an interesting one. And indeed true. *"Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy."* **Q: Why should we watch out for many kisses from an enemy? Let us thank God for a friend who will speak truth into our life! Even if it hurts at first to hear it. Think about this - is someone being a better friend to you if they tell you a truth about your life that may wound you - or if they say nothing at all and let you keep on keepin' on with something wrong you may be doing?** Let us embrace and welcome truthful wounds from our friends! We need this type of iron sharpening iron. Sometimes we need to be lovingly and truthfully wounded by our friends to grow closer to God.

11/7 - Today in Proverbs 27 verse 8 we read: *"A person who strays from home is like a bird that strays from its nest."* **Q: Where is our spiritual home? Who is our spiritual home? Have we strayed from our spiritual nest?** As I read this I of course think about our relationship with Jesus first - and then manifestation of his body in the local church as being our spiritual home. And I realize that if I do not attend church on a weekly basis, I am like a bird straying from its nest. Our prime home is Jesus - we do not want to stray from our relationship with Him, ever. It's far too risky to do so, for obvious reasons. But I think we can sometimes feel like we don't need Jesus' body, his church. We feel like we can do life fine without church. I submit to you that this is far too risky of a way to live life. I am just afraid that if we stray away

from the nest of our local church, then we are at risk of potentially straying away from Jesus. We need the church. We need Jesus. **Are you going to church each week these days? Do you think you should?** If there is one thing I can encourage you on, almost more than anything, is to please find a local church where Jesus is clearly the cornerstone and the Bible is clearly taught. And then please do not stray away from that nest. . . I cannot encourage you enough on this point. I love the church so very much. I pray that you do as well. (It brings tears to my eyes to even try to think of my life without the church – I cannot imagine it. I pray this is the case for you as well . . .)

11/8 - Proverbs 27:10 is interesting and not something I would think of on my own: *"Never abandon a friend--either yours or your father's. Then in your time of need, you won't have to ask your relatives for assistance. It is better to go to a neighbor than to a relative who lives far away."* I would of course think it's better to ask a distant relative for help than a friend. But, this Proverb tells us differently... Why do you suppose this is? I guess as I think about it, it is probably because when our "time of need" comes we will first turn to our neighbors in our local community - to call the fire department or call the police or call the paramedics or whatever the case may be. We'll need our neighbors during that time of need initially. And then, longer term, yes we'll need our relatives who live far away. But that unforeseen time of immediate need is just one more reason to live in loving community with our neighbors! And let us always be ready to serve our neighbors when they need us. **Do you really know your neighbors? Are you a good neighbor?**

11/9 - It is interesting to read Proverbs 27:11 as if God was writing this to each of us: *"My child, how happy I will be if you turn out to be wise! Then I will be able to answer my critics."* **Q: Are we spending our lives striving to be wise in God's eyes or the world's eyes? Do you think that God will be happy if you are wise? Do you want godly wisdom? Where will you find it? Below is an image of a young Jesus growing in wisdom with Scripture - think this made God happy?**

11/10 - Proverbs 27:12 reminds us that it's good to be a defensive driver on the roads! :) *"A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences."* Honestly, I do think that we do well when we are "defensive" drivers or defensive walkers or defensive workers or this list could go on. I am afraid that all too often we can drive or walk or work like we are #1 and there is no one else in this world... well, guess what? The person you crash into with your car, or get in a fight with when you walk, or get in an argument with when you work is thinking the exact same thing - except they are thinking that they are #1! This is where Jesus wisely encouraged us to consider others before ourselves. Imagine if our world operated this way - in Jesus' way of humility and service to others - instead of everyone thinking they are #1? **Q: How would our world be different if this was the case? Are you helping our world be different? Are you humbling yourself to be a #2 or #3 or #4 instead of being #1 all the time? Think this is prudent? A good way to foresee the dangers ahead? And a good way to take precautions? Or are you going on blinding as a #1 and suffering the consequences?** (I have to admit - this kiddo below does appear to be #1 in his household at this very moment... and suffering any consequences is probably not going to happen in this case! :)

11/11 - Proverbs 27:13 today teaches us: *"Get security from someone who guarantees a stranger's debt. Get a deposit if he does it for foreigners."* This is a great simple but important reminder to get collateral or security on debts! Particularly if the guarantee is for someone you don't know - though I'd recommend a guarantee on family loans too... :) Otherwise you may see your money "fly away" from you... **Q: How are you doing with debt in your life today?**

11/12 - Proverbs 27:14 today makes me laugh: *"If you shout a pleasant greeting to your neighbor too early in the morning, it will be counted as a curse!"* This reminds me of my visit to the coffee shop in the morning before I've had a chance to drink my coffee... those people behind the counter are already wired on their espresso shots and are just way too pleasant first thing in the morning! :) **Q: Any other coffee addicts out there...?** Coffee may be an idol for me that I need to not worship anymore... really...

11/13 - Proverbs chapter 27 verse 16 is a great teaching that it is tough to try to stop the wind or hold something with greased hands... How's that for avoiding the real point of this Proverb? :) I'm newly married, so I'll punt to you veteran married folks to give commentary from here about that dripping analogy in verse 15! :)

11/14 - Today in Proverbs 27:17 we read: *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* This is such a powerful proverb to memorize, meditate upon, and put into practice in our lives! **Q: Do you see the value in this proverb? Are you "iron" in someone else's life? Is someone "iron" in your life? Are you being sharpened? Why would you want to be sharpened? Is there some dullness spiritually in your life today? How will you seek to**

sharpen that dullness? Will you seek to sharpen that dullness through involvement in a local church? Do you think that a church community can sharpen you? Do you think involvement in a weekly small group can sharpen you?

11/15 - This week in Proverbs 27 verse 19 we read: *"As water reflects a face, so a person's heart reflects the person."* **Q: How is your heart these days? Take a minute and really reflect on this question. How is your heart? Your heart toward others? Toward your family? Toward God? Toward Jesus? Is your heart full of love? Overflowing with love? (if maybe not, please read [First Corinthians chapter 13](#) for a good refresher on love) What is your heart reflecting to others you come in contact with these days? Are you reflecting love to others? Are you reflecting Jesus?**

11/16 - Proverbs 27 verse 21 I think carries forward our theme from the opening of Psalm 115 again very succinctly - *"Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised."* **Q: When you are praised, where should the glory go?**

11/17 - Proverbs 27:23-27 are pretty much just agricultural advice. :) Agriculture was obviously a huge part of the B.C. economy - and still is today. So, a few proverbs verses on agriculture certainly makes sense!

11/18 - Proverbs 28 verse 1 today teaches us: *"The wicked run away when no one is chasing them, but the godly are as bold as lions."* **Q: This can only cause us to ask ourselves - are we running with no one chasing us? Or are we bold like lions?**

11/19 - Proverbs 28 verse 2 today is a great reminder for us to pray for our leaders in power nationally, locally, and worldwide. *"When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily. But with wise and knowledgeable leaders, there is stability."* **Q: How often do you pray for your leaders? Will you cover them with prayer today?**

11/20 - Proverbs 28 verse 4 today teaches us: *"To reject the law is to praise the wicked; to obey the law is to fight them."* This is a great reminder that obeying God "heaps coals upon the head" of those who are not obeying God. Let us obey the Lord! Let us obey the lion of Judah!

11/21 - Proverbs 28 verse 6 teaches us today: *"It is better to be poor and honest than rich and crooked."* I have often paraphrased this proverb in this way - "It is better to be poor and happy than to be rich and miserable." Though, I think the Proverb reads better and has more truth in the way it is actually written in the Bible. "Honest" is better than "Happy"... Actually, the more I think about this, I think that honesty actually will lead to happiness. If you are honest with yourself and others, I do think you'll be happier obviously than if you are dishonest with yourself and others. To take this a step further, and to reflect on the "absolute holiness" verse in Ezekiel today, I might even paraphrase this Proverb to say "It is better to be poor and holy and than rich and un-holy." Not sure if this works? I do want to say that I don't think being rich means you'll be crooked or miserable or un-holy. But, I think there is so much truth to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 16:26 - *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* We need to be careful around too much money or too much power or of course too much (any?) pride. Too much can distract us from God... In fact, whether we're rich or poor, I think if we don't always keep in mind that absolutely everything we have comes from and belongs to God then we can indeed become "blinded" by money in one way or another... **Q: How does this Proverb stand out to you?**

11/22 - Proverb 28:9 makes me simply say yikes... *"The prayers of a person who ignores the law are despised."* This proverb is quite the opposite from yesterday's readings in James telling us the prayers of a righteous person are powerful in James 5:16b: *"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results."* **Q: Think there is a correlation between what these two verses teach?** Lord, please let our earnest prayers be heard!

11/23 - Proverb 28:11 today teaches us: *"Rich people may think they are wise, but a poor person with discernment can see right through them."* This is a great reminder to not think of ourselves as being wise in our own eyes... others will see through our supposed "wisdom"!

11/24 - Today in Proverbs 28 verse 13 we read: *"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."* **Q: Are there sins you are concealing? Maybe even from your own consciousness? Do you believe concealed sin will affect your prosperity? (Not just financial prosperity, but your spiritual,**

physical, & mental prosperity?) **Can you find a trusted friend or pastor to confess your sins to? Do you believe that in doing so you will find mercy? Will you confess and renounce your sins? Will you find mercy?**

11/25 - Proverbs 28 verse 14 today teaches us: *"Blessed are those who fear to do wrong, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble."* **Q: I think this should simply should make us ask - Do I fear to do wrong? What does it mean to fear to do wrong? How does one live one's life if you fear to do wrong?**

11/26 - Proverbs 28:15-16 today teach us: *"A wicked ruler is as dangerous to the poor as a roaring lion or an attacking bear. A ruler with no understanding will oppress his people, but one who hates corruption will have a long life."* These verses are a reminder to me to pray for our leaders in government. Their actions matter. In very significant ways. **Q: Do you think our prayers for our leaders matter? In very significant ways?**

11/27 - Proverbs 28:17 today tells us - *"A murderer's tormented conscience will drive him into the grave. Don't protect him!"* There is a very real example of this Proverb with Cain in Genesis chapter 4, where Cain became restless for the remainder of his days after murdering his brother Abel.... In Genesis 4:14 Cain himself tells us - *"I will be a restless wanderer on the earth."* This is one of the saddest moments in the Bible for me.

11/28 - Proverbs 28 verse 19 tells us: *"Hard workers have plenty of food; playing around brings poverty."* This is a great reminder to not "chase after fantasies" or "chase the wind", but to simply work hard for our employers and earn an honest wage each day! Verse 20 reminds us to be trustworthy in our work: *"The trustworthy will get a rich reward. But the person who wants to get rich quick will only get into trouble."* **Q: How is your work ethic these days? Are you working hard for your employer? Are you trustworthy on the job? Do you think that God pays attention to these things in your life?** Let us not be lazy on the job!

11/29 - Proverbs 28:21 tells us: *"Showing partiality is never good, yet some will do wrong for something as small as a piece of bread."* This is a great reminder to not sell-out or sin for anything - no matter how seemingly "small"! Oftentimes I do think it is the tiny things in life that really trip us up and lead us down the wrong path. **Is there any area of your life where you are selling-out or sinning? Even in what might seem to be a "small" area of your life...?** This Proverb reminds me of Jesus' words in the parable of the talents from Matthew chapter 25 verse 23: *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"* **Q: Do you want to hear these words from Jesus at the end of your life?** Let us be faithful then in the few things - the small things. For in the future we will inherit our Master's happiness in many things!

11/30 - Today in Proverbs 28 verse 23 we read: *"In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery."* How does this Proverb speak to you? I find it to be a great reminder to simply be sincere with people. Just be sincere. Be frank. Don't flatter. Don't lie. **Q: Do you appreciate sincerity in others? Do you like it when people flatter you rather than speak frankly to you? Do you ever flatter others? How often are you frank with others? Are you a sincere person? Do you want to be sincere? Was Jesus a sincere person?**

Group discussions:

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

Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.

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

- My favorite verses or passages:
- What I learned from the readings:

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

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

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