

**One Year Bible Blog – Monthly Notes - www.OneYearBibleBlog.com
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Notes & Group Questions for May 1 - 31 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

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

5/1 - Today we begin reading four chapters about Samson, the last of the judges. You'll notice that the author of Judges often compares the story of Samson's birth and life with the story of Israel. Samson was a Nazirite, which meant he could drink no alcohol, could not cut his hair, and could have no contact with the dead. I found it interesting that Samson's mother was commanded by the angel in Judges 13 today to not drink any alcohol during her pregnancy. Obviously this is important for health reasons, but also it seems it is important because Samson was a Nazirite - whose life began in his mother's womb. More info on Nazirite's is [at this link](#). Interesting story today about Samson & the lion! Pretty gross that he ate the honey made in the lion's carcass on the way to his wedding! :) You'll note in our readings of Samson that he is drawn to Philistine women, which was against God's law and the Philistines were Israel's enemies then. Hence, his parents did not approve of the marriage early in chapter 14. **Q: How did the readings about Samson stand out to you?**

5/2 - Judges 15 today is quite a chapter! Whew... Samson is a whirlwind in this chapter... I know I probably should not chuckle about this - but a donkey's jawbone?? Who would have ever thought this could be a lethal weapon. Well, now we all know it can be indeed. In Judges chapter 16 verse 3 we continue to see Samson's strength - *"But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the city gates with its two posts, and lifted them, bar and all, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron."* And then we get to the famous story of Samson & Delilah. In verse 21 the Philistines finally overpower Samson by cutting his hair - a symbol of Samson's relationship with God. **Q: What stood out to you in reading about the life of Samson and Samson & Delilah? Have you ever been in an unhealthy relationship that God brought you out of?**

5/3 - Judges chapter 17 & 18 are sad chapters to read! In these chapters we see how far a Levitical priest had wandered from his original call to serve God - by accepting money, idols, and position in Micah's house. And we see how far the tribe of Dan had wandered from God's plan for the tribes of Israel by killing the citizens of Laish - a city that did not fall under God's judgment due to serving idols or wickedness - and Laish was outside the geographical boundaries of the tribe of Dan. Unfortunately, we see Dan's tribe worshipping idols. Verse 6 in chapter 17 stood out to me - *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* This verse certainly seems to be building up to the kings of Israel that will soon be coming. But, this verse also indicates to me the importance for each of us to have a king - so that we don't just do whatever seems right in our own eyes. Fortunately, today, we have Jesus Christ as our king. He is the best king we could ever hope for. **Q: Do you consider Jesus to be your king? In what ways is Jesus King over your life?**

5/4 - Hmm... notice the similarities between Judges chapter 19 and Genesis chapter 19? In [Genesis chapter 19](#) two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening and they planned to spend the night in the town square. But Lot insisted they go with him and spend the night at his house. Then, in the middle of the night the men of Sodom came to Lot's house to have sex with the two angels. Lot offered his two virgin daughters instead... see the unfortunate similarities? Social protocol of the time - protecting a house guest at any cost - unfortunately carried more authority in Judges chapter 19 than God's law and moral convictions. Obviously this is an extreme case in Judges chapter 19.... **Q: yet, is it possible that in today's world social protocol of our time can sometimes carry more authority than moral convictions? How do we stand tall today and protect someone when this is the case? How have you stood up for moral convictions over social protocol today?**

5/5 - Today we finish the book of Judges! What a powerful and telling verse the book closes with in chapter 21 verse 25: *"In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* Unfortunately, so true then. And perhaps so true for us today if we don't have a king.

Fortunately, we do have the opportunity to have a king - through faith in Jesus. Otherwise, without Jesus as our king, we will surely do whatever seems right in our own eyes. I know I did for many years... sad years they were. **Q: How has been reading the book of Judges been for you this year? What new insights or revelations did you pick up while reading through Judges?**

5/5 - Today we are starting up – and tomorrow finishing - the wonderful book of Ruth and then moving into First Samuel. The book of Ruth is a wonderful look at faithful love in human relationships, and in a family in particular. I like how Zondervan describes this book – “The book of Ruth is a Hebrew short story, told with consummate skill. Among historical narratives in Scripture it is unexcelled in its compactness, vividness, warmth, beauty, and dramatic effectiveness – an exquisitely wrought jewel of Hebrew narrative art.” I hope you are ready for this jewel!

Ruth

Author: Unknown

Date: During the time of the Judges

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

Theme: The central point of this book is that even in times of crisis and despair, life may be lived according to the precepts of God and that God abundantly blesses those who do so live. The fundamental values of love, faith, trust, and goodness are greater than the hatred and violence of men, and continue from generation to generation as a light to guide those who look for the true meaning of life. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers “The One Year Bible Companion” pp. 4-5) More commentary on Ruth is at these 3 links –

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=888

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=952

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=1292

5/5 - Today in Ruth chapter 1 verses 16 & 17 we will read these beautiful words of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi, whose husband & two sons had died - *“Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”* How’s that for love & commitment! **Q: Can you imagine saying these words to someone in your life today?** I pray that each of us have this type of love & commitment for our families – or that we will have this in the future with our families. It seems like nowadays families are getting more and more distanced from one another – separated sometimes by geography and I think oftentimes by individualism or other selfish reasons. **Perhaps each of us can learn something from Ruth and her dedication to her mother-in-law Naomi about what family love & commitment could and should really look like?**

5/7 - Today we begin the book of First Samuel! This is an amazing book of the Bible. I cannot wait to read about Hannah, Samuel, Saul & David!

First Samuel

Author: Unknown

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: The books of First and Second Samuel comprise one book in the Hebrew Bible because they form one continuous history covering the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David. They were separated into two books for convenience for reading. First Samuel deals with the Philistine wars and Saul’s ultimate failure to deal with the enemy. The book opens with Israel’s being oppressed by the Philistines (a war-like neighboring nation) and the emergence of the two early leaders, Samuel and Saul. Samuel was the religious leader and Saul ultimately became the king. Saul’s early victories are described, followed by his moral decline and tragic end. Balancing the decline of Saul is the rise of the youthful David who will assume leadership after the death of Saul.

Theme: The basic idea that pervades this book is that God does not make his people immune to the changes of human life, but give them grace to see things through to a satisfactory conclusion. The rise

and fall of kings, times of peace and war – throughout it all God stays the same and controls human events in such a way that those who trust him will find comfort and the courage to endure. *(Above commentary is from “The One Year Bible Companion” p. 5)* **More commentary on First Samuel from Bible.org is [at this link.](#)**

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

5/7 - Today in First Samuel chapter 2 we read the incredible Prayer of Hannah! In verse 2 we read: *“There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.”* This prayer of praise from Hannah really stands out to me these days. Oftentimes I think I “forget” that there is no one holy like the Lord – and I start to seek from other sources what I should only be seeking from God. I have come to realize more than ever lately that if I am feeling a strong emotion or need, I need to really reflect on that emotion or need and ask myself if God can satisfy or quench or dispel that emotion or need. The answer is always an unfailing and beautiful YES. There is no other person, place or being that will always be there for us – that will always be our Rock – that is perfectly consistent – besides God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is holy and his holiness can take care of any emotion or need that comes up in our lives. We need to turn it over to him and trust in Him. **Q: How about you? Do you sometimes “forget” that God is holy? Do you sometimes seek from other sources what you should only be seeking from God? Do you believe that God can satisfy or quench or dispel any emotion or need that comes up in your life? Is God your Rock? Do you believe there is no one holy like the Lord?**

5/8 - First Samuel chapter 2 verse 25 stood out to me today when Eli says to his sons - *“If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede?”* This is an interesting thing to consider. When we sin, are we sinning against other people and/or against God? I think generally speaking the answer is both. I have heard a pastor teach that “nobody sins in a vacuum.” Not a literal vacuum of course :), but a “vacuum” meaning that your sin only affects you and you alone. This pastor went on to say that when we sin - even when we are alone - we end up affecting everyone else around us in our lives in some way. We may not consciously see how this happens, but our sin affects how we will treat others in the near future. So, it seems to me that when we sin we pretty much always sin against others, because we're in one sense letting down the community of people around us and we will behave differently to our community around us because of our sin. Now, in terms of sinning against God, I always think of Psalm 51 where David writes to God - “against you and you alone have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” I think this is true as well - any sin we commit is a sin against God. It is interesting that David uses the term “you alone” about his sin. But, obviously, David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba affected the community around him in a big way. So, all this to say - I believe that when we sin we are sinning against God and the community of people in our lives at the same time. Eli asks in this verse above, “who can intercede for our sins against God?” Well, at that time, that was a very good question. However, in our time Jesus can and does intercede for our sins against God - if we'll ask him. We simply need to confess our sins to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and repent - in faith that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We are so very fortunate that we have someone - Jesus - who can intercede for our sins... This is why Jesus is called Savior. Jesus Saves us from our sins. **Q: Has Jesus saved you from your sins? How is Jesus' mediating for your sins today? Do you confess your sins to Jesus? Do you repent?**

5/9 - Interesting chapters in First Samuel today! The idol Dagon was no match for the Ark of the Covenant! You'll notice in verse 4 that Dagon ends up in a worship position before the Ark: *“And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD.”* Dagon was the “god” of the Philistines, and was thought to have been some sort of man / fish combo. It's fascinating to see the Philistine's send back to Israel a “guilt offering” of

golden tumors and rats with the Ark. Not quite what was prescribed for guilt offerings in Leviticus... but, I guess you can give them an E for effort. :) Then we arrive at the people of Beth-shemesh who look in the ark and perish - and then the ark is sent off again to another town. We then arrive at some wonderful words from Samuel in chapter 7 verses 3 & 4: *"Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the LORD, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the LORD; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." So the Israelites destroyed their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the LORD."* And later in verse 10 we read - *"Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them."* **Q: What was your reaction to reading about the Ark of the Covenant in Philistine territory and its return to the Israelites? Has there ever been a time in your life when you worshiped an "idol" of sorts, like the Israelites worshipped foreign gods, and that you realized you must give up the idol and return to the Lord? What are some idols in our modern world that we might not realize are idols?**

5/10 - We have some great dramatic reading today in First Samuel! Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion today has some good food for thought to the question of Why did Israel want a king? - "1. Samuel's sons were not fit to lead Israel 2. The 12 tribes of Israel continually had problems working together because each tribe had its own leader and territory. It was hoped that a king would unite the tribes into one nation and one army. 3. The people wanted to be like the neighboring nations. This is exactly what God didn't want. Having a king would make it easy for them to forget that God was their real leader." In First Samuel Chapter 8 we hear Samuel passing on God's warning to how the king will treat the people... **Q: Why do you think Israel wanted a King? Do you want "kings" today as well? Who is your King? Is Jesus your King? What does his Lordship look like in your life?**

5/10 - Can you imagine hearing these words of Samuel if you were Saul in First Samuel 9:20 today: *"And I am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes."* All you are doing is looking for your dad's lost donkeys and all of the sudden you hear this from the seer! Whew... You know though - I will say this. Being in relationship with God is always an adventure. I think oftentimes we will start out on a journey to do one thing and God ends up taking us some place completely different. Saul is about to embark on an adventure. You and I have the opportunity to embark on an adventure with God each and every day. I know that there are many times that God sends me into places & situations I would have never thought imaginable. That's the adventure of faith. It truly is not boring! I honestly think that life apart from God is truly boring. The secular life is boring. The materialistic life is boring. **Q: If you are feeling bored these days, will you break free and wholeheartedly pursue an adventurous relationship with the Lord? How do you think the life of faith is either boring or adventurous?**

5/11 - Okay - I have a temporary new favorite verse in the Bible! Today in First Samuel chapter 10 verse 22 when they were about to name Saul king, but they couldn't find him: *"So they asked the LORD, "Where is he?" And the LORD replied, "He is hiding among the baggage."* That is awesome! I really appreciate the fact that Saul was hiding among the baggage. :) I think that's where I would be too. I hope I would be in any case. I think it's a bit scary when someone is too lustful for power. Better to have your future king hiding in the baggage... :) In First Samuel chapter 11 we see Saul really step into his role as king by defending the city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites attack. Verse 2 was sad to consider when the Ammonite king said this to the citizens of Jabesh-gilead - *"All right," Nahash said, "but only on one condition. I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you as a disgrace to all Israel!"* Gouging out the right eye would be done for humiliation purposes - but also to destroy the military ability of the archers. After this point, Saul gets word back in his hometown that Jabesh-gilead is under attack. I was impressed with Saul's graciousness in verses 12 & 13 of this chapter: *"Then the people exclaimed to Samuel, "Now where are those men who said Saul shouldn't rule over us? Bring them here, and we will kill them!" But Saul replied, "No one will be executed today, for today the LORD has rescued Israel!"* Impressive. You could see where after defeating the Ammonites, Israel's adrenaline might be running high to go after dissenters. Saul put a stop to it, which was impressive. **Q: What about us today? When we are riding high on a victory of some sort and the group around us says we should forge ahead on something that does not seem right, can we stand up and say "No" to the group as Saul did on this day?**

5/12 - I like First Samuel 12 verse 7 today when Samuel says this to the Israelites: *"Now stand here quietly before the LORD as I remind you of all the great things the LORD has done for you and your ancestors"* Just like the Israelites needed reminding all the great things God has done, we need reminding today as well. We are a forgetful people. I honestly believe reading God's Word, the Bible, each day is a great way to "remember" all that God has done for each of us and our spiritual ancestors. I know that I need this daily reminder... How about you? Verse 23 is intriguing when Samuel says - *"As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right."* It sounds like if Samuel stopped his prayers for the Israelites, he would be sinning. Interesting. What about us today? Does God call us at times to pray for others? And if we do not respond to this call and do not pray for others, are we sinning? Interesting food for thought. I guess it's just a safer bet to continue praying for others! :) In 1 Samuel 13 we see Saul's disobedience toward God, through his impatience. **Q: I wonder again about us today - are we patient people? Or are we impatient? Do we wait on God when things are not moving as quickly as we would like them to...? Should we be waiting on God or trying to hurry things up like Saul did...?**

5/13- Interesting First Samuel readings today! Jonathan was quite brave going to the Philistine camp like he did. Verse 6 was impressive: *"Jonathan said to his armor bearer. "Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!"* Fortunately God helped him with an earthquake and what looked to be some unique strength in verse 13: *"So they climbed up using both hands and feet, and the Philistines fell back as Jonathan and his armor bearer killed them right and left."* Then, Saul seems to be having some power & ego & oath issues in today's readings... First he makes and oath that the men cannot eat until evening - not so wise when in the midst of battle. Then he says in verse 39 - *"I vow by the name of the LORD who rescued Israel that the sinner will surely die, even if it is my own son Jonathan!"* Well... it was Jonathan. Fortunately the people were smarter than Saul and saved Jonathan. **Q: Why do you think Saul started having power & ego & oath issues? What happened to Saul? Do we too have power & ego & oath issues in our modern day?**

5/14 - Wow. Big reading day today! David is anointed by Samuel. Saul meets David for the first time! The story of David begins! I am excited! In First Samuel 15 we read about Saul destroying most - but not all... - of the Amalekite nation. God's commands were clear to destroy all. Saul, simply put, disobeyed. Verses 22 and 23 sum up this chapter powerfully when Samuel says this to Saul: *"What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king."* **Q: Obedience is far better than sacrifice... think this is still true today? Are you more of an obedient person or a sacrificial person before God? Do you believe that rebellion is as bad as witchcraft and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols?**

5/15 - We are beginning the story of David, which is always a blessing to read. As you know, David wrote many of the Psalms, so we've been reading some of David's writings already this year. Now we begin his story! Hang on! This is a wonderful part of the Bible – reading about David and reading the Gospel of John at the same time. . . great stuff! Bob Deffinbaugh with Bible.org has a terrific overview of David becoming Israel's King [at this link](#). Today in 1 Samuel chapter 17 read about David & Goliath. In verse 45 we read – *"David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty."* **Q: How often in our lives today are we like Goliath, where we try to make things work or do things with our own strength or our latest technology? Goliath relied on his strength and sword and spear and javelin – and perhaps we today rely on our intellectual pride and Blackberry and career and money. David simply relied on God. David moved in the name of God. How often do you move in the name of God today? How often do you completely rely on only God today? Can you move beyond relying solely on your "strengths" and "technologies" and instead move and breathe and rely on God in every circumstance in your life?**

5/16 - This is a powerful verse in First Samuel 18:14 today: *"David continued to succeed in everything he did, for the LORD was with him."* I think that is so important to know - David succeeded in all he did because God was with him. And I believe this applies to us today as well. We will succeed in all we do if God is with us. Now - don't get me wrong - when I say succeed, I do not mean "succeed" as the world might define this word. I mean we will succeed spiritually in all we do if we are in a loving and growing and obedient relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son (who is God). This success might mean that we actually become "poor" in the world's eyes and serve overseas or in our own town in a ministry that won't make us a million. But - if we are living in right relationship with God than we have truly succeeded in life. Nothing else matters. **Q: Is God with you today? How do you know? How do you invite God to be with you in your daily life?**

5/16 - It is great to see Jonathan asking his father Saul to not murder David in First Samuel chapter 19. I read a commentary that said Jonathan had really been won over by David after David killed Goliath. It is thought that perhaps David shared with Saul and Jonathan his faith in God and why he was fearless of Goliath early in chapter 18 or late in chapter 17 (in yesterday's readings), and that Jonathan believed David's faith was true. In any case, we do see in chapter 18 verses 3 & 4 these words: *"And Jonathan made a special vow to be David's friend, and he sealed the pact by giving him his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt."* Jonathan is obviously living up to this pact here in chapter 19. **Q: How do you win friends and influence people in your life today? Is it on your own? Or is it through your faith and actions? How would you define a true friend?**

5/17 - Great readings about Jonathan & David today! 1 Samuel 20 verse 13 today seems to indicate that Jonathan realizes that David will be the king after his father Saul: *"May the LORD be with you as he used to be with my father."* Verse 17 is beautiful - *"For Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself."* **Q: Who are people in your life that you love as much as you love yourself? Do you think that there should be people in your life that you love as much as you love yourself? Do you love Jesus as much as you love yourself? Do you think that God loves you as much as He loves Himself?**

5/18 - Very sad readings today in First Samuel 22 as we read about the slaughter of the priests. Sadly fitting that Doeg betrayed the priests to Saul and then Saul commanded Doeg to kill the priests, because no one else would. This whole incident shows how far Saul has strayed away from God. He has lost his moral compass completely. It's interesting to recall earlier in our First Samuel readings how Saul looked like he might be a decent king initially. But, then he was disobedient to God. And then his sin continued and continued to where he is in today's readings. This should be a warning to each of us to not stray from God like this. If we are allowing ourselves to be disobedient to God or if we are continuing in a sin, we are slaves to that sin. And this slavery to sin can grow and grow until we lose all moral control, as Saul has. **Q: Have you ever been a slave to sin? Are you a slave to sin now that you need to repent of? Have you ever seen others enslaved to sin? How can you or they be truly free of that enslavement to sin?**

5/18 - I love the mini-reunion of Jonathan and David in First Samuel 23 verses 16 & 17 - *"Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God. "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father is well aware."* **Q: What great words of encouragement from Jonathan! Who is the last person you encouraged? Do you make it a habit to encourage people around you regularly? Who is someone you can encourage big-time today or tomorrow?**

5/19 - Interesting chapters today! David is essentially put to the test by God over the next 3 chapters - 2 tests today and 1 tomorrow. And the test is this - obedience. You'll recall that Saul fails the test of obedience early in his kingship. David passes the tests - he does not kill Saul and he does not kill Nabal. He could have killed both. First Samuel 24 verses 5 through 7 are a great look at David's character when Saul was in the cave - *"But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. "The LORD knows I shouldn't have done it," he said to his men. "It is a serious thing to attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him." So David sharply rebuked his men and did not let them kill Saul."* **Q: Have you ever been tested in your obedience to the LORD like David**

was? When have you remained obedient and faithful in the face of great temptation?

5/19 - How impressive is Abigail in First Samuel chapter 25! Her speech to David in verses 24 through 30 is awesome. She takes all the blame. Calls out Nabal. Gives David gifts. And smartly lets him know he doesn't need this blood on his hands. David is clearly impressed. **Q: Have you ever met someone with amazing wisdom displayed like Abigail's? How might we obtain wisdom in our lives today? Does our world value wisdom today?**

5/20 - Interesting... in First Samuel 28 Saul bans mediums - wise - and then becomes desperate for one - unwise... The medium seems to get quite freaked out that she has called up Samuel. Commentaries suggest that she is used to calling up satanic / demonic forces. She (possibly) connected to Samuel somehow here and was freaked out by it. And Samuel tells Saul exactly what he probably knows in his heart. God has left him - a long time ago - because of his disobedience. Consulting a medium is just one more disobedient act in a string of them. I pray that no one reading this consults mediums or does tarot cards or gets into palm readings or any of that garbage. It is spiritually dangerous and risky to get into any of that. Unfortunately, I know that things like "tarot card reading parties" are somewhat popular today. I have been invited to them and have not gone - and told the hosts why I was not attending. Please avoid this spiritually risky stuff. It is no joke dangerous. **Q: Have you ever had to flee from risky activities like tarot card readings or psychics? How can we help our friends flee these activities?**

5/21 - We finish the book of First Samuel today! Second Samuel is up tomorrow! First Samuel chapter 29 verse 8 read a bit strange to me: *"What have I done to deserve this treatment?" David demanded. "Why can't I fight the enemies of my lord, the king?"* It seemed odd, at first read, that David would say this to King Achish of the Philistines. Commentaries suggest that David may have purposefully made an ambiguous statement here, such that Achish (and maybe us) would think he was referring to Achish - when perhaps he was referring to God or Saul as David's "lord, the king." With David's madman acting and wisdom, this ambiguous type statement with another meaning would not be surprising... In First Samuel 31 today we read about the death of Saul. At the very end Saul did what he always did - took things into his own hands. Relied on himself. Fell on his own sword. Perhaps sometimes in our lives today we are not so different from Saul. Maybe we try to take things into our own hands. Rely on ourselves. But hopefully never fall on our own swords... We should instead be leaving things in God's hands and relying fully on God. **Q: What did you learn from reading 1 Samuel this year? What did the life of Saul teach you?**

5/22 - Today we begin the book of Second Samuel!

Second Samuel

Author: Unknown

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

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

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

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

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

5/22 - Today in 2 Samuel chapter 1 we read about David's lament for Saul & Jonathan. This year in going through the One Year Bible, I have really been intrigued by Jonathan and David's relationship. They became incredible "brothers" it seems – much like we now have "brothers" and "sisters" in Christ today.

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

5/23 - Today's Second Samuel readings are quite dramatic! We start off with the beginnings of what I think you could call a civil war between Judah and Israel in chapter 2 verses 15 through 17: *“So twelve men were chosen to fight from each side—twelve men of Benjamin representing Ishbosheth son of Saul, and twelve representing David. Each one grabbed his opponent by the hair and thrust his sword into the other’s side so that all of them died. So this place at Gibeon has been known ever since as the Field of Swords. A fierce battle followed that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the forces of David.”* In chapter 3, it is interesting to see how David got so mad at Joab for killing Abner. Understandable for many reasons - murder being the main one - but also Abner was working to bring David's kingship to all of Israel. Joab's murder of Abner threatened the civil war between Judah and the rest of Israel to start up again. **Q: How does all the fighting and murder stand out to you in the Old Testament readings? Does fighting and murder continue in our world today? Why is this?**

5/24 - Second Samuel chapter 4 verse 11 stood out as David said this to the 2 murderers of Ishbosheth: *“Now what reward should I give the wicked men who have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed? Should I not also demand your very lives?”* Similar to the Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul and reported this news to David, David was not happy with the news. This all reminds me of the old adage that you cannot fight evil with evil - you'll get corrupted in the process. These 2 guys murdered an innocent man, thinking they were doing a greater good for David. David disagreed. **Q: Are there times in our lives where we do something wrong / bad / lie / evil for what we think might be a greater good? Aren't we then corrupted in the process?**

5/24- In Second Samuel chapter 6 when the Ark is brought back to Jerusalem verse 14 is phenomenal to imagine: *“And David danced before the LORD with all his might, wearing a priestly tunic.”* And David's words in verse 21 are something for you and I to consider in our lives today - *“So I am willing to act like a fool in order to show my joy in the LORD.”* **Q: Are you willing to act like a fool to show your joy in God? Have you ever danced before God with all your might? Think you ever could?**

5/25 - Second Samuel 7 today is a big chapter! God essentially establishes a covenant with David - it isn't expressly called a covenant, so I suppose it is more of a promise. Verse 16 is a nice sum-up of God's promise to David: *“Your dynasty and your kingdom will continue for all time before me, and your throne will be secure forever.”* The throne is secure forever because from the lineage of David comes Jesus. Jesus is forever. Genealogies in [Matthew 1](#) and [Luke 3:21-38](#) will give you more details on this lineage. It is interesting that God does not want David to build him a temple, but lets David know one of his descendents will in verses 12 & 13: *“For when you die, I will raise up one of your descendants, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house--a temple--for my name.”* We will later learn the reasons for this in 1 Chronicles 28 verse 3 when David says - *“But God said to me, ‘You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.’”* David was a warrior - as is very evident in Second Samuel 8 today. David's purpose was to unite and establish Israel. David's son Solomon will build the temple for God. I love David's prayer of thanksgiving to God in 2 Samuel 7 verses 18-29 today! **Q: How often do you pray prayers of thanksgiving like David did? Should we be thankful and express gratitude to God every day?**

5/26 - Interesting set of readings today in Second Samuel. We start off with David showing kindness to Saul's crippled grandson Mephibosheth and we end with David committing adultery, ordering the murder of one of his warriors, and making God very unhappy. What happened to change the course of events like this?? I think this is something that each one of us should take heed of - even when things are going very well in our walk with God, things can suddenly go the wrong direction if we are not vigilant in fleeing from sin and temptation. David was obviously tempted when he saw Bathsheba from his rooftop. He should have left that temptation there, and fled from it immediately - but instead he gave into it. He asked about Bathsheba (entertaining temptation...) and invited her over and then committed adultery. Then... things got worse. That's how sin goes. Once we let it start to *run* our life it can quickly start to *ruin* our life. David thought he could trick Uriah into thinking Uriah got his wife pregnant - but Uriah in chapter 11 was behaving much more honorably than the king! He would not sleep with his own wife when he knew other warriors were sleeping on the battlefields. Uriah acted honorably. David did not. David allowed sin to run the show. Below is a powerful painting by James Tissot showing the moment on the rooftop where David allowed temptation to take over... **Q: Again - back to our lives - have you ever seen a pattern of sin running the show in your life?** I know I have in the past. It's a dangerous pattern to see taking place in our lives. It can lead to all kinds of pain and suffering for ourselves and those around us. If you are perhaps even in the midst of sin running the show in your life now, there is hope. There is confession and repentance. David does give us this example in Psalm 51. Psalm 51 David wrote after the events in chapter 11 took place with Bathsheba & Uriah. Psalm 51 is a powerful Psalm of confession and repentance. You may be at the point where you need to pray this Psalm to God now. I think each of us does well when we pray this Psalm to God regularly. We certainly may not be at the point where David was in chapter 11 - but, we likely have sin to confess to God - even right now. [Click here if you'd like to pray Psalm 51 now.](#)

5/27 - We read a great parable from the prophet Nathan today to start the chapter! Wow. Convicting stuff for David... You'll note that David said in response to this parable in verse 6: *"He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."* Well, sure enough, David paid for the death of Uriah 4 times over through the future deaths of 4 of David's sons: the unnamed son who dies in this chapter, Amnon dies in chapter 13, Absalom in chapter 18, and Adonijah in First Kings 2:25. I read a commentary that said God forgave David of his sin, but God did not negate all the consequences of David's sin. **Q: Do you believe that even if we are forgiven of our sin that there still may be consequences of our sin?**

5/28 - Second Samuel chapter 13 is a sad chapter to read in so many ways! Amnon is David's first born son, so he is heir to the throne at this point. Absalom is David's third born son - but at this point he may have been second in line to the throne because David's 2nd born son, Kileab, was only mentioned once and may have died young. You'll note that there are unfortunately are some parallels in David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah with his 2 sons' behavior in this chapter. David sinned sexually with Bathsheba - Amnon sinned sexually against Tamar in a horrible way. David sinned by ordering the murder of Uriah. Absalom sinned by ordering the murder of Amnon. Unfortunately we see a pattern of "like father, like sons..." in this chapter. I don't think this always has to be the case in our human condition - I do believe we can be redeemed and transformed and not act in sinful ways like our parents may have acted. But, I also do believe we need Jesus to save us from ourselves - in this regard of breaking the cycle/pattern of sin and in all regards. **Q: Have you seen instances of "like father, like son" in our world today? Can we break free from cycles of sin in our family histories? How?**

5/29 - Well.. this is a tough couple of chapters to read today! On one hand we see David showing much grace to Absalom and meanwhile Absalom is plotting to rebel against his father and then does so! At first glance it makes me wonder what on earth was David thinking? Why did he bring Absalom back to Jerusalem? But, I believe David was doing the right thing. Absalom was his son. David was trying to restore that relationship. I think about this with people in my life who have maybe "stung" me in some way. On the one hand I want to write them off - believing that they will sting me again. And maybe they will... but, I don't think writing people off is healthy ultimately for me and I don't think it is the right thing to do. I think showing grace, forgiveness and compassion is the right thing to do. I think David did this - and then he wisely got out of town when he realized Absalom was up to no good! So, he didn't completely let

Absalom walk all over him. He still used wisdom. I don't know... this is a tough couple of chapters. **Q: What do you think? Did David do the right thing by bringing Absalom back to Jerusalem? Do you see any parallels in your life where someone has stung you - and then perhaps stung you again? Was it still maybe the right thing to do to show them grace and forgiveness? And maybe even to do so again?**

5/30 - We have more sad readings today in Second Samuel! However, it is impressive to see David's countenance in the midst of all of the chaos going on around him. I love David's words in verses 10 through 12 when Shimei is cursing David: *"If the LORD has told him to curse me, who am I to stop him? My own son is trying to kill me. Shouldn't this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to do it. And perhaps the LORD will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses."* That is incredible faith and humility! David says first that perhaps God has told Shimei to curse him, so why try to stop it. Then at the end David basically says if God has not told Shimei to curse him, then perhaps David will be blessed by God because of these wrongful curses. Great stuff! **Q: How do you act in your life today if someone is cursing you or wronging you? Do you act like David does here? With patience and wisdom? Or, do you "react" with anger and spite? Which is the better way to go?**

5/30 - At the end of today's readings we read about Ahithophel advising Absalom to sleep with David's concubines. To sleep with a king's wives or concubines was to make a claim to the throne. It is sad to read about this advice to commit a horrible act that is *"beyond hope of reconciliation"*, as verse 21 says in today's readings. I read a commentary that said Ahithophel advises Absalom to do this horrible act so that all of Israel will hear about it. Well, Absalom is in such a deep state of sin and wickedness at this point that he wanted Israel to also see that he was committing this sin by setting the tent up on the palace roof. It is striking to me to see David's humility toward Shimei's curses in today's readings versus Absalom's complete pride and rebellion. **Q: See what unchecked sin can do in a life? Do you think Absalom knew he was going the Wrong Way? Or was he blinded by sin?** In a couple of days we'll read about where the Wrong Way leads Absalom...

5/31 - Interesting readings in Second Samuel today! The dynamics between Ahithophel's advice and Hushai's advice is fascinating. Hushai plays smartly to Absalom's ego and insecurity with the advice he gives. Ahithophel seems to realize that he's lost his status in Absalom's kingdom - and I wonder if maybe perhaps Ahithophel realized this kingdom of Absalom's would soon fall? And thus decided to kill himself? It was probably more of an ego / pride / status thing though that played into Ahithophel's tragic decision. Ahithophel, a betrayer of David, ended up taking his life in the same manner Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, does. (Not to be morbid here, but just fyi that there are 7 suicides documented in the Bible - you can view this list of 7 on bible.org [at this link](#).) It does make me very sad to read about suicide, even in the case of Ahithophel or Judas. I know obviously suicide happens still in our world today at alarming rates, which makes me incredibly sad. I just feel like all of us can have some serious down times in our life and maybe sometimes feel like just giving it up completely. I pray that if ever we really do get that down in our life, that we always remember there is redemption. There is hope. There is love. There is forgiveness. There is Jesus. No matter what we've done or what we've failed to do, let us not every give up on the everlasting hope that is Jesus in our lives. Jesus saves. Jesus even saves us from ourselves. **Q: Have you ever worked with someone to move them away from suicide? Are there any ministries, books or organizations you can recommend related to suicide prevention and assistance?**

NEW TESTAMENT

5/1- I absolutely love John chapter 1 verse 29 - *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* **Q: Do you believe Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? Has Jesus taken away your sin? How?**

5/1 - Verses 45 & 46 I find so truthful, along with Nathanael's reply being amusing - but mostly Nathanael's reply demonstrates how very humble of a background Jesus came from - *"Philip went off to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from there?"* **Q: Are we ever like Nathanael - having preconceived notions about places**

or things or maybe even Jesus? Can we leave our preconceived notions about things behind us and move forward in the spirit of truth, particularly when it comes to Jesus and who He is?

5/2 - John chapter 2 verse 11 is of note - *"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first display of his glory. And his disciples believed in him."* It is interesting that John refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs." Signs seem to indicate the significance of Jesus' actions, rather than the marvel. **Q: What do you think Jesus' miracles might have been "signs" of? What do they mean to you today?**

5/2 - Tyndale's One Year Bible Companion has a very interesting commentary on John chapter 2 verse 14 - *"In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; and he saw money changers behind their counters."* Tyndale answered the question of why there were merchants & money changers in the temple as follows: "The temple tax had to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. But the moneychangers would often charge exorbitant exchange rates. The people were also required to make sacrifices for sins. Because of the long journey, many could not bring their own animals. The price of sacrificial animals was much higher in the temple than elsewhere." It is understandable why Jesus was upset with all of this. Thank goodness we do not have this system still in place for us today - with moneychangers & merchants for tax & animal sacrifices... thank you Jesus! **Q: What's your reaction to Jesus' "cleansing of the temple?" Was He justified in this? Have our churches today turned away from being a house of prayer and turned into being a market in any ways?**

5/3 - Today in John chapter 3 we will read about Jesus' interactions with Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees. This is obviously a powerful chapter, as Jesus' words in this chapter include the famous John 3:16. In verse 3 we will read this from Jesus - *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* And to this Nicodemus asks in verse 4 - *"How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born?"* **Q: What do these verses mean to you? Do you understand Jesus' statement in verse 3? Do you understand Nicodemus' confusion and why he asked the question like he did in verse 4?** Jesus later goes on in chapter 3 to say that he is referring to being born again in "the Spirit." It is not a physical rebirth Jesus is referring to in verse 3, but a Spiritual rebirth. I do think this is an appropriate time in our One Year Bible readings - the gospel of John and John chapter 3 in particular - **for each of us to ask ourselves if we have been born again in the Spirit? If not, do you want to be born again in the Spirit? Will you pray today to God and Jesus for this Spiritual rebirth?**

5/4 - Wow... I love John the Baptist's words about Jesus in John chapter 3 today! Great stuff. Please read these verses again and meditate upon them in your life today. The verse that really stood out to me today was verse 30 when John said this about Jesus - *"He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less."* How very true and how very applicable to our lives today. We must let Jesus become greater and greater in our lives, hearts, and actions, and our individualism / selfishness must become less and less. **Q: How are you doing on this? How are you allowing Jesus to become greater and greater in your life and are "you" becoming less and less?**

5/5 - Wow. The Jacob's Well story in John chapter 4 today is beautiful on so many levels. I definitely recommend you check out Bible.org's commentary on this chapter [at this link](#) if you aren't familiar with all of the meanings of this story. I love Jesus's words in verse 34 - *"My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."* **Q: If this is true for Jesus - think this might be true for us too? Do you believe that our nourishment comes from doing the will of God?**

5/7 - I'm not sure if you noticed this unique thing about Jesus' healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda today - the man did not seem to have faith in Jesus or know who Jesus was! You'll recall with many of the healings we read about in the Gospels people yell out to Jesus for healing, or reach for Jesus' garment, and show some sort of faith or recognition of who Jesus truly is. Well, here in John chapter 5 verse 6 Jesus asks this man at the pool: *"Do you want to get well?"* And then in the following verses the man still doesn't realize who Jesus is and doesn't ask Jesus for healing, but instead frets about not getting into the waters of the pool where he thinks the waters will heal him. Well, come verse 8 Jesus says, *"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."* I find this whole scene awesome and a great example of

God's grace! Perhaps sometimes in our lives when we miss seeing what Jesus is doing, He will still often heal us or care for us! Even sometimes (though I don't think always...) when we seem to be looking for the other "waters" that we think will heal us. Even sometimes when we don't ask Jesus for healing, he'll still do it for us. **Q: Has Jesus ever done something amazing for you without you asking for it? Perhaps even when you were looking for somebody or something else to fix or heal something for you, is there a time when God's grace showed up on the scene instead and made the situation right?**

5/8 - I am intrigued by Jesus' words in John chapter 5 verse 30 today, particularly in light of the book of Judges that we recently read, which was a dark time in Israel's history - *"But I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own."* I love that Jesus says his judgment is absolutely just. And I believe this is true - 1. that Jesus will judge us and that 2. his judgment is just. I think this is both something to be celebrated - there is no one else I would want to judge me... - and I think this can be sobering - if his judgment is absolutely just, then it is obvious that we cannot "sneak" anything by Jesus. Everything we have ever done or will do will be judged by Jesus. I think ultimately it is very healthy to recognize this. Maybe initially this realization will keep us from sinning because of some fear of judgment - but ideally this realization matures into a love for Jesus that encourages us not to sin because we would not want to disappoint Jesus whom we love with all that we are. **Q: Do you believe that Jesus is your judge? Do you believe that Jesus will judge you absolutely justly? Do you believe that God is a just God? A God of justice?**

5/9 - It is very interesting to note that Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle, along with the resurrection, that is described in all 4 gospels! In John chapter 6 verse 14 we read - *"When the people saw this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, 'Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!'"* The Prophet the crowds are referring to comes from Deuteronomy chapter 18 verses 15 & 18 - *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."* **Q: What do you think the significance is of the miracle of feeding the 5,000? Do you think Jesus is concerned for our physical needs? What is a time in your life Jesus took care of your physical needs?**

5/10 - Wow... verses 28 & 29 in John chapter 6 are so beautiful and simple that I think it is easy to miss the strong meaning behind this conversation between the crowd & Jesus - *"They replied, 'What does God want us to do?' Jesus told them, 'This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the one he has sent.'" Check out that very last sentence. This is what God wants you to do. Believe. That's it. It's that simple. Believe. Not give away all your money to the poor. Not do thousands of good deeds. Not become a perfect person over night. Just believe. Believe. Yeah, okay, maybe God will ask you to give away some money and do good and become a better person after you believe... :) But the key is first and foremost to Believe. **Q: Do you Believe in Jesus, the One whom God sent? When did you first Believe? Feel free to share your testimony with the group!***

5/10 - And verse 35 is so powerful as well - *"Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in me will never thirst.'" Jesus saying he is the bread of life is similar to him saying he is the Door or the Vine. Bread is a beautiful metaphor that Jesus supplies divine nourishment to us spiritually. For me, this verse also reminds me of The Lord's Supper in our churches today. **Q: How is Jesus your bread of life? How has Jesus quenched your thirst?***

5/11 - Okay, so John chapter 6 verses 53 through 58 are some verses that get interpreted several different ways - some saying these verses speak of the Lord's Supper and some saying they speak only of faith in Jesus because the Lord's Supper had not yet been instituted by Jesus at this time. I think the key for us to focus on is that Jesus is our nourishment - our literal spiritual food if we have faith in him. It is interesting to note that many disciples turned away from Jesus after this teaching. I love Peter's reply to Jesus in verses 68 & 69 after Jesus asks if the Twelve will leave too - *"Simon Peter replied, 'Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God.'" True words indeed Peter. True words indeed. **Q: If not Jesus, to whom would you go? Does anyone else have the words that give eternal life? Are you looking forward***

to eternal life with Jesus?

5/12 - Hmm... I found John chapter 7 verse 12 intriguing today as it said this about Jesus - *"There was a lot of discussion about him among the crowds. Some said, 'He's a wonderful man,' while others said, 'He's nothing but a fraud, deceiving the people.'"* **Q: Does this verse sound familiar to you at all? Maybe like something we would hear about Jesus or Christianity in our modern world today?** "Jesus & Christianity is wonderful. Jesus & Christianity is nothing but a fraud, deceiving people." Times really have not changed much have they?

5/12 - Jesus' words in John 7 verse 17 are powerful - *"Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own."* I like that - if we want to do the will of God, we will know whether Jesus' teaching is from God or is his own. **Q: Do you want to do the will of God? When you read Jesus' teachings in John, do you know that his teaching is from God?**

5/13 - John chapter 7 verses 37 & 38 are powerful verses for each of us to meditate upon - *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of those who believe in me."* Wow... these are powerful words from Jesus. And so true. I know that I have been very spiritually thirsty in my life in the past and Jesus has most certainly quenched that thirst in my life. And I do believe that rivers of living water flow from the heart of those that believe in Jesus. This is the Holy Spirit, which indwells within us when we are in relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. This living water flowing from our hearts - the Holy Spirit - is an intriguing topic. I know different folks experience the Holy Spirit in different ways. I do hope that each of us do tangibly experience the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives each and every day. I do know there are some days where I really sense and experience the Holy Spirit in my heart and life. And there are some days where I may not - but I don't believe the Holy Spirit has departed. It's more likely that I'm just caught up in the hustle / bustle of this life and focused on the flesh / world and not the Spirit. **Q: Do you believe that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of those that believe in Jesus? Are you thirsty? Are those around you thirsty?**

5/14 - I love John chapter 8 verse 12 today: *"Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'"* **Q: Do you believe that Jesus is the light of the world? Why would we want or need a light in this world? Do you believe there is darkness in this world? Do you need the light that leads to life?**

5/15 - I love John 8 verse 29 where Jesus says - *"And the one who sent me is with me--he has not deserted me. For I always do those things that are pleasing to him."* **Q: If Jesus always did those things that are pleasing to God, do you think that you and I should do those things that are pleasing to Jesus and to God? Meaning, it seems to me that Jesus was clearly very intentional with how he spent his time. He only did those things that are pleasing to God. How intentional are you and I in how we spend our time? Do we make sure we are only doing those things that are pleasing to Jesus (who is God) and God the Father?** I know I don't. I wish I did. I pray that I will spend more and more of my time doing those things that are pleasing to God. Let us pray that Jesus' personality permeates our personality and all that we do!

5/16 - John chapter 8 verses 34 through 36 are such powerful teachings for each of us to recognize - *"Jesus replied, 'I assure you that everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.'"* **Q: Do you believe it is possible to be a slave of sin? Do you believe Jesus can set us free from the slavery of sin? Are you free?**

5/16 - I believe verse 58 is one of the most powerful statements Jesus makes in the Gospels - *"Jesus answered, 'The truth is, I existed before Abraham was even born!'"* Or the NIV of this verse is - *"'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'"* Jesus is quoting Exodus 3:14 here when Moses asks God who he should say sent him to free the Israelites from Egypt and God says - "I AM. Tell them I AM sent you." Jesus here knows what he is doing when he says that even before

Abraham was born, I AM. Jesus is saying he is God. And He is. But, to the religious leaders at this time, this was blasphemy to their ears. And hence, they attempted to stone Jesus in the very next verse. **Q: Do you believe Jesus when he says, "before Abraham was born, I AM"?**

5/17 - Jesus' teaching in John chapter 9 verse 3 is powerful - *"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "He was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him."* Wow. He was born blind so that God's power could be seen in him. I wonder about this in our lives today. **Q: When we have challenges or struggles, is it possible that they are happening so that the power of God can be seen? I know this can be tough to fathom when you are in the midst of a challenge or struggle - or, if you are blind for example, like this man in John 9. But... no matter what life throws our way, do you think that God's power can be seen in any circumstance?**

5/17 - Verse 27 is great when the healed man says - *"Look!" the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"* Hmm... Verses 39 through 40 are a dialogue that each one of us should reflect upon - *"Then Jesus told him, "I have come to judge the world. I have come to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind." The Pharisees who were standing there heard him and asked, "Are you saying we are blind?" "If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see."* **Q: How are we behaving today? Are we allowing Jesus to give us spiritual sight? Or do we think we can see well enough spiritually without Jesus? Without Jesus, can we see or are we blind...? Will we allow Jesus to heal us of our spiritual blindness right now?**

5/18 - I love Jesus' teachings today in John 10 verses 9 & 10 - *"Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness."* What a great analogy - Jesus is the gateway to salvation. Life in relationship with Jesus will be full of green pastures - this reminds me of [Psalm 23 verse 2!](#) And then Jesus tells us that his purpose is to give us life in all its fullness. I think all too often we look for fullness of life in all the wrong places... when all we have to do is walk through the gate. **Q: Have you walked through the gate? How can we help lead others in our life who don't know Jesus through the gate?**

5/18 - Jesus calling himself the Good Shepherd is so very beautiful and fitting in verses 14 & 15 - *"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep."* After we walk through the gate of faith to fullness of life with Jesus, he will be our Good Shepherd forever. He is a shepherd that knows us - and we know him. He will protect us with his rod and staff - again, a little [Psalm 23 verse 4](#). :) And more than anything else, this Good Shepherd has laid down his life for us. **Q: Do you consider Jesus to be your Good Shepherd? How does Jesus shepherd you?**

5/19 - John chapter 10 verse 30 is a powerful teaching from Jesus! *"The Father and I are one."* Many churches celebrate Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the Upper Room after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Thus, rounding out the Trinity. (Bible.org has a great overview of the Trinity [at this link](#).) The Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit. **Q: Do you believe Jesus when he says, ""The Father and I are one" ? Do you believe Jesus is God? Do you think the majority of our world believes Jesus is God?**

5/20 - Today in John chapter 11 verse 35 we read the shortest verse in the Bible - *"Jesus wept."* Though this may be the shortest verse, I do not believe it is small in meaning. What does it say to you that Jesus wept? What does it mean to you that Jesus wept? I love this verse because to me it shows Jesus' humanity (while at the same time he is divine). During his time living as a man on earth, Jesus experienced the full range of emotions that you and I experience today. Jesus was tempted. (though, unlike us, he did not give into temptation and sin ever) Jesus was joyful. Jesus was angry. Jesus loved. Jesus wept. **Q: Knowing this about Jesus, does this help you to realize that you can approach Jesus with absolutely any situation in your life that you might be struggling with? Do you believe that Jesus will understand you if you are weeping? Do you believe that Jesus will rejoice with you when you are rejoicing?** I do. "Jesus wept" says so much to me about who Jesus was, is, and forever

will be. Jesus wept.

5/21- John 12 verse 10 stood out to me today - somehow I hadn't really noticed this verse before - *"Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus."* Lazarus was raised from the dead and they wanted him dead again... sad... The miracle had caused many to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Not surprising that those in that day who were against Jesus would also be against those close to Jesus. **Q: Think there might be some correlation in this regard in our world today? Is it possible that the closer we get to Jesus, the more the Enemy might come up against us in various ways?** It cannot defeat us with God on our side. But it may come after us.

5/21- I like verse 19 today! *"Then the Pharisees said to each other, "We've lost. Look, the whole world has gone after Jesus!"* Unfortunately it was a bit of an exaggeration at that time and the 2,000 years following. **Q: But maybe in the future? How are you part of the Great Commission today?**

5/23 - Wow. Jesus' teaching in John 13 verses 14 - 17 are so powerful today: *"And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things--now do them! That is the path of blessing."* **Q: Are you on the path of blessing? What might it mean to "wash other's feet" today? Yes, perhaps at times it literally means wash other's feet. Could it mean other acts of service as well that perhaps we maybe think we are "too good for" or "above" in any way? Jesus humbled himself to wash other's feet. Are you humbling yourself to serve others in ways that your ego might not like?**

5/24 - I love the dialogue today between Thomas and Jesus in John 14 verses 4 through 6! Somehow I didn't quite remember the context of Thomas' question setting up Jesus' profound statement in verse 6. Beautiful. Jesus starts us off in verse 4 - *"And you know where I am going and how to get there."* *"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We haven't any idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."* These last two sentences of Jesus' we've probably all heard many times. But how often have we asked Thomas' question either to ourselves or to God or to now one in particular - "how can I know the way?" Jesus answers this for us perfectly. **Q: Have you ever felt in your life that you didn't know the way? Do you believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life?**

5/24 - John 14 Verses 12 through 14 today are so convicting for me - because I really rarely follow this teaching (or fully believe in it?) of Jesus' - *"The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!"* **Q: Do you believe that you can do the same works Jesus has done, and even greater works?** I'll confess - I'm not so sure that I do. I mean, it's encouraging to think that I could, even if I don't fully believe it. And, yet, I believe most everything else Jesus teaches. Why would I doubt this teaching? Maybe it's because I have some sort of inferiority complex - or maybe I think it would be prideful to think this. But Jesus teaches it quite plainly! Or... maybe... I haven't really asked Jesus for the guidance and wisdom to believe this - and asked for even just this in his name.

5/25 - Wow. Today's John chapter 14 readings start off strong with a very short sentence of teaching from Jesus in verse 15 - *"If you love me, obey my commandments."* Not too complicated there, eh? :) Really... it's quite easy to understand. And believe. But to obey... hmmm... I've been thinking about that "obey" word quite a bit lately. In fact, it's a word that has been spray painted around my neighborhood lately - "obey" - I think for some political statement reasons. It's not really a popular word. But it's a pretty straightforward teaching from Jesus. Obey. Obey my commandments. "If you love me, obey my commandments." I really do believe that true freedom is found in this. When we are obedient to Jesus' teachings and God's will in our lives, we truly will be living "free" lives. I know it sounds like an oxymoron. But I believe it is true. The more we obey Jesus' teachings, the freer we truly become. **Q: Do you think this is true? Are you obeying Jesus' teachings in your life? Do you feel freer?**

5/25 - Well, if we are wondering how on earth we can possibly obey Jesus' teachings, He graciously answers this for us in the next two verses in today's readings in John 14:16-17: *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you."* Basically, we cannot obey Jesus' teachings on our own. Using our own will power or smarts or strength, we will fail. We need the Holy Spirit, living with in us, to give us the grace and strength to obey Jesus' teachings. The Holy Spirit rounds out the Trinity and leads us and guides us. **Q: Are you looking for the Holy Spirit? Do you recognize the Holy Spirit living within you? Do you believe the Holy Spirit is leading you into all truth?**

5/26 - Today we read one of my favorite chapters in the Bible - John 15. I cannot tell you how much this chapter means to me and I hope to you as well. John 15 takes place just after the Last Supper, the night before Jesus dies on the cross, so this is one of Jesus' last teachings to the disciples – and to you and me. It is so beautiful. My quick personal story on this chapter is that I have only preached verbally once – and it was when I was in Bulgaria several years ago on a short-term mission trip. Our team ended up going to a small Roma church – and I mean small – in a village outside of the capital city of Sofia. As we drove up to the village where the church was located I saw rows and rows of grape vines in and around the village. I knew I would be preaching that evening – each person on our team took a turn every night. And initially I was planning to preach from a Psalm – but, when I saw the vineyards I quickly decided to preach from John 15, and it turned out to be so beautiful. I literally ended up outside of the church – all of us could not fit in the tiny 1 room church - under some grape vines preaching from John 15. God showed up. I cannot even remember what I said, but God moved. I pray that as you read John 15 today God moves for you as well. John 15 is something special. (John 16 & 17 are something special as well. . .) **Q: Have you ever been on a mission trip and had a powerful experience that you can share with your group?**

5/26 - Today in John 15 verses 12 & 13 we will read these words of Jesus - *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* **Q: Why would Jesus give us such a command as this? Why would Jesus give this command the night before he died on the cross? How did Jesus show his love for us? Do you agree that there is no greater love than laying down one's life for his friends? Did Jesus do this for you and me? If we are to love each other as Jesus loved us, how do we do this? When we look at Jesus' life and how he lived it, what might we be able to model in our lives? When we look at Jesus laying down his life for us, how might we be able to "lay down our life" for our friends? Do you love others as Jesus loved you?**

5/27 - John chapter 16 is amazing today! I love verse 8's teaching from Jesus about the Holy Spirit: *"And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment."* One commentary on this verse and verse 9 today says: "Apart from the Spirit's convicting work, people can never see themselves as sinners." Wow. This is powerful to reflect upon. **Q: Did you ever have a time in your life that you did not see yourself as a sinner? Was this time before you experienced the Holy Spirit? Do you believe this to be true - that many in our world today cannot see themselves as sinners, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit and Jesus?** This I think should demonstrate to us who is truly doing conversion work in our world - not us, but Jesus and the Spirit. We cannot convert anyone on our own human power. The Holy Spirit must enter the room...

5/28 - John 17 is such an amazing chapter... this is Jesus praying! So powerful. I honestly am at a loss for words on this chapter. I could probably try to write something about each and every verse. But, maybe what makes the most sense is for you to re-read this chapter again. **Q: Do you see Jesus praying for you in this chapter? What does it mean to you that Jesus prayed for you?**

5/29 - Such sad readings today. Jesus was betrayed by Judas... Judas kissed Jesus to betray Him. Seems that betrayal has been a part of our human condition for maybe all time? Well, since the Fall to be sure, which is pretty much all time for us humans... (you'll recall just after the Fall Cain murdered Abel - yet another betrayal...) **Q: Do betrayals continue today? Why do you think this is? What can free**

us from betraying each other? Or should I ask Whom can free us from betraying each other?

5/30 - Today in John chapter 18 verse 38 we come across what many say is the most ironic question asked in all of history, as Jesus stands before Pilate: *"What is truth?" Pilate asked.* Why is this ironic? Because Pilate asks what is truth, when Truth is standing right before him! Jesus is Truth! And Pilate couldn't see it. Wow. . . think there are people in our world today who see Jesus so dimly, like Pilate does in this painting? I pray you and I see Jesus much more clearly, and much more as the Light! What is truth. This is a question that is still asked today of you and me. **Q: What is truth? Who is truth?**

5/31 - I read an interesting commentary on John 19 verse 25: *"Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene."* Zondervan's commentary says that Mary Magdalene appears in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives of all four Gospels, but outside of these narratives we only read about her in Luke 8:2-3. It is interesting to note that these are the only places in the Gospels where we find Mary Magdalene - though crucially important places in the Gospels! It is amazing to read about the actions of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two secret followers of Jesus on the Jewish council, in verses 38 through 40 - *"Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body down. When Pilate gave him permission, he came and took the body away. Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night, also came, bringing about seventy-five pounds of embalming ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Together they wrapped Jesus' body in a long linen cloth with the spices, as is the Jewish custom of burial."* That is a beautiful scene - these 2 men. They were risking much to do this. They were risking this for Jesus. **Q: What about you and me? Would we have taken this type of risk back then? Would we take this type of risk even today? What might be a risk - for Jesus - that we could take but that we are not taking today?**

PSALMS

5/1 - Psalm 102 is a great reminder to us on the importance to pray. To bring our troubles to the Lord. Psalm 102 can also definitely be a comfort for us during a time of sorrow. I love the reminder about God in verse 27 (which Hebrews also reminded us of today in the verses above...) - *"But you are always the same; your years never end."* God does not change. He is perfectly consistent. We are oftentimes inconsistent. But, our inconsistencies do not change God's consistency. He is always the same - yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever. God is the one sure thing in life that you can count on - forever. **Q: Do you believe God is the same yesterday, today and forever? Do you believe God is the same God in the Old Testament and the New Testament?**

5/2 - Psalm 103 is a great Psalm today! Each verse is a powerful reminder of God's character and our relationship to God. Verse 8 definitely stands out today - *"The LORD is merciful and gracious. He is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love."* **Q: Do you believe that God is merciful and gracious? How have you experienced God's mercy? His grace? Do you believe that God is slow to get angry? When was the last time you experienced God's unfailing love?**

5/2 - Today in Psalm 103 verses 11 & 12 we read these verses about God - *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."* I think these verses are a wonderful look at what it means to be spiritually reborn and living in relationship with God. These verses are a glimpse of the true freedom that is found in relationship with God - freedom of living in God's perfect love, and freedom from our slavery to sin. **Q: Do you believe that God's love for you is as high as the heavens are above the earth? Do you believe that God has removed your sins (transgressions) from you as far as the east is from the west? Do you thank God often for His love for you? Do you thank Jesus often for saving you from the bondage of sin?**

5/3- 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 cool 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 does nature remind you of our Creator God? Do you ever praise God when you are outdoors?**

5/4- 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. 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 in your life today? What are some new ways you are praising God these days?**

5/5 - 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?**

5/8 - 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?"* **Q: Can you list all of the glorious miracles of God? Can anyone? Are you praising God today? Every day?**

5/8 - 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?**

5/9 - 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?**

5/9 - 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...?**

5/10 - 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?**

5/11 - 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. **Q: 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. **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?

5/12- 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?**

5/13 - 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?**

5/15 - 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?**

5/16 - 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?**

5/16 - Psalm 112 verse 4 stands out - *"When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in."* This is encouraging. When darkness overtakes us, if we stay true to God and Christ and faith, light will come "bursting in"! I like that... Know that the light is coming... And verse 9 is a great reminder - *"They give generously to those in need."* **Q: 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?**

5/17 - 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?**

5/18 - 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?**

5/16 - 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?**

5/20 - 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... **Q: When was the last time you said "Alleluia" to God, outside of church?**

5/21 - I came across a wonderful speculation on Psalm 118! Zondervan's commentary 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."* Adds a bit of a new dimension to this Psalm, no? 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. However, what do you think on this question: **Q: 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...

5/22 - 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?**

5/23 - Whoo-hoo! 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/>

5/24 - 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?**

5/25 - 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?**

5/25 - 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? 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?**

5/26 - 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! **Q: 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.**

5/26 - 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?**

5/27 - 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?** Christianity Today magazine had a great article on Suffering a while back, which you can read [at this link](#). (Note that the article starts out with this provocative statement - *"God loves you and has a difficult plan for your life."*) Also, I did find some reflections on Suffering & Grief on ChristianityToday.com that are worth reading [at this link](#).

5/28 - 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 is powerful: *"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?

5/29 - 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?**

5/29 - Verse 111 wow... *"Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight."* **Q: What is your treasure? Where is your treasure? Is God's Word, the Bible, truly your heart's delight?**

5/30 - 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!

5/30 - 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..."

5/31 - 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?**

5/31 - 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?**

PROVERBS

5/1 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 16 is a bit convicting for me - *"The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with great confidence."* As I look at my life I think that I often plunge ahead with great confidence... and recently I was called out on this - wisely I think. I do see the wisdom of being cautious and avoiding danger. But, I also think that we shouldn't avoid some risks of failure - particularly when it comes to God's Kingdom work... but... I do see that it is foolish to plunge ahead only with great confidence. We should only move forward with God. **Q: How about you? Are you cautious and do you avoid danger? (maybe too cautious sometimes?) Or, do you plunge ahead with great confidence? With too much confidence? Is this foolish?**

5/2 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 17 is convicting for me... wow... the Proverbs have been convicting me a bit more than I'm used to lately... I do take this as an overall good thing! It is good to get convicted by God's Word. Verse 17 - *"Those who are short-tempered do foolish things, and schemers are hated."* No, it's not the short-tempered piece that is convicting me, but that last piece - schemers are hated.. I don't like to admit it, but I think on occasion I am a schemer. I don't mean to be... but I think sometimes it seems as if I am. And when I am busted in a "scheme" - that I may not have really consciously thought was a scheme - there are some hurt feelings, anger and maybe even hatred toward me in that moment. Wow... bummer. I pray that I can move beyond being a schemer in every way. Life is too short to scheme! **Q: How about you? Are you ever a schemer? Even if you don't "mean to be one", are you still sometimes? Why do we scheme? Who are we trying to fool with our "schemes"?**

Ourselves?

5/3 - Today in Proverbs chapter 14 verse 21 we read – *“He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.”* **Q: How does today's Proverb speak to you? Do you love your neighbor? Who is your neighbor? Do you believe despising your neighbor is a sin? Are you kind to the needy? What are some ways that you are consistently kind to the needy? Do you believe that you are blessed when you are kind to the needy?**

5/4- Proverbs verse 14 chapter 22 is awesome - *“If you plan good, you will be granted unfailing love and faithfulness.”* Great stuff! And so true. **Q: Do you plan good in your life? Do you consciously think of ways you can bless others? Do you love others well? Do you surprise others with grace? Often? Do you believe that if you plan good, you will be granted unfailing love and faithfulness?**

5/7 - Proverbs 14:29 teaches us today: *“People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.”* **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb? Have you ever struggled with anger? Do you agree that controlling your anger demonstrates understanding, and that letting your anger control you shows great foolishness? Will you seek only understanding in this area of your life, and let all foolishness go?**

5/8 - Today in Proverbs chapter 14 verse 31 we read – *“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”* Those of you that have been journeying through the One Year Bible with me this year know that I like to point out verses like these. I believe it is crystal clear in the Bible that God cares about the poor and instructs us to care for the poor. I'm sure we all have differing views on what this might look like logistically, and that's fine. But, I think it's really an issue of the heart. **Q: Do you care for the poor? Really – “care,” in your heart, for the poor? What are some ways in your life that you are caring for the poor on a consistent basis? Do you believe that God cares for the poor? Do you believe that God instructs us to care for the poor? Why?**

5/9 - I really like Proverbs 14 verse 33 today - *“Wisdom is enshrined in an understanding heart.”* I pray we all develop understanding hearts that are full of godly wisdom! **Q: What do you think this Proverb means when it says “understanding heart”? What is an “understanding heart”? How is it different from other hearts? Maybe hardened hearts or foolish hearts? Have you ever prayed to God for an understanding heart? Would this be a good prayer?**

5/10 - Proverbs chapter 14 verse 34 today teaches us today: *“Godliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”* This is a great reminder that godliness is not just an individual issue, but a community and even national issue. **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb that godliness makes a nation great? In our recent readings in Judges, was Israel a godly nation? Or was there sin in the nation bringing disgrace? How about today? Do you live in a godly nation? Or is there sin bringing disgrace to the people?**

5/11 - Proverbs chapter 15 verse 1 is so so so very true... we would all do well to practice this every day - *“A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”* How beautifully true & wise this is? Let us be gentle people... **Q: If someone were to describe you, would they describe you as a “gentle” person? Would you want to be described as a gentle person? Should we be gentle all of the time? Was Jesus gentle all of the time? Was Jesus gentle most of the time? To whom or in what circumstances was Jesus not gentle? Should we follow Jesus in this regard?**

5/12- I also love Proverbs 15 verse 4 today - *“Gentle words bring life and health.”* **Q: Based on our Proverb today, do you bring life and health to those around you each day with gentle words?**

5/13 - Proverbs chapter 15 verse 5 today makes me think about the godly discipline our Heavenly Father gives us... - *“Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise.”* **Q: Are you learning from God's discipline of you? Or, do you despise God's discipline at times? Which is the better road to go?**

5/14 - Proverbs chapter 15 verses 8 & 9 today teach us: *"The LORD hates the sacrifice of the wicked, but he delights in the prayers of the upright. The LORD despises the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue godliness."* **Q: Today's Proverb is a great opportunity to ask yourself - 1. How's your prayer life? and 2. Are you pursuing godliness in your life each and every day? Also, what verses or insights stand out to you in today's readings?**

5/15 - Proverbs 15:11 today teaches us: *"Even the depths of Death and Destruction are known by the LORD. How much more does he know the human heart!"* Today's Proverb is a wonderful reminder that God not only knows us, he knows our very hearts! **Q: How is the state of your heart today? Does your heart belong to God?**

5/16 - Proverbs 15 verse 14 is so powerful - *"A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash."* I will humbly submit that since YOU are going through the One Year Bible, you are a wise person who is hungry for truth! :) Well, really, I mean it. The Bible is the best place to find Truth. And trash? Well, interestingly I was having a conversation with 3 friends recently - 2 of whom participated in this One Year Bible with us last year - and we were discussing how each of us don't watch TV. We didn't quite use the word "trash" when discussing TV, but I think the term can fit... **Q: Can you imagine living your life feeding only on TV? Yikes... So, really, when you look at how you invest your time are you hungry and feeding on truth or perhaps are you feeding on some trash? Will you throw that trash away?**

5/17 - Proverbs 15 verses 16 & 17 today are so powerfully true - *"It is better to have little with fear for the LORD than to have great treasure with turmoil. A bowl of soup with someone you love is better than steak with someone you hate."* **Q: Do you agree with today's Proverb that it is better to have just a little and fear the Lord versus having much and much turmoil?**

5/18 - Proverbs 15 verse 19 today teaches us: *"A lazy person has trouble all through life; the path of the upright is easy!"* This is a great reminder that we should live our lives upright, intentionally, and not be afraid of a little hard work! **Q: Have you ever struggled with laziness? How did you overcome it and become diligent? Can Jesus help us overcome our laziness?**

5/19 - Wow. Proverbs 15 verse 21 is convicting to me - *"Foolishness brings joy to those who have no sense; a sensible person stays on the right path."* Sometimes in the past I got joy from foolishness... not a good sign! And yes, I noticed sometimes that when I was getting joy from foolishness I was no longer on the right path... I'd strayed off a bit... God brought me back and welcomed me back on the right path once I got my senses. I pray we can avoid foolishness and the fake joy that comes with it. There is a difference I believe between healthy rest & play - and foolishness. We should know better. **Q: How are you doing with discerning the difference between healthy rest & play and foolishness in your life today? Do you ever veer toward foolishness? Why do you suppose this happens? Is this healthy?**

5/20 - Today in Proverbs chapter 15 verse 22 we read - *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."* Wow. . . this verse really is convicting for me on a couple of levels. The first thought for me is God - and how often (or not often) do I pray to God for counsel on my plans for my life? Truthfully, not enough. I pray to God daily - but it's usually pretty brief. I believe God wants us to come to him often in prayer asking for guidance and counsel on our plans. Imagine that - with God as an adviser on our plans, do you think they might succeed?? :) Secondly, I think about community - other people. And I think about, first of all, am I in community? Am I in a community of people that I know well and that know me? And if so, am I consulting this community on my life plans? Am I allowing people I know and love to advise me on my life? Think this would be wise? **Q: How about you - do you pray often to God for counsel and leading in your life plans? Are you in community with others that you know well and that know you? And do you consult this community with your plans and ask for their advice?**

5/21 - Proverbs 15 verse 24 is a beautiful meditation - *"The path of the wise leads to life above; they leave the grave behind."* **Q: Are you on the path of the wise?**

5/22 - Okay, I'm going to go very topical here today with Proverbs 15 verse 27 - "*Dishonest money brings grief to the whole family, but those who hate bribes will live.*" Has anyone seen the movie *Millions* by chance? It is definitely a feel good movie - with some interesting Christian themes (not all that I agree with how they portrayed in the movie - but overall good). I do recommend checking this film out. It really does this particular Proverb great justice. **Q: Do you agree with this Proverb? Have you ever seen it play out?**

5/23 - Proverbs 15 verse 30 today teaches us: "*A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.*" This is a great reminder to spread good cheer to others and to not hesitate in sharing good news with others whenever possible. It brings joy to the heart and health to the bones! **Q: How are you bringing good cheer to others in your life these days? How and when do you share good news with others? How can we bring joy to the heart of others?**

5/24 - Proverbs 15 verse 32 I think is one great reason for us to be in community with others: "*If you reject criticism, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding.*" I think if we are not in community with others, we can avoid criticism. Which is just as good as rejecting criticism. But, if we are truly in community with others - and yes, community can and should be messy really - then we will inevitably be criticized at some point and in some way by those around us in community. But this is a good thing! We need to listen to correction from those around us. We need to grow in understanding. Let us live our lives in community! **Q: Are you in community? A community that will actually constructively criticize you from time to time? And will you listen to this criticism so that you might grow in understanding?**

5/25 - Wow... how powerful is Proverbs 15 verse 33 today? - "*Fear of the LORD teaches a person to be wise; humility precedes honor.*" **Q: Do you believe this Proverb to be true? Does fear of God teach us to be wise? Why would humility precede honor?**

5/26 - Proverbs chapter 16 verse 3 is so very wise for each of us - "*Commit your work to the LORD, and then your plans will succeed.*" **Q: Based on today's Proverb, do you commit your work to God? Do you pray about your work and pray that it will be pleasing to God? Do you pray for others at your work? Do you pray for specific projects and meetings? Do you commit your work to God each and every day?**

5/27 - Proverbs chapter 16 verse 5 today teaches us: "*The LORD despises pride; be assured that the proud will be punished.*" This Proverb reminds me of a talk I recently heard by [Jim Collins](#), author of *Good to Great*. I am a huge fan of Jim Collins work and had the good fortune to hear him talk about his recent monograph titled "[Good to Great and the Social Sectors](#)", which I HIGHLY recommend to anyone who works in full time ministry or for a nonprofit - or even anyone who volunteers for either. It's only 42 pages long, but packed with incredible insights. (secular business insights - but great stuff) Anyway, Jim Collins wrapped up his talk with something that reminded me of this Proverb. He said something along the lines of, "As we go about our work and move our nonprofits/ministries from good to great, let us never fall into the trap of thinking that we've arrived. Let us not fall into the trap of ever thinking that we are great." **Q: Have you ever fallen into the trap of thinking you are great? Also, what verses or insights stand out to you in today's readings?**

5/28 - Proverbs 16 verse 7 is interesting today - "*When the ways of people please the LORD, he makes even their enemies live at peace with them.*" Do you believe this to be true? I do... And I think I've seen this in action in my own life very recently. Sometimes I think we can get so worried about our perceived enemies or whatever else - when really all we should be focusing on is our relationship with God. And this other stuff will work itself out. It's secondary. Our relationship with God is primary. **Q: Is this true in your life today? Has God ever given you peace with your "enemies"?**

5/29 - Proverbs 16 verse 9 is one of those seemingly simple Proverbs, that I think has a lot more depth to it than first glance: "*We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.*" **Q: Do you think this is true? We make our plans - but God determines our steps. Do you see this to be true in your own life? Have you made plans before, but then seen your steps somehow be guided in perhaps a different direction - perhaps a more godly direction? And then do you realize that it was God**

determining your steps? I have experienced this in my life - thankfully. I have made some interesting (i.e. bad) plans in my life in the past - and probably am still making some bad plans even today. But, I am trying to pray regularly to God to "lead me." I want God to determine my steps - and truly, I want God to determine my plans as well. But, if God's plan is not immediately clear for my life, I do believe he gives wisdom to discern direction - and then ultimately I believe God will determine our steps. Thank goodness!

5/30 - Proverbs 16 verse 11 is important for each of us to keep in mind in our daily work lives - *"The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard."* God cares about our work. He cares about our business deals. He knows if we are conducting our work fairly or not. If we are not fair in our business deals - if we are cheating our employer of our full and diligent work during our hours worked - then we are sinning. God sets the standard. Work fairly and honestly as if you were working for God as your boss. Because, truly, you are working for God in all that you do. No matter where you work. **Q: Do you believe that God cares about your work? Every single detail of your work?**

5/31 - Proverbs 16:13 today teaches us: *"The king is pleased with righteous lips; he loves those who speak honestly."* This Proverb reminds me of a worship song we sing in my church on occasion that goes: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight." Which, now that I type this I realize is Psalm 19:14. **Q: How are the words of your mouth these days? Are your lips righteous? Is speaking honestly pleasing to your King? Today, who is your King? Is your king yourself? Is your king Jesus?**

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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