

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

OLD TESTAMENT

9/1 - We finish up the book of Job today! King Solomon's book of Ecclesiastes begins tomorrow! **In our Job readings today, one very interesting thing that I really want to now study further is what exactly was the "behemoth" in Job Chapter 40 and what was the "leviathan" in Job Chapter 41? Were these dinosaurs??** I ask this very openly, in that I don't know. Currently my thinking is lined up with the New Living Translation saying that the behemoth is a hippopotamus and that the leviathan is a crocodile – and obviously you can view my blog entry below to see I have images up of a hippo and croc. But. . . last year some of you posted up some good questions and points on the behemoth and leviathan's being something else. . . **perhaps even dinosaurs?** I know we have some Biblical scholars and many pastors out there reading this. **What say you?**

9/1 - In our Job readings today, God talks all about Intelligent Design. :) Seriously, when I read today's chapters in Job 40 about the hippopotamus and 41 about the crocodile, I could not help but praise God for indeed being the Almighty Intelligent Designer! Great stuff. You cannot argue with Job chapter 40 verses 15 through 18 where God says to Job - *"Take a look at the mighty hippopotamus. I made it, just as I made you. It eats grass like an ox. See its powerful loins and the muscles of its belly. Its tail is as straight as a cedar. The sinews of its thighs are tightly knit together. Its bones are tubes of bronze. Its limbs are bars of iron. It is a prime example of God's amazing handiwork."* Amen. Thank you hippopotamus for reminding us today that God intelligently designed you too! And we can't forget about your intelligent and powerful design either Mr. Crocodile! :) God's words about you in Job 41 verses 31 through 34 - *"The crocodile makes the water boil with its commotion. It churns the depths. The water glistens in its wake. One would think the sea had turned white. There is nothing else so fearless anywhere on earth. Of all the creatures, it is the proudest. It is the king of beasts."* I thought the mighty Lion was the king of the beasts?? I guess not. The title goes to you Mr. and Mrs. Crocodiles! **Q: Do you believe in intelligent design?**

9/1 - Today in Job chapter 42 verse 1 we read – *"Then Job replied to the Lord: 'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.'"* This verse comes just after God speaks his mind to Job for the preceding 4 chapters. Job replies quite humbly and wisely in this verse above. This week as you read through God's words to Job in chapters 38 through 41, please some time to meditate upon who God is and how great God is. **Q: Ask yourself, do you truly know that God can do all things? Do you know that no plan of God's can be thwarted? In light of this knowledge, how then should you live your life? Will you align your entire life with God's plans and purposes? Will you consciously choose each and every day to live your life in accordance with God's will? Will you live in accordance with the will of the Creator of the universe and the very Creator of you? Or will you rebel against your Creator in some areas of your life? Will you dare to hold something back from God? Why? Why not let the rebellion toward God depart from your life? Why would you not live a fully holy and pleasing life for God?**

9/2 - Today we begin the book of Ecclesiastes! We will be reading about the vanity of life apart from God in this book. I think some people may find this to be a depressing book. I find it hopeful! Yes, indeed life is depressing apart from God. But life with God is an unending beautiful adventure. (certainly with some trials along the journey...) I pray the book of Ecclesiastes draws you into thanksgiving for the amazing life we can indeed have in relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit!

~ Ecclesiastes ~

Author: Probably Solomon, the son of David

Date: Probably tenth century B.C.

Content: This difficult book displays the dark philosophy of one who sought to find peace apart from God, but in the end realized that only futility is to be found there. The only possible solution to life's puzzle concludes this book: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Leading up to that positive statement is a series of pictures, each one portraying the futility of life without God. Wealth, wisdom, popularity, and pleasure are all put down as so much vanity. Only when a man turns from this world to God will he find true happiness.

Theme: There is a negative lesson to be learned from this book. It is a series of things not to do. It shows the emptiness of trying to live for oneself and to please oneself alone without considering the needs of others or considering God our Maker. There is a positive side, however. If one can see how not to live, perhaps then he will see what he ought to do and

be spared the heartaches of living a wasted life. (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 10)

Fantastic commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes titled "**On The Wings of Eternity**" is [at this link](#) and commentary titled "**The Theology of Ecclesiastes**" is [at this link](#). **Q: How has the book of Ecclesiastes stood out to you over the years? Has this been an important book to you?**

9/3 - I heard a good chunk of today's readings in the book of Ecclesiastes at a wedding a few years ago. And really, these verses work out quite nicely for a wedding if you think about it. Chapter 4 verses 9 through 12: *"Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken."* Pretty good stuff for a wedding, eh? The kicker is that last little bit about the triple-braided cord. The pastor at the wedding I was at said that God is the third strand in the triple-braided cord in marriage. I like that! Two people come together in marriage, and it's good. But, throw God into the mix of the marriage, as I'm sure we would all want to do, and you've got a very strong triple braided cord! Great stuff. **Q: If you are married, is there a triple braided cord in your marriage? Is God always part of your marriage? Part of your every day life?**

9/4 - Our readings in Ecclesiastes today reminded me of Solomon's writings in Proverbs! (It was likely the same author of both books - well, most of the Proverbs - hence the connection) It seemed like a series of Proverbs in today's readings - albeit with a more pessimistic view than the typical Proverbs we read... but still, overall great teachings and great reminders of how empty and vain life is apart from God. I love Chapter 7 verse 20, which is something we all probably need to be reminded of: *"There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins."* And certainly that was true back then and now. Jesus was the only one ever to walk the earth who never sinned. Now, to go along with verse 20 we later read verse 28, which I'm thinking probably did not make women too happy to read: *"Just one out of every thousand men I interviewed can be said to be upright, but not one woman!"* Now, first and foremost, keep in mind this is the author of Ecclesiastes' opinion or experience - not God saying this. Scripture does not declare anywhere that women are morally inferior to men. The bottom line of this verse is that basically no one is upright - men or women. The next verse 29 then says: *"I discovered that God created people to be upright, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path."* This verse again reminds us that though we were created for righteousness, we are broken. We are sinners. We are in need of a Savior. **Q: How about you? Do you know anyone who is always good and never sins? Anyone who does not need a Savior to forgive and heal them of their brokenness? Do you believe God created people to be upright? Without God and Jesus in our lives, do you think we are in severe danger of following our own downward path...?**

9/4 - Now, another verse that says "women" but that I think could just as well say "men" is chapter 7 verse 26 - *"I discovered that a seductive woman is more bitter than death. Her passion is a trap, and her soft hands will bind you. Those who please God will escape from her, but sinners will be caught in her snare."* This verse stood out to me as I read it, for one very modern and very dangerous reason: internet pornography. Now, I know I don't need to tell anyone reading this that internet pornography is an incredibly serious problem affecting far too many people. Many of whom are Christians. The reason this verse stood out to me was the reminder that internet pornography is literally a snare that so many people are caught in. They can't escape it. Well, they can, but it's not easy on their own. I have a hunch that someone reading this is addicted to internet pornography. Or, maybe isn't addicted - yet - but checks it out on occasion. Let me warn anyone who ever goes to an internet pornography site - it is a snare! A trap. Like chapter 9 verse 12 in Ecclesiastes today says: *"Like fish in a net or birds in a snare, people are often caught by sudden tragedy."* Visiting a pornography website even once is a sudden tragedy that has come to your doorstep. You will then be like a fish in a net or a bird in a snare. You will need much prayer and counseling to escape it's lure. I write this to warn folks too who have never visited an internet pornography site, but maybe someday in the future will be tempted to do so. Don't do it. Ever. Run from it. Flee. Actually, I've had to think about this because I know some of my friends (friends from many years ago - who I still try to witness to) watch pornographic movies on occasion. I know it happens at bachelor parties, etc. Honestly, I don't go to bachelor parties at all these days - unless I know for sure there won't be any of this nonsense. But, I have a hunch someday I may be surprised at some gathering where a porn movie will be shown. And guess what? I will run. Literally, I will flee that location of wherever that movie is being shown, and I won't look back. Why? I won't just sit there and let that stuff pollute my mind. Pollute my very soul. Pornography is exactly that - soul pollution. It pollutes your soul! I realize I've been typing way too long on this issue - but I do so because I know it's a major issue for our society today. It is a major issue for the church. Please let me encourage you in that if you are ever in a situation with friends that

pornography or strippers or anything like that appears that you literally run. Flee. And don't look back. And don't fret about what your friends think. Your soul is so much more important. If anyone reading this is currently struggling with pornography, let me encourage you to talk to someone you trust about it immediately, and get help. Today. Go to counseling. You cannot get out of the snare on your own. You may succeed for short periods of time, but long-term you are going to need some help. But, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and his precious blood poured out on the Cross for our sins, yes, indeed you can be freed of the snare of pornography. You quickly need to run toward your freedom in Christ now; connect with pastors, friends & counselors who can keep you accountable and give you tools to beat this; and then please don't ever look back to that which pollutes your very soul. In Christ, my brothers and sisters, we are forgiven. And Forgiveness will heal us. If we will let Him. **Q: How do you avoid the traps and tragedies of sexual temptation and sin your life today? Do you ever literally run away from it?**

9/5 - We finish up the book of Ecclesiastes today, and what a finish it is! Song of Solomon begins tomorrow! I love Ecclesiastes chapter 10 today. It's basically a series of rapid Proverbs. Great great stuff. I had forgotten about this gem of a chapter in the Bible. This chapter is again a great reminder of why Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, wrote many of the Proverbs. He had godly wisdom no doubt! I love verse 1 in this chapter today - *"Dead flies will cause even a bottle of perfume to stink! Yes, an ounce of foolishness can outweigh a pound of wisdom and honor."* This is a powerful truth for us to take to heart. We can so often live our lives with wisdom and honor... and then, we let an ounce of foolishness seep into our lives and it outweighs all of our wisdom and honor! This is so true... I think this is particularly true if we are harboring any unchecked sin in our life. We need to put that sin in check! We need to repent and flee from that sin. Otherwise we are harboring an ounce of foolishness in our lives that can outweigh our pounds of wisdom and honor... and this is just as bad as a dead fly in a bottle of perfume! What a great analogy by Solomon. Think of unchecked sin in your life a dead fly in the perfume of your life... it is a sad but true analogy... Get that dead fly out of your life! **Q: What is a dead fly that you need to get out of the perfume of your life?**

9/5 - I love verse 18 as well - *"Laziness lets the roof leak, and soon the rafters begin to rot."* This is so very true, of course. **Q: Are there any areas of laziness in your life where you are letting some "roofs leak"? Are there "rafters rotting" in your life? Will you pray to God for freedom from your laziness in those areas of your life and will you simply go and fix the roof?**

9/5 - Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 13 is the key verse in this entire book! *"Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person."* Take a moment to meditate on this verse. **Q: Do you agree with this teaching? Do you fear God? What does it mean to fear God? Are you obedient to God's commands? Do you believe this is your duty?**

9/6 - Today we begin the Song of Solomon! Now, for those of you that have not read Song of Solomon before, let me say this up front – this is a book for married folks y'all! :) Well, yes, us single folks can read it, but we would do well to know that this book is all about the beauty of love and, yes, sex - within marriage. As we all know, love and sex can get so very twisted by our modern world these days.

~ **Song of Solomon** ~

Author: Solomon

Date: Tenth century B.C.

Content: This book, about the love of Solomon and a Shulamite woman, consists of a series of lyrics or songs, hence the designation in the text: the Song of Songs. It is a simple but moving piece, describing the longing of two lovers for one another, of the struggles that need to be overcome, of the tender feelings that love awakens, and of the joy that the lovers find in being together. The young women of Jerusalem, who appear with Solomon and his beloved, add to the dramatic effect of the story by adding observations of their own.

Theme: The most obvious meaning of this narrative is that human love, which was ordained by God, is good and holy when enjoyed in obedience to the commands of God. Many interpreters have found a symbolic meaning in the book, however, and point to the love of God for Israel or the love of Christ for his church. Seen in this way it underscores the teaching of the New Testament that God is love (1 John 4:8). (Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers *"The One Year Bible Companion"* pp. 10-11) **Q: How has the Song of Solomon stood out to you over the years? Have you studied this book before? What have you learned? What do you hope to learn from the book this year?**

9/7 - Today we finish up the Song of Solomon! Song of Solomon Chapter 8 verse 4 stood out to me today when the young woman says- *"I want you to promise, O women of Jerusalem, not to awaken love until the time is right."* This is an interesting concept I think - of not awakening love until the time is right. The reason I bring this up is because I know tons

of people who are single. And probably a lot of folks reading this blog are single. And I've come to realize that single people can oftentimes stress out over being single... as if they are never going to get married. Which, perhaps for some, may be true. I do honestly believe that some are called to live a life of singleness. However, if you are single I think stressing about it does no good. Trying to "awaken love before the time is right" does no good. In fact, it can be very bad. I know of some folks that have gotten themselves in bad dating situations, simply because I think these folks were trying to "awaken love before the time is right." My thought here is that the Young Woman from Song of Solomon is absolutely right. If we are single, we need to remember that everything is in God's hands. If God has a plan for us to get married, then we really don't need to stress about the timing of it all. It will happen when it should happen. When the time is right. And to try to awaken love before the time is right typically does not work out well. So, that's my two cents today. :) I just hope that if you are single and feel like you've been single for too long, don't stress out about it! God's timing and God's plans for your life are indeed a mystery - but a beautiful mystery. He will awaken love when - and if - the time is right. Let us always remember in all areas of our life to "Let go and Let God"... **Q: How have you learned the wisdom of "not awakening love until the time is right" in your life? How do you share this wisdom with others in your life?**

9/8 - Today we begin the book of the prophet Isaiah! A powerful quote from Bible.org [at this link](#) about this book is: "The Book of Isaiah is one of the most important books of the Old Testament. While little is known of the personal life of the prophet, he is considered to be one of the greatest of them all. The book is a collection of oracles, prophecies, and reports; but the common theme is the message of salvation. There was, according to these writings, no hope in anything that was made by people... There would be a purging of the nation because God is holy. Before the nation could inherit the promises made to the fathers, it would have to be made holy."

~ *Isaiah* ~

Author: Isaiah

Date: Eighth century B.C.

Content: Isaiah's long ministry lasted almost sixty years and covered the reigns of four kings, the last one being Hezekiah, the reformer. Isaiah was sent primarily to Judah, although his message concerns the northern kingdom of Israel as well. He lived through the awful days of the civil war between Israel and Judah in 734-732 B.C. and saw the destruction of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C. the grim lesson taught by Israel's fall was not lost on Isaiah, and he used it to encourage Hezekiah to trust in the Lord. The Lord delivered Judah from the mighty Assyrian army by sending a plague to destroy the camp. Isaiah also looked beyond his own time to the coming exile of Judah and the deliverance that God would provide.

Theme: Isaiah was one of Jesus' favorite books and he quoted it frequently, because the central theme is salvation. God is seen as the Savior of his people, who redeemed them from Egypt, who will redeem them from their coming captivity, and who will send his beloved Servant to bear the sins of us all (Isaiah 53:6). God freely offers to pardon all who will turn to him in repentance and faith. The future kingdom of God on earth is also described in exquisite detail as a time when men will lay down their swords and, in peace, sing praises to God their King. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 11*)

9/8 - Today in Isaiah chapter 1 verses 2 and 3 we read these words of the prophet Isaiah: "*Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."* **Q: These words were spoken to the Israelites in the 8th century B.C., but do you suppose they can apply to our modern world today as well? Do we know God? Do we truly understand God?** I do think that sometimes we can forget that God is our Father. We are his children. He has brought us up. And we have rebelled. Is an ox at times smarter than us in terms of knowing who its master is? Do we truly know who our master is? I'm afraid sometimes I live my life as if I am my own master. I am "master of my own destiny!" Well. . . am I really? What about you. **Q: Who is your master day in and day out? Do you know your Master? Do you understand?**

9/9 - Isaiah chapter 5 verse 20 was directed at Judah in the 8th century B.C., but I wonder if this verse can have application to our world today? "*Destruction is certain for those who say that evil is good and good is evil; that dark is light and light is dark; that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.*" Can you think of any examples in our modern world where evil is portrayed as good and good is portrayed as evil? I can think of far too many examples unfortunately. This twisting of good and evil, light and dark, bitter and sweet did not make God happy back in eighth century B.C. **Q: Think God is happy about this twisting of good and evil today?** This makes me think of Gordon Gekko's infamous lines from the movie Wall Street: "I am not a destroyer of companies. I am a liberator of them! The point is, ladies and gentleman, that greed -- for lack of a better word -- is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms -- greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge -- has marked

the upward surge of mankind." **How do you suppose Isaiah would react to hearing these words from Mr. Gekko...? :) How should we react? Or... do we react at all?**

9/10 - Wonderful readings today in Isaiah chapter 6 as Isaiah is commissioned as a prophet by the Lord! Great stuff! The seraphim mentioned in this chapter are not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible by name, though they do seem similar to the "living creatures" described in [Revelation 4:6-9](#). It is intriguing to note that even the seraphim with two of their wings "covered their faces" (verse 2) before God. No wonder Isaiah got very scared in verse 5 because he saw the Lord with his own eyes in this vision! It is thought by some commentaries that this vision of Isaiah's may have taken place in the Temple in Jerusalem. Below are two pieces of artwork depicting the seraphim and verse 3: *"In a great chorus they sang, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!'"* Amen...

9/10 - In Isaiah chapter 7 today we read about the sign of Immanuel in verses 14 through 16! *"All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel--'God is with us.' By the time this child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will know enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong. But before he knows right from wrong, the two kings you fear so much--the kings of Israel and Aram--will both be dead."* I don't know about you, but when I read this today I immediately thought of the virgin Mary and Jesus. With good reason, as we'll recall from the gospel of Matthew chapter 1 verse 23: *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'"* Commentaries suggest that yes, indeed, these passages in Isaiah are ultimately wholly fulfilled in Jesus, who truly is "God with us." But, commentaries also suggest that this prophecy in Isaiah had a double fulfillment - first in a young woman from the house of Ahaz who was not married, but would marry and then have a son - and by the time the son was the age 2, the two invading kings would be destroyed. Then, the second fulfillment of this prophecy was indeed in the One we now celebrate as the true Immanuel, Jesus Christ, God with us! **Q: What is your reaction to reading prophecies about Jesus here in Isaiah? Do you believe these truly are prophecies of Jesus? Why do you suppose God orchestrated these New Testament prophecies in the Old Testament times?**

9/11 - I got chills today when reading Isaiah chapter 9 about the hope in our Messiah, Jesus Christ! Keep in mind that the book of the prophet Isaiah was written in the 8th century B.C.... 800 years before Jesus walked this earth! Verses 1 & 2 start off this chapter in such a beautiful way: *"Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will soon be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light--a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow."* Compare these verses to the Gospel of [Matthew chapter 4 verses 12 through 17 at this link](#) when Jesus begins his public ministry. Amazing eh? Jesus Christ is the great light! The light of the world! And indeed, a light to the Gentiles! Verses 6 & 7 continued the chills for me as I read them - and reminded me of an incredibly beautiful song that is sung at my parent's church every Christmas: *"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the LORD Almighty will guarantee this!"* **Q: Do you believe that these verses were prophesying the coming of Jesus Christ 800 years later? Do you believe that Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor? Mighty God? Prince of Peace? Do you believe that Jesus rules forever with fairness and justice?** Praise God for this prophecy in Isaiah that a child would be born to us!

9/12 - Isaiah chapter 11 in today's readings is an incredible Messianic chapter of the Old Testament! Check out a webpage outlining the Messianic prophecies from Isaiah chapter 11 and then their fulfillment in the New Testament [at this link](#). The life and character of Jesus is so clear in chapter 1 verses 1 through 5 today: *"Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot--yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will never judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay. He will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth. He will be clothed with fairness and truth."* **Q: Does this sound like anyone you personally know? I pray so.**

9/12 - Then, verses 6 through 9 are such a beautiful reflection on the peace and safety of the coming Messianic age when Jesus returns: *"In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves*

will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD." **Q: Can you imagine all of this? Can you imagine all of this ever taking place, apart from Jesus coming into our world? Do you look forward to experiencing the day of the lion and the lamb living together in peace? (Or as I heard a pastor quip once, the dog and the cat eating out of the same bowl! :)**

9/13 - Today Isaiah chapter 12 is a very short chapter. But it is a wonderful song of praise to God! Verse 2 reads: *"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."* **Q: How does this verse resonate with you? Do you frequently sing songs of praise to the Lord? Do you trust in God? Are you not afraid? Is God your strength and your song?**

9/13 - In Isaiah chapter 13 we are beginning a new section of the book. Chapters 1 through 12 were primarily chapters of judgment against the southern kingdom of Judah, as well as some mentions of the northern kingdom of Israel. Chapter 13 begins 11 chapters of judgment on other nations, beginning with Babylon. At this time in history (early 700's B.C.) Babylon was still part of the Assyrian empire. So this oracle from Isaiah was incredible in that it spoke of Babylon's destruction even before Babylon became a world power! Babylon brought about the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem later between the years of 605 and 586 B.C. But then Babylon would be conquered by Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C. An interesting commentary I read on chapter 14 verses 12 through 15 is that some think Isaiah is giving a description of the fall of Satan from heaven in these verses. However, most commentaries seem to say contextually that these verses are about the king of Babylon. I do see how some could think that these 4 verses could apply to the fall of Satan - *"How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.' But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths."*

9/14 - This week in Isaiah we will read many prophecies against cities and kingdoms. I realize these can be tough to read in some ways. As you read these prophecies, consider why these prophecies were written. Why were these prophecies proclaimed by Isaiah? Bible.org's excellent commentary on this section of the book of Isaiah titled **"The Burdens Upon the Nations"** is worth spending a few minutes reading [at this link](#). Today we read in Isaiah chapter 15 a message against Moab, or the Moabites! **Q: Now, the big question for each of us is how many sermons in your life have you ever heard that touch on the Moabites??** :) I will admit that there is only one I can think of - and I actually just heard it on my iPod while jogging. From a previous post, many of you know that I'm a fan of Josh Harris and listen to his sermons often. Well, he has a recent sermon about the Moabites from [Numbers 22 through 25](#), where the Moabites were first fearful of Israel (Num. 22) because of their size, and they realized they could not defeat them in open warfare. So, they tried to get Balaam to curse the Israelites (Num 23 & 24), but Balaam wouldn't do it because God was giving him messages of blessings upon the Israelites! So, finally the Moabites decide to simply seduce the Israelites (Num 25) into worshiping their gods and this strategy worked! To the point where God ended up killing 24,000 Israelites with a plague (Num 25:9) because of their disobedience! Josh Harris does a great job of integrating this story of the Israelites and the Moabites into our lives and how we can fall prey to temptation just like the Israelites if we're not careful. [You can download an MP3 of this great sermon on temptation at this link](#). And you can check out more of Josh Harris' sermons online at this link: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/covenantlifechurch> **Q: Have you ever heard any great sermons on the book of Isaiah?**

9/15 - Today in Isaiah chapter 19 we read the message concerning Egypt! You can gain further context on this chapter today by reading [Jeremiah chapter 46](#) and [Ezekiel chapters 29-32](#). Both of these books we will be reading later this year, just after Isaiah. There are some really interesting verses at the end of chapter 19, beginning in verse 18 and going through the end of the chapter. Verses 19 & 20 are awesome: *"In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and there will be a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When the people cry to the LORD for help against those who oppress them, he will send them a savior who will rescue them."* This reminds me of Joseph & Mary's flight to Egypt with Jesus as an infant to be safe from Herod's decree to kill all boys under the age of 2! (see [Matthew 2:13-21](#)) Our Savior was sent into Egypt for a brief period of His life! **Q: What is your reaction to reading prophecies about Jesus' life here in Isaiah? Is it beautiful to you?**

9/16 - Today in Isaiah chapter 23 we read a message about Tyre. Ancient Tyre was a city on the seacoast of Phoenicia and is still a city today in modern day southern Lebanon. In the days of the prophet Isaiah, it was a major trading center, wealthy and full of corruption. Tyre was also rebuked by the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah -

books that we'll read later this year in the One Year Bible. A good history & overview of ancient and modern day Tyre is [at this website link](#). Below is a map of modern day Lebanon that shows the location of Tyre. And below that is a modern day picture of Tyre's ancient ruins. Some more great images of ancient Tyre's ruins are [at this link](#). Isaiah chapter 24 today begins 4 chapters of judgment and blessing in the final days! The time of God's final victory over evil. There is some pretty "heavy" stuff to consider about the last days when reading this chapter, to say the least. But, I absolutely love the way the chapter ends - as God's story truly will end as we'll read about more in the book of Revelation later this year - with verses 21 through 24: *"In that day the LORD will punish the fallen angels in the heavens and the proud rulers of the nations on earth. They will be rounded up and put in prison until they are tried and condemned. Then the LORD Almighty will mount his throne on Mount Zion. He will rule gloriously in Jerusalem, in the sight of all the leaders of his people. There will be such glory that the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away."* **Q: Are you looking forward to this moment of the Lord's final victory?**

9/17 - We have great readings in Isaiah today about the judgment and restoration of Israel! I think Isaiah chapter 27 verses 11 through 13 capture the essence of today's readings: *"The people are like the dead branches of a tree, broken off and used for kindling beneath the cooking pots. Israel is a foolish and stupid nation, for its people have turned away from God. Therefore, the one who made them will show them no pity or mercy. Yet the time will come when the LORD will gather them together one by one like handpicked grain. He will bring them to his great threshing floor--from the Euphrates River in the east to the brook of Egypt in the west. In that day the great trumpet will sound. Many who were dying in exile in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem to worship the LORD on his holy mountain."* **Q: How do Isaiah's readings about judgment and restoration stand out to you?**

9/18 - Today the Lord continues his messages of woe against Jerusalem and Judah through the prophet Isaiah! Isaiah chapter 29 verses 15 and 16 I found to be so powerful to consider... *"Destruction is certain for those who try to hide their plans from the LORD, who try to keep him in the dark concerning what they do! "The LORD can't see us," you say to yourselves. "He doesn't know what is going on!" How stupid can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you. You are only the jars he makes! Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "He didn't make us"? Does a jar ever say, "The potter who made me is stupid"?"* **Q: How true are these words? Have you ever tried to hide your plans from God? Did it work out? How apropos the point in verse 16 is where some people said: "God didn't make us!" Ever hear words like this today from others? How sad is this? Will you pray for others in your life today who may feel that God didn't make them? Will you pray for those in your life today that do not believe in God? Will you pray for them to learn that indeed the potter who made them is not stupid? Will you pray that they learn that the Potter who made them is God who loves them so very dearly!**

9/19 - Today in Isaiah chapter 30 we read about blessings for God's people! You'll notice in verses 12 and 15 the term "Holy One of Israel" is used for God. An interesting thing to note about this term "Holy One of Israel" is that it occurs a total of 26 times in the book of the prophet Isaiah - and only 6 times elsewhere in the rest of the Old Testament! (I think it is such a beautiful term - maybe in part because my church sings a wonderful song occasionally w/ these lyrics: "For I am the Lord your God. The Holy One of Israel. Your Savior. I am the Lord - do not fear - I am the Lord". Anyone else's church sing this song?) Some scholars over history have challenged whether the entire 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah were really all written by the same person, Isaiah. Well, the continuity of the use of the term "Holy One of Israel" throughout the book has been the strongest argument for the unity of the book of Isaiah. **Q: Who do you believe is the Holy One of Israel? Who is the Holy One in your life? What does Holiness mean to you?**

9/20 - Today we read Isaiah chapter 35, which is a wonderful glimpse of God's Kingdom Come! The preceding Chapter 34 is a message of judgment to the nations during the end times. And then Chapter 35 is a message of hope for those who love, believe in and are obedient to the Lord. I love verse 8 in chapter 35: *"And a main road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-hearted people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there."* I like that concept! The Highway of Holiness! **Q: If you could take the Highway of Holiness right now, would you? Do you look forward to walking on the Highway of Holiness in the future? In the midst of our often chaotic and un-holy world, will you seek only the Highway of Holiness for your life today and forevermore?**

9/21 - Great readings in Isaiah featuring King Hezekiah today! You'll recall from yesterday's readings that King Sennacherib of Assyria's representative threw down some serious trash-talking at the walls of Jerusalem. (see yesterday's blog entry below). Well today in chapter 37 we read about Hezekiah seeking the Lord's help. Hezekiah takes all of this to God in prayer. Good move! **Q: How often in our lives today, when challenges come our way, do we**

take the challenges everywhere else BUT to God? Wouldn't it be easier to take them directly to God? Why do we turn to alcohol or drugs or food or worrying or _____ (fill in your blank here) when we can simply take our challenges to the one true living God who can actually do something with them? Will you model what Hezekiah did when he received distressing news from the King of Assyria, in verses 14 through 17: *"After Hezekiah received the letter and read it, he went up to the LORD's Temple and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the LORD: "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth. Listen to me, O LORD, and hear! Open your eyes, O LORD, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God."*

9/21 - I love Hezekiah's poem of praise in chapter 38. Verse 16 stood out to me: *"Lord, your discipline is good, for it leads to life and health."* **Q: Would you agree with Hezekiah on this point? Is God's discipline good? Does God's discipline lead to life and health? Are you accepting God's discipline in your life today?**

9/22 - Today in Isaiah chapter 39 we read about Hezekiah receiving envoys from Babylon. Unfortunately, he is a bit too hospitable with these envoys! He believes showing off his wealth will prove that he has worldly power and that the Babylonians will respect him and Judah. Isaiah sees that Hezekiah is relying on worldly wealth and not God, and Isaiah delivers a word from God that Judah will be exiled to Babylon. Indeed, this comes true in 115 years in the future from when Isaiah delivers this word in this chapter. We will read more about the Babylonian exile later in this year's One Year Bible readings. **Q: How about us, in our lives today – do we try to impress people with our worldly wealth or toys or stuff, like Hezekiah was trying to impress the Babylonians? And further, do we actually try to rely on this worldly stuff rather than rely on God?**

9/23 - Today in Isaiah chapter 42 we read some amazing prophecies about Jesus! Verses 1 through 4 in Isaiah 42 are known as the "Servant Song," in which the servant is the coming Messiah, Jesus. There are 3 other servant songs in Isaiah we'll read in the coming days. The nation of Israel, as well as the Messiah, are both often called "servant". The nation of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and the Messiah is the high priest who atones for the sins of the world. In Isaiah chapter 42 verse 1 today we read: *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations."* Verses 1 through 4 are quoted in part in [Matthew 12:18-21](#). **Q: Do you see the prophecies about Jesus as you read today's chapter 42? Is this chapter and its prophecies encouraging to you?**

9/24 - Isaiah's words in chapter 44 verses 18 & 19 today are classic Old Testament very direct words! *"Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a chunk of wood?"* **Q: I wonder about us in our lives today - do we create idols of our own today? Maybe our idols are not made out of chunks of wood these days. But do we create idols perhaps out of other people? Do we create idols out of material goods? Do we create idols out of our careers? Do we create idols out of how we spend our time? Are you bowing down and worshiping any "chunks of wood" in your life today?** Please turn any idols you might have over to Jesus and allow him to heal you from worshiping those idols in your life!

9/25 - In yesterday and today's Isaiah chapter 45 readings we read about King Cyrus of Persia! Verse 13 says this about Cyrus in today's readings: *"I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide all his actions. He will restore my city and free my captive people--and not for a reward! I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!"* The interesting thing to note here is that Cyrus was not Jewish - he was a Gentile ruler who was raised up for the purpose of freeing the Israelite captives from exile in Babylon and allowing them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. In yesterday's readings in chapter 45 verse 1 Cyrus was even referred to as "God's anointed." This is the only place in the Bible where a Gentile ruler is said to be anointed. It's also very interesting to note that Isaiah is calling Cyrus by name some 150 years before Cyrus ruled! Isaiah prophesied from 740 to 681 B.C. and Cyrus ruled from 559 to 530 B.C. Some Bible commentaries suggest that Cyrus read these prophecies of Isaiah during his reign and was so moved by them that he decided to indeed fulfill them. In any case, Cyrus played a pivotal role in our spiritual history - allowing the promise of Abraham's many descendants to continue to the fulfillment of the coming Messiah in Jesus! Isaiah chapter 45 verses 22 & 23 are powerful and foreshadow Jesus' ministry here on earth: *"Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other. I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to my name."* These verses are also foreshadowing of the book of Revelation that we will read later this year. We read Paul quoting these verses to describe Jesus in [Romans 14:11](#) and [Philippians 2:10-11](#).

Q: Do you believe that all the world should look to God for salvation? Is there another god? Is Jesus God? Do you believe that one day every tongue will confess allegiance to the name of Jesus and every knee will bow to Jesus?

9/26 - Isaiah chapter 49 verse 6 is sometimes referred to as "the great commission of the Old Testament"! Here it is: *"You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."* Paul and Barnabas quote this verse in part in [Acts 13:47](#). The preceding 5 verses (1-5) in chapter 49 are considered the second servant song in Isaiah and are thought to refer to Jesus, the coming Messiah. Isaiah chapter 50 verses 4 through 9 in today's readings are considered the third servant song (out of a total of four) in Isaiah. It's interesting, when I initially read these verses in chapter 50 I really thought they were solely about the prophet Isaiah. But, as we all know by now from our readings in Isaiah - and we'll see this again in big ways in our coming day's readings - Isaiah often had the coming Savior of the world, Jesus, on his mind when he was writing this incredible book of the Old Testament in the eighth century B.C.! **Q: What's your reaction to reading about all of the prophecies of Jesus in the book of Isaiah? Do they encourage you? Do they strengthen your faith in any way?**

9/27 - Isaiah chapter 53 is one of the most powerful chapters of the Bible - and one of the saddest to really meditate upon. Isaiah chapter 53 is all about Jesus! This is a powerful chapter to read... I'm sure you likely caught that this chapter was about Jesus when you first read it, but if not, please re-read the chapter again and do you see how Isaiah is prophesying Jesus' passion and death? It is astounding to realize these words of Isaiah's were written in 8th century B.C. Verse 5 tells us: *"But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!"* **Q: Do you believe that the words of Isaiah's in chapter 53 today are about Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus was wounded and crushed for your sins? Was he beaten that you might have peace? Are you healed because Jesus was whipped and then murdered on a cross?**

9/28 - Today we read Isaiah chapter 55, which is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible! I went to a wedding several years ago in Napa, California and God led me to a church in that town on a Sunday morning where the pastor preached an incredible sermon from Isaiah 55. It is a beautiful chapter for all of us who are Thirsty. Let us drink deeply of God's Word today! Verse 1 tells us - *"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink--even if you have no money!"* **Q: Are you drinking freely of the Bible this year? Even if you have no money, do you believe that God is inviting you to drink deeply of his True and Holy Water, His Word? Are you thirsty?**

9/28 - In verses 10-12 we read: *"10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. 12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."* **Q: How do these above verses resonate with you, based on our One Year Bible readings? Particularly verse 11 above - is God's Word accomplishing something in you this year through reading the Bible each day? Is the Bible "watering" you? Are you Thirsty? Do you feel that you are going out in joy and being led forth in peace? Have the mountains and hills burst into song before you? Are the trees of the field clapping their hands in your life today?**

9/29 - Today in Isaiah chapter 57 verses 20 & 21 we have a chance to think about that sometimes elusive word "peace": *"But those who still reject me are like the restless sea. It is never still but continually churns up mire and dirt. There is no peace for the wicked," says my God.*" I don't know about you, but I know I have gone through many days of my life without true peace - and many days with true peace. And I do honestly believe that there is no peace in our lives apart from God. When we live our lives solely for our own selfish motives, we live a very chaotic un-restful un-peaceful life I believe. But, when we turn our lives over to God, when we embrace God, when we love God, and when we are obedient to God's will for our lives, we come to know true peace! And it is indeed a peace that surpasses all understanding. I pray that each of us is walking in the light of God's peace this very day. And tomorrow. And the next day. Please, don't ever step out of the peace of God and back into the chaos of living for yourself. **Q: Do you agree with this verse saying "There is no peace for the wicked."? Where have you found peace in your life? Have you found peace through righteousness?**

9/29 - Today in Isaiah chapter 59 we read about warnings against sin - which were written for Israel in 8th century B.C. **Q: Do you think we should heed these warnings today as well? Any of these warnings in chapter 59 sound like they could have been written for our modern day?** In verses 9 & 10 today we read - *"It is because of all this evil that*

deliverance is far from us. That is why God doesn't punish those who injure us. No wonder we are in darkness when we expected light. No wonder we are walking in the gloom. No wonder we grope like blind people and stumble along. Even at brightest noontime, we fall down as though it were dark. No wonder we are like corpses when compared to vigorous young men!" When I read these verses above, I for some reason think of people in our world today who are addicted to pornography. Pornography is a horrific sin that indeed turns vigorous young men into "corpses" of themselves. Pornography sells you "vigor", but it delivers just the opposite - death. I pray that if anyone reading this is addicted to pornography that you'll run for your very life to counseling. Seriously. Your life is too short and precious to walk around like a corpse any more! Go for God! You likely can't pull out of the addiction on your own. You'll need help - immediately. Find an addiction counselor in your town ASAP. Please don't walk in the darkness of this deadly addiction anymore...

NEW TESTAMENT

9/1 - Today in Second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 17 and 18 we read – *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* How do these 2 verses speak to you? I have a hunch that you have probably heard the first of these 2 verses before? (Michael W. Smith has a child reciting this verse at the beginning of one of his Worship albums.) I find it interesting to consider the first verse – being a new creation – along with the second verse – because God reconciled us through Jesus. I absolutely love the first verse. If we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, we are indeed a new creation. Our old self has gone and the new self has come. And why do we receive this amazing gift? Because the Creator of All has reconciled his Creation (us) to himself through Jesus and the ministry of reconciliation. We have been reconciled to God! This is a powerful thought to consider. It is a joyful thought! It is also a thought that should make us realize that there was a time in our life when we were not reconciled with God. And it should make us realize that there are people in this world right now whom we know who are hurting and are not reconciled with God. **Q: Are you reconciled with God through Jesus? Do you rejoice frequently in the Spirit and in prayers of thanksgiving that you are a new creation? Are you working and praying for reconciliation for your family and friends and others God has brought into your life? Do you believe that they want to leave their old self behind and become a new creation?**

9/2 - I love Paul's opening words in Second Corinthians chapter 6 verses 1 and 2 today, as he quotes from the prophet Isaiah - *"As God's partners, we beg you not to reject this marvelous message of God's great kindness. For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. Today is the day of salvation."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? What does it mean to you? Do you believe that God is ready to help you right now? Do you believe that today is the day of salvation?**

9/3 - Second Corinthians chapter 7 verse 1 today is powerful - *"Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God."* **Q: How does this verse speak to you? What promises do we have as followers of Jesus Christ? In light of these promises, should we cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body? And cleanse ourselves of everything that can defile our spirit? Are you living your life in such a way that you are moving toward complete purity? Do you believe that the Cross of Jesus Christ purifies you? What does the Cross of Jesus ultimately purify you for?**

9/4 - Second Corinthians chapter 7 verses 9 & 10 teaches us a great lesson - *"It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow."* **Q: Do you believe that God can use sorrow for redemptive purposes? Do you believe there is such a thing as godly sorrow? Can sorrow turn us away from sin and toward salvation? Have you ever experienced such a sorrow?** I know that I have. There have been times in my life in the past where I was pursuing the false glamour of sin. And that pursuit of sin delivered great sorrow. But, thanks be to God for that sorrow! It was a godly sorrow that turned me away from sin and toward God's salvation. So, if you are experiencing sorrow in your life right now, or when you do, please seek God in the midst of the sorrow. Perhaps the sorrow was not caused by your sin, as it was in my case. But perhaps God can still use that sorrow ultimately for his redemptive purposes.

9/5 - Second Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 today is one of those verses that can really make you think about how blessed you truly are and why through Jesus: *"You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was. Though he was very rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich."* I imagine that most of us

reading this blog right now are living pretty nice lives overall. In most respects it may be fair to call us "rich." Many of us have rich lives in terms of where we live, our spiritual freedoms, and other freedoms. And why do we have these riches in our lives today? Because Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and made himself poor for our sakes. Jesus was born in a manger. He lived his life "homeless" in many ways. He was sinless, but yet died a criminal's death by execution on a cross. Jesus was very rich in heaven. But yet, because of his love and kindness, he made himself poor and died on a cross for us, so that we would be "rich." **Q: And now, realizing this, how are we utilizing our riches? Are we demonstrating love and kindness to others like Jesus did to us? Are we investing our lives - lives that were given to us by God and saved by Jesus - for Kingdom purposes? Are you living your life as if you are literally working for God in all that you do?**

9/6 - Second Corinthians chapter 8 verse 23 stood out to me today - *"If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And these brothers are representatives of the churches. They are splendid examples of those who bring glory to Christ."* I like that last sentence a lot. I believe each of us are called to be splendid examples of those who bring glory to Jesus! **Q: How is your example these days? How are you bringing glory to Jesus in your life these days?**

9/7 - Today in Second Corinthians chapter 9 verses 6 through 8 we read these words of Paul's - *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."* Great verses! A lot of ground is covered in these verses. **Q: Do you believe that we reap what we sow? What are you sowing? What have you decided in your heart to give? Do you give without reluctance? Do you give without compulsion? Are you a cheerful giver? Do you realize that God graciously gives you all that you need so that you will participate in good works? Are you participating in God's grace that he is freely giving to you?**

9/8 - Wow... I love Paul's words to the church in Second Corinthians chapter 10 verses 3 through 5: *"We are human, but we don't wage war with human plans and methods. We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds. With these weapons we break down every proud argument that keeps people from knowing God. With these weapons we conquer their rebellious ideas, and we teach them to obey Christ."* This is incredibly powerful for us to realize. We are human. God is God. We are not God. But, good news is that we have access to God's "weapons" through our relationship with his son Jesus. And trust me. In this fallen world, we need God's weapons. We need his strength. We need his grace. We need his forgiveness. We need his miracles. We need his Son. These are the only ways that we will knock down the Devil's strongholds in our lives and in others lives. How do we access God's mighty weapons? My personal opinion is that prayer is one of the best things we can do in this regards. I don't know about you, but I do not pray enough. However, just lately I've been praying a bit more, and I'll tell you, God has moved! Prayer is such a beautiful mystery. We need it like the air we breathe. Please pray. Other ways to access God's mighty weapons are certainly reading and studying God's Word daily, investing in a church community at least weekly (even more is better via small groups, etc.), and confessing and repenting and fleeing from sin. Then, with God's weapons we are called to introduce others to who God is and teach them to obey Christ. **Q: How are you accessing God's mighty weapons these days? Are you praying? Are you reading and studying the Bible daily? Are you investing in a church community weekly? Are you confessing and repenting and fleeing from sin? Or are you relying on your human plans and methods to make it through the day? Are you relying on worldly weapons? Will you seek instead God's mighty weapons?**

9/9 - Paul's words in Second Corinthians chapter 11 verse 14 are some of the scariest words in Scripture for each of us to take to heart: *"Even Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light."* **Q: Do you believe these words of Paul's are true? How would you know if something that appears to be good on the surface is not really good at all?** Let us pray for discernment in this regards! Let us not ever be fooled by Satan and his disguises!

9/10 - Amazing words from Paul today in Second Corinthians chapter 11 verse 30! *"If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am."* Why would Paul say he would rather boast about things that show how weak he is? Why would Paul want to be weak in any way? Why would you or I want to be weak in any way? If you must boast, what are you boasting about these days?

9/11 - Paul's words in Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 through 10 about the thorn in Paul's flesh are so powerful

for each of us to consider for our lives today as well! *"But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* Biblical commentaries can basically all agree that we do not know what Paul's "thorn" was.

There is some interesting speculation out there. Some think that the thorn is Paul's flesh was perhaps something that literally affected his flesh - a health issue of some sort. Some think it could have been a disease of the eyes, epilepsy, or even malaria. Whatever the thorn was, it was something that affected him very seriously. And it kept Paul humble in the midst of his incredible ministry. **Q: Why do you suppose that Paul was given a thorn in his flesh? Do you suppose you or I might have thorns in our flesh today? What might those thorns be in your life today? And why might those thorns be there? Is there anything you can learn from Paul about your thorns? Can you learn to live with the thorn in your flesh realizing that God's power in your life actually works strongest when you are weak? Do you believe that God's power can actually work through the thorn in your flesh for God's glory? Will you accept where you are weak, so that in that area of your life God will be strong?**

9/12 - Paul's words in Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 20 and 21 were written for the church in Corinth. But, imagine if you will that these words were written to you and me today... *"For I am afraid that when I come to visit you I won't like what I find, and then you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfishness, backstabbing, gossip, conceit, and disorderly behavior. Yes, I am afraid that when I come, God will humble me again because of you. And I will have to grieve because many of you who sinned earlier have not repented of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure."* **Q: What would Paul find if he came to visit our lives today? Would he find quarreling, jealousy, outbursts, selfishness, backstabbing, gossip, conceit, or disorderly behavior? Impurity? Sexual immorality? Eagerness for lustful pleasure? Or - instead, would Paul find peace, joy, love, giving, and purity in our lives? Would we grieve Paul or make him joyful? Better yet, let us reflect upon what Jesus would find in our lives if He came back today? Would our lives grieve Jesus in any way?**

9/13 - I love Paul's words today in Second Corinthians chapter 13 verse 11! *"Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Rejoice. Change your ways. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you."* Imagine that these words were written to you. **Q: Are you rejoicing? Are you changing your ways? Are you encouraging others? Are you living in peace? Is God's love with you this very moment? Is God's peace with you now?**

9/14 - Today we begin Paul's letter to the church in Galatia!

~ **Galatians** ~

Author: Paul the apostle

Place: Unknown

Date: A.D. 48 or 49

Content: Paul had preached to the inhabitants of Galatia on his first missionary journey (Act 13:14-14:23). Shortly after his departure, a group of Jewish believers arrived to insist that the Gentile Christians submit to the laws of Moses in order to be saved. Paul writes to combat this error by showing that Abraham, who lived over four hundred years before the giving of the law, was saved by faith in the gospel – so how could it be argued that the law could either save a man or make a believer in Christ more perfect? Paul couples this with a vigorous defense of himself as an apostle and with a discussion of how a Christian ought to live.

Theme: Paul energetically defends the truth of the gospel, which is that man is saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ and nothing else. Any other teaching is a perversion of the truth of God (Galatians 1:7). We are made right in the sight of God by faith (Galatians 2:16) and become the people of God (sons of Abraham) in the same way, by faith (Galatians 3:7). Because we are free in Christ, we must never allow anyone to drag us back to the idea of working for our salvation, but must live out of the gospel. This involves submission to the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:16) and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Galatians 5:14). *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 25-26)*

9/14 - Wow. I have to share with you that Paul's words in Galatians chapter 1 verse 1 stopped me in my tracks today when reading them: *"This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group or by human authority. My call is from Jesus Christ himself and from God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead."* The thing that struck me about this was Paul saying that he was not appointed by any group or by human authority to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. His

call was from Jesus Himself! And this just made me think about our modern world today, where I am afraid that sometimes we will only maybe do bold things in our life for the Gospel - for the Kingdom of God - if we feel like we have been appointed by some group or by some human authority to do it. When, in fact the important thing is if we have been called by Jesus to do it! I hope humbly here I can share with you that there are probably a ton of reasons of why I "shouldn't" be leading an online Bible study like this one. I don't have a Seminary degree. I am not an ordained minister or pastor. Yes, I have been in a Bible study before, and I do a lot of studying each day for this ministry. But - no group or human authority has appointed me to do this. I have just done it because I do feel very called to it! And I share this with you not to pat myself on the back, but to encourage you. Maybe you've never been to Seminary. Maybe you're not an ordained minister or pastor. Maybe you've never done _____, _____, or _____. (fill in your blanks) **Q: But, maybe God is calling you to do something bold for his Kingdom, and the question becomes when will you do it? When will you stop relying on an old excuse of not being appointed by a group or human authority to do it?** If God is calling you to something, please, please, do it! Our time is short. Your time is now. The water is fine. Please, dive in!

9/15 - We have great readings today in Galatians chapter 2 as Paul confronts Peter! I think this is a powerful lesson for us to learn. It is okay - in fact good - to confront other Christians when they are out of line. We should do so in the spirit of love. Speak the truth in love to our brothers and sisters who step out of line. But let us not be too meek in this area and let somebody we love slide by because we're too scared to say anything. Is there anybody in your life today that you are being led by God to speak the truth in love to? (there is someone in my life I'm being led to do this... and I confess that I have been dragging my feet...) Let us learn today from the example of Paul confronting Peter! I have to tell you, for some reason the parenthetical point from Paul in verse 6 today really stood out to me - *"(By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)"* This is really a profound thing for each of us to realize! No one is above you! No one is below you! God has no favorites! I really really love thinking about this. This means we should respect all, but fear none. God is the only one we should fear. You, your pastor, your president, the homeless person on the street corner are no more or no less favored by God comparatively. God has no favorites! And - if God has no favorites, what do you think this should mean to us. **Q: Should we have favorites? Should we give more respect to those who we think are in better social standing than others? Should we love the pastor more than the homeless person? Should we love the celebrity over the waiter? This really is something for us to think about... Paul said people's reputation as great leaders made NO difference to him. Should people's reputations in our world today make any difference to us?**

9/16 - Paul's message in Galatians chapter 3 verses 6 through 9 is very good news to the 1st century Gentiles and to you and me today too! *"In the same way, "Abraham believed God, so God declared him righteous because of his faith." The real children of Abraham, then, are all those who put their faith in God. What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would accept the Gentiles, too, on the basis of their faith. God promised this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." And so it is: All who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith."* **Q: Do you believe that you can share in the same blessing Abraham received? How? Are you a spiritual descendent of Abraham? Why? What do Paul's words "faith in Christ" mean to you? Is this all very good news to you?**

9/17 - Today in Galatians chapter 3 verses 10 and 11 we read: *"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith.""* **Q: What is Paul saying here? Why would those who rely on observing the law be under a curse? Do you rely on the law?**

9/18 - I love Paul's teachings today in Galatians chapter 4 verses 3 through 7! *"And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were slaves to the spiritual powers of this world. But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you."* **Do you believe these teachings of Paul's to be true? Are you a child of God? Has God sent the Spirit of Jesus into your heart? Do you today call God your dear Father? Do you believe that everything God has belongs to you because you are his child?**

9/19 - Galatians chapter 5 is a great teaching on our freedom in Christ! Verse 1 is so very powerful: *"So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law."* **Q: Has Jesus set you free? Has He set you free from the slavery of sin? Has He set you free from the slavery of the law? If you are**

not yet free, today will you hand over the controls of your life to Jesus and let Him once and for all set you free!

9/19 - I also love verses 5 & 6 - "*But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.*" I like that thought of eagerly waiting to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. **Q: How are you eagerly waiting for everything promised? How do you have the hope of glory?** And then the last sentence of what is important is powerful - faith expressing itself in love! Not faith expressing itself in hate.... Faith expressing itself in love. **How is your faith expressing itself in love?** This reminds me of the old song - "They will know we are Christians by our love. By our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love." Amen!

9/20 - I love Paul's teaching in Galatians 5 verses 22 & 23 today - "*But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*" It is incredible I think for each of us to really meditate on this question - does the Holy Spirit control your life? I think so often - even after coming to faith in Christ - we still try to hold onto the controls of our life! I know I do. And yet, when I finally realize that I should instead "let go, and let God", my life gets 100 times easier. I don't stress and worry about things any more. When I let myself be controlled by the Holy Spirit I finally realize that this is where true LIFE is at! It's not in hanging on so tightly to the steering wheel... Then, as we truly let the Holy Spirit control our lives, we begin to see amazing fruits being born in us! **Q: Do you see these fruits in your life today? Love? Joy? Peace? Patience? Kindness? Goodness? Faithfulness? Gentleness? Self-control? How are you doing on letting the Holy Spirit control your life these days? Who is holding on to your steering wheel - you or the Holy Spirit? Will you now let go of that steering wheel? Will you "let go, and let God." Will you let the fruits of the Spirit fully grow in your life?**

9/21 - We finish up Paul's letter to the Galatians today. Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus begins tomorrow! We read some powerful teachings in Galatians chapter 6 today. I love verse 1: "*Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.*" This is such a great teaching. And one that I have a hunch we do not follow often enough... **Q: When was the last time you gently and humbly helped someone who is overcome by sin get back on the right track?** I know for me that it has not been recently. And I know I've missed some opportunities in this regard. The last sentence in this verse is powerful and reminds me that we need to be particularly careful around sexual sin I think - to make sure we don't fall into the same temptation ourselves. One important note for all of us is to not discuss with someone of the opposite sex their struggles with sexual sin! It is foolish to do so I believe. Men can discuss and counsel men in the area of sexual sin. And women, women. But I think it is just way too risky for men to discuss or counsel women in the area of sexual sin - and vice versa. I think we just open ourselves up potentially to temptation if we do this. I'm sure there are exceptions to this, but generally speaking, don't go into a discussion on personal sexual sin struggles with someone of the opposite sex! **While I'm on the topic here of sexual sin, does anyone have any good book recommendations for anyone who struggles in this area?** A good book on this topic is Josh Harris' "[Sex is Not the Problem \(Lust Is\): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World.](#)"

9/22 - Today we begin Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus!

~ **Ephesians** ~

Author: Paul the apostle

Place: Rome

Date: A.D. 60 or 61

Content: Paul wrote this letter while a prisoner in Rome, his purpose being to comfort and encourage the believers in Asia Minor. He presents them with an overview of history, beginning in eternity past where God worked out his plans for the world, moving to the present where God is saving those who believe in Christ, and then to the future where all evil will be overcome. He points out that in the present there will be great conflict because our battle is with the forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12), but because we are members of Christ's body, we have the power to withstand. Paul then deals with practical matters relating to living the Christian life: marriage, behavior, parents and children, and servants.

Theme: The basic idea in Ephesians is that God's eternal plan is being worked out through Christ and his body, the church. When a man believes, he is in Christ and finds salvation and safety. God had planned for this from all eternity and has given to the believer everything that he needs for his Christian life, but it is for him to avail himself of the resources at his command. Paul closes the book by describing the provision that God has made for the believer so that he may withstand the worst of Satan's attacks and when the battle is over, to be victorious. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale*

Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 26)

9/22 - There are so many amazing verses in Ephesians chapter 1 today! I love verse 18: *"I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people."* **How does this verse speak to you? Is your heart flooded with light today? Do you believe that your heart can indeed be flooded with light so that you can understand your wonderful future in Christ?** I love this imagery of our hearts being flooded with light! Let Jesus' light flood us today!

9/23 - Today in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 through 10 we read: *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (NIV) **Q: Have you been saved by grace through faith? Do you believe that salvation is a gift that cannot be earned? Have you ever felt that you had to work for your salvation? What does Paul say about works related to salvation in these verses? Do you believe that you are God's very workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works? Do you believe that God has prepared good works for you to do in advance? Are you participating in God's plan for your life?**

9/24 - Wow, Paul's opening verse 1 in chapter 3 of Ephesians today reminded me that Paul literally wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus while he was in prison in Rome! *"I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles."* I think if we keep this fact in mind, Paul's words in this letter become all that more poignant and powerful. **Q: Could you ever imagine yourself being a prisoner of Jesus because of your preaching the Word to others? I think this is something we should really consider. Would you go to jail for Jesus? Why or why not?** If you would go to jail for Jesus, then I challenge you to consider ways in your life that God may be asking to you indeed be like Paul "in chains for the Gospel" - even if you won't "literally" be going to jail any time soon. (I pray not!) Maybe those chains are that you don't spend as much time doing something that is counter-productive to the Gospel.

9/25 - Great teachings from Paul today about unity in the body of Christ! Chapter 4 verses 4 through 6 are beautiful - *"We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all."* **Q: Do you believe these words of Paul's? Do you believe that all of us in Christ are all one body? That we have the same Spirit? And that we have been called to the same glorious future? I like that last piece of verse 6 - God the Father is living through us all! Do you realize that God the Father, who is indeed over you, and is also literally living through you?** This is powerful to consider...

9/25 - Verses 14 and 15 I think are so important for each of us to meditate upon: *"Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church."* The thing that these verses remind me of is that indeed at some point we are all "children" in our faith. When we are new to Christianity we are certainly children who need others to lead us, disciple us, and help show us the way. And I guess as I think about this, we should always be like children before God - but I don't think we should always be children before humans. Because if we remain as children before humans, then we are at risk of "forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has cleverly lied to us and make the lie sound like the truth." Has this ever happened to you? I know it has happened to me and it's scary to think about. I once heard a church pastor say that his most important job was to help his congregation become "self-feeders" when it comes to their faith. I thought this was fantastic and very wise! This pastor did not want his congregation to always rely on him and what he had to say on Sundays as their only source of spiritual food. This pastor wanted his congregation to be able to spiritually grow in other ways outside of Sunday services - through Bible study, small groups, and other spiritual disciplines. **Q: So, this may be a good time to ask - are you a "self-feeder" when it comes to your faith? Can you grow in your faith and find food for yourself spiritually outside of what you hear at church?** If you're new to the faith, I wouldn't stress about this - but think about it. I do think each of us should aim to become "self-feeders." Why? Well, if we don't then we are so reliant on the words of other people that we could be misled down wrong paths. The one thing that I think really is critical for each of us in our journeys of becoming self-feeders is reading, studying, and really meditating upon Scripture. If we can become well grounded in Scripture then we can filter through the lens of the Bible what others are telling us. It is amazing how much "spiritual stuff" or rules or rituals that I hear is so "important to practice" from others that I don't see in the Bible! In fact, as I'm typing all of this, I will also

say that I sincerely hope you don't take anything I say on this blog as Truth - it's a blog trying to draw out some practicalities and questions and reflections and commentary based on the Truth, the Bible - but what I write is not the Word. As Paul writes in verse 15 today, instead of remaining forever children in our faith before people, let us *"hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church."*

9/26 - Wow. It is rare that I will copy & paste 8 verses in a row here on this blog - because you can simply read the verses by clicking on the link above. However - I think these 8 verses of Paul's in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 17 through 24 bear repeating here and warrant our re-reading and really meditating on these verses. Please take a few minutes to really reflect and pray on these verses - *"With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness--righteous, holy, and true."* Powerful verses above, eh? I love this teaching - there must be a spiritual renewal of our thoughts and attitudes! **Q: Has there been a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes? Is there currently a daily spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes? Or are you maybe on "cruise control" these days?** A great teaching I heard once is that "you are either moving forward or you are sliding backwards. There is no stable middle ground." I believe this to be true in our spiritual life. We are either moving forward - continually renewing our thoughts and attitudes and displaying our new nature - or we are sliding backwards. Backsliding as some may say. I pray that each of us today will really take to heart these teachings of Paul's in Ephesians. Let us throw off our old evil nature and our former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception! Let us each and every day spiritually renew our thoughts and attitudes through Christ Jesus our Lord!

9/27 - Ephesians chapter 5 is such an incredible chapter! I know I won't do it justice in this blog posting. There is so much I could dive into in nearly every verse. Actually, I will share this with you. I met with my Pastor a couple of days ago. And he shared with me that he is currently memorizing the entire book of Ephesians! I had shared with him that I'm just starting to memorize Scripture verses - and to invite you along with me on this journey at the bottom of each daily blog posting. Well, you know how Pastors are - they're always a step ahead! And my Pastor is memorizing the entire book of Ephesians... wow. He shared with me that as he's memorizing Ephesians he is amazed how some of the words and meanings of words of Scripture are coming alive to him in new ways! I believe it. **Q: I'm curious if anyone reading this today has ever memorized an entire book of the Bible? Or even a chapter? Please share if you have?** I have actually downloaded 1 Corinthians 13 onto my Blackberry and I am hoping to memorize that chapter soon! Okay, back to Ephesians chapter 5. You know how I enjoy posting up YouTube videos these days, so I of course loved reading verses 19 & 20, which you'll see in this image below! :)

9/27 -Ephesians 5:1-2 touches on a theme I've been thinking a lot about lately - living a life of love! - *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* (NIV) **Have you ever meditated on what it means to live a life of love?** I have occasionally. But I'm starting to camp out on this thought a lot more these days. I think it's in large part due to the impact 1 Corinthians 13 has had on me this past year. And it certainly fits in well with Jesus saying the 2 most important commandments are to love God and love people. But perhaps most significantly, I've been trying to live out this thought of "living a life of love" in real life a bit more these days. I definitely don't have it all figured out by a long shot! But I think living a life of love is something we should all seek. Not strive for. But seek. Or maybe "receive" is the better word. I think we can receive from Jesus the ability to live a life of love. I don't think we can get there on our own power. So, there's a lot more I could write about what I've been thinking about in regards to living a life of love. But let me at this point just encourage you to think about this concept. Living a life of love. **Q: Do you want to live a life of love? Think you can do this on your own? Or will you invite Jesus and the Holy Spirit into this process each and every day? How does [1 Corinthians 13](#) speak to you these days?**

9/27 - Ephesians chapter 5 verse 17 really stood out to me today: *"Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do."* I am wondering how often each of acts thoughtlessly? I am afraid in my case it is far too often. I can sometimes sleep-walk through my day - or even days - or even weeks... and miss the point of life completely when doing so! Paul teaches us here to try to understand what the Lord wants us to do. Why would we want to try to understand this? I think in large part so we no longer act thoughtlessly! I'm afraid we are far too often a thoughtless

people in how we live our lives & how we waste so much time in our very short lives this side of heaven... **Q: How about you? Are you acting thoughtlessly at all these days? Will you seek to understand what God wants you to do? And then will you go do it and leave your thoughtless ways behind?**

9/28 - We wrap up Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus today! His letter to the church in Philippi begins tomorrow! Ephesians chapter 6 verse 7 stood out to me today - "*Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*" I realize the context of this verse is that Paul was writing it to slaves. However, I think this verse works very well today for any of us that work a full time job. I'm sure you've probably seen movies or TV shows that make fun of working and basically encourage folks to work as little as possible when they are on the job. I think this is a horrible idea! I had a friend tell me once that if you are acting like a slacker at one job - perhaps a job you really don't like and are trying to get out of - you'll end up acting like a slacker at your next job, even if your next job is your dream job. You'll goof up that dream job because it will be hard to break the habit of being a slacker... So - I think each of us would do well to take to heart Paul's words here in verse 7. **Q: Are you working at your job with enthusiasm? Are you working each and every day as though you are working for the Lord? As such, are you not "stealing time" from your employer by surfing the net, socializing excessively, doing errands, arriving late, and this list could go on... If Jesus was your boss, would you act the same way at work that you do now? Well, is Jesus perhaps really your "boss" even if he isn't the one signing your pay checks per se...?**

9/29 - Today we begin Paul's letter to the church in Philippi!

~ **Philippians** ~

Author: Paul the apostle

Place: Rome

Date: A.D. 61

Content: Paul wrote this letter from prison in Rome to some very dear friends in Philippi as a response to their sending some money to him in order to meet his needs. He begins by expressing his confidence in them and then describes some of the problems he faces in Rome. Whether he will die or not he does not know, but if death does come, he will rejoice in the presence of Christ. If he remains, he will continue to serve God by serving the churches. The example of Christ's humility is set before the Philippians as an example to follow. False teachings are to be vigorously rejected. Two quarreling sisters are admonished to make up and all believers are admonished to set high ideals for themselves because God will supply all that one needs in life.

Theme: In this very personal letter of Paul the theme of rejoicing may be seen throughout. If one lives, he may rejoice because God loves him. Christ died for him, and all things are given to him by God for his life. If one dies, then he may rejoice by being in Christ's presence forevermore. This does not mean that Christians will have no problems, however. Even as Jesus had to endure the cross, so we must be ready to follow that example of submission to God, if it must be. But we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:2) and should live with that thought constantly before us. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 27*)

9/29 - In Philippians 1:21 today we read Paul's powerful words of: "*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" **Q: How does this verse speak to you? Is this verse true for you? How so?**

9/30 - Our readings in Philippians chapter 2 today have some powerful verses on imitating Jesus' humility. In verses 3 & 4 we read: "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*" **Q: Are you doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vanity in your life today? Are you humble? Do you consider others better than yourself? Do you look to the interests of others?** I realize these can be hard teachings to put into practice – in fact, it seems almost impossible in our modern world. But, let us remember that indeed all things are possible with Jesus Christ in our lives and hearts. Let us not give up on imitating Jesus' humility in our lives today. I pray each of us is becoming more like Jesus in some small or significant way each and every day. Don't stop the transformation process. Don't quench the Spirit. Let God change you.

PSALMS

9/1 - Psalm 45 is very likely a song of praise to King David on his wedding day. Interestingly, after the Babylonian exile, this Psalm was applied to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the promised Son of David. I can see how some verses in this Psalm could apply to both the current king of the day and the true king yet to come. Verse 7 is a good example: "*You love what is right and hate what is wrong. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.*" **Q: Is Jesus your King?**

9/2 - Today we read Psalm 46, which is an incredible Psalm! This Psalm represents a song of hope celebrating the certain triumph of God's kingdom – even in the midst of times of severe trouble. This Psalm served as the inspiration for Martin Luther's famous Hymn, "[A Mighty Fortress is Our God](#)." Just after 9/11 I saw emails on the internet floating around with the entirety of Psalm 46. I would encourage you to keep this Psalm in your "back-pocket" as a Psalm to meditate upon whenever you personally might be going through times of severe trouble – or whenever our world might be going through times of severe trouble. Near the end of this Psalm in verse 10 we will read a tiny little verse that I think is the key to this Psalm – "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" **Q: If you are going through a time of trouble in your life right now, will you take some time to meditate upon Psalm 46 and in particular verse 10? What does it mean to you to "Be still, and know that I am God?" Do you believe that being still during times of trouble can draw you closer to God? Will you be still today before God? In this stillness will you seek to know that He is indeed God? Even in the midst of whatever might be troubling you, will you seek to know that I AM is your God?**

9/3 - Psalm 47 is an awesome Psalm! I can almost hear and feel music and a drum beat as I read this Psalm today! This Psalm was used in later Jewish synagogue liturgies for Rosh Hashanah, the New Year Festival. This Psalm has also been used by the Christian church in the Celebration of Jesus' ascension, in particular with emphases on verse 5 - "*God has ascended with a mighty shout. The LORD has ascended with trumpets blaring.*" **Do you hear and feel the music as you read this Psalm? Do you think God is a fan of music?**

9/4 - Psalm 48 is a celebratory Psalm of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, as verse 8 reads: "*We had heard of the city's glory, but now we have seen it ourselves- the city of the LORD Almighty. It is the city of our God; he will make it safe forever.*" I like verse 10 a lot in this Psalm: "*As your name deserves, O God, you will be praised to the ends of the earth.*" I have had the good fortune to travel many places on this planet, and I will admit that it always encourages me to no end when I see God being praised and worshiped in other cultures. I always try to visit churches wherever I travel on Sundays, and I love seeing how different cultures worship God. One of the most memorable experiences was in the Dominican Republic in a very impoverished community. I honestly don't know that I have ever seen a congregation worship God so wholeheartedly than I did that day in the DR. It was beautiful. The other thing I am reminded of when traveling is that when we are in relationship with Jesus, God is always with us no matter where we go. When we're 35,000 feet above the ground in an airplane, God is with us. When we're in the middle of nowhere that has no church - God is with us. So, no matter where we go, if God is with us, we have the opportunity to praise God's name to the ends of the earth! **Q: Even if you're traveling to some far off locale where no one else around you would praise God, will you? Have you ever experienced this when traveling?**

9/5 - Psalm 49 verses 1-3 are a fantastic teaching that the Word of God, the Bible, is for everyone, no matter what our lots in life may be - "*Listen to this, all you people! Pay attention, everyone in the world! High and low, rich and poor--listen! For my words are wise, and my thoughts are filled with insight.*" **Q: Are you listening today? Are you paying attention to the wise words and insights of the Bible? Are you truly studying the Bible and then applying the Bible's teachings to your life?** Then, verse 15 in this Psalm is beautiful: "*But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of death.*" **How about for you? Will God redeem your life? Like the parable of the lost sheep that we read about in [Luke 15:3-7](#), has Jesus saved you from being snatched from the power of death?**

9/6 - Psalm 50 verses 14 & 15 are beautiful words from God to Israel - "*What I want instead is your true thanks to God; I want you to fulfill your vows to the Most High. Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.*" **Q: Do you believe these words can apply to us today as well? Are you giving true thanks to God each day? Are you trusting in God in your times of trouble? Are you giving God glory for all that he has done for you? How often do you say "thank you" to God?**

9/7 - Today we read one of my favorite Psalms! Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is David's humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed in battle. I believe that this Psalm can continue to be a humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing for each of us today. This Psalm is read by many liturgical churches during the season of Lent as a penitential Psalm. A brief quote from this Bible.org about this Psalm is: "The application of the psalm to believers today should be obvious. We, like David, can and must have complete cleansing before we can fully and freely serve God in any capacity. Our eternal destiny may not be in doubt when we sin as believers, and neither was David's because he appealed to that covenant relationship, but our fellowship and service will be. God will not tolerate unconfessed sin, and so will hold us accountable if we do not confess." I've been trying to figure out my favorite portion or two of this Psalm to share with you. . . but I can't just pick one portion. It is all so powerful!

Tell you what – I'm going to copy the full Psalm below in the NIV translation (my favorite for this Psalm). Please take a few moments to meditate upon this Psalm. **Q: My questions for reflection are these – Do you confess your sins to God? Do you confess your sins to others? And ask them to hold you accountable? When was the last time you confessed your sins to God? Do you have sins to confess to God today? Will you do so now?** I pray this Psalm opens up your heart to the amazing burden that is lifted when we confess our sins to God!

9/8 - Verse 9 in Psalm 52 stood out to me today - *"I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will wait for your mercies in the presence of your people."* **Q: Are you looking forward to praising God forever? Are you willing to wait for God? If things don't seem to be moving as quickly as you would like them to in your spiritual life, will you still wait for God? And will you do so in the presence of God's people? Do you believe that being part of a church community can help you during a time of waiting for the Lord? And do you believe that you can help others in your church to wait as well?** Then, together you can look forward to praising God forever for what he has done and will do!

9/9 - If you've ever asked yourself - or ever been asked - why do we need a Messiah? What is our need of Jesus? Well, I think this question is clearly answered in verses 2 & 3 of Psalm 53: *"God looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if there is even one with real understanding, one who seeks for God. But no, all have turned away from God; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not even one!"* This is why we need Jesus. With Jesus, we indeed seek for God. With Jesus, we are blessed with the Holy Spirit to begin to have some real understanding. But without Jesus.... well, it reminds me of the old DC Talk song "In the Light" - "What's going on inside of me? I despise my own behavior. This only serves to confirm my suspicions, that I'm still a man in need of a Savior!" Amen... **Q: Do you agree that apart from Jesus there no one in the entire human race who does good or has real understanding? Why do you suppose people who are not in a saving relationship with Jesus sometimes still believe people are basically "good?"**

9/10 - I like Psalm 54 verse 4 a lot - *"But God is my helper. The Lord is the one who keeps me alive!"* **Q: Is this true in your life? Is God the one who keeps you alive? Or are you trying to lean on other things as your source of life?** I believe it is such a blessing to surrender more and more to God until we get to the point where truly this true for us - God is the one - and only - who keeps us alive. I am not saying I am there yet - but I'm trying to get there. I'm trying to surrender more and more each day to God and to Jesus - all that I am - all that I am living for. I pray that in your life and in mine God will be the one who keeps us alive!

9/11 - Today we read Psalm 55 verse 22, which is a beautiful reminder to all who believe in the risen Lord! *"Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall."* Please do meditate on this verse a bit. **Q: Do you make it a habit of giving your burdens to the Lord? Or do you try to carry your burdens on your own strength? Is there a burden you are carrying today that you can give to the Lord? Will you? And do you trust that he will take care of you and not permit you to slip and fall?**

9/12 - Psalm 56 verse 10 makes a One Year Bible blogger quite happy :) *"O God, I praise your word. Yes, LORD, I praise your word."* **Q: Does this verse make you happy? Do you praise God for the gift of the Bible? Do you praise God's very Word, the Bible?**

9/13 - Psalm 57 verse 8 is amazing - *"Wake up, my soul!"* What 4 great words. . . wake up my soul! Do you ever feel like you need to say this to your soul? I know that I have in my past. There have been times in my life where I have felt spiritually asleep. Just completely slumbering. . . and I have begged my soul to wake up! Fortunately, I finally learned that I could not wake up my soul on it's own. I needed the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to wake up my soul. . . and being in relationship with our Triune God keeps it awake today. **Q: If you feel that you need your soul to wake up, will you prayer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to indwell your soul and to wake it up?**

9/14 - Psalm 58 verse 11 stood out to me today - *"There truly is a reward for those who live for God; surely there is a God who judges justly here on earth."* I think this is wise for us to remember that God indeed judges. We don't. We shouldn't. But God indeed judges justly. **Q: This verse also brings up the question - are we living for God? If so, what will our reward be? Are you looking forward to the reward?**

9/15 - Psalm 59 has some powerful imagery of the *"night of danger"* in verse 14 and the *"morning of deliverance"* in verse 16 - *"But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning because of your unfailing love."* I like

that thought - shouting for joy each morning because of God's unfailing love. I pray that in some way I "shout" for joy each morning because of God's love. **Q: How about you? Do you in some way "shout" for joy each morning because of God?**

9/16 - I like the imagery of Psalm 60 verse 4 a lot - *"But you have raised a banner for those who honor you -- a rallying point in the face of attack."* I do believe that if we honor God, he will in some profound way "raise up a banner" for us. A banner that will rally and encourage us in the face of attack - in the face of doubt or despair or sickness or just plain old fashioned attack from the Enemy - I believe God will give us a banner of hope. This banner could end up being one of a million different things I think, depending on the circumstances. For me, certainly a banner that rallies me each and every day is God's very Word, the Bible. I believe the Bible is indeed a banner that rallies us in the face of attack... What are some banners in your life that God is providing to rally you in the face of attack? Uh-oh, this whole banner imagery has reminded me of an old childhood song... :) Remember that children's song that goes something like this (over and over and over again...) - "Peter built the church on the rock of our faith. HIS banner over me is love."? What a great simple song! God's love very well should be a banner in our lives! **Q: How is God's love a banner over your life today?**

9/17 - Today we read Psalm 61, which has some powerful verses for us to meditate upon when the storms of life come crashing down upon us. This Psalm reminds us of who is indeed our true Rock – our true Refuge. Verses 1 through 5 are so powerful to meditate upon when you are going through a storm in your life –

"Hear my cry, O God;

listen to my prayer.

From the ends of the earth I call to you,

I call as my heart grows faint;

lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For you have been my refuge,

a strong tower against the foe.

I long to dwell in your tent forever

and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

For you have heard my vows, O God;

you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name."

Q: Do you cry out to God in prayer during the storms in your life? When your heart grows faint, do you call on God's holy name, and allow him to lead you to his Rock? Do you believe that God can be your refuge? Your strong tower against the foe? Do you long to dwell in God's house forever? Do you long to take refuge in the shelter of God's wings?

9/18 - Today we read in Psalm 62 verse 11 - *"God has spoken plainly, and I have heard it many times: Power, O God, belongs to you."* This is a powerful verse - no pun intended. . . :) Really, think about it. **Where does power come from? Who gives power? Who takes it away?** I think it is such a blessing when we truly understand this verse and then live it out. When we realize that we really have no power of our own. Any power - any thing - we have comes from God and God alone. And thank God for that. It's when we start believing we create or own or control power that we begin to get prideful or we'll misuse the power given to us. I think a great teaching on where power truly comes from comes from Jesus when he is before Pilate in John chapter 19 verses 10 & 11 - *"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."* **Q: Where do you think your power to do anything at all comes from? Do you believe it was given to you from above? If so, how might truly realizing this change how you live your life? How might it change how you utilize the power given to you?**

9/19 - Psalm 63 is beautiful! So many amazing verses... The imagery in verse 1 is fantastic - *"O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water."* **Q: Do you earnestly search for God in your life? Each and every day? Does your soul literally thirst for God? Does your whole body long for God in this dry and weary land....**

9/20 - Psalm 64 verse 10 is beautiful - *"The godly will rejoice in the LORD and find shelter in him."* **Q: Do you consider God a shelter for your life? When storms come into your life, do you find shelter in God? How about the Bible? Is the Bible a sort of shelter in your life? Do you find refuge in the Bible?**

9/21 - Psalm 65 has some amazing verses about nature! I love verse 8 - *"Those who live at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your wonders. From where the sun rises to where it sets, you inspire shouts of joy."* **Q: When is the last time you have been inspired to shout for joy to God for the beautiful sunset he created?** Verse 7 of the Psalm says this - *"You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations."* **When is the last time you have stood in complete silence before God because of his beautiful Creation?**

9/22 - Psalm 66 verses 1 & 2 are awesome! *"Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth! Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is."* **Q: Do you tell the world about how glorious God is? How do you do this?**

9/23 - Psalm 67 verse 2 today sounds very Great Commission-ish: *"May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere."* It's interesting to read this verse when just recently I was reading a review in my local newspaper about a book that "exposes" evangelical Christians. This book really dives into how "successful" evangelical Christians are in "recruiting" young adults ages 20 to 35 with their ministries. And this book reviewer - and the book author - were very disdainful of Christianity. Saying it threatened secular society... and this just made me realize that the more we do indeed make God's ways known throughout the earth - the more we introduce people to God's saving power among people everywhere - well, then the secular world will push back big time with books and reviews like the one I read. And the secular world will even push back in more severe ways as well. This makes me realize that indeed our efforts to make God's ways known - God's love, grace, mercy, salvation, call to repentance - are being noticed by others! But hopefully more than just being noticed by others, let us pray that our Kingdom work actually introduces others to God's only son Jesus, who transforms hearts and lives for eternity! **Q: How are you helping make God's ways known throughout the earth?**

9/24 - I always like the idea and reminder to sing to God! **Q: Do you sing to God at places other than church? Maybe in your car? Maybe at home with the headphones on? Do you "sing" to God with the way you live your life?** Here's verse 4 in Psalm 68 today which I love - *"Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the LORD-- rejoice in his presence!"* **How do you sing your praises to the Lord each day?**

9/25 - Today in Psalm 68 verse 20 we read - *"Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death."* **Q: Do you believe God is a God who saves us? How did / does God do this saving? Do you believe that escape from death comes from God and his Son?** I've been reflecting on this "death" aspect of our fallen world a bit lately, which has been sad to reflect upon. I had an experience with a few friends very recently where I was reminded of how self-destructive we can be in our lives. I think that without Jesus we can oftentimes not know where to turn for an escape from death - we do not know where to turn from an escape from our own self destructive behaviors. My friends need Jesus. I need Jesus. The world needs Jesus. Our God is a God who saves. From God and Jesus comes escape from death. May these last few months of this year bring us, our friends, and families closer to the God who saves!

9/26 - Psalm 69 verse 16 today is such a true statement that maybe we need to be reminded of today - *"Answer my prayers, O LORD, for your unending love is wonderful. Turn and take care of me, for your mercy is so plentiful."* God does answer our prayers - perhaps not in the way we "want" Him to, but always in the way that is ultimately best for us and the Kingdom. His unending love is wonderful. His mercy is so plentiful. But, yet, somehow I think I sometimes forget all of this. Why? I think I forget about God's love & mercy when I am not praying to him. **Q: How about you? Are you needing a reminder today about God's unending love and his mercy? Are you praying to God for these very things? Will you allow God to demonstrate both his love and mercy to you today? Will you offer up prayers and allow God to answer in his perfect way?**

9/27 - I love Psalm 69 verse 33 today - *"For the LORD hears the cries of his needy ones; he does not despise his people who are oppressed."* God hears the cries of his needy ones. **Q: Perhaps the question is then, do we hear the cries of God's needy ones? Do we hear the cries of those starving today? Sick from lack of clean water? Suffering from HIV / AIDS? Spiritually poor? Needing a friend? How is the soil of our hearts if we are *not* hearing these cries? Should we be hearing these cries? And if we do hear them, what then should we do?**

9/28 - Psalm 70 verse 4 is awesome - *"But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, "God is great!"*" Indeed, I think as Christians we should be filled with joy & gladness. Yes, there will be tough times. And suffering. But overall, I pray we are filled with joy and gladness. And then the second sentence in this verse reminds me of an older Relient K song with lyrics that go something like this - *"Your voice has broken my defense. Let me embrace salvation!"* I like that thought. Let us embrace salvation. Let us love salvation. Let

us literally cling to salvation... **Q: How often do you think about your salvation? When is the last time you have shouted something like, "God is great!"?**

9/29 - Today in Psalm 71 verses 6 through 8 we will read - *"Yes, you have been with me from birth; from my mother's womb you have cared for me. No wonder I am always praising you! My life is an example to many, because you have been my strength and protection. That is why I can never stop praising you; I declare your glory all day long."* This is so true that God has cared for each of us since we were in our mother's womb! This is a beautiful thing to realize. There is an interesting thought in these verses - if our life is an example to many - and well, yes, it really is no matter what we actually do. Hopefully our life is a good example - but there could be seasons of bad example too... If our lives are good examples to many, why is this so? I agree with the Psalmist - it is simply because of God in our lives. **Q: Is God literally your strength and protection? Do you praise God unceasingly? Do you declare God's glory all day long? How do you do so?**

9/30 - I'll admit. I pay attention every single time the Bible talks about serving the poor. And it is a lot. And I think it is for a reason. Here it is again in Psalm 72 verses 12 & 13, speaking about Israel's king - *"He will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them. He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them."* **Q: What about us today? Does this Psalm speak to us? Should we perhaps be "kingly" in this regard? Do we rescue the poor when they cry to us? (do we even listen for their cry?) Do we help the oppressed and those who have no one to defend them? Do we feel pity for the weak and needy? Do we rescue them? Do I? Do you?**

PROVERBS

9/1 - Proverbs 22 verse 14 teaches us today: *"The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; those living under the LORD's displeasure will fall into it."* Let us all watch our mouths - though really it is our hearts we must guard, for what comes out of our mouths starts in our hearts. And let us not fall into the trap of listening to anyone's immoral talk. Immoral talk is indeed a deep pit! **Q: How do you react to immoral talk in our world today? Do you avoid it? Confront it?**

9/2 - Today Proverbs 22:15 teaches us: *"A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but discipline will drive it away."* This is a great reminder that loving and godly discipline is of great benefit to a youngster whose heart is filled with foolishness. **Q: Do you suppose that discipline is of great benefit to even us oldsters :) who might have hearts filled with foolishness at times? Do you appreciate loving and godly discipline in your life today? Do you practice discipline in your life today? Are you disciplined? Are you a Disciple? Speaking of which, has anyone read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book "[The Cost of Discipleship](#)"? It is a great book!**

9/3 - There is an interesting "or" statement in Proverbs chapter 22 verse 16 today - *"A person who gets ahead by oppressing the poor or by showering gifts on the rich will end in poverty."* I hadn't really ever thought that showering gifts on the rich might put one in the same boat as oppressing the poor. Oppressing the poor seems like the obvious no-no. **Q: But showering gifts on the rich... why do you suppose this is a no-no as well? What's wrong with showering the gifts on the rich? I'm wondering if it is because our gifts would be better given elsewhere? e.g. to the poor?**

9/4 - Proverbs 22 verses 17 through 19 today are a great reminder for why we read and study the Bible! *"Listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my instruction. For it is good to keep these sayings deep within yourself, always ready on your lips. I am teaching you today--yes, you--so you will trust in the LORD."* Great stuff. I love the part that says it is good to keep these saying deep within yourself - in your heart! And to memorize these sayings with your mind so that they are always ready on your lips. **Q: Are you listening to the words of the Bible? Are you applying your heart to the Bible's instruction? Is studying the Bible enhancing your trust in God? Actually - if anyone out there memorizes Scripture, please post up in the Comments section below? I would love to know which verses you have found useful in your life? And - if anyone has advice on how to best go about memorizing Scripture, please post that up too. Are you memorizing Scripture on a regular basis? Are you bringing Scripture to mind when faced with temptation or sadness or whatever ails you?**

9/5 - Proverbs 22 verses 20-21 today teach us: *"I have written thirty sayings for you, filled with advice and knowledge. In this way, you may know the truth and bring an accurate report to those who sent you."* These two Proverbs verses today actually tie in quite nicely with Psalm 49 verses 1-3 above. Let us know the truth of God's Word and then report it accurately to others! **Q: Actually, this is probably a good point for me to ask you if you are participating in a Bible**

study at your church? If not, can I encourage you to consider starting up a One Year Bible study / small group at your church this next year? Seriously. Please think and pray about this leadership opportunity. I do realize not everyone is called to something like this. But - I think many of us are - probably more of us than we think are. If you have been going through the One Year Bible with us this year, you have learned much! I think you are in a great position to lead a One Year Bible study / small group at your church next year. All you need is a One Year Bible, perhaps the One Year Bible Companion book with Q&A teachings for each day's readings, and a willingness to take this opportunity on. **Will you think and pray about this? Will you talk to your pastor or the appropriate person at your church about this?** You don't need to know the Bible backwards and forwards to lead a group! You just need to take the initiative to lead, and invite others to join you on the journey. You will be amazed by how God moves in a Bible study! It will bless you and those around you immensely! **Will you lead someone (or a group of someone's) through the One Year Bible this next year?**

9/6 - Proverbs chapter 22 verses 22 & 23 teach us today: *"Do not rob the poor because they are poor or exploit the needy in court. For the LORD is their defender. He will injure anyone who injures them."* This is a strong warning to not rob or exploit the poor. I think we would do well to think of this not only in terms of the materially poor, but the spiritually or emotionally poor too. Let us not rob them or exploit them. For the Lord is their defender! **Q: How are you making sure that you don't rob the poor in your life these days?**

9/7 - Proverbs 22 verses 24 through 25 are a great reminder to pay attention to who our friends are: *"Keep away from angry, short-tempered people, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul."* I've read somewhere that a good way to determine the character of a person is to take a look at who their friends are. Now, this is a bit tricky I think because none of our friends will ever be perfect. We should not look for perfect friends. We won't be perfect friends to others either. Jesus is the only one true perfect friend for each of us. But, there are certainly some "friends" who probably should not be people we spend a good deal of leisure time with. There may be friends who are into lying or pornography or who are angry or short-tempered (per this Proverb) that we need to be very cautious around, otherwise we may learn to be like them. Now, I do think we are called to be friends to people who may struggle with various things - including lying, pornography, being angry, etc. - but, we need to be very cautious and clear on our boundaries. This is a tricky one I know... Overall, I will say this - there are friends of mine that I have had to let go because I knew that hanging around them was simply not good for me. **Q: How about you? Are there any friends in your life that you may simply need to let the friendship go? When might this be the appropriate thing to do? When might it be the inappropriate thing to do?**

9/8 - We read an interesting Proverb today in chapter 22 verses 26 & 27: *"Do not co-sign another person's note or put up a guarantee for someone else's loan. If you can't pay it, even your bed will be snatched from under you."* I've always been intrigued by these types of Proverbs / verses in the Bible. Verses that basically say don't co-sign or guarantee anybody else's debt - unless of course we're talking about your kid! :) I do see the wisdom in this. If you co-sign / guarantee for somebody else, then be prepared to have to pay back that debt in full... Wow. This is pretty heavy to think about. We hear so much about staying out of debt - and typically think about our own personal debt. That's obviously wise. And well, this Proverb today is saying don't take on other people's debt! That is very wise! Stay out of debt! Your own and particularly your friends! **Q: How are you doing with debt in your life these days? Are you avoiding debt? Paying it off if you have it? Vowing not to go into debt again?**

9/9 - Today in Proverbs chapter 22 verse 29 we read: *"Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men."* The thing I love about this Proverb is that it encourages us to be skilled in our work. Whether we are teachers, or bus drivers, or accountants, or technicians, or full time moms, I do strongly believe we are called to be skilled in our work! **Do you really focus on your work and make sure you give 100% to your job? Do you avoid surfing the internet at work or chit-chatting for too long or checking personal emails? Do you work for your employer as if you were literally working for God? Do you believe that indeed no matter what your job is that you are really working for God? Do you want to give God your all? Will you give work your all?** Don't get me wrong - I'm not encouraging us to be workaholics. I just think that too often we can slack off a bit at work and think it's no big deal. I think it is just the opposite. I believe if we slack off at work we'll be more likely to slack off in other areas of our life, including our relationship with God. **Q: Are you skilled in your work? Do you realize that through your work you are not serving before obscure men, but you are indeed serving the King?**

9/10 - Proverbs 23 verses 1 through 3 today teach us: *"When dining with a ruler, pay attention to what is put before you. If you are a big eater, put a knife to your throat, and don't desire all the delicacies--deception may be involved."* This is a

fascinating Proverb. I think the key to remember here is that if you are dining with a ruler that you really need to be very well prayed-up! Seriously. Rulers don't just mean presidents or politicians. I think of rulers as perhaps our bosses or key people in our community who are well known, but whom perhaps we don't know that well. If one of these people invites you to dinner, very simply put - beware. Why? Because... deception may be involved. It may not be involved - it may be a very innocent invite to dinner - but you should be cautious. If you are a woman and a well-known man invites you to a one-on-one dinner, and it seems out of context or strange in some way, my first inclination would be to not go. We all obviously know the risk in a situation like this. But men being invited to dinner by men, or men being invited to dinner by women, or women being invited to dinner by women all need to be careful too. One-on-one dinners with someone other than your spouse, someone you are courting, or a good friend could be risky business. I'll briefly share with you that I got put into a crazy bad situation once being invited to a dinner by a "ruler" in my community. I didn't see at all what was coming. (I'll spare you the details...) By the grace of God it all turned out fine in the end - in fact, in some ways I have never felt the Spirit of God rushing through me as powerfully as when I was in that horrible situation over dinner. But, it was a lesson learned! When dining with a ruler - pay attention to what is before you! Not only the food & drink... but the psychological game of deception that may very be before you as well... **Q: Have you ever had the experience of having to be "on your guard" when dining with rich or powerful people? Have you ever had someone in a position of power try to deceive you? How did remain pure and holy in the midst of it?**

9/11 - Proverbs 23 verses 4 & 5 today are a great teaching on the futility of pursuing worldly wealth - *"Don't weary yourself trying to get rich. Why waste your time? For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!"* **Q: Have you ever tried to get rich? Did it ever seem like perhaps that goal in and of itself was perhaps a waste of time? What else in life do you miss out on when you pursue nothing but riches? Is it possible that you miss out on God when you wholeheartedly pursue riches?** I do want to share with you a personal conversion of heart story here. When I graduated from college my one goal in life was "to make one million dollars by the age of 30." Seriously. And what a sad goal that turned out to be! I did go through a period of about 4 years of really pursuing that goal - and it led me into a job that was leading me down the path of being rich, but it was a job that I absolutely hated. The pursuit of that monetary goal was literally killing my soul. Fortunately God can redeem dumb goals like this and save us from our self-destructive habits. During that quest for riches God led me into a homeless shelter for teenagers where I finally had a conversion of heart experience to realize that there are people really struggling in our world - teenagers that have been physically, mentally, and sexually abused by their own parents in this case. And I realized in that homeless shelter that I was doing absolutely nothing for these hurting teens in my pursuit of cold hard cash. I was the one becoming cold! Well, praise God that he led me to eventually quit that high profile job and begin working for jobs that paid much less, but which have given me a great opportunity to have work / life balance. Jobs that have given me enough breathing room to grow in my relationship with God and others! So, back to you and your life today. **Q: Have you grown weary pursuing riches yet...?**

9/12 - Today's Proverbs 23 verses 6 through 8 teach us: *"Don't eat with people who are stingy; don't desire their delicacies. "Eat and drink," they say, but they don't mean it. They are always thinking about how much it costs. You will vomit up the delicious food they serve, and you will have to take back your words of appreciation for their "kindness.""* This is a great teaching on not eating with people who are stingy. **Q: I hope in turn we can reflect upon whether or not we ourselves are stingy? Are there any areas of your life where you might need to repent from being stingy?**

9/13 - Proverbs 23 verse 9 is one of those verses in the Bible that really makes you think about your own life - *"Don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice."* This is very wise advice. But it is hard advice at times. I think each of us often will want to give advice to others. But truly, some people do not want to hear what we have to say - no matter how wise the advice is. I struggle with this. I don't want to ever think that I am "wasting my breath on fools"... That seems so harsh. But if we do persist in giving wise advice to those that absolutely don't want to hear it, they will end up despising us as this Proverb says. **Q: How does this proverb speak to you? In any areas of your life, are you wasting your breath?**

9/14 - Today in Proverbs 23:12 we read: *"Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge."* **Q: Does this describe your heart and your ears? Are you open to instruction? Do you have a "teachable heart"? Are you listening for words of knowledge? What are some specific things in your life that demonstrate this?**

9/15 - We have a powerful Proverb in chapter 23 verses 13 & 14 today: *"Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death."* I can see how this Proverb applies to our own children, as long as we are disciplining in a godly manner with love - "tough love" though it may be at times. I can also

see how this Proverb applies to you and me from our Heavenly Father. I honestly believe that God does not fail to correct us! :) Really.... He'll discipline us if he needs to. Because He loves us. And when He disciplines us, he may very well be saving us from death... **Q: Do you believe there is such a thing as positive discipline? Have you ever been disciplined by God?** One of the best books I read on this concept of God disciplining us is Bruce Wilkinson's "[Secrets of the Vine.](#)" This book does a great job of explaining how God "prunes" off the sin in our life. And while the pruning can hurt, it is critically important for us to stay under the Godly pruning! And not try to run from it! Plus this book goes deeper into John chapter 15, which is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Oh - and it's a quick read too, which is nice. Check this book out if you haven't ever really thought about the concept of God disciplining you on occasion as a parent might discipline a child.

9/16 - When I read Proverbs 23 verses 15 & 16 today I felt like God was saying this directly to me - *"My child, how I will rejoice if you become wise. Yes, my heart will thrill when you speak what is right and just."* Yes, it's true that I do not believe I am wise! Isn't it a Proverb that says something like "be not wise in thine own eyes"? Wise advice... :) Truly, I love the thought of actually someday being wise. On my better days, I seek after wisdom. But I'm not there yet by a long shot. So, I guess today's Proverb seemed to be a bit of encouragement to me from God. **Q: Do you believe that God will rejoice if you become wise? Do you believe that God's heart will thrill when you speak what is right and just?**

9/17 - Proverbs 23 verses 17 & 18 are so applicable to our modern day: *"Don't envy sinners, but always continue to fear the LORD. For surely you have a future ahead of you; your hope will not be disappointed."* **Q: Do you ever find yourself envying sinners?** I have on occasion. And what a mistake that is. When we envy sinners, we take our eyes and heart off of God. We are no longer fearing the Lord. I do think we'd do well here also to realize that we ourselves are sinners. And we can likely even envy ourselves - or envy our old ways - or envy our "glory days" in the past that may have been full of sin. Let's not go down this path at all! For surely you have a future ahead of you with God. And your hope will not be disappointed!

9/18 - Today's Proverbs verses 19-21 in chapter 23 are very applicable to each of our lives today in this modern world... *"My child, listen and be wise. Keep your heart on the right course. Do not carouse with drunkards and gluttons, for they are on their way to poverty. Too much sleep clothes a person with rags."* **Q: How do these verses speak to you? Is your heart on the right course? Do you avoid carousing with drunkards & gluttons? Think this Proverb has some value for our lives today in this modern world? Is gluttony or drinking at times portrayed as "good" or hip or cool in our world today...? Do you realize the danger and poverty that this lifestyle can lead to?**

9/19 - Proverbs chapter 23 verse 22 reminds me of the Ten Commandment to honor your father and mother! *"Listen to your father, who gave you life, and don't despise your mother's experience when she is old."* I do think that listening to our parents and not despising their experience when they are old is very honoring. **Q: Are you listening to your parents these days? Are you not despising their experience?**

9/20 - Today in Proverbs 23:23 we read: *"Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding."* **Q: What does this Proverb mean to you? Can you "buy the truth" or is this perhaps a metaphor? Why shouldn't you sell it? Why get wisdom, discipline and understanding? Why is discipline good to get? What is truth? Where can you find truth? Is the Bible Truth? Will you learn from this Truth in some way each day for the rest of your life?**

9/21 - Proverbs 23 verse 24 is one of those Proverbs that simply states a fact without giving advice per se: *"The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure it is to have wise children."* This is of course true. **Q: My question for us today - are we ourselves godly children to our parents? Are we giving our parents pleasure because we ourselves are wise children?**

9/22 - Proverbs 23 verse 26 today is fantastic - *"O my son, give me your heart. May your eyes delight in my ways of wisdom."* **Q: Can you imagine God saying this Proverb to you? What does it mean to give God your heart? How does one do this? Have you fully given God your heart? Are your eyes delighting in the ways of God's wisdom?**

9/23 - Proverbs chapter 23 verses 29 through 35 is one of the largest portions of Proverbs that we will read on one day this year in the One Year Bible. I'm sure you've noticed that usually our Proverbs readings each day are one or two verses. Well, these 7 verses today are well worth presenting together all at once! I pray these verses speak to each of us powerfully about the dangers of overdoing alcohol and being out late partying: *"Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who*

is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper. You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?" This is so very true! I have to share with you here that I have really been convicted lately of how dangerous alcohol can be for so many people in our society. Recently I've had a couple of good friends share with me their struggles with alcohol - and they are heartbreaking stories. Alcohol abuse can literally destroy lives and relationships, as we all know. I'm not a prohibitionist. But, I do see so much truth in this Proverb and I think we all need to recognize the danger of alcohol abuse - not to mention the dangers of drugs. Please please please, don't ever let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you! **Q: How have you navigated the risks of alcohol in your own life? Have you ever struggled with alcohol? Had friends who have? How have you helped someone who has struggled with alcohol? Is there someone you can help today?**

9/24 - Proverbs 24 verses 1 & 2 today are powerful - *"Don't envy evil people; don't desire their company. For they spend their days plotting violence, and their words are always stirring up trouble."* **Q: Have you ever found yourself desiring the company of evil people? Have you ever found yourself envying them?** The bottom line to both of these things are these three words: waste of time. Really. Spending your time with people who do evil - those whose words stir up trouble - is simply a waste of your time. Envying evil people? Waste of your time as well. Don't waste your time! Our life is short and precious. Spend your time loving and serving God and other people. I have to share with you here that being careful who you spend your time with can be very challenging in some ways. Obviously I think all of us can see the wisdom of staying away from people who are truly evil. But what about people who are somewhere in between being holy and being evil - which, oh, includes all of us... :) There are obviously people who are in different phases of life, or on different points on a spectrum between good and evil if you will. And this gets tough to know if you're "compromising" too much by spending time with folks who perhaps don't care about God at all, don't care about the poor at all, and don't really care about much of anything besides themselves - but yet they are not "evil" people per se. I will confess that I do purposely avoid spending time with people who I spent A LOT of time with in my past. This was my past where I drank too much. Stayed out way too late. Didn't care about God. Didn't care about the poor. Only cared about myself. And you know what, praise God that I was saved from that lifestyle by Jesus - and through a godly friend who still would spend some time with me back then and eventually brought me to the point where I could give my life over to the Lord. So, I guess what I'm saying is this - we do need to spend time investing in others who don't know the Lord. That is not a waste of time. But, it gets tricky to realize when we are "going back to our old ways / old self" and when we're really loving people where they are at. I don't have this fully figured out right now, as you may guess by this long post... :) But I'm cognizant of it. Our hours each and every day are so very precious... I do pray for wisdom and discernment in this area! **Q: How are you spending your time these days? Wisely?** Please don't waste your very precious time that God has given you this side of heaven...

9/25 - Proverbs 23 verses 3 and 4 can be looked at literally or metaphorically - *"A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables."* **Q: Has your house been built by wisdom? Has your life been built by wisdom? Is your house strong through good sense? Is your life strong through good sense? Is your house filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables through knowledge? Through knowledge, is your very life filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables?**

9/26 - Proverbs 24 verse 5 seems to go against some of our modern world's teachings about strength being the key to success - *"A wise man is mightier than a strong man, and a man of knowledge is more powerful than a strong man."* **Q: Which do you believe to be true? The world that says strength is mightier? Or the Bible that says wisdom is mightier?** Let us seek ever-increasing godly wisdom in our lives each day!

9/27 - Proverbs 24 verse 7 is actually a bit convicting for me - *"Wisdom is too much for a fool."* I'm not sure if you've ever experienced this, but there have been times when I honestly have not been able to read or digest the Bible. I mean, there are times when I can kind of work my way through reading the Bible, but nothing is sticking. And obviously the Bible is wisdom... I then wonder if at times I am a fool? I don't think I'm a chronic fool... :) But, truly, sometimes I do dumb stuff or live in a dumb season and in retrospect I was acting like a fool in those seasons. And in those foolish seasons wisdom was too much for me... I do ultimately think Jesus / God / the Bible / wisdom brought me out of those foolish seasons. But let us pray that we don't enter into seasons of life where we are acting like a fool, and where wisdom is too much for

us. Being a fool is no way to live this beautiful life God has called us to! **Q: Have you ever acted foolishly in your life? How did you move from being a fool to wisdom?**

9/28 - Proverbs 24 verse 8 today is a great reminder that we should not get in the habit of planning evil.... :) - *"A person who plans evil will get a reputation as a troublemaker."* Okay, so I put a smiley face there, because probably none of us consciously decide we're going to plan something evil. However, I wonder if any of us maybe do get in the habit of planning things that really are outside of God's will for our life? This isn't evil on the surface. And we may not get a reputation as a troublemaker. But, if we are planning things and doing things that are outside of God's will for our life and how He wants us to spend our time, then we are essentially going against God's will. God's perfect will. I will confess that I all too often plan and do things that I know are outside of God's will for my life. And maybe I do these things so I get a good "reputation" among people... Well, perhaps my good reputation among people is actually a bad reputation to God because I'm doing things outside of his will... And I guess I've been thinking about this lately and thinking about how often I'm wasting God's time that he has blessed me with. And so maybe I'm getting the reputation of being a troublemaker in heaven... **Q: How about you? What's your reputation in heaven? Forget about your reputation here on earth... What's your reputation with God?**

9/29 - Interesting Proverb chapter 24 verse 10 - *"If you fail under pressure, your strength is not very great."* I think sometimes we forget that pressure is where we grow. God will not give us more than we can handle. Our key is to not fail under pressure. Stay with the healing / fine tuning / pruning that God is placing you under - even if it comes with pressure. For at the end of the pressure is transformation. Let us not fail under the high pressure systems of life that will periodically come our way... **Q: Where do you turn for strength when pressure comes to your life?**

9/30 - Today in Proverbs chapter 24 verse 12 we read – *"If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?"* This reminds me of the old adage that we are "either part of the problem or we are part of the solution". **Q: If we say "we knew nothing about this" related to some issue in our world today, do you think that God will know if this is truth or a lie? What is going on in our world today where you feel like you perhaps should be taking some action on being part of the solution? What is an atrocity that you are being called to help solve? Do you think you should now move forward and be part of the solution? If you do nothing – if you say you "knew nothing about this" – will you then instead be part of the problem? Will you move forward on being part of the solution to issues in our world that God is calling you to?**

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.

