

JANUARY 25

Genesis 50

Congratulations! You are about to finish your first book of the Bible this year. Sixty-five to go!

Vs. 1-14 So, what are your impressions, observations, and feelings reading this section? The one thing that is interesting to me is that there were times that both Isaac and Jacob had conflicts with the locals regarding their wells and their bought land. They had now been out of the land for 17 years. It could have been that the Canaanites thought to repossess the burial land that Abe bought, but seeing this procession of Egyptians with an armed escort would have made the Canaanites think twice.

Vs. 15-21 I wonder if Jacob really told them to say this to Joseph. Joseph's statement, *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good*, is famous. If you've been following these reading notes, you understand a little more of the process God used to bring Joseph to this point of maturity and understanding. If you see this process, and hadn't seen it before this year, then praise God. That kind of spiritual growth in understanding is what this is all about. God uses His Word to form our hearts so that as we enter situations, or when events happen to us, these truths, observations and confirmations from the Spirit give us perspective and hope. As these truths enter our hearts we make a decision here, or we are patient there, where we wouldn't have been before. This is the Spirit working to mature us in the Word. Without the Spirit and the Word, we'd be sunk. With the Spirit working in the Word, though we are slow in learning and we keep on falling, He lifts us up, shows us the way, and leads us on in hope. This is what makes being a disciple a joy, and the only way to fly.

Vs. 22-26 Joseph's life had a happy end...just like a Disney movie. Joe was 17 when sold to the Midianites, 30 when he was brought out of prison and set over Egypt, 39 when he was reunited with his father, 56 when Jacob died and 110 when he died. All of that is in the text and easy to figure out. What is more important is for you to be able to see this and how God worked with him during different periods in his life. His life looks much different than Jacob's. Following the Lord, being Jesus' disciple, hearing and doing His Word makes the difference in a life. Circumstances do not dictate our joy, wisdom, and peace. Our closeness to the Lord does.

V. 25 Joseph knew the Exodus was coming and reminded Israel that God would fulfill His promise. In all, from the moment Jacob set foot in Egypt, Israel would be there 430 years to the day. At Joe's death, Israel had been in Egypt for 54 years.

Exodus 1:1-2:10

As you'll see, this is a very interesting book. It begins like an action movie and ends with God laying the foundation of a nation. We'll have the plagues of Egypt at the beginning and the Ten Commandments and the building of the tabernacle at the end. A lot takes place in Exodus.

Exodus 1

Vs. 1-7 Actually, the Hebrew name for Exodus is "Names." This is a summary of the growth of Israel in Egypt.

Vs. 8-22 These verses contain two acts that seem to have occurred at the same time. First, the people of Israel were made slaves and forced into hard labor. Second, at the same time, the Egyptians tried to stop the growth of Israel by killing the male infants. It appears that this happened shortly before Moses was born since the parents seemed to be under no threat when Aaron, Moses' older brother (three years), was born. It must have been in the next three years that parents were required to kill or throw their male sons into the Nile. If the slavery began, say, 20 years before his birth and Moses led Israel out of Egypt when he was 80, they would have been forced into slavery the last 100 years of their 430-year stay.

God used the slavery. What a funny way to prepare Israel to build a new nation. When you read what they went through, think about what that might have "positively" built into the people. Also, the slavery gave them the "need to leave" Egypt, which for some people had been heaven on earth. As disciples, we need to understand that God can use all sorts of things in our lives and in the lives of those we are reaching out to or leading as disciples. It might be uncomfortable, but we need to be slow to judge God's allowance of difficulties in our lives. Not only was God preparing a nation, but we'll see 80 years of preparation in Moses' life, 40 of which were lived in defeat in the wilderness.

The hardest thing for a very energetic disciple is waiting on the Lord when He is slowly preparing things, and most often us, for the work He has in mind.

V. 19 There must have been truth to what these women said. Pharaoh didn't punish them.

Exodus 2:1-10

There is a lot to observe and think about here.

Vs. 1-2 I wonder if Moses "glowed" or something. Apparently God did something in the hearts of the parents to move them to dare to break the law. There was something about that baby. I'm glad I wasn't born then. I don't think I glowed. I wonder if I would have gotten thrown in? Just a random thought.

Vs. 3-10 You see all of this human planning, but you know that the only reason this worked was God, totally. Actually though, I think if the princess had opened the basket and seen me in it she would have saved me too. She would have handed me over to a servant and said, "Give it a banana and take it to the zoo."

Matthew 16:13-17:9

Matthew 16:13-28

These are very important verses in following Christ. Jesus has watched the progress of the Twelve and knew that the coming year would lead to His sacrifice. Now He needed to prepare them further, but were they ready?

Your observations here are more important than anything I have to say. Imagine that Jesus is talking to you. Where do you need to be more focused on Him and live more sacrificially?

Vs. 13-20 This confession by Peter was not just verbal acknowledgment. The Twelve had been with Jesus through some pretty hard battles. Now, they were still with Him as the people were beginning to drift away from Jesus and as the aggression from the scribes and Pharisees was increasing.

V. 17 This confirms what Jesus told the Pharisees and His doubting followers in John 6:44, *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.* The recognition of Jesus' identity was granted by the Father based on some microscopic response of faith and submission. The Father only allowed those with true faith and submission to know the Son.

V. 18 This church is built on what Peter just said, not on Peter the little stone. The Rock is Christ, the Son of the Living God.

The *gates of hell*, or Hades, could mean a couple of things. The gates were where the rulers of a city sat and conducted business and made judgments. If so this would mean the "government of hell" shall not prevail against the church. On the other hand, Hades was the place of death and the gate of Hades was like a mouth that swallowed up mankind. In this case *the gates of hell* meant, "the power and fear of death."

I know it is more dramatic and adventurous to think of the demonic government of hell. That also preaches good. But, hell has no government. Hell has no social life. The devil doesn't rule there or in Hades, and he never will. Biblically, the final enemy is not the devil. The enemy of mankind, given power by sin, is death. Death will be the final enemy defeated by Christ. *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (1 Cor. 15:26)

The church and the saints of the Tribulation will defeat the devil because they will work in the harvest without fear of death. *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.* (Rev. 12:11)

V. 19 The church has authority and Jesus will spell this out in another place. It will be specific to the harvest.

V. 20 So why do you think Jesus commanded this?

Vs. 21-23 Here Peter goes from "hero" to "zero" in nothing flat. First, notice the progression. Verse 21 shows you that until this point, having known Jesus for over two years, He hadn't told them about the crucifixion. Why do you think Jesus waited until now to reveal this?

Second, although Peter was just trying to help the "poor depressed Messiah" to see the glass as "half full," Jesus rebukes "the stone," who does not yet have the maturity to see the plan according to God's wisdom. We disciples get in trouble on this one all the time, assuming we know God's plan as if we were God, and then we try to get Him to approve our plan as His. We can actually hinder, not help, the work of God.

Notice that the word "Satan" means adversary. Jesus wasn't saying Peter was Satan or that Satan was there, but it was a very hard rebuke. Also, the issue here was not a satanic plan, but a human plan and the furtherance of the things of man. Humanly speaking, the plan of man was that Jesus should have "shot to the top" and instantly become king. That's what everyone wanted. The plan of God was to provide a sacrifice and substitute for sinful man.

One interesting note of trivia here is that when Jesus rebukes Peter, He turns away from him. The rebuke wasn't given face to face. I'm not sure if that was cultural, but it was far less aggressive than how we do it, face to face, nose to nose, bad breath to bad breath. Notice in Luke 9:55 that Jesus rebukes James and John the same way. There is something to learn here.

Vs. 24-28 The charge to His disciples was to give everything in following Him. We spiritualize and devotionalize taking up one's cross, but in that culture it only meant one thing. If a person was carrying a cross, they were walking to their death. That is fairly ultimate and supersedes bearing the scars of an abusive background. It is the willingness to follow Christ to death. That path to death defines what it means to "deny" oneself. It is denying the desire to live and to fulfill our expectations and desires. Following Christ in the harvest, to the death, to bring the testimony of Christ and His offer of salvation to a dying world becomes our ultimate desire.

V. 25 This is said to the disciples who believe. To the lost this means that to gain eternal life, they have to be willing to give up their "life" for belief in Jesus as their Savior. For a believer, and this is the main context, it is the rule of investment and protection walking on this planet. If we give Him little, we get little. If we try to forge a nice life for ourselves here, ignoring Him, chances are that our faith, our hearts, and our lives will be damaged. To be fully protected by His care, we need to be fully submitted to Him. Paul taught "salvation" from damage in his letters (i.e., 1 Tim. 4:16). Look around at believers who follow half-heartedly, and you will see the results of damage on earth.

V. 26 One note of trivia is that the Greek word for *soul* in this verse and the word for *life* in the previous verse is the same word. It can mean "life" or "soul."

V. 27 Jesus' teaching on discipleship has introduced the concept of "salvation from damage" on earth as a believer. And now He is introducing the idea of rewards in following.

V. 28 This took place literally in the next chapter as Jesus' glory was revealed. And if that wasn't the event Jesus was referring to, the apostle John would see and tell of this event in Revelation. Needless to say, Jesus hasn't come yet and taken an earthly throne in His kingdom. That is still to come.

Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus only takes the three with Him. He apparently discerned in them, a deeper faith, commitment and understanding. They all became key leaders in the early church in Jerusalem.

Notice that Jesus took Peter in spite of Peter's mistake six days earlier. Jesus didn't shun his disciples when they made mistakes. He was a Good Shepherd and Teacher and kept nurturing their faith.

Psalm 21

I think for us as followers, vs. 5-7 say it all. This is a great psalm. Highlight or underline all the occurrences of *you*, *your* and *Lord*.

Vs. 1-7 This psalm was apparently written after all of David's running from Saul, and after he was the king of the entire nation. He had a lot of years and tears to look back over. Because he says *forever*, it seems that God had already made the promise to David that one of his children would sit on the throne of Israel forever.

Vs. 8-12 In the ten years David ran from Saul, many men expressed their arrogance against both David and God's plan for David to be king. Then came the seven years of civil war and again men opposed God's plan and vented their anger at David. Now David was the king and those men were gone.

V. 13 David knew that God, and only God, had done all of this.

Proverbs 5:1-6

Just speaking to the guys here, if God has thought to address this issue, it must be a big one. None of us are "supermen" and it would be better, if you know you can't handle it, to have somewhat distant and awkward relationships with women than be stupid and think you can be the friend of all. Many men in ministry have messed around here and gone down. Obviously, the women in church are not these women, you'd hope; but this is really saying more about the weakness of the man and his temptability. This is very tricky, especially if you realize that both David and Solomon (the guy writing this) became victims. So, you should pay attention. Those great men slipped and were never the same again. I'm sure that we're no better.

For most men following Christ, the problem will not be physical adultery, but visual adultery. Jesus says visual adultery is basically the same thing, and it will kill your heart. It never delivers what it promises and it messes up your relationship with your Lord and your wife.

The answer? Turn the TV off, turn in early, and focus everything on "the wife of your youth." God's advice. Remember, like in Genesis, the true desire and need, deeper than anything sexual, is completeness and connection. You can't charge a battery by only connecting it for 10 minutes. It usually takes 40 minutes to an hour to charge a battery properly. Anything less, and the things don't fill up properly and they run out quickly. The man has to lead in this. God made it that way, so quit complaining. If you don't think your wife takes enough interest, blame God, not her. That's how He made her so that you would have to initiate, develop warmth and lead. God's way is always the best way.

For women, I would just say to "try" to understand that your husband is probably 90% OK, but always vulnerable. Never forget that. All the stuff of life beats on him so that even the best and most godly get down and fatigued and sink into themselves. This, more than lust, draws them to escape and pornography.

A man likes to know that if he really were in trouble emotionally, and on the verge of "death" emotionally, someone would be interested in reaching in and saving him. I know it's self-piteous and silly, but you just have to go with it. Men need respect and attention, not some wild woman that Hollywood tells them they need, who, incidentally, is mentioned in this proverb. Mostly, godly men following Christ are solid; but where they fall is in thinking, rightly or wrongly, in stress and emotional fatigue, that they are really alone. Know your husband, because he probably won't tell you. In his weakness, he'll quietly test you to confirm that he really is alone. What he needs is the safety and security of being home and accepted and complete.