

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 12

Day 78. Read Numbers 28.16-29.40; Luke 3.23-38;
Psalm 62. 1-12; and Proverbs 11.18-19.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Numbers: Morning and evening, day after day. New moon after new moon, month after month- sacrifices. Sin and death and making atonement are interminable. But at certain times of the year come special times to add punctuation- the exclamation point to complete the picture. The feast of unleavened bread, beginning the 14th day of the first month. Then the Feast of Weeks, the festival of firstfruits, fifty days after Passover. On the first day of the seventh month, another assembly for the Day of Atonement, followed by a week- long celebration later in the month. No work is to be done. More sacrifice is to be made—sacrifices, in addition to the daily and monthly sacrifices, year after year. Will there be no end of sin and death? No end of sacrifices? Questions: Why does God appoint special times for special worship in addition to the weekly Sabbath-like worship? Why do I need these special times in addition to the weekly worship? 2. How does my worship differ from the Old Testament worship since Christ has provided the complete sacrifice for my sins? Why do I worship?

Luke: Simply put, it's a paradox. God's Son, who as God has no beginning or end, now has a long lineage when he is born of Mary as the man called Jesus. Luke traces the genealogy painstakingly. Jesus is true man, truly human like us all. The line extends back through time to creation, including times of nomadic wandering, slavery in Egypt, wilderness wandering, kingdom building, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, languishing in exile, return and rebuilding. His line includes David, the "man after God's own heart," and Jacob, the cheat and liar who tricked his blind father to cheat his own brother out of his rightful inheritance. There are big names and 'no names.' People like us. Jesus is truly human, with a long lineage, and yet, as God's Son, has no beginning and so is without genealogy. Both are true, and that paradox puts him in a unique category. That paradox makes his sacrifice for sins perfect. **Questions:** 1. My genealogy traces back, like Jesus' own, through time to the creation by God, and through redemption to Jesus Christ. What does it mean to me—how does it change my thinking and actions—to know I am doubly dependent on God for my creation and redemption? 2. Who are my spiritual

ancestors—the people who helped me know and follow Jesus? Who will be my spiritual descendants—the people God has used or will use me to help them know and follow Jesus for eternal life? Take time to list them as specifically you can.

Prayer: Lord, I see it now. I am not my own. I owe my very existence to so many people over so much time. I am like the tip of the tree rising out of the morning mist. Nor am I the end, I pray. Others follow after me, just as I have followed others. Really, this is all your doing, from beginning to end...to new beginning. Thank you for the faithful people who led me to know, love and follow you. Thank you for them! And thank you for those who will come after. Give me courage and strength, give me love and joy, to link yesterday with tomorrow in today. Make me faithful to those of the past, and those of the future, O God of yesterday and tomorrow. To you be the glory never ending! Amen.

Day 79. Read Numbers 30.1-31.54; Luke 4.1-30;
Psalm 63.1-11; and Proverbs 11.20-21.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Numbers: Severity tempered with understanding. Vows must be kept but may be annulled if made unwisely and repented of quickly. Except toward the Lord. Vows made to God must never be broken, but always be fulfilled. The power that led them astray to worship another god, Midian, is to be completely destroyed. And yet, anyone in Israel who comes back from the death and destruction—anyone who has killed—cannot come back into the camp to be among the community for seven days. Human life is precious beyond telling, even the life of the enemy. Shedding blood, even in a just war, renders one unfit for God's presence and in need of redemption. Of the plunder, everything that can be passed through fire must be passed through the fire; and whatever cannot, must be passed through water, before it is 'clean,' fit to be among the community or used for God's offerings. Those who fought against the enemy are to receive their reward, and from their reward the Lord is to receive a part. Through fire and water. Severity tempered with compassion. So Israel will be saved, through fire and water. Of all who fight against the enemy, not one is missing. Not one soldier is lost. Questions: 1. What promises have I made to God in my baptism into Christ? Am I keeping them? What do I need to do that I haven't done in my relationship with God? 2. What spiritual enemy do I have to fight against for God? When have I mistakenly taken people as my enemies and hurt them instead of the evil that holds them bound? 3. Do I dedicate to God the 'plunder,' meaning the good things following God brings my way?

Luke: The desert is an empty place. And Jesus is soon empty himself. Fasting forty days, he is hungry till it hurts so bad he...what will he do? He has one thing to feed on...temptations. Completely alone, he has some company...the evil one. "If you are the Son of God..." Does the devil doubt it? No. But if Jesus can be turned, well then, God's plan to redeem this desert world will be undone. Turn stone into bread, Jesus. Take all authority on earth, Jesus. Throw yourself from the temple to prove God's Word is true.

Let him bear you up. As empty as his stomach is, Jesus is still full. Far from empty, he is completely filled with...the Spirit. Jesus simply responds: 'It is written...' My answer is 'Whatever you say, My God. Even if you forsake me, you are God. Let it all be just as you say.' He will die - deserted on the cross, desert dry and thirsty. In the synagogue, he reads from God's Word his mission: proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, release for the oppressed. He has been anointed for this mission. The Spirit of God is upon him, and he will fulfill God's Word, whatever the cost, whatever may come. He announces this redemption is for everyone, even the foreigners. And the people of his hometown desert him. They drove him out of town and would have killed him if they could. Come cross and tomb, and hell itself, the most deserted place of all, he will fulfill God's Word, whatever the cost, whatever may come. **Questions:** 1. What does it mean to me when I face the temptations of the evil one, that Jesus was tempted just like I am? 2. When tempted, do I, like Jesus, use the Word of God as my weapon against the lies and tricks of the evil one? 3. What does it signify that God's Word declares that I and all who believe are 'the temple of the Holy Spirit,' and promises that 'out of the believer's heart will flow rivers of living water (the Spirit)?'

Prayer: God, most days I feel dry like the desert. Wayward thoughts and hungers swirl through my mind and soul, like dust devils in the desert. Yet here, just here, you promise your Spirit. In the midst of this desert world today, you give me the mission of Christ to fulfill. There are captives who need freedom, blind people who need to see, hopeless people who need to hear the good news of your limitless love for them. How hungry they are. How thirsty. Just like me. They need Jesus. Just like me. And they need...me. So you have sent me, I who have fed on Christ, your Word made flesh. I, who by your grace and promise, have the Spirit flowing like a well inside. Fill me, Holy Spirit. Overflow me, Spirit. Soften this dry desert world with your Spirit, O God. Soften my heart, and send me forth for your mission O Christ, hungry for those for whom you hungered. Amen.

Day 80. Read Numbers 32.1-33-33.39; Luke 4.31-5.11;
Psalm 64.1-10; and Proverbs 11.22.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Numbers: It has been a long, wilderness journey. Not in physical distance, but in spiritual distance. Forty years in time, but a new generation in spirit. Or is it? Is it just the same old conniving and griping? Moses' anger blazes at the request of two tribes for the land on this side of the Promised Land. Can't they wait to receive their inheritance with everyone else? Won't they fight for the land God promises them as everyone else must? Will they leave their sisters and brothers to fend for themselves when they are most needed? No, they respond patiently; they are indeed willing to arm themselves and struggle beside their kindred people. They promise: we will not return to our homes until every person in Israel has received the inheritance. This is a new spirit after all. **Questions:** 1. What are

the signs in my life of the new Spirit of Christ at work in me? What tastes of the Promised Land are already present in my life and actions? 2. What areas still need the transforming power of Christ's Spirit, need the conquering power of Christ's cross and resurrection to win them for God's purposes? 3. Who among other believers needs my partnership in their struggles?

Luke: Authority. Power. They echo in his words. They shout through his deeds. The Defiant demons are defeated and cast out. At his touch...and word...a feverish woman is healed. At once she gets up to serve him...and the others around him. Daybreak finds him away from people in a solitary place, praying. That is the source of his power. This is the spring of his authority. Unbroken, intimate relationship with the Father. He is driven by his devotion to the Father. He 'must' proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because that is why he was sent. And why he sends others. Fishermen, who become, at his bidding, fishers of men. At his bidding they let down their nets for a catch so amazing their boats begin to sink. At his bidding, they leave their boats high and dry on the shore, leave everything, and launch into his mission. Such is authority. Such is his power. Questions: 1. How much power and authority do I really believe Jesus has? How does this belief show in my life and actions? Not show? 2. What does it mean for me to leave everything and follow Jesus? 3. Who among my family members, friends, neighbors, fellow workers and acquaintances does God want me to fish for? What will I do next to try to 'catch' someone to be a disciple of Jesus with me?

Prayer: O Lord, sometimes I want to settle for so much less than you want for me...or through me. I would gladly settle down and take it easy. In fact, I long for rest...repeatedly. This pasture land looks productive enough for me. What I've got is enough. Why want more? What do you say? Because all authority in heaven and on earth is yours? It's not for me to decide, how far to go or to whom or when I am done? You're right, Lord. All the authority is yours. Forgive me for forgetting. Don't feed me, this hungry man inside me, a fish today. Teach me fishing...like you do. Let me always be fishing. I have your license for that. All authority belongs to you. You long for that, and fulfilling your longings are my deepest desires. Amen.

Day 81. Read Numbers 33.40-35.34; ;
Psalm 65.1-13; and Proverbs 11.23

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Numbers: There can be no compromise. It is to be total war. Not one enemy is to be left alive. All the idols are to be destroyed. All places of worship, obliterated. If they are not, then, inevitably, they will become thorns in your side. They will cause you to turn aside, come to understandings, make compromises. Then God, who never changes, will have to do to the people of God even as he does to the nations he dispossessed. Already at the first

coming into the Promised Land, the seeds are sown for their exile from it. See how God acts. The land itself will be given fairly, with everyone receiving their share. The person who kills intentionally must die, life for life. No ransom can be taken for a murderer. Bloodshed pollutes the land and atonement must be made with blood—the blood of the one who shed it. There is even to be provision for people who kill others unintentionally to be spared retribution - cities of refuge to which they must flee and where the avenger cannot come. The killer must stay in the city of refuge to live...until the death of the high priest. Then he or she might go back home, on with life. This too foretells and foreshadows the death of Jesus, our High Priest, who prayed on the cross for us ‘Father, forgive...’ and by his sacrifice set us free. **Questions:** 1. Who have I hurt by my thoughts, word, or actions today? 2. What does it mean for me to flee to the city of refuge today? How can the community of faith help me with forgiveness? 3. What does it mean for me to know the my High Priest, Jesus Christ, has died and I am set free for life again?

Luke: Touch him, and you’ll be unclean just like him! So the religious leaders said, citing God’s Word. So society said, also, because of their own fear and loathing. “If you are willing, Lord, you can make me clean.” Not, “if you can, I am willing.” If you are willing. This faith is strong faith. What would he have done if Jesus had said, ‘I am not willing.’ What if Jesus had said, ‘I will you to glorify God by remaining as you are. In your illness, glorify God.’ But Jesus has faith, and he is willing. Willing that everyone be healed of every evil...in God’s time. But God’s time is not our time. ‘One day the power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal the sick.’ That day. Not others. A paralyzed person is carried to Christ and Christ responds with compassion ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ What about his broken body? People whose hearts and souls are sick—the respected religious leaders—grumble about him. How dare he forgive sins? Only God can, after all. That’s God’s prerogative. Almost as an afterthought, to prove his power to forgive sin - the main part of his mission- Jesus heals the paralyzed man of his paralysis. Would that he could heal the religious leaders of theirs. Jesus heals a hated tax collector—collaborator and stooge of the Roman conquerors—back into the people of God by calling him to be one of his disciples. Jesus is willing—willing everyone to be healed and whole again. In God’s way. In God’s time. The plan is God’s, but the purpose is plain: everyone who trusts will be healed and made whole. **Questions:** 1. Who is considered ‘untouchable’ in my community, or among the people I know? How can I be Christ’s hand to touch them and give them some experience of God’s healing love for them? 2. To whom do I need to pronounce forgiveness? 3. Have I heard and heeded Christ’s call to follow him? How is that reflected in my life today?

Prayer: I want to flee to you, Lord and stay with you, safe and secure, as in a city of refuge, if you are willing. Oh, you are all too willing to receive me. Just as I am, misdeeds and sickness and all. Your touch makes me whole again. Your intimate embrace washes away my sin and sickness, and I am made right again. Made like new. Made like you. I want to stay with you in these intimate times. But you, my High Priest, have died. That means I am set free, and sent out. Out into your world. Out to follow you where you are...touching, healing, calling, sending people: the leper, the tax collector, the self-

righteous religious...me. Go ahead of me, and come with me. Be before and behind, above and around. Be in the person whose need I meet, and in me as you meet their need through me. Amen.

Day 82. Read Numbers 36.1-Deuteronomy 1.46; Luke 5.29-6.11; Psalm 66.1-20; and Proverbs 11.24-26.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Numbers & Deuteronomy: It doesn't seem too much to ask. Moses' last request: 'Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan.' The Promised Land. For forty years Moses had led the people as God led Israel through the wilderness. Moses is almost the last of that generation that knew Egypt. Shouldn't he be allowed to see the promised land? God would not listen. Moses had disobeyed and failed to follow God, just like the others who perished in the wilderness and would not enter the land. Someone else must lead them in. 'Commission Joshua,' God commands Moses, 'and encourage him. He will lead the people into the land.' But to Moses he gives a sight. 'Go up on the mountain, and look in all directions at the land you will see but not enjoy in this life.' Some are chosen to prepare the way for others. Serving reveals the measure of faith a person has. The greatest works take more than one person, and more than one lifetime, to complete. Questions: 1. When I prepare the way for others, and don't get to enjoy the fruit of my labors myself, how do I respond? Do I get resentful, or rejoice to be used of God? 2. What works of faith am I involved in that will take generations to complete, the fruit of which I may never see with my own eyes in my lifetime? 3. Am I investing my time, talents, and resources in leaving a legacy of faith for future generations? How?

Luke: Such a lavish lifestyle! Such rich food, but such poor company! Why does Jesus associate with such...slime? The right religious folk—called Pharisees in Jesus' day—are not bold enough to accuse Jesus to his face; so they ask his disciples to defend him, if they can. Jesus knows their hearts and minds and answers himself - sick people need a physician. Jesus' mission? To call sinners to turn and have life with him...through him. Jesus is a problem for religious folk. He won't act in ways that are acceptable. He's much too worldly, it seems. He associates with the most unacceptable sorts. He doesn't worry at all about looking religious. He doesn't fast like John's disciples. He looks the other way as his followers pick grain to eat on the Sabbath, knowing full well that is disrespectful and highly irregular. Surely he won't break the Sabbath rules himself? Will he even dare to disregard God's clear commandment? See there, he actually healed the man with a shriveled hand...on the Sabbath! What's that you say, Jesus? New wineskins for new wine? Is it not 'lawful'—true to God's will and Word— to do good on the Sabbath, to save life, he asks? The Pharisees were furious and began to plan what they might do to stop Jesus. If only Jesus could heal shriveled hearts and minds, as easily as he could a shriveled hand!

Questions: 1. When I am invited to a party or social event, do I go looking for people and seeking out people to show God's love to? Do I see all the social events I am a part of as opportunities to help someone experience the healing love of Christ? 2. What has Jesus asked me to do, or whom has Jesus called on me to serve with his love, that others might disapprove of? If I am not in relationship with anyone like that, why not? 3. What persons or groups do I shy away from as undeserving of or incapable of appreciating Christ's love?

Prayer: God, you eat with me every day. Every meal every day. You provide the meal, and your presence surrounds me as I eat it. When I eat alone, you are there, and I am not alone. When I eat with others, you are there; and we are encompassed in your care. Whether it is with joy, or whether there is deep pain and hurt, you are there, hoping against hope to bring new life to everyone present. Open my shriveled eyes to see what you see - people precious to your Father, and mine. Open my shriveled hand to reach out to them for you, even as you reached out your nail pierced hand on the cross to include me in your endless life. Amen.

Day 83. Read Deuteronomy 2.1-3.29; Luke 6.12-38; Psalm 67.1-7; and Proverbs 11.27

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Forty years wandering in the wilderness, and they have lacked nothing. God has provided all. After that whole generation that had known slavery first-hand in Egypt, and so often longed to go back, had died in the wilderness, only then would God give the command to make the preparations to enter the promised land. This new generation had known only God's good providing. No slave masters might take credit. The entire generation of fighting-aged men had died, the ones who had quaked in fear at the mention of the warlike peoples inhabiting the Promised Land. The new generation had come up that had learned to march at the command of God. The whole people had been formed into a mighty army. The people are hungry to take possession of the land God has promised. But God instructs Moses as they approach the Promised Land to take care and not provoke or fight the Ammonites or the Moabites, for God's struggle is not with them. They are relatives...descendants of Lot and Esau...related to the Chosen People. **Questions:** 1. What spiritual defects of temperament or behavior have died in me since God called me to be his person and take part in his mission to redeem the world? If none, why? 2. What parts of my thought process, words or actions still need to 'die' and be reborn according to Christ's new nature? 3. The 'dying' process is also the work of God in us. We cannot do it ourselves, but it often comes as we are asked to serve others, since the old nature wants to be served and not to serve. Who is God calling me to serve in order to put to death the old nature in me more?

Luke: The whole night. Praying. Was he worried? Having trouble deciding? Mulling over the his options? Before he chose the twelve he spent the whole night in prayer. Did he fail, finally? One of them, Judas, betrayed him. Another denied him. All forsook him and fled when he was arrested in Gethsemane. Have his prayers gone awry? Was God not listening? He prayed because keeping constant communion with his Father was critical. And what he loved. He undertook his mission to make disciples out of communion with his Father, to do his will. When he walked among the crowd, everyone tried to touch him...because power was coming from him...healing power. Because he kept in constant communion with his Father, power flowed from him. And truth. Truth like the world had never heard. Blessed are the poor, the hungry, those who weep, those who are hated for following Jesus, for yours is the Kingdom, fullness, laughter, love of God. But watch out, whoever has what the world values above all, the wealthy, the satisfied, the favored and privileged, you've gotten all the world has to offer, but missed the Kingdom. There is a power that flows through Jesus' Word, a soul transforming, society changing power. Love your enemies and do good to those who mistreat you. Do not condemn others, and you will not be condemned. Give and you will receive even more abundantly. The measure you give—to other people, and to life itself—will be what you receive back. There is power in his words to heal. Don't you want to touch him, too? To come close enough to him to touch him and receive his healing power? Questions: 1. What was it Jesus experienced in prayer that made him want to pray all night? How does my desire compare with his? 2. What does it do to me to know that Jesus picked me personally, just as he picked the twelve to be his disciples? 3. What power of Jesus for healing has flowed into my life? What forgiveness, truths, or ways of behaving toward others have changed my life?

Prayer: God, so often there just doesn't seem to be much happening, much changing. The new life I felt before, with excitement, when I first really came to know you has worn off. Now it seems like the promised land is far off and receding farther away into some unimaginable future. I won't experience it in fullness, on this side of the resurrection. So be it. You have the plan, even if I do not understand it. Lord, let me work now, according to your Word and you will. Let me invest these gifts you have given me: my time, my energies, my money, in your kingdom, though I may not live to see the fruit it bears. You took the first risk in investing in me. You chose me as your disciple. Thank you for risking. May all I do and say bring you glory, and serve to bring in your kingdom people yet unborn. Amen.

Day 84. Read Deuteronomy 4.1-49; Luke 6.39-7.10;
Psalm 68.1-18; and Proverbs 11.28.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Last words are important. Moses cannot enter the promised land to live there. God has said so. He will die in the wilderness. Moses' last words call God's people

to listen to God's Word. He repeats God's decrees and laws. He warns God's people not to add to God's Word or take away from it but to follow it carefully and completely. The reason? 'So that you may live and go in and take possession of the land the Lord is giving you.' God's Word is the way to life as it is meant to be. But from the beginning, God's plan has involved more than Moses and Israel. Abraham and Sarah, the first of the Chosen, were chosen and blessed...to be a blessing. 'All the nations of the world will be blessed through you,' God had promised, relishing the day when everyone on earth would be living as God wants—in fullness of life. So Moses, with his last breaths on earth, reminds the people not to forget. Even more, he orders them to pass on this legacy of God's speaking to them, this Word of God. Teach your children and to their children after them. Moses, with tears, must tell them the truth: if they forget and go another way, after other 'gods' which are not God at all, then they will perish from the Land he is giving them. God is holy and pure—a consuming fire, that consumes all the chaff and dross. But most of all Moses reminds them that, even then, if through their faithlessness they have forsaken God, if they will only turn to him still, he will not abandon or destroy them. He will forgive them. They are the chosen people, of all people on earth. With 'chosen-ness,' with this special, close relationship of being literally on 'speaking terms' with God, comes great responsibility. If he talks with us, will we listen? And act? Questions: 1. How does it change the way I think and act to know that God has chosen me to be part of his work in the world, that all people may be blessed through a relationship with him? 2. How careful am I to immerse myself in God's Word? 3. To whom am I intentionally passing on the faith and God's Word?

Luke: Why call me, Lord, if you won't do what I say? No student is above his or her teacher, to know more than they know. So how do you judge over Jesus? The one who hears my words and puts them into practice is like someone who builds a house on a solid foundation. All others build on a false foundation that will not hold. When the troubles and trials come, they will fall flat. Will anybody believe enough to act on what Jesus says? Will anybody truly trust that he knows what he says enough to stake the life upon it? Strange to say, a foreigner is first. A centurion, a member of one of Rome's legions occupying Israel as a conquered country. Just say the word, Jesus, and my servant will be healed. You don't even need to come in person. In fact, I don't deserve for you to come to me personally. But say the word. The Centurion knew that Jesus wanted to heal his servant. He wants everyone to be living life fully and freely. And he knew that Jesus' Word was the very power of God for life. Just speak the Word, Jesus. Here is faith...unlike any Jesus had even seen in Israel. Questions: 1. Why do I so often read or hear God's Word and fail to put it into practice? 2. How can I, like the Centurion, have the faith that trusts Jesus to know and do what is lifegiving in every situation, so that I act in trust and faith on his Word?

Prayer: Why do I call you Lord and not listen to you? I hear but do not heed. I want you to hear me whenever I pray; but when you speak, too often I don't want to hear what you say. You call me to actions I don't want to take, for people I don't want to be with. Speak

a word of forgiveness - to heal our broken relationship? Speak a word of invitation to that person I don't really know all that well, so they might know your acceptance of them? You go so deep, you expose right to my foundation, what is deep in my heart, and the foundation is broken. But that same Word you speak is what heals and gives hope. Speak Lord. Just say the word, and your servant will be healed. Speak Lord, and those others you love and long for, will be healed. Speak to me. Speak through me. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 12

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Deuteronomy 4.32-40

Psalm: 67.1-7

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Luke 6.46-7.10.

Theme: "Just Say The Word!"

Summary of The Sunday Scripture and Theme: Moses reminds Israel that they have been favored above all nations because God has chosen near to them and spoken to them. He did this so they might know him and the way to life. Because he loved them he chose them and delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Our God is a God who speaks, and creating relationship with him. His Word is powerful and brings life. In the passage from Luke, Jesus teaches that everyone who does what he says is like a person who builds a house on such a solid foundation that the worst storms of life cannot shake it. No sooner has he finished teaching this when a foreigner—an officer in the occupying Roman army, no less—shows he understands the power in God's Word and the compassion in Jesus' heart when he asks Jesus to heal a dying servant. Too humble to have Jesus come under his roof, the centurion says simply "But say the word, and my servant will be healed." He knows that just a word from Jesus will do it, even at a distance. For once, Jesus is awestruck, saying "I have not found such faith in Israel." And, of course, the servant was healed.