

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 15

Day 99. Read Numbers 16.41-18.32; Mark 16.1-20;
Psalm 55.1-23; and Proverbs 11.7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: The last words from Moses' mouth are a blessing. A specific word for specific people. Each tribe, like every person created by God, has a unique personality, unique passions, unique gifts and abilities. Each tribe receives a personal blessing. So God always acts to give blessings: specific gifts to specific people so they may succeed at the specific tasks appointed them. 'Blessed are you, O Israel,' Moses concludes. 'Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD?' He is shield and sword...your defense and your power to fight the enemy you will necessarily face in this world. But with God, the source of every blessing, you will defeat your enemies and trample down their high places.

Questions: 1. What blessing has God spoken over me? What gifts, abilities, wholesome passions, personality and character traits has God given me? 2. What does it mean for me to be part of God's people, redeemed and saved by God himself? 3. How is God my shield to protect me from the attacks of the enemy? My sword to 'fight' and take the offensive against the enemy? How does God want me to take action against the enemy in the lives of and for the others around me?

Luke: The headlines must have heralded the bad news: 'Innocent Civilians Killed In Crossfire...Tower Topples, Eighteen Die.' Why do bad things happen to some people, while others escape unscathed? Could it be because these particular people are being punished? Because these particular people have been bad, bad things have happened to them? Perhaps, then I am safe after all, but no. Jesus says simply, "Unless you, too, repent, you, too, will perish...all of you." Bad things happen to all people, including and especially the ultimate evil: death. So, Jesus comes to turn it all around...to open the way to life in a world of death. He tells a story about a fruitless, fruit tree. 'Cut it down, burn it up,' says the vineyard owner. The gardener pleads: 'Let me try once more. Give it another chance. Let me lavish my love upon it, and then, if the tree still doesn't come to life, still doesn't do what its true nature is made to do and bear fruit, then it will be cut down.' Jesus frees a woman, bent over and unable to straighten up. Suddenly, at Jesus' loving word, she stands straight and tall again, the way God created all people to live, upright. The fruitless, fruit trees—the religious leaders—attack him instantly. It is the Sabbath, a day God commanded

no work should be done; and Jesus is working... healing someone. How can he be from God, he who violates God's law and breaks the Sabbath? Jesus confronts them. Even they would set free their ox or donkey to let it get a drink on the Sabbath. Even they would let an animal that is bound be set free, so it would live. How could a real follower of God not set free someone who has been dehumanized by her disease? It is God's will that good things happen to all people...to bad people, unfruitful people, even people whose hearts are so hardened that they leave others in suffering and call it God's will. **Questions:** 1. When have I turned a deaf ear or a blind eye to the need of another and not acted as God's agent to alleviate their suffering? 2. Do I love and serve people for God, regardless of whether they have brought the calamity on themselves or are experiencing the consequences of bad choices? Do people experience the unconditional love of Christ in my words and actions, or do I communicate judgment or condemnation? 3. Do I believe everything I have is a gift from God through his grace in Jesus Christ, despite my fruitlessness; or do I think I am basically good, so that God will reward me with good things?

Prayer: You get right in my face sometimes, God; and I thank you for it. Oh, first it hurts. It humiliates me. No, it humbles me. You are not in the humiliating business. You want people to stand tall and straight. You want people to be free and live life abundantly, as you intended life to be, and as only you can make it to be. Speak your powerful word over me, Lord, as once you did for a crippled woman. I, too, am bent down; so I stare at the earth and cannot lift my eyes to heaven. I cannot see you. Speak your word and lift me up. Lavish your love upon me, so I may love again. Let me bear fruit for you in serving others, so they may experience the life you alone can give. Let me serve in love the ones who've been caught in the crossfires of life, the one's who've been crushed as the towers toppled on them. Everyone I know has been hurt...and has hurt others. In my words and actions, speak your healing word and lift them up to life. Amen.

Day 100. Read Deuteronomy 34.1–Joshua 2.24; Luke 13.22–14.6; Psalm 79.1-13; and Proverbs 12.26.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy/Joshua: 'Be strong and courageous,' Moses bids Joshua. It is really a blessing, more than a wish. Moses lays his hands upon Joshua to bless him and bestow upon him the same Spirit that God had given him. No prophet would ever rise to the stature of Moses in Israel; and, yet, Moses cannot bring the people into the promised land. That remains for the one who comes after him, Joshua, whose very name means 'God saves.' Moses bids him to be careful to obey God's Word. 'Do not let it depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you can do it,' Moses bids him. And then he repeats himself to emphasize his point: 'Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified, or get discouraged because the LORD will be with you wherever you go.' Courage comes from knowing God, from maintaining a close connection with him in his Word. His presence gives strength and courage. It is a dangerous world. Joshua's first action as

commander is to send spies to scout enemy territory. The story reads like a modern adventure thriller. Their secret mission discovered, the spies are forced to flee for their lives. They find a most surprising ally: Rahab, a prostitute from the very city they seek to conquer. A deal is struck. She will hide them and lie for them, sending their pursuers on a wild goose chase, if they will spare her when the city is taken. They agree, but she must hang a scarlet rope in the window as a sign. All her family will be saved, too, if they gather with her where the scarlet rope is shown. The men return, mission accomplished. 'The LORD has given the whole land into our hands, for all the people melt in fear before us,' they report. As Paul will say, 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' When a latter-day Joshua, or as Greek transcribes it, Jesus, comes as Savior, Rahab will be listed in his genealogy as his ancestor. In God's marvelous and mysterious plan, even a prostitute is included in the Savior's line. Questions: 1. What do I need courage and strength to face in life these days? What is calling for courage and strength in my life and work as God's disciple right now? 2. What is my personal mission for God in my life? How is God using me to fulfill his plan for the people around me? 3. Who can be a partner in faith and work for God with me, whom I might easily overlook, to help accomplish our mission for God?

Luke: They are some of the scariest words out of Jesus' mouth: 'I don't know you or where you came from; away with you, all you evil doers.' Away from him means away from life, for he is salvation itself. Will there be only a few who are saved? How many? Who? The disciples ask difficult questions that would be on any thoughtful person's mind who is spiritual enough to think about death and the afterlife. Jesus doesn't answer their questions. Instead he bids them: 'Make every effort to enter the narrow door.' A narrow door? Where is it? How narrow? If I ever find it, will I fit through? Who will? 'Many will try to enter it, but will not be able to' Jesus says. It will be as if people come to a home at night seeking a place. They will knock on the door, but the owner will say, 'I don't know you...' The one thing necessary is to know Jesus well enough that he knows us. Intimate knowledge. Person to person. Jesus mourns over the city, Jerusalem, filled with people, most of whom have no idea where true life—salvation—is to be found. He longs to gather the people to him, but they would have nothing to do with him. So be it. He is the door...the narrow gate...the only Way. People have to walk through it on their own. Everyone who does will be saved. How many? Who? Me? All who believe. **Questions:** 1. How would knowing who is saved or not saved change the way I work for God here and now? Whom am I inclined to give up on as beyond God's grace, even though God holds out hope, like Jesus did? 2. Does not knowing who is saved make me more likely to share Christ with others? 3. Do I hunger and hope for people in my city or community to be saved the way Jesus longed for Jerusalem? Do I actively pray for and seek the salvation of the people I know, as Jesus did? 4. How does Jesus being the 'narrow door' or only way to a right relationship with God affect my need to tell others about him?

Prayer: I don't fit. I will never fit through that door into God's presence. I could try to slim down on my own. I will never make it. So you must do it, LORD Jesus. And you did. At the instant you died on that cross, the curtain to the holy of holies in the Temple

was torn in two from top to bottom. Your death as my sacrifice has opened the way. I'm in, who would have been out, if it weren't for you. You opened the way for me and everyone who believes in you. Make me remember that everyone I know needs you as their Way. Make me hunger and thirst—make me long—that everyone I know or ever meet might go through that door...and live forever. Make me strong and courageous, like Joshua, to lead people into the land of promise, into life in Christ. Draw me deeper into your doorway, O gracious God, and make me want to beckon and bring others behind me. Amen.

Day 101. Read Joshua 3.1-4.24; Luke 14.7-35;
Psalm 80.1-19; and Proverbs 12.27-28.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Joshua: Some leader you are. There's a river in the way, Joshua. What's that you say? Consecrate myself, because tomorrow I will see amazing things? Don't you think I would better spend my time gathering wood to build a bridge or a boat...or by learning to swim? Pray to prepare myself for what I am about to see? You want me to carry the Ark of the Covenant—the sign of God's presence among us—into the water? You want me to step into a river? That's how we will know God's among us? What if I'm left just dripping wet, standing in a river? With all the people watching? Won't that be a sight to remember! I'M SURE THEY WILL BE TALKING ABOUT IT FOR A LONG TIME TO COME! Couldn't we wait till a better time? Like after dark? Or summer, when it's hot... and dry. The river is at flood stage this time of year! You say God says? Okay, Joshua, here goes. 'As soon as the priests who carried the Ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water'—not before—'the water upstream stopped flowing, piling in a heap a great distance away...until the whole nation crossed on dry ground.' Twelve men are chosen who will each carry a stone from the riverbed, for a memorial. Smooth stones from a riverbottom—a sign of God's greatness and goodness, to provide a way where there was none. Questions: 1. When have I been called to take the first step for God in doing something that strikes me as ridiculous or useless? 2. Do I follow my God-appointed leaders, even when I might question their direction? 3. What does it mean for me that God has provided the way to the life and land I long for, when there was no way I could make it there myself? How does it change my attitude and actions to know that God can and will provide a way when obstacles come beyond my ability to overcome?

Luke: Jesus watched and saw what we overlook—a relentless law of human nature. Twisted nature. As water seeks the lowest point, humans seek the highest...the best...for themselves. As water goes down, people will push themselves upwards, into the most pleasant position they can. The best seat at the banquet. And then he says simply, 'To go up, go down.' The way up in God's kingdom is the way down...to rise higher, stoop lower. Serve. Don't just associate with those who are favored and can return the favor or do

favours. Feed those who cannot even feed themselves, let alone you. For there is a great banquet coming...the Kingdom banquet. It's all prepared... for whom it is prepared. Who will sit at table with the Host? Not the ones you might expect. Those with possessions are invited, but they are busy with their property. Those with horse power, yes; but they are trying out their plows. Those in the pleasant times, for whom life is like newlyweds on the honeymoon; yes, to be sure, but they are... otherwise occupied. Who will enjoy the hospitality of the Host with the most? Scrounge the streets and bring in the scum. They are welcome...and they will come. Bums at the banquet. He wants his house full. He wants the empty people, the lowly people, the disliked and unlovable people, to eat their fill from his table flowing with food. The way up is the way down. The way down is the Way...up. Up. Way, way up. And anything that gets in the way to the Way up needs to go. Mama and Papa. Everything. Anyone who doesn't embrace the Way up, and take the way down—the cross—stooping to follow the Way—is not worthy. No disciple there. Count the cost. But consider what you buy, when you choose the way down to take the Way up. Questions: 1. Do I consciously take up my cross every morning and stoop to serve everyone in love all day, as Christ has served me in love, or do I just clamor for my own advantage in every situation? 2. Are there people or possessions or other things that I am seeking more than Jesus? Do I first and foremost seek to maintain and strengthen my personal relationship with him as the most important thing in my life? 3. Whom is God calling me to invite to his banquet? Whom do I know who is spiritually hungry and lost, like the homeless people in the streets in Jesus' story, that God is calling me to stoop and serve in love to show him Christ's kindness?

Prayer: What a meal. Thank you, LORD! I am full! Best food ever. Bread and wine. Your body and blood, broken and poured out for me, for my life. I can push myself away from the table now, satisfied. But I am not, really. The more I get of you, the more I hunger for you. And the more I hunger for you, the more I hunger like you. I hunger as you hunger, for the hungry, that they might find not only the bread for their bodies, but you, the Bread of Life. I think I'll push away from the table now...to go and bring someone back with me. There is plenty for all. The more I eat, the more I bring to eat, the more there is. What a meal! You are an awesome host! Could I have a little more dessert before I go? Ah! I knew you would say, 'Yes!' You're like that! You say, 'Yes!' to anyone...and everyone...who asks. Amen.

Day 102. Read Joshua 5.1–7.15; Luke 15.1-32;
Psalm 81.1-16; and Proverbs 13.1.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Joshua: What's the plan, Joshua? What did God say for us to do to prepare to go into battle? Do what?!? Cut off... what?! Wait a minute. We're about to go into battle, and we will be fighting for our very lives, and you want me to cut off...You can't be serious? Why?

Oh. Because God said so. Because that is the sign, given long ago, that someone belongs to God and is one of God's people. Whenever someone follows God, they are marked, in a way that sets you apart. Scarred. Forever different, and we are changed in the most personal ways. All of the men of military age who had been freed from Egypt had already been circumcised before they were delivered from slavery for the freedom of following God. The new generation born during the wilderness journey with God had not been. Now the people of God are about to go among the nations. The sign is not just for ourselves, but a witness to others, too. Now the whole nation of Israel had to be circumcised again, all at once. This is the sign of the covenant with God, the covenant, not of Mount Sinai and the Law, but the covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah when he first chose those two to make a mighty nation from them. And then, after they are circumcised with the sign of the covenant, they celebrate the Passover, the meal and festival reminding them how God had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. That cost the life of an innocent lamb, whose blood was painted on the doorposts. Now they are prepared. The day after Passover they ate some of the food of the new land God was giving them, and that very day the manna—the food God provided them in the wilderness—stopped. They are ready for battle. There is no turning back. The first battle plan? A dress parade. March around an impregnable city for seven days, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, blowing trumpets. On the seventh day, march around the city, blow the trumpets and charge, for the walls will fall down. It is not in their own strength they will win. God fights for them. **Questions:** 1. Am I ready for battle against the spiritual enemies in this world? How can I get prepared for and grow more proficient in spiritual warfare? (See Ephesians 6.10 and following) 2. Have I obediently submitted to the sign of the new covenant with God in Christ, Holy Baptism, as a public proclamation that God is Lord for me and I am part of his people? 3. Do I faithfully avail myself of the spiritual food God continually provides me and all believers in the Lord's Supper?

Luke: Oh, man! Jesus is going to blow the whole thing. Doesn't Jesus know which side the bread is buttered on? He puts the power people off. The pitiful things, he attracts like a porch light on a sultry, summer night. Worse, he doesn't just draw them, he desires them. He seeks them until he finds them. He tells three stories, showing how important the point of seeking the lost is with the repetition. In each case the Finder is overjoyed and calls the community to celebrate. The stories grow in intensity, each one 'raising the stakes' over the previous one, like poker players around a table. A lost sheep...a lost coin...a lost son. The most extravagant celebration in the stories is by the father who finds his lost son, only to lose his second son from jealousy and stinginess. The story is really about two lost sons, one of whom has been lost the whole time right at home. When the wandering son is found alive again, the other spins off into space, angry and resentful, revealing he never has really been at home with his father in his heart. He has always stayed grudgingly, slogging out his days with his father as servitude. He cannot forgive. He cannot rejoice. The father goes out to plead with him to come in to the party, to live life as a celebration, rejoicing at the good fortune of having such a forgiving father. The story ends there, with the father pleading with the son to come in from the dark outside, into the light. The story ends with Jesus...the flesh and blood plea of the Father to his

children to come in to his home where everyone is welcome. Questions: 1. When I was lost, what was I like? What was my life like? Was I even conscious of it, or was I like the older son who thought he was home but really never was in his heart? 2. How does it change my self-understanding to know that God sought me personally by sending his Son to become human and die on a cross to redeem me back into right relationship with him? 3. Do I carry on Christ's work to seek and save with the joy of someone who has been redeemed, or grudgingly like the older brother of the story, taking up the Father's work with reluctance?

Prayer: God, thank you that you didn't just give up on me. **Correction.** That you don't just give up on me. Present tense. Every day I am both brothers in the story, the one who wanders away, and the one who always paints grudgingly by the numbers and within the lines because I feel I'm forced to. And sometimes, just sometimes, I get glimpses of Christ in me. Sometimes I taste the joy you feel in me as your child who's come home. Sometimes I hear the distant sounds of the celebration and remember it's all for me. It's like at those moments I hardly know myself; it surprises me so, even though I know that is my true self as your true child. These are the moments when I do your will simply because I want to, without any effort really. It's just natural. It's the new nature of Christ you are forming in me. I know, when this happens, I want to do your will simply because you love me...and sought me at such a cost...and found me. Make me a celebration of your love for everyone around me whom you are beckoning home. Let all my words and servant actions be an invitation to the party you have prepared for their return. Let me long in joy for the return of my sisters and brothers, sharing the very longing of your own heart for them. Amen.

Day 103. Read Joshua 7.16-9.2; Luke 16.1-18;
Psalm 82.1-8; and Proverbs 13.2-3.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Joshua: Israel's army is defeated at Ai. Is the problem on God's side? Is God too weak to win victories after all? Maybe Jericho's wall tumbling down was a fluke. The next day finds that whole army on parade. The problem is not God. The problem is with the army. Lots are cast. One after another the twelve divisions of the army—the twelve tribes of Israel—are sorted through until one is taken. The regiments (clans) within that one division (Judah) are similarly sifted, until one is taken. From that regiment one squad, from that squad one person. And that one person is actually the guilty one! Discovered by lots? Casting dice? Truly, God knows every thing about us. He is concerned about each of us down to the least detail. Just ask Achan. Just one soldier in an army over half a million strong. Yet after the first battle, this one alone disobeyed orders, took and kept some of the spoils of the battle he was not supposed to. For this reason the army is defeated in its second battle.

'You cannot stand against your enemies,' the Lord said to Joshua, as long as the problem remains. Harsh treatment? We are all interdependent. Our ability to accomplish our mission depends on each of God's people. Achan and his accomplices, caught red-handed with the stolen articles, are removed. God gives Joshua the plan for the next battle. When the army of Ai sees Israel fleeing as before, they come out of their fortified city, only to be surprised, surrounded, and destroyed by Israel's army. When God's people follow God's will in God's way, they can overcome every enemy. Questions: 1. What am I currently struggling with that needs super-human wisdom and power to overcome? 2. When do I try to use God's goodness and gifts for my own benefit, instead of in the way that is best for God's people and mission in the world? How does my doing so prevent God's power and purpose being displayed in my own life? How does my seeking to gratify my own selfish desires weaken another's life and work for God? 3. How does the forgiveness and freedom Christ won for me though his cross clear away the obstacles raised by my selfish desires and help me to live a victorious life to his glory?

Luke: The summons caught him totally off-guard, which was unusual since he was always on guard, watching for every opportunity to help himself. The crooked manager held it in his hands, read it, and trembled. 'What can I do? The Owner is onto me. I am going to be tossed out for sure. I better think of something. Quick, too. There isn't much time. Got it! This may just work. It's worth a try. 'Charlie, how much do you owe the Owner? 800? Make it 400! Don't mention it! I like doing business with you, too. Let's do lunch soon! Susan, how much do you owe? 1,000? I like you. Make it 800! Oh, you're welcome. No, I'm not that great really! What? There might be an opening for someone like me with your company? Funny you mention that. I may be giving you a call.' 'And the Owner commended the dishonest manager,' Jesus said, surprisingly. The moral of this immoral story? The people of this world are shrewder in their dealings with people than are God's people. Use your wealth to win friends in High Places; that is, make friends with the One who will welcome you to eternal dwellings while you can. Don't wait. A reckoning is coming. Live every moment as if your life depended on it—not out of fear, for the Owner is forgiving—but because that is what pleases the Owner. And you want to please the Owner, if you really know him. Those that don't care to please the Owner live to please themselves, thinking that pleasing other people is the important thing. Live for the Owner. It all belongs to him, and he is the one to whom you are accountable. That's why they call him the Owner. Questions: 1. How can I use every resource of time, talents, and treasure to please God? Are there aspects of my life I am withholding from God's lordship and use for his glory? 2. What opportunities are before me right now that I can use to glorify God? 3. In what areas of my life do I tend to seek approval of people rather than God?

Prayer: Another day gone. Another day beginning soon. How can they fly past so fast? How can I live them unconscious of you, my Lord. It is like running on a treadmill. Going through the motions, without getting anywhere. Oh, I know; I may be getting somewhere and just can't see it. I don't see as you see. You use everything that happens, even what I do or don't do when I am on autopilot and going through my blurry day totally unconscious of you. But I want something better, and you've said to ask. You

promised that if we seek, we will find. Knock, and the door will be opened. I am asking. And seeking. And knocking. Let me walk through the day aware of you. For one day, Lord, let me truly be alive...alive to you...alive with you. Every moment. And until you grant me that, let me have moments—little islands in the sea of my unconsciousness—when I am alive to you in the moment. You be glorified in all, whether I am aware or not. Amen.

Day 104. Read Joshua 9.3–10.43; Luke 16.19–17.10;
Psalm 83.1-18; and Proverbs 13.4.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Joshua: Surprise! Tricked! They fooled us. Where did we go wrong? We fell for the oldest scam in the book. The people of Gibeon heard about Israel conquering Jericho and Ai. Knowing they could not stand against such a formidable army that captured heavily fortified cities, they pulled a fast one on us. Put on worn out clothes and shoes. Carried moldy bread. Told us they had come from far away. Gibeon's right around the corner practically! Where did we go wrong? We didn't inquire of the Lord. We went on the evidence of our own senses and understanding, and we went...wrong. Always will. Now what do we do? We gave them our word. We made a treaty—a covenant—with them, to let them live. Maybe with God two wrongs make a right. Why don't we violate our promise, since it was made under false pretenses—theirs. The Gibeonites respond simply, 'We are in your hands; do to us whatever seems good and right to you.' Good and right. Pleasing to God. God doesn't like anyone breaking oaths, either. They will serve. They will cut wood, carry water, for the house of God. They are privileged to serve in God's house, because they took bold action to get allied with God's people. Five Amorite kingdoms wage war on the Gibeonites when they learn they are allied with God. God's people keep their promise and come to their aid, marching all night. More of the enemy are killed by hail than by weapons wielded by human hands. Only a few escaped to their fortified cities. Now it's a matter of mopping up. Questions: 1. Like the Gibeonites, most of us are not of the chosen people by biological descent from Abraham, but have been included in God's people by another surprising way, the cross of Christ. How does the cross make it possible for me to live with God eternally, not as a slave but as a child? 2. How does that affect my outlook and attitude in life? My actions today? 3. What forces and temptations attack me now that I am allied with God and part of God's people by the cross of Christ?

Luke: It's not that he won't. He can't. Abraham cannot cross the divide, even to slake the thirst of another for a moment. It is not possible. The gulf between is fixed...forever...then. You get this life, and then you get eternal life. Everyone gets two lives: one in this world, which will end, and one in the world to come, which will never end. What will those lives be like? How will we live in this life...and the last life we will be given, the life which will last? Spend in on ourselves? How will those we know live

now...and afterwards? Concerned for others? Caring? Heaven and hell hang upon our choices and actions. Will we cause people to stumble and waste this life? Will we speak up when the chance comes now, if others are in danger of going wrong, so they won't go wrong in the next life? If the one you know wrongs you, will you tell him; and if he repents, will you forgive him? If you do, you set him free. And if you set him free, you free yourself. But watch out! When you have done everything as you should, followed Jesus fully, when you have lived life as it is intended to be by your Creator, just say 'I have done what was expected.' No big deal. No credit. But what a life! You have lived as God made people to live. It is a big deal! And it's the preparation for living forever the way God intends us to live. Questions: 1. Whom do I know whose life is very difficult right now and I could serve with Christ's love in action now? Who needs me to share a word of correction to get them on course with God? How can I humbly and lovingly help them to see a better way? 2. Whom do I need to forgive, in order to free them and myself? 3. What would it be like to be separated from God eternally? Whom do I know who is in danger of that, whom I can serve and invite for Christ?

Prayer: God you want everyone to live with you forever. I know that because you want me to live with you forever, and have made it possible. In fact, you have promised that I will and sealed the promise with the lifeblood of your Son. The Cross means you will you're your promise. I am so thankful it doesn't rely on my choices, my actions, or inactions. Anything I have ever done...or even the wrong I avoided...it was just what was required. Still, I know it gives you joy, whenever I turn to you and be with you. And when I help someone else find the way. God, I want everyone I know or will ever know, everyone I meet, to live with you forever. I can't imagine it any other way myself. Use me to help others know the way. May they see you in my actions, and may they love you forever. Amen.

Day 105. Read Joshua 11.1-12.24; Luke 17.11-37;
Psalm 84.1-12; and Proverbs 13.5-6.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Joshua: To follow God is to invite conflict. The more active one gets with God and for God, the more active the resistance one faces. The opposition unites, conspires, to bring you down. After Israel's early victories, the Ammorite nations unite to form an army 'as numerous as sand on the seashore.' They have heavy armor as well—chariots and horses. Outnumbered, out-gunned, Israel might well be worried. It's one thing to say, 'Don't be afraid,' as God tells Joshua. It's another to believe it. What plan do you follow when outnumbered and out-gunned? Attack, of course! Joshua attacks them by surprise, throwing them into confusion and annihilating them. Then he takes their fortified city. There is no quarter. God's instructions are clear. No compromise. Their chariots must be

burned. Their war horses must be hamstringed—rendered useless for war. Israel is not to take up their ways, not even their ways and weapons of war. They already have the only weapon they need to face and defeat the enemy: God. Fifty-one kings fall before the King of Kings, finally; their hearts are hardened, so they fight against God and destroy themselves. And then the land has rest. True peace comes only where God alone is the ruler. **Questions:** 1. How can I be on watch today for the attacks of the evil one against me? 2. How can I keep alert and looking for opportunities to ‘win territory’ for God by serving another for Christ or sharing an invitation or correcting injustice? 3. How can I be sure I don’t use the enemy’s weapons for fear or untruths as I work and serve others for God?

Luke: They stood respectfully at a distance, as required by law; but they sure raised a ruckus. Ten of them, shouting...no, shrieking... for mercy. You would, too, in their place, if it meant your only shot at a real life and being restored to your community again. ‘Have pity on us!’ the lepers cried. No problem. Sure thing. Jesus sends them to show themselves to the priest and offer the sacrifice that shows they have been healed. Ten men go, obediently following Jesus’ word. On the way, ten men are healed. Ten voices bubbling with excited joy, like little boys again. Ten pairs of hands, whole and healthy, clapping with delight, slapping the shoulders of the others in congratulation. Ten men on ten pairs of legs suddenly strong and healthy again, leaping and racing, running to the priest, hurrying home, to embrace those they love, to sleep in their own bed again, to eat a meal with their family for the first time in ages. Wait a minute. Weren’t their ten? There are only nine running as fast as feet can carry them to the town, the temple, and home. Where is the tenth one? He has turned back, back from home and family, from food and familiar surroundings. He has fallen at Jesus feet. He is praising and glorifying God. In Jesus. Just one out of ten? A tithe? 10% is not much of a return for such a gift. Why did not all of them return to thank and praise God in Jesus Christ, the source of their new life and wholeness? Is it that they love the gifts more than the Giver? Why this particular one? Why does he alone come back to Jesus? Oh, he is the foreigner. He is the outcast among the outcasts. He knew a double pain. He suffered from a deeper illness even than the sickness of the flesh: the sickness of spirit directed at him who is different. He is not welcome among the other lepers who are healed now that they are healed. They have a deeper illness that they yet need to be healed of. He returns to the One who has healed him not only in body but into relationship with himself, and through himself to God in God’s community that is open to all, even the leper, even the foreigner. ‘Rise and go,’ Jesus says, ‘your faith has made you well—truly whole again.’ Live! One day this Healer will come again at the end of time to make the world as God intends it to be forever. He will not be disguised as any other human being then. He will come like lightning across the sky. People will not expect him; but he will suddenly appear, even though they are unprepared. But you, in the meanwhile, you are to live. The Kingdom of God is within you. Live as one made whole through God’s power, a Kingdom person. Rejoicing. Leaping and praising God. Falling at the feet of Jesus. Alive! Truly alive! **Questions:** 1. What does a person who has been given new life in Christ look and act like? How do I compare with the leper who was healed? Why do I so often live without the joy I should

demonstrate as one redeemed for eternal life through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross? 2. How can I 'fall at Jesus' feet and demonstrate to him personally my love and gratitude for the new life he has given me? 3. What will Christ be like at his coming? What can I do to prepare—both myself and others—for his coming?

Prayer: Lord, you have lifted me out of brokenness into wholeness, out of loneliness into a community of caring people, out of darkness into the light, out of death into life; I praise you. I worship you. I thank you. Forgive me when I slip back into the old sickness and lose sight of the new life that is mine through your sacrifice on the cross. I ought to be truly alive. Instead of sorrow and sadness, my words and deeds should radiate the joy and hope, the peace and power that stream from you. You promise and proclaim, 'The Kingdom is within you!' There are grace moments, when, like lightning, your new life flashes forth from me, through me, as lightning across a stormy sky. Lord, bring on the Day. Come, Lord Jesus. And until you come when the time is complete, make me an instrument of your healing love for all around me. Let your Kingdom come in me, and through me, to everyone you put around me. Let the lepers leap with new life, Lord, through your healing love. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 15

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Joshua 1.1-11

Psalm: 84.1-12

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Luke 17.11-22.

Theme: "Be Strong and Courageous: The Kingdom Is Within You."

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation:

God reassures Joshua that he will be with him as Joshua leads God's people in a difficult task of fighting for the promised land. God's promised presence and power will provide all that God's people need, now as before when they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Joshua can be strong and courageous as he leads God's people. In the Gospel lesson from Luke, Jesus restores ten lepers to health, which means in the culture of the times, he restores them back into the community where they will be loved and cared for again. Only one of them returns to fall at Jesus' feet, thanking and praising God before Jesus. He is a foreigner, which means in that society, a double outcast, because he didn't belong to the Chosen People by physical descent from Abraham. He turns to Christ, who has healed him not just physically, but into right relationship with God, as indicated by his worshipping and thanking God for his healing. Shortly after this healing, Jesus teaches, "The Kingdom of God is within you," for whomever believes. The kingdom life—characterized by joy, worship, love, and service to Christ—emanates from those redeemed by Jesus, as light emanates from the sun. The Kingdom comes as people catch the new life

of Christ from those who have it, Christ passing from one to another, as the whole world is changed, one life at a time.