

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 22

Day 148. Read 2 Samuel 13.1-39; John 17.1-26;
Psalm 119.81-96; and Proverbs 16.6-7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Violence spawns violence in return. Wrongful desire begets desire-gone-wrong in succeeding generations. The inexorable chain of consequences begun by David's adultery catches up with David and his own family. One of his children, unable to control his desires, rapes another of David's children, his half-sister and then despises her. Another son of David murders his own half-brother to revenge her violation. Neatly, the murder also removes a main competitor for the throne of David, whenever David was to give it up. David mourns for the loss of two sons: the one killed, and the one, Absalom, who flees, fearing the just punishment for his violent crime. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Whoever lives by the sword will die by it. Whoever lives for fulfilling their own desires will die of desire. **Questions:** 1. What is an example of my own inappropriate action (or inaction) boomeranging back on myself? 2. Why does God not remove the consequences, along with the guilt, when he forgives sin? 3. What weaknesses of spirit or character have I passed on to those around me? How can I make amends by talking with the people I have passed these to?

John: Unity. Not rescue. The night before he dies, he lifts up a prayer for unity - that all his followers may be one, even as God the Father and Son are one - not that they be rescued or removed to safety from the world. What will unite them? "Sanctify them by the truth," Jesus prays, "Your Word is truth." As he is sent by the Father, and yet remains one with the Father, so Jesus sends out his followers and remains one with them: "As You sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." Even as they are sent into the whole world, they remain in Jesus; and Jesus remains in the Father, so they remain always in the Father. So that the world may believe...and have life. Through the unity. Unity. The world will know God through the unity of his followers. **Questions:** 1. How does the wonderful truth that through the person and sacrifice of Christ I am included in the very oneness of God's own being change the way I think and act? 2. Do I demonstrate unity with other Christ-followers in real ways, through worshipping, learning, serving and

fellowshipping together? What would be the next step of growth for me in experiencing and demonstrating unity with other Christ-followers?

Prayer: How can it be? This is so far beyond my comprehension or even imagining! I in Christ, and Christ in you, Father, so now.... I am...in you?! This is what I have longed for most, to be one with you in an unbreakable bond of love. You have lifted me up from the depths to which I had fallen, into the eternal unity that you are, O holy One. This is love. This is life. To be in you! Thank you for sending your Son, so I might share this Life! Thank you for such love, my Lord. Send me into this divided world where everyone is so isolated and alone. Send me to everyone around me to share this Love that can make everyone one with you in Christ! Amen!

Day 149. Read 2 Samuel 14.1–15.22; John 18.1-24;
Psalm 119.97-112; and Proverbs 16.8-9.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: Scheming catches up with the schemer. As David conspired with his command to bring about the death of Uriah to hide his adultery, his own son, Absalom, conspires to take the throne from his father. As David could not control his desire, so Absalom cannot wait for the time when he will inherit the throne. Like his father before him, he must have what he wants...now. His character once dethroned by his desire, David must flee from his throne in Jerusalem to save his life. David even calls his son, King Absalom, to one of his advisers, a foreigner, advising him to follow the new king. The foreigner is steadfast and faithful. 'As surely as the LORD lives...wherever my lord the King may be, there will your servant be, though it means life or death.' Amid the tragedy and treason, his trustworthiness shines all the brighter. **Questions:** 1. When the situation gets difficult, do I grow more trustworthy and reliable toward others, or am I tempted to 'look out for number one'? 2. Who has stood by me in my most difficult times? Have I thanked and honored them as they deserve? 3. Who is my most trusted spiritual companion and adviser? To whom am I a spiritual friend and adviser?

John: Whom do I want?! I want you, Jesus. To arrest. To stop. You don't dissemble or deny who you really are, when I ask if you are the one. "I am" you say, in the worrisome words that echo the voice Moses heard from the burning bush: "I am that I am." You are the One. That One. The One, who by coming, changes everything. You are the Unity that divides. By coming as the Way that I may be one with the Father, you divide me from all that has been so familiar...so comfortable. Yet, you are the One I seek. So much of me wants you arrested, wants you stopped in your tracks, so you won't disrupt my world. My religion stopped you for a time...my rules and rituals...but you broke through that barrier I built by being. You won't allow religion to be between us. You won't be stopped until you have a relationship...with me. **Questions:** 1. In what ways do I try to arrest or stop Jesus

in my life and work for him? What limits do I try to impose on him and his Lordship over me? In my spiritual disciplines by which he might build a stronger relationship with me? My money? My time? My recreational pursuits? 2. Do I, like Peter, follow Jesus at a safe distance, in the shadows on the periphery? What is Jesus asking me to do that will mean stepping out into the light for him?

Prayer: You are Lord, Jesus, I acknowledge...most of the time and in most ways. The shadows are so cool and comfortable. I don't want the limelight. I don't like the light. It's too....exposed. Yet, you did not retreat into the shadows when the opportunity came that night. If you had, I would be doomed to darkness...a night that would never end. Still, say it as you did then: 'I am.' Speak to me day by day and say, 'I am.' Never let me forget. Let me live your promise 'I am.' The power of that promise is what will transform me into what I will be when you finally have your way, and your word is fulfilled in me. Until that day, never cease to say 'I am' over me. Amen.

Day 150. Read 2 Samuel 15.23–16.23; John 18.25-19.22;
Psalm 119.113-128; and Proverbs 16.10-11.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: All his work undone? David returns into hiding as someone hunts his life, just as happened before he began to rule. Someone from Saul's family finds him and hurls curses along with stones: 'You have come to ruin because you are a man with blood on your hands.' David does not deny the charge, though he is not guilty of Saul's blood or any of his kin's. David could easily kill him, as a subordinate urges; but, instead, David shows mercy. God is merciful...perhaps he will be this time...perhaps God will repay good for the cursing David is receiving. One day another Son of David will be cursed and beaten and will return a prayer of forgiveness for the very ones who abused him. God is merciful, and to be merciful is to be God-like. **Questions:** 1. Do I have an 'enemies list'? Who would consider me their enemy? Do I return mercy and kindness for the trouble I receive from others or seek paybacks? 2. How does it change the way I think and act to think the 'blood' (or human hurt) I am guilty of is forgiven because of the blood of Christ shed for me?

John: Do I know Jesus? Not really? Do I? Not me. Don't I know Jesus? No way. I am really not lying when I say I don't know him. I thought I did once, but what I thought about him was a betrayal in its own right. He was the one who would give me the good life. But this one who walks straight to the cross without stepping aside when he was given the chance...not once, but several times...I really don't know him. I don't think I want to know him. It will mean my death. To really know him means to really know myself...my mixed up motives...my pretense and self-protections. That will kill me. No, I don't know him. Are you the King? Well, that would mean I have to let you rule me, and I don't want anyone but me to rule me. Scariest of all, if your kingdom is not of this world, then I can

have no control over it whatsoever, because I am completely of this world if I will not let you reign in me and will not let your kingdom come. So I will put the purple costume on you and crown you with thorns and play at it in a way that really denies the truth. What is truth? You are. Though part of me may not want even to acknowledge I know you, I know that. You are the Truth...and the Life...and the Way to life I long for. **Questions:** How can I come to know Jesus better? Which way(s) of knowing him better will I focus on (check all that apply) : ___ his Word, ___ forming real relationships with his friends, ___ worshipping frequently, ___praying daily, ___ giving generously, ___serving others as he served, ___ telling others about him. 2. If I were to tell someone about who Jesus is, what would I tell them? 3. If asked ‘What has Jesus done for you personally?’ what would I say?

Prayer: O merciful God, make me merciful. Let me forgive as I have been forgiven by you. Then I will forgive much, for you have forgiven me so much...more than ever I deserved...more than I ever forgave anyone else. Amen.

Day 151. Read 2 Samuel 17.1-29; John 19.23-42;
Psalm 119.129-152; and Proverbs 16.12-13.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: Caution or...caution to the wind? Everything he wanted was in his grasp...but how to grasp it? A sudden bold stroke...or a deliberate hammering with irresistible force? Either way, he intends a death blow...for his own father...for the kingdom he desired as his own. Absalom has methodically prepared and planned. Not much spontaneous or spur of the moment about him. His nature is his undoing. Caution wins out. His delay gives David time to flee to the strongholds in the desert he knew so well...the safety of the wilderness he sought when another sought his life. In this world where son seeks his own father's life, who can be counted on? As his general over his huge army, Absalom names the first cousin of David's own commander. Family is divided against family. Even in the wilderness God provides for him. From surprising sources, even from some foreigners, flow much-needed supplies to sustain him and his people when they need it most.

Questions: 1. Who in my family has been most resistant to my following Jesus as Lord? Have I continued to show them God's love, without denying either them or the Lord the love God wants me to show? 2. Who has helped me in my time of need? Have I thanked them? 3. Who is experiencing difficulty right now that God has made me aware of? How can I help them for God in their difficulty?

John: By gambling for his seamless robe, without realizing, they are fulfilling God's seamless plan to redeem this dying world. The thread of prophecy and fulfillment runs right through the robe they cast lots to own. Seamless also is his love. Greater than his own pain is the agony of those around him. To his mother, losing her son, he gives a new son. To his disciple, his spiritual son, he gives a new mother. As, for a brief time, he is

taken from them, and they are left without the love their relationship brought, he gives new love. Love one another, as he loves, he has said. He not only said it, he lived it. To the end. To fulfill scripture, he says, 'I thirst.' Truly he thirsts, that people might live in relationship with God and one another in the perfect love that is God. So he consented to be stripped bare, that people might be clothed with his righteousness... not by chance or accident, but by the design of God from before the foundation of the world. 'It is finished...completed...accomplished.' They wrap the bare body in grave clothes and lay him in a borrowed tomb...our clothes and our grave...so we might be clothed with his eternal love and life. It is accomplished. We are saved and freed for life. We are restored by him into the family of God, with God as our father. Not by chance and certainly not by luck. It is by the premeditated plan of God. **Questions:** 1. Do I believe, as scripture suggests, that God is interested in the least detail and every aspect of my life, just as he was about Jesus' clothes at the crucifixion? How does that call me to consecrate every part of my life to him? How does it help to know that God can use even the most insignificant thing for his purposes? 2. Do I really see my fellow Christ-followers as my true family, even when they don't act like family? Do I show that in my actions?

Prayer: Father, sometimes my faith family is more like David's, with infighting and division rather than the love Christ calls for. Truth is, sometimes I am more like Absalom myself, seeking to put myself on the throne and ready to remove whoever stands in the way, whatever it takes. That was what sent you to the cross, clothed in our nakedness and sin. And being stripped bare, you clothed us in your seamless robe...and made us your seamless people...with not even a thread separating us from the Father...or one another...when we are in you. Clothe my nakedness with your righteousness. Cover my sin with your forgiveness. And, by your gentle word of command, make me love as you love. Make me love others as who they really are...your brothers and sisters. Amen.

Day 152. Read 2 Samuel 18.1-19.10; John 20.1-31;
Psalm 119.153-176; and Proverbs 16.14-15.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: Kingly. An apt description of David, for he shows kingly character traits in what was without question the most desperate crisis he faced: the rebellion of his own son that could cost him not only his throne, but his very life, and the lives of everyone near and dear to him. Under fire, he responds with faithfulness. "I will surely march out with you," he tells his army as they go out to battle. He wants to be beside them, to lead them into battle. Is it any wonder they love him so much that they beg him to stay in the safety of the city: "You are worth ten thousand of us!" they shout. David gives in to their demands saying, "I will do whatever you decide is best." He listens to those he leads. But his kingly

qualities shine brightest in his commands about his enemy: “Deal gently with my young son, Absalom, for my sake” David tells the army as they march out. It is almost as if he asks that his son be forgiven because he is young and doesn’t know what he is doing. When his son is slain, fleeing in defeat, David mourns instead of rejoices. All the army hears of David’s grief and slinks around in silence instead of jubilation, despite their victory. His army commander challenges David, “You love those who hate you, and hate those who love you.” He is only half right. David does indeed love those who love him. But David also loves those who hate him. Long before he loved Saul, as Saul sought his life. Now he has loved his rebellious son in the same way. David’s royal character is consistent. Consistent like another king, the crucified King of Kings who prayed from the cross for the very ones who cried out for his death, ‘Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.’ **Questions:** 1. Do I show the kingly character of Christ in the crisis as well as when things are going fine? 2. When I am put in a leadership role, what kind of leader am I? What can I learn from the example of David’s leadership?

John: She’s a basket case. Whatever is Jesus thinking? Why pick her to carry the greatest news the world has ever heard? She is so beside herself she doesn’t even recognize him when he appears and speaks to her. He has to call her by name before she knows it is him! Besides, in that culture, women could not even give testimony in court. They quite literally did not ‘count’ as people. Why send a woman? Yet, Jesus sends Mary Magdalene with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” He knows the news is hard to believe. First came the stunning news the body was missing. Mary herself, like the men, thought someone must have stolen the body. It was a borrowed tomb after all, maybe some...body...needed it. How could anyone rise from the dead? Sure, Jesus himself raised people; but the problem was there was no one to take Jesus’ place. Who would raise Jesus? God himself? Then comes her stunning words, “I have seen the Lord!” Hysteria? Jesus knew it was hard to believe, so he appeared to the appalled disciples himself. He had to reassure them twice by saying, “Peace be with you” and let them touch him. Then they believed...except Thomas. One touch and Thomas’ tune turns upside down, from doubt and disbelief to: “My Lord and my God!” What a strange crew Jesus has called to take the message to the world. But this is what he has done: chosen the lowly, those of no account, the doubters and disbelievers, and sent them to change the world with the message, ‘He is risen!’ The Living Lord commands: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Were they blessed by seeing, hearing and touching Jesus alive again? Wait till you see the blessing given the people who do not see, touch, or hear him talking to them and ,yet, believe. The whole purpose of writing down the story of Jesus is exactly that: that the blessing may abound and be available to everyone who believes from that day till time gives way to eternity. **Questions:** 1. When did I first really understand and believe the good news of the resurrection? 2. When and how did I first have the personal experience of Jesus’ caring for me personally, so that I declared him “My Lord and my God” like Thomas? 3. How and to whom is Jesus Christ sending me, so I can share the good news of his life and love to the people I know?

Prayer: Haven’t you made some mistake, Lord, to choose me? So many times I have questions and even doubts. So many times I don’t recognize you when you are right in

front of me...in your word...or your Holy Supper...or in people of faith...or even in people who need my love and care. Can you really care for me so, that you want me to be certain that it was for me you died and rose? It is so. That is the message of your word. That is the message of your Supper...and of your people who have told me of your death and resurrection and eternal life...for me. Send me to whomever you will. Why should I be afraid or hesitate to share with them my Lord and my God and my best friend....my Beloved? Send me forth as you sent the scared and discouraged disciples that day, who by your presence and the power of your love and new life transformed this whole world....my whole world...forever. Amen.

Day 153. Read 2 Samuel 19.11-20.13; John 21.1-25;
Psalm 120.1-7; and Proverbs 16.16-17.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Samuel: What reveals our true character most? Close behind how we respond in time of crisis is how we treat others in victory. Fresh from fleeing for his life, David returns to rule in Jerusalem. He is magnanimous to those who helped him in the hour of his greatest need. They risked all for him; for if he had lost, they would have undoubtedly lost, too—their very lives. But how shall he treat those who rose up against him, or at least, did not dare risk to help him? One such falls before David, begging for mercy: “May my lord not hold me guilty nor remember how your servant did wrong on the day you left Jerusalem. May the king put it completely out of his mind!” One of David’s bodyguard suggests otherwise: put him to death! David rebukes him, saying: “Should anyone be put to death on the day I am again king over Israel?” And he spared him the death he deserved. Even Saul’s son, who hoped that David’s trouble might see him restored to his father’s throne, is spared. Mercy? Some might think David is compassionate and forgiving to a fault. David even promotes Amasa, leader of his rebellious son’s army, to be commander over his own forces. Soon all the people of Israel come to David to acknowledge him as king, not just his own tribe of Judah. Not everyone is as forgiving and generous in victory, however. Whether for vengeance or out of jealousy, David’s demoted commander treacherously murders Amasa. The cycle of violence continues. **Questions:** 1. How am I at forgiving those who have hurt me or refused to help me? Do I show them kindness despite what they have done? 2. How generous am I at thanking and rewarding people who do acts of kindness for me or help me? 3. Toward whom do I harbor jealousy? How does harboring jealousy hurt my own life and walk with God? How does it detract from others?

John: What will he fish for? Fish? Or people? After Jesus appears alive, and even after Jesus says pointedly to Peter and the other apostles, ‘As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you’, Peter decides to go fishing. It was what he was doing before Jesus came into his life and called him. It was his profession...and probably his love in life. When he goes

again, others go with him. Peter is someone people will follow. They fished all night and caught nothing. A mysterious stranger tells them to let down their nets on the other side of the boat, and they catch so many they could not bring the net into the boat. Who could the stranger be? You guessed! Jesus. Three times he asks Peter, once for each of the times Peter denied he even knew Jesus the night he was betrayed. Jesus gently reminds him of his betrayal, and more gently removes the guilt. But will Peter deny him again by going back to his own business, instead of dedicating himself to Jesus' purposes? Will it all go for nothing? 'Do you love me?' Peter. 'Really? Really, really love me?' Yes, Lord. 'Then feed my lambs, care for my sheep, feed my sheep!' To love Jesus is to love those he loves. And he especially loves those who don't love him...yet. He wants the nets to be thrown out in all directions. He wants a miraculous catch. Don't worry; the net won't ever break. This net is made of unbreakable fiber: God's love. The cross couldn't break it. The tomb couldn't break it. 'Do you love me, Peter? Then love others with the love I have for you!'

Questions: 1. Who am I influencing in life and how? Am I influencing others toward God and God's work or away? How am I affecting those in my faith community particularly? 2. Who are the people I know God wants me to 'catch' for him personally? 3. What groups of people in my community can we in Christ's family reach for him? How can I get others involved in reaching them, so that we are 'net fishing' instead of me or others trying to reach them separately (and less effectively)?

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love like you. You forgave me when I was your enemy. You still forgive me when I deny you now that I am your friend. I am caught forever in your net of love, and I pray that I may never escape. Now weave me into your great net, and use me to encircle and capture others in your love; for that means life for them. Life! Amen.

Day 154. Read 2 Samuel 20.14–22.20; Acts 1.1-26;
Psalm 121.1-8; and Proverbs 16.18.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

2 Samuel: Another threat to the David's throne arises. There is always another threat...another danger...another enemy. Because of the Enemy who stirs it up. Relentlessly. Remorselessly. A wise woman prevents needless bloodshed...the destruction of a whole city in Israel. Instead, one person, the very one who was accused of attempting to destroy the kingdom - dies - instead of those in the city and the soldiers who would perish in the attack. There are muffled echoes of Golgotha all throughout history. A famine arises, and David seeks the source: the land suffers because of bloodguilt. Innocent people had been killed in the struggle of Saul's forces to find and kill David. David consults the family members of the victims. Even they ask that not all of all Saul's descendants be annihilated, but only seven. David must choose. He chooses to spare

Jonathan's son because of his oath, but yields up others. Then David, himself, does something that send a magnanimous message: he buries the bones of Saul and his sons in his father's tomb. Only after that, after all have received justice...and kindness...does God answer the prayers for rain. The land is restored. **Questions:** 1. What attacks do the Enemy, the Evil One, keep using to try to overthrow my relationship with my King? Where I am weakest, because that is where he attacks? 2. Who have I wronged that I need to humble myself and make restitution to?

Acts: Power from on high. How high? The highest! The Holy Spirit. God himself will come upon you. No, don't worry about those unimportant things, like the times or dates God will act. That's his area. You are in service and sales, not management. To do your critical work, you will receive power from on high...the Highest! And you will be my witnesses here at home and in the community nearby, and even around the world. What shall you do? Wait. Prayer is good. Get together and pray, men and women. And wait. Wait for power from on high. You won't be able to do it on your own. Oh, go ahead and try. Appoint someone to take the betrayer's place. How shall you choose him? Try lots. That will be as effective as anything you do on your own. His name is Matthias, a good man; his main qualification was he was with Jesus from the time John baptized him until he ascended to the Father. Good qualification. But another qualification is coming that will mean the kingdom will extend throughout the world and time itself until the end: power from the Highest, the Holy Spirit. **Questions:** 1. When and how have I tried to further the kingdom of God (or my own 'kingdom') through my own powers and abilities, without relying or waiting on God's leading and power? 2. Why is it so hard for me to rely upon or 'wait' upon God's timing, purpose and power? 3. What does it mean to me, personally, that God desires his Holy Spirit to live in me and provide the power and direction for my work for his kingdom? How can I be a better conduit for the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit; inspire my soul. Enlighten me with your celestial fire! Kindle my mind! Make my heart well up and overflow with praises to God! Make my whole being and life sing, like the high tension wire through which the power of a dozen dynamos flows. May all my thoughts, and all my words, and all my acts wait always on you. And may I instantly obey you. Power from on high, be lifted up as you descend to earth and make your home in me. Make Christ shine in all you say and do through me. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 22

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): 2 Samuel 18.1-8, 32-33

Psalm: 119.145-152

Second (New Testament) Lesson: John 20.1-31.

Theme: When God Shines Through

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation:

His life hanging in the balance as the battle rages around him, David awaits word of the outcome. His faith in God shines through his every word and action. He wants to lead his army himself, undoubtedly believing that as leader, he should bear the danger of battle along with those who fight for him. His loyal soldiers tell him to stay behind and support them from the city, his command post, saying, 'You are worth ten thousand of us.' He listens to them, and so waits in the city for word. Victory! But at the announcement of triumph, David's godly (literally God-like, as the word godly means) character shines brightest. He asks how his foe has fared—for that is his own son, Absalom. When he learns that Absalom has been killed, David mourns, crying, 'If only I had died instead of you!' In the confusion and shocking aftermath of the true battle between death and life, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Mary is left weeping and wondering where the body of Jesus has been taken. Jesus calls her by name, turning her grief into joy, her mourning into dancing. Jesus sends her, the first to see him alive forevermore, with the good news: "I have seen the Lord!" Not everyone believes the incredible news, of course. Thomas's insistence that 'Unless I put my finger where the nails scarred him and place my hand in his side where the spear pierced him, I won't believe' turns to the wonder of worship when he declares to the risen Christ come to confront him 'My Lord and my God!' God shines through when we respond to his personal presence and power in our lives by reflecting his own character, outlook and actions, especially in times of trouble and turmoil. The faithfulness of God shines through people most perfectly when they believe and live faithful lives, even though they cannot see or touch him physically. God shines through us most when we live by faith.