

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 49

Day 337. Read Daniel 11.2-35; 1 John 3.7-24; Psalm 122.1-9; and Proverbs 29.1.

Daniel: Against the backdrop of ancient geo-politics and intrigue, God's word comes in a terrifying vision to his prophet, Daniel. Daniel himself might well have felt like a pawn in the world politics of the time. From the small nation, Israel, he himself had been captured and carried as an exile to Babylon, where eventually he was trained to serve his conquerors who held him captive. But this new vision and word from God reveals to him the terrifying prospects of almost continual warfare ahead, embroiling all the world. Alliances will form, only to be destroyed by betrayal, as people maneuver and struggle for supremacy. One will seem to prevail, even to the point of defiling God's temple by setting up an idol and demanding it be worshipped along with God. He will even fool some of the faithful, but those who really know God will resist him. But all these kingly characters are simply actors appearing on a stage, strutting and fretting for a time, only to disappear again. The geo-politics of the time are the backdrop for the real drama: God's redeeming this dying world through his Son. The stage is being set for his appearance. The curtain is about to go up on the main act. God, the Director, is giving stage directions through his prophet. The curtain is rising on the divine drama's main act. **Questions:** 1. How does God's exact, prior prediction of the division of Alexander the Great's kingdom into four parts, and other historically accurate predictions in this passage, strengthen my sense that God is in complete control and knows everything that happens? How does that affect the way I think and act in my own daily life? 2. What societal influences tend to lead me away from God? What people of influence in my life lead me away from God? Do I resist these influences and influencers or go along? 3. Since knowing God intimately is the best protection against succumbing to wayward influences, how will I strive to strengthen my personal knowledge of and relationship with God?

John: A person is as a person does. The character inside—the nature that is the wellspring of the person—is revealed in actions. Is someone a child of God or a child of the devil? Look at the actions. No one born of God will keep on sinning. It is impossible, because they are born of God. Anyone who does not do what is right, anyone who does not love their brother or sister, is not a child of God. The only way anyone can know what love is, is to experience that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. This is love, not a mere feeling or emotion, but a self-giving for the sake of another. Love is not merely a matter of speech

but act and fact. Because Christ loves us so, those who know his love also lay down their lives for their brothers and sisters. Love is as love does. This is God's command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he loved us. Those who follow God's commands, who do his will, those who pour themselves out in love for others as he did, they live in God; and God lives in them. A person is as a person loves. **Questions:** 1. When I have been more loving to others in words than in actions? 2. Who needs an active expression of God's love for them through my actions or service right now, rather than just through words? 3. What will I do to show someone God's love for them in my actions today? Tomorrow?

Prayer: Thank God you did not just love me in words, Lord! You did love me in words, and I thank God for the Gospel—the good news of your boundless love for sinners like me. I need to hear it again and again, because it is so hard to believe when I sin again and again. You didn't leave it a matter of mere words, but you proved your love in action. On the cross. In the tomb. Rising from the dead, ascending into heaven. For me. For everyone in this world, for all are priceless to you. Lord, knowing your love, now let me live your love in word and action to everyone around me. By your gift of grace, I now live in your love; may you now live in mine! Amen.

Day 338. Read Daniel 11.36-12.13; 1 John 4.1-21; Psalm 123.1-4; and Proverbs 29.2-4.

Daniel: The scroll was ordered closed up...and sealed...until the time of the end. We are caught between two ends: our own and the end of time. The human mind wants to know what is to be, but the future is left in shadows. But before the book is closed, a glimpse is given to God's prophet. There will be a time of distress, such as has never been since the beginning. At that time, everyone whose name is written in God's book will be delivered. The dead will rise and live forever, some to everlasting life, shining like the stars, and some to everlasting contempt. Daniel asks, 'What will the outcome be?' 'The words are closed and sealed to the end of time,' the messenger of God responds. 'But as for you, go your way till the end. You will rest and then at the end rise to receive your inheritance.' It is not for us to know the outcome. We are to go our way faithfully to the end, trusting in the One who promises us and in the inheritance he promises. **Questions:** 1. Have I come to terms with the reality that my life-and, therefore, my time- is truly limited? 2. When I contemplate my own death, how does that affect my attitudes and actions? Do I fear my end and avoid thinking about it? Or do I anticipate confidently the inheritance that is mine through faith in God and live as generously and joyously now, as I will for all eternity? 3. Am I a worrier who wants to know what might be coming next, or do I tend to live peacefully secure in the present, knowing that God is in control? What would help me worry less?

John: Do not believe every spirit, every idea about God. Some are true, some are not. How can I know the difference between the true and false? Everyone who acknowledges

God's Son took our human flesh is from God. The ones who don't acknowledge Jesus is God's Son or that he became truly human like us, so that God and a human being were wed in one person, these are the spirits not from God. Those other spirits are of the world, and the world listens to them; and the world loves them. The world will not love those who love God. It cannot. God sent his Son into the world so that we might live through him. This is love; not that we loved God, but that he first loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice to remove our sins. Since God loved us so, we love one another. Perfect love casts out fear—be it the fear of condemnation from God, or the fear that comes from inhabiting a world that hates people who don't share its spirit. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in whoever lives in love. We love because he first loved us, and we inherited his perfect love. Anyone who does not love his brother or sister whom he can see cannot love God, whom he cannot see. Love God? Love your brother and sister. Then you have the Spirit of God. **Questions:** 1. Do I test the spirits of those around me, particularly those who are influencing my thoughts and actions, and even my own thoughts and motives, to see whether their suggestions come from God and where they lead to? How gullible am I in accepting whatever sincere people (or even my own thoughts) tell me as true? 2. How strong is the base of my personal relationship with God and my knowledge of my faith to help me test the spirits and withstand false leadings? How can I strengthen them more, so as to better withstand false teachings and leadings? 3. How does the love of God, demonstrated in Christ's taking human form and dying for me on the cross, teach and compel me to love others as Christ loves? How does his perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to truly love others?

Prayer: God, I wouldn't even know what it is to love if you hadn't loved me first...fully...forever in Christ. I would have gone complacently through life putting myself first before everyone else, seeking my own satisfaction and enjoyment at the expense of others. I still do. But you have made it impossible for me to remain there or even rest there. Your perfect love, by totally taking away my fear, has made me afraid of only one thing: that I might not love others as you have loved me, and so reflect your very nature in my own being. Lord, teach me to love as you love. Let every new day and every new encounter with the people you send my way be a lesson in loving like you, until I learn your perfect love. Amen.

Day 339. Read Hosea 1.1-3.5; 1 John 5.1-21; Psalm 124.1-8; and Proverbs 29.5-8.

Hosea: Marry a prostitute? Why would God ask that of his prophet? Because the whole life, not just the words of the prophet, are the prophecy. As Israel was adulterous in lavishing her love on the idols and gods of the nations around her rather than faithfully following God, so the prophet is to show the faithful love of God for his adulterous wife. The prostitute bore him a son, whom the prophet was instructed to name Jezreel, a reminder of the prophecy soon to be fulfilled that the dynasty of King Jehu would come to

violent end because of the massacre he committed at Jezreel. She bore him another son, who receives the prophetic name Lo-Ammi, which means 'Not my people;' for God is saying to Israel, 'You are not my people when you act this way.' And yet.... God commanded his prophet to marry a prostitute, which means to love her just as she is, though not for what she is or does. And so God says through his prophet Hosea, 'Where it was said, 'You are not my people' the people will be called 'sons and daughters of the living God' again! God says of the adulterous Israel, 'I will block her path with briers and wall her in, so she cannot find her way where she wants to go to her lovers. Then she will discover she was better off with her husband and decide to come back.' For God is the husband of adulterous Israel. He loves her so, he still longs to have her back. Like a loving husband, he lays plans to allure her to a solitary time together in the wilderness, when he will woo her to win her back, just as he led Israel into the desert to be alone with him after he freed her from slavery in Egypt. God wants to lead every soul into that intimate time and place where he can woo and win each one. **Questions:** 1. What hard things has God asked me to do for him? 2. How has God loved me even when I was not being faithful and loving to others? 3. How does God loving me—in fact seeking and wooing me—in Christ—even when I wasn't being loveable, affect the way I act toward others, especially others who are being unloving toward me? How has God's loving me and forging a personal relationship with me changed me and my actions?

John: How to conquer the world: believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Everyone who believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone born of God overcomes the world. Faith, which is total trust in God, doesn't just lead to victory over the world; it is victory over the world. Every child of God is a world conqueror. Anyone and everyone who believes in the Son of God has his testimony-God's declaration of their perfect forgiveness and complete righteousness through Christ- in his or her heart. Confidence and courage lie at the center of their souls, so that nothing the world or the evil one or even their own sin-struck consciences can throw at them will shake or shatter their peace. This is not just blind optimism. Believers know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one; and, yet, they are not discouraged or dismayed. They know a deeper reality: they are children of God. He hears his children gladly; and if they ask anything according to his will, he will grant it. Anything! As God's children, our eyes are open with compassion and caring for others around us who are still caught in sin. They don't separate from fellow-sinners; they come alongside them. There is sin that leads to death, which means to hardened unbelief, a sin which means severing for oneself the living, saving relationship with Christ forever. There is no prayer for this, except that it never happen in a person's life. But there is sin that does not lead to death, the residual sin still resulting from our brokenness which is already conquered by Christ but still awaiting the consummation at the end of time to be corrected completely and permanently. This sin, believers confess to the faithful Lord who forgives and restores. This sin, the believer asks God to forgive in others, for Jesus' sake. Jesus is the true God and the eternal life we seek...and have now, through our faith that conquers the world. God has given us eternal life...victorious life now ...as we faithfully live in and through Christ and overcome the world together.

Questions: 1. How does my faith in the forgiveness that is mine in Christ enable me to

live a joyous, confident, victorious life now as a present experience of the eternal life that is mine in Christ forever? 2. What residual sins still cling to me? What fallen tendencies do I still struggle with frequently? 3. Whom do I know still caught in sin that needs my prayers and encouragement through caring actions? What is my next step, after praying, to help them discover victorious life in Christ?

Prayer: God, joy comes from knowing you and believing your promises are true. The world may contradict, the devil may accuse, and my own conscience may convict, but you are God. In Christ, you have conquered all my sin and all that separates me from you...forever. You have conquered, and in you I share the victory. I was conquered and captive to sin, and then you conquered sin and freed me for life and love with you. Forgive me when I still stumble and fall. Lift me up and lead me on. Lead me especially to see and to reach out to those around me still trapped in the tangled jungle of sin I lived in so long. Use me as your instrument to help free them for victorious life through faith and following now. Yours is the kingdom, power, glory and the victory forever and ever! Amen.

Day 340. Read Hosea 4.1-5.15; 2 John 1.1-13; Psalm 125.1-5; and Proverbs 29.9-11.

Hosea: The whole land mourns, in the land that has no love, no faithfulness, no acknowledgment of God. The whole land. Not just the people, but the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, even the fish of the sea, languish. All of nature suffers from the godlessness. But especially the people. People without understanding end in ruin. God's chosen people were dying, not from physical disease, but from a lack of spiritual understanding. The priests, who by right ought to have guided them and given them understanding to know God, led them astray instead. The people are like a stubborn heifer. How can God lead them to pasture. Like the Good Shepherd he is, God longs to lead them like lambs into a lush meadow where they can pasture. And so, God declares through his prophet, it will be 'like people, like priests: I will punish both for their ways. And the worst of the punishment is this: 'I will go back to my place,' God declares, 'until they admit their guilt and seek my face. A whirlwind will sweep them away. But in their misery, they will seek my face.' God will do anything to win people back to him, including even allowing the whole land to languish until they gain understanding. **Questions:** 1. When and how has God used negative consequences of my sins to bring me back to him? Have I thanked him for those 'tough love' situations? 2. How has nature suffered because of my personal sinfulness? How am I doing now that I know God in honoring and protecting nature, wildlife, the air, the water, and the environment? 3. Am I more like a 'stubborn heifer' or an obedient 'lamb' in following God right now in my life? In what areas am I still stubbornly (or even passively) resisting God's Lordship? When will I give God control of them?

John: Just a reminder, John says. Nothing new. The commandment we had from the beginning. John had heard it with the other disciples long ago on the night Jesus was betrayed...by one of those disciples.. “Love one another,” he said simply. His commandment was...and is... that all his followers walk in love. Walk? Why not run? Or at least skip? Walking isn’t very exciting. Not glamorous. Not much fun, really. Walking just takes steady effort. Balance. Perseverance. Patience. But anyone who runs ahead and doesn’t continue in that most basic of teachings of Christ—to love one another as he has loved us—goes wrong. And there are many false running coaches...many deceivers...abroad in the world, who will encourage you to run shortcuts to the prize. Don’t listen to them. Instead, just walk...in obedience to his command. Walk in love with that real person with all their real problems, even as Jesus did the night he gave that command, to one disciple who would betray him, to one disciple who would deny him, and even to John, who would forsake him that very night. Walk in love, and you walk with good company. You walk with Christ. **Questions:** 1. Why do I want to ‘run ahead’ in my personal, spiritual relationship with God, but still have trouble ‘walking’ patiently with the other people God’s put around me by loving them, despite all their problems and faults ? 2. How can my desire to ‘run ahead’ spiritually open me to ‘deceivers’ and their false teachings? When has it? How does Christ’s command to ‘love one another’ help protect me and others from that? How does the faith community help? 3. Why do I always need to go ‘back to the basics’ of God’s Word and obedience to it, to keep from ‘running ahead’ and getting into trouble? How does knowing God’s Word help prevent spiritual miscues?

Prayer: Lord, more often I am more like a stubborn steer than I am like a docile lamb. You want to lead me to the still waters and the green pastures, and I plant my feet instead. Worse even, I run ahead...down my own path in the opposite direction. What’s the use of running, if I’m always running away? Lord, slow me down. Teach me to walk again. Let me take to heart...and hand...your command to ‘Love one another.’ Loving the people you put around me, with all their faults and failings, will definitely slow me down, just as I slow them down. But by doing that, by slowing down to love the real person with real problems with a real and not just wordy love, I who was crippled with my own willful ways, will finally be able to walk again. And what is more, I will be able to walk... with you. That’s what I really want. Amen.

Day 341. Read Hosea 6.1-9.17; 3 John 1.1-14; Psalm 126.1-6; and Proverbs 29.12-14.

Hosea: What can you do with someone whose love is like the morning mist, that disappears as the heat of the day comes? In his desperation to win back people, God ‘cut’ them with the prophets and ‘killed’ them with the Words of his mouth, like lightning striking the earth. He longs to redeem them, but they speak lies against him. The prophet they consider a fool, and the inspired person they esteem a lunatic. God gave them his Word; but, far from following God’s precepts, they considered them as something farfetched and foreign. They wail upon their beds because of their suffering but refuse to

call out to God. God desires mercy, not sacrifice; God longs for the righteousness that comes from a real relationship with him, not religion or religiosity. They create idols to their own destruction and chase after the gods of other nations around them. God declares, 'I will no longer love them; they will be wanderers among the nations.' All who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind. **Questions:** 1. What have been the 'whirlwinds' in my life, the toughest times of trouble? Have they had the effect of driving me closer to God or away from him? To what do I attribute the way they affected me in my relationship with God? 2. What part of God's Word do I find most troubling? Where does God's Word challenge me most to change my ways? 3. When in my life have I settled for religion and religiosity rather than real relationship with God and reflecting it in all my actions? How can contemplating God's Word, prayer, real spiritual relationships with other believers, true worship, serving- using my gifts in God's mission, giving generously to God's work, and sharing my faith with others help strengthen my relationship with God and guard me from religiosity? How can these decline into simply religiosity themselves?

John: A brief letter to a friend. That, too, is God's work. That, too, is holy, when done with and for God. John wrote to his friend, Gaius; and this simple letter to a friend became part of God's Word, because it was inspired by God and done for God. John commends his friend for being faithful in showing hospitality and caring for other believers, even though they are strangers. Those strangers in turn have told others in the church about Gaius' love in action. Others, like Diotrophes, refuse to welcome such strangers and stops others from showing hospitality to others, even when they are engaged and traveling in the Lord's work. Is Gaius possibly wavering because of the criticism of such people himself? John encourages him to imitate what is good, not what is evil, reminding him that anyone who does what is good is from God. John had much more to write Gaius, but preferred a face-to-face talk instead of a letter. He hoped to see him soon. Centuries later we have this little letter...sent to us by God to show us that the simplest act can be holy...and have incalculable impact in people's lives. **Questions:** 1. How do I practice hospitality to others in God's name? In what other simple ways of serving do I show God's love to people around me? 2. How do I support those who are involved in God's work? What more can I do? 3. Who would benefit in their life and walk with God from a brief card or letter of encouragement right now? Who needs a face-to-face visit to talk?

Prayer: God, open my eyes to the little things, like practicing hospitality and welcoming the strangers you send my way. Sometimes I look for the grand gesture or the great thing to do for you. I bet most of the time I miss the little thing you lay before me to do, looking instead for the great big, dazzling deed to prove how much I love you, or to convince me how important I can be in your work. I may not be able to do great things, Lord; but teach me to do little things with great love. Lord, let me be faithful first in the little things you lay right at my hand every day—to give a kind word of encouragement or do a simple act of service. Then perhaps I will be ready... and able... when you send those greater opportunities my way. Amen.

Day 342. Read Hosea 10.1-14.9; Jude 1.1-25;

Psalm 127.1-5; and Proverbs 29.15-17.

Hosea: Success went not just to his head but to his heart. Like a spreading vine that grows luxuriantly, Israel brought forth fruit...for themselves. As their fruit grew, so did their altars to other gods. The Lord will demolish all altars to false gods and put an end to all human-made religions. Israel made for themselves a calf-idol to worship. It would be carried to Assyria as tribute, God declared. Hosea called to Israel, 'Sow righteousness for yourselves and reap from unfailing love; for it is time to seek the Lord until he showers righteousness on you.' But they planted wickedness and reaped evil because they depended on their own strength. The more God called to them, the further away from God they went. He freed them from the yoke of slavery. He led them with cords of kindness and ties of love. He stooped down to feed them. What is left for them but to return to slavery, because they refuse to repent and turn to God? That would only be justice. But no, God declares, he will not execute his just anger and destroy Israel. 'I am God and not a man, the Holy One; I will not come in anger.' This God, who brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, will make them live in tents again...as at their very beginning with God. 'You shall acknowledge no god but Me,' God declares, 'no Savior but me.' Like a bear robbed of her cubs or a lion lurking by the path, he will attack them and rip them open. The kings they set up to save themselves, where are they now? God will allow them to acknowledge no one as Savior but him, for he is the only One who can save. 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave,' he declares, 'and redeem them for death itself.' He is the only Savior. How can he allow people to seek anything else, for in him alone lies their salvation? Hosea urges Israel, "Return to the Lord your God, taking words with you, and say, 'Forgive us all our sins; for we will never again say, 'Our gods' to false gods we have made with our own hands.'" And God responds as if they have already. God says, 'I will heal their waywardness and love them freely.' He will be like dew to Israel, and Israel will blossom again like a lily under God's dewy love. **Questions:** 1. How can God keep loving me despite my constant wanderings from his way? How does it change my thoughts and actions to realize God keeps forgiving me, even though I do not deserve it or even want to change so much of the time? 2. What other things, people, or powers have I sought (or do I seek) to save me in times of trouble, other than God? Have I acknowledged God alone to be my Savior? 3. How have times of prosperity and success affected my relationship with God? Do they tend to strengthen or weaken my faith? What is the secret to succeeding in life without failing to lose dependence on God?

Jude: Alchemists, the early forerunners of science, sought to find ways to transform common lead into uncommon gold. There are those, who by their words, would turn gold into lead. They would turn the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. So Jude the apostle, and the brother of James, urges those he writes to, to contend for the faith entrusted once for all to the saints. Most likely these 'dreamers' dreamt they could do anything at all with their bodies, rejecting God's authority. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind every which way. They

are wild waves of the ocean, tossed and turning in every direction. They are like wandering stars heading into the deep darkness of space. They follow human instincts instead of the Spirit of God. Jesus himself predicted their coming. Instead of following them, build yourselves up in the faith and pray in the Holy Spirit, keeping in God's love as you wait and work for his coming. Give grace to those who doubt, and seek to snatch them from the fire and save them. Even as you have been extended grace and as God snatched you from the fire. He is the One who transforms dead lead into glittering gold. **Questions:** 1. How was I like 'dead lead' before God snatched me from the fire and gave me his grace worth more than gold? 2. How am I tempted to take my salvation for granted and become complacent with the pleasures of this world? 2. How wrapped am I in the comforts and consolations things in this world offer me? 3. Whom do I know that I have perhaps been ignoring that needs snatching out of the fire? Whom do I know who is doubting faith, or severely being severely tried, and needs a word of mercy and encouragement from me?

Prayer: God, lead me deeper in love with you, even if that means leading me into the desert. Those dry and difficult times lead me to you and make me rely on you in ways that success and abundance do not. I grow complacent when all is well. Worse, I grow indifferent to others and their need. All around me the world is on fire. All around me are people you put there for me to snatch from the fire. Open my ears to their often silent cries. Open my eyes to see them, my lips to encourage them, and my hands to serve them with your love. You snatched me from the same inferno; let me burn to snatch them from the fire as you do. Amen.

Day 343. Read Joel 1.1-3.21; Revelation 1.1-20; Psalm 128.1-6; and Proverbs 29.18.

Joel: Sound the alarm! The day of judgment is near...a day of darkness and gloom, clouds, and blackness. Like locusts, the destruction is sweeping upon them. Declare a holy fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the leaders and all who live in the land. Call upon the Lord. It is not too late. It is never too late, with this Lord. 'Even now,' God declares, 'turn to me with true repentance. Tear in two your hearts and not just your clothes.' God is gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in faithful love. Who knows? Even now he may relent and leave a blessing instead of destruction. Sound the trumpet. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the whole people, from the priest to common person, old and young, women as well as men, gather everyone and cry out to the Lord. Let the priest mediate for the people and cry out to God, 'Spare your people!' Joel pronounces a solemn promise from God: if people will do that, if they will tear their hearts from other loves and turn to the Lord, then the Lord will be jealous for his people and show them pity. He will send the hope and the help they need. And what is more, God promises a day...not of judgment but mercy...when he will pour out his Spirit on all his people, women and men, old and young. They will dream dreams and have visions. They will proclaim the might

saving acts of God, so that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Their bloodguilt will be pardoned, and God will dwell among his people. Sound forth the alarm! Proclaim the promise! **Questions:** 1. Have I ever prayed a prayer of true repentance, simply turning to God and crying to God for his mercy? 2. How does this promise through Joel, fulfilled at Pentecost in Acts 2, that all God's people would have the Holy Spirit poured on them so that they have God's vision and can proclaim his salvation, strengthen and encourage me for my life and work for God? How has God's Spirit been poured into me? 3. How am I showing forth God's Spirit to others in my words and actions?

Revelation: Just when you think you know Jesus...he changes. Actually, he doesn't change. He never changes. It really is us who change. John had known Jesus personally. In his Gospel, John speaks of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' who even rested his head on Jesus' bosom at the last supper, so close were they. But now, rather than resting his head on Jesus' chest, he falls as one dead at his feet. Jesus' head and hair were white as pure snow. His eyes were blazing like fire. His feet glowed like super-heated bronze in a furnace. His voice sounded like a mighty waterfall. In his right hand were seven stars. Out of his mouth came a two-edged sword, sharper than any surgeon's scalpel. When John saw him, he didn't think of resting his head on his breast. He fell at his feet, as one dead. But Jesus is still Jesus. It is not he who has changed, it is us...and our knowledge of who he really is. He is Son of Man, certainly. Savior, yes. But he is also Son of God, King of kings and Lord of lords. 'I am the Living One who was dead,' Jesus reveals to his followers, 'and now I am alive forevermore! And I hold the keys to death and hell itself.' When John fell as one dead before him, this Jesus showed he was the same Jesus as always. He touched him. He said to him, 'Do not be afraid.' The celestial Jesus, who by his presence and appearance terrifies us with his sovereign freedom and awesome power, is the only One who can remove all fear from us. Do you know this Jesus? Do you really know the real Jesus? This is the real Jesus: Son of Man, Savior, Sovereign Lord, Son of God. He knows you; and what is more, he wants to touch you and speak with you. **Questions:** 1. As I look back over my life of faith to this point, how has my understanding of Jesus Christ changed and grown through the various stages and seasons of my life? 2. How is it possible to be both intimate and awestruck with Jesus Christ at the same time? How can I know him both as intimate friend, loving Savior, and my Sovereign Lord and Master—all at the same time? 3. As Jesus touched John and bid him have no fear, how does Jesus touch me now and calm my fears? How does his Word do that for me? The Lord's Supper? Prayer? His presence in and through loving, Christian brothers and sisters with whom I have real, spiritual relationships?

Prayer: God, like a waterfall you flood me with your Spirit; and I can finally see, as much as human eyes might, your awesome greatness and grandeur. You take my breath away...and then you inspire me to rise in praise of you alone. You are my Savior and my Sovereign. You alone I acknowledge Lord of all my life, my ways and days. Rule in my thoughts, and words, and deeds. May all I am and do be yours and yours alone; for you alone are worthy of all my love. May even my weaknesses and my wanderings, now

healed, bring greater glory to you for your great mercy and become the means that others may rise to life in you. Be glorified in me and through me, I pray, now and always. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 49

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Hosea 2.5-9, 14-20

Psalm: 126.1-6

Second (New Testament) Lesson: 1 John 4.7-12

Theme: This Is Love

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 49:

What is real love? We use the word so easily and loosely that it is almost meaningless. We can say, 'I love this ice cream,' or 'I love the way that looks on you' of a haircut or a coat. We can also say, 'I love you' to a person lightly, meaning I have a warm feeling towards you, without meaning I am committed to you no matter what. In the prophet, Hosea, God shows real love toward his people—both an intimate, passionate love of a bridegroom for his bride and a tough love that seeks to win back his estranged people by forcing them to face the consequences of their actions. In the New Testament reading, John describes what real love is: the self-surrendering, seeking love of God that paid the price of our unfaithfulness to win back his people. 'God is love,' John declares, but he means not a warm feeling but an unstoppable force for reconciling with wayward people. Love is epitomized in the cross of Christ. Because God loves us so, we know what love is; and we are made capable of such divine love. If we love one another—that is, if we love (in action and not just sentiment) the real people around us, despite all their faults and failing, God lives in us; and his love is perfected in us (that is, carried through to completion).

Alternate Readings & Themes:

1. **“How The World Will End: In Tribulation and Resurrection”** Does the world endure forever, or will there come an end? What happens to people after they die? Some world religions claim that time is cyclical, going through endless cycles of birth and rebirth. The Bible claims otherwise. The world has a beginning and is moving to a conclusion. At the end of time will be the beginning of an endless time we call eternity. All people will be resurrected to live eternally, either to everlasting life

with God or everlasting death. The Bible talks about a terrible time of tribulation coming before the end. In the Old Testament, the prophet, Daniel, was given a vision of the end times that included the tribulation and the resurrection. John, in the New Testament, writes about the troubles believers will have because they follow Jesus Christ. The world will hate-and persecute- the followers of Jesus, because they do not share the world's values and ways. But those who know Jesus will endure...and prevail. **Daniel 12.1-4; Psalm 125.1-5; 1 John 3.11-18.**

2. **“Faithful God, Unfaithful People”** Though his people be unfaithful, God is-and ever will be-faithful. In the Old Testament, God likens his people to a wife who was unfaithful to her husband. But rather than rejecting her, God seeks to win her back. He promises he will woo her and renew their love. In the New Testament, John writes to give believers confidence for life now in God. God is both powerful and faithful to protect his people from sin, the evil one, and the world which is under the evil one's power. We have confidence, because of God's faithfulness, to approach him and ask him for anything according to his will. Because God is faithful, he will hear us. **Hosea 2.5-9, 14-20; Psalm 124.1-8; 1 John 5.13-21.**