



Let's Read! April, 2013 Hosted by Open Doors

*Books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth

* Psalms 38-49

* Proverbs (chapters 10-11)

* Book of John

Dear Lovers of the Word,

How are you faring on this most exciting journey? I'm sailing along quite nicely, enjoying the "still waters" I encounter with many of the Scriptures, while also noticing some rough waters that pose questions and leave me groaning for God's peaceable kingdom when the lion and lamb will be friends, as will the children and serpents (See Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25). Even though I've been through the entire Bible a number of times I'm still learning a lot and growing ever closer to the Lord, buoyed by the familiar Scriptures and intrigued by all the new insights and information this time around. I hope you feel the same way.

If you're falling behind, don't be discouraged. You may have to adjust your schedule—to either make more reading time or narrow your focus for this year. I think it's better to read just the Psalms, Proverbs and/or the New Testament and do it well, with time to digest and apply what is read, rather than to bite off too much and feel overwhelmed or hurried. Let's consider that scholars have spent their lives on just one small part of the Bible, so our tackling the entire Bible in a year is an ambitious project. For those going from Genesis to Revelation, please don't feel that every word must be read. There are obviously places where it makes sense to scan, such as when the census statistics for each of the 12 tribes are listed or when it tells in detail what each tribe brings forward as their temple sacrifices. I scan parts like this, looking for interesting insights, such as the fact that Judah (the tribe from which Jesus comes) has the largest population and walks ahead of all the other tribes while traveling through the wilderness.

Have you been watching the 5-part series on the Bible each Sunday evening on the History Channel? Not everything is portrayed as I envisioned it, but seeing it in living color makes it powerful, indeed. If one didn't realize how violent the Bible is, they'll know it now. In church this past Sunday we all had a chance to write down our sins, regrets, gratitude, prayers, etc. and actually nail them to one of the four huge wooden crosses at the front of the the room. As part of the lead-up to our going forward we saw a couple of clips from the History Channel's yet-to-aired scenes: Jesus' Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem and the cross being lifted up with his battered and bloodied body nailed to it. Oh, the horror! No depiction can come close to the true horror and pain of those hours, but this rendition made me realize as never before what a great sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf... it's truly humbling.

And what's on our agenda for April?

Joshua: Moses (described in Deuteronomy as the greatest of all prophets, the one whom God knew face to face) is replaced by the new leader, Joshua (*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!*). The Book of Joshua records how he obeyed the Lord and conquered the Promised Land. Note the well-known story of the walls of Jericho falling down, which includes the lesser-known story of Rehab the prostitute, whose name is listed in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus!

Judges: Some of our favorite Bible heroes are found in this Book, including the adventures and misadventures of an incredibly strong man named Samson. The judges were local tribal leaders and rulers (more judicial than military), precursors to Israel's first king, Saul.

Ruth: This delightful story is about Ruth, a non-Jew. It answers the question as to whether it's OK to marry someone foreign-born. Watch for Ruth's poignant words to her Jewish mother-in-law: *Whither thou goest I will go... your God will be my God.*

Psalms and Proverbs: This month we'll be coming upon some wonderful verses like: *Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God...; Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised...; He who trusts in his riches shall wither, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.*

John: This is the last Gospel to be written, is elegantly presented, and is the favorite of many. It's the one Billy Graham gave to new believers to read. John calls miracles signs and includes seven of them, Be on the lookout for how these signs point us to God and help us see the divine nature of things. In John we find the favorite of all verses (3:16): *For God so loved the world...* It also contains Jesus' wonderful *I am* statements: (bread, light, the way, etc.) as well as the long and heartfelt prayer in which He prays ardently for His followers—including those of us who are following Him today.