



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

*Books of Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Isaiah

* Psalms 93-105

* Proverbs (chapters 22-23)

* Timothy 1 & 2, Titus, and Philemon

Hello! For the most part summer is over. It came and went quickly—although we here in Florida have plenty of heat still to look forward to. So far we've been spared a hurricane, but that season isn't over yet either. In Ecclesiastes 3, which we'll read this month, we're told that everything has its time and season. The song *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, written by Pete Seeger and sung by the Byrds, took these words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and emblazoned them on the hearts of millions:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

*a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to break up, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

These words are sobering... yet comforting, when we trust in God's loving hand and His perfect timing. Let's see what other words of wisdom and guidance we can find this coming month in the following readings:

Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Isaiah. Ecclesiastes talks about the meaning of life and offers a gloomy outlook, depicting life as boring and just a chasing of the wind. Yet it offers good advice, like telling us it's better to be wise than foolish, and that God intends for people to enjoy his gifts of work, food, drink, friendship and marriage. Most important of all:

Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about. God will judge everything we do, even what is done in secret, whether good or bad (12:13-14)

The Song of Solomon is a collection of poetic songs in which a man and a woman tell about their mutual love. It's interpreted in different ways: the joy of human love, the relationship of Christ to the Church (or God to His people). See what *you* think...

Isaiah is the first of the Books called *The Major Prophets*. Major doesn't necessarily mean superior, just longer. The shorter books are called *Minor*. Isaiah spoke God's Word to the people as a prophet during four Judah kingships: Izziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. It was a time of terrible trouble and messes (not unlike today), but this wonderful Book is chock-full of great promises and beloved verses, such as Isaiah's enthusiastic response when God asks, *Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? can we send? (Here I am. Send me!)* and familiar verses like *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee* and *In quietness and confidence shall be your strength*. The final chapters (56-66) spotlight the coming Messiah, the inclusion of people from all nations, and God's promise of a new Jerusalem with no more crying or sorrow. There's lots to reflect upon.

Psalms and Proverbs. As always, these are a joy to read (and/or sing!) This month we'll read one of my favorites, Psalm 100; it was often read to start our school day (in the "olden" times when we read a Psalm and said the Lord's Prayer along with the Pledge of Allegiance). There are only two Proverbs again this month, and again they are full of "food for the soul."

I and II Timothy, Titus and Philemon. The letters to Timothy and Titus are called *The Pastoral Epistles* because they deal with leadership issues. Timothy was like a son to Paul and is mentioned in 5 of his letters. Paul also mentions Titus several times. Both are great heroes of the faith who were trusted to carry on Paul's good work. Philemon is a short one-chapter letter about a runaway slave named Onesimus (which means *Useful*), who became a believer and a valuable friend to Paul. Paul asks his friend Philemon to also accept Onesimus as a friend in Christ. Here are some well-known passages in these New Testament Books: *If we die with Christ, we will live with Him. If we don't give up we will rule with him. If we deny that we know him, he will deny that he knows us. If we are not faithful, he will still be faithful. He cannot deny who he is. (1 Tim 2:11-13)*

Do your best to win God's approval as worker who needn't be ashamed, and who teaches only the true message. (2 Tim 2:15)

Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us eternal life. (Titus 3:7)