

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

- Though set here as the last words of Moses before his death and the Hebrew people enter the Promised Land, these words likely are written in the time of King Josiah of Judah, when they were “found” in the clean up of the Temple. In that time, these words became a call to repentance for the nation of Judah, urging them to change their behavior and re-commit themselves to God’s ways.
- How does “loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him” mean life to you? How does turning away from it mean death? What does it mean to you to love God, obey God, and hold fast to God?

Psalms 1

- What does it mean to you to meditate on God’s law day and night?
- I have always loved the image of the tree that this psalm uses. It can provide a visual meditation as I picture myself sinking my roots into God and producing fruit for God.

Philemon 1-21

- Philemon is a unique letter in that it is the only letter in the New Testament that is truly written to one person. The story goes as follows. Philemon is a colleague of Paul. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus (which means, “useful.” Note the play on words in verse 11.). Onesimus ran away. While he ran away, he became a believer and joined in Paul’s ministry. When Paul found out that Onesimus had run away from Philemon, he sends Onesimus back to Philemon, asking that Philemon free him. What does this say about slavery? Did Paul support it, thus sending Onesimus back? Or did Paul struggle with it, shown in his appeal to free Onesimus?
- What happened to Onesimus? Later in the 1st century, we have some letters from Ignatius. In one addressed to the Ephesians, he mentions the bishop there, whose name is Onesimus. Is this the same Onesimus? We do not know. But if it is, it would provide a nice ending to this story.

Luke 14:25-33

- How do we deal with verse 26? What does it mean to **hate** your family and life itself in order to be a disciple?
- We like to think about “carrying the cross” (v. 27) as carrying our burdens in life, but the cross signified a painful and excruciating death. So what does it mean to “carry your cross”?
- How do we deal with verse 33? What does it mean to give up all your possessions before becoming a disciple of Jesus? Do we too easily try to explain statements such as this and hating your family in verse 26? Why do some people take so literally God creating the world in a literal six days or Paul’s comment to keep silent in church but not take such statements as these literally? Does anyone take the Bible literally?