

Reading Schedule for June 19-25, 2017

You are sure to appreciate the focus this week as we culminate the Book of Ecclesiastes, and launch into my favorite minor prophet called Micah. These Old Testament Scriptures are very relevant to our lives today. We often overlook the Old Testament, and do so to our detriment. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes and the warning of Micah are both essential to Christian maturity.

June 19 –Ecclesiastes 10:1-20: “If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success.” (v.10) How would you summarize Solomon’s wisdom? Couldn’t you simply say work smarter instead of harder? I’m sure you have heard that before. This can apply to your personal life. We go at it day after day, and over time we become dull. Even Stephen Covey said that we needed to sharpen the saw. You and I do well to take the time to deepen our understanding of life and strengthen our sense of knowledge, so that we become more mature . . . wiser. This is what I think Solomon is talking about in this verse. This is a section of proverbs that is worth contemplating. Which proverb caught your attention? In what area of your life would you like to work more effectively? How might you be able to do that?

June 20 –Ecclesiastes 11:1-10: “Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.” (v.4) This seems like yesterday’s reading, very practical. Waiting for the perfect conditions would mean never doing anything. This also applies to our spiritual lives. We wait for the perfect opportunity or place to begin intentional reading and meditation on God’s Word, but we never begin. We wait for the perfect opportunity to serve, and yet nothing is quite good enough, so we remain stagnant, unproductive. Solomon also encourages us to enjoy life. We sometimes think of Ecclesiastes as a pessimistic book, but here I think Solomon is telling us to remember the joys of life. How do you respond to this chapter? Which proverb got your attention?

June 21 –Ecclesiastes 12:1-8: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them.’” (v.1) There is a theme that I am noticing in these final chapters. We sometimes think waiting for just the right opportunity is smart, but several times Solomon says that we miss out when we wait. Do not wait until you are older to pursue the Lord. The excitement of being young is to have the energy to pursue God and to serve him with abundance. People sometimes tell me, “I will get serious about God when I graduate from college, or when I get married, or when I retire.” The fact is, it will never happen with that mentality. There are other areas that apply as well. “I will start saving for the future in a few years.” “I’ll begin eating right when I need to.” You know the answer to these statements is that it will never happen. That’s what I believe Solomon is getting at several times in these chapters, and here he ties it to our pursuit of God. “Remember the Creator now and always.” Life is most satisfying when you are close to the Lord. How do you respond to this reading today?

June 22 –Ecclesiastes 12:9-14: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.” (v.13) As Solomon concludes his writings, he points to our relationship to God. The bottom line of life is to have faith in the Lord and honor him for who he is.

Respect his authority and follow his commands. No matter what the circumstances are in your life, or the aspects of life you don’t understand, the focus of life can be single-minded as you pursue the Lord. Knowing God and his ways makes life the fullest it can be. The Lord knows all things, and being rightly connected to him is the most essential aspect of life. Nothing has meaning without faith in God’s authority and reliability. Is that how you see it? What stands out to you as Solomon concludes this intriguing book?

June 23– Micah 1: “The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.” (v.1) Let’s meet Micah. Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries and prophesied between 750 and 700 B.C. Micah’s message was mainly to Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Judah had been prospering at the time, but there was a very evil king named Ahaz. There was idolatry, injustice and hypocrisy. Do you notice those characteristics in this first chapter? He is warning them of God’s judgment to come if they continue to pervert the name of the Lord and follow the idols of their world. How do you respond to this first chapter?

June 24 –Micah 2: “I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the Lord at their head.” (vv. 12 & 13) These verses have been some of my favorite over the years. It is a promise that God’s people will return to a vibrancy, and there will be a gathering of His followers who would break forth in ministry as they honor the king . . . King Jesus. He would time and again give people hope as they would turn from sin and renew their faith in the living God. The most hopeful message here is that there would be a strengthening of the community of God’s people in Judah. This has a sense of Jesus coming and many interpret it that way. The Messiah would gather the people and rescue us for all eternity. “The Lord at their head,” is where Jesus should be. Is the Lord first in your life? How do you respond to this challenging, yet hopeful chapter?

June 25 –Micah 3: “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.” (v.8) The reason I am drawn to Micah as a prophet is how he says things. He attributes his ministry to the work of the Spirit. This could sound like pride, but I know it to be one of validation. He is not saying these words on his own accord. He is a witness to the things of God. It reminds me of Acts 1:8 when it said that we would be the Lord’s witnesses as the Holy Spirit comes upon us. We can’t witness effectively by relying on your own strength. Micah relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and you can too. Zechariah 4:6 says, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.” That is a very important message for you and me. How do you respond to this reading, as well as how is Micah touching your heart?

Prayers: Pray for summer opportunities to grow in our relationship with Christ and to minister to others.