

I KINGS

SHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



life
group

1 & 2 Kings Introduction (Adapted from ESV Introduction)

Written to give clarity to those in exile as to what went wrong, 1&2 Kings explains to the chosen people of God why the exile to Babylon had happened. God is not weaker than another country's god. God is not some malevolent being who promises one thing, yet does another. Israel and Judah's own sin and rebellion against their covenant God has put them in the situation they are in. God is still all-powerful and the only true God. God is still faithful, true and altogether good. The problem was in the people, not their God. 1-2 Kings uses language found in Deuteronomy to shine a light on this covenant faithlessness that the people had demonstrated, yet 1&2 Kings does not leave them without hope for forgiveness for the repentant and the future (1 Kings 8:22-61; 2 Kings 25:27-30). Ancient Jewish tradition attributes the authorship to Jeremiah, but no one can know for sure.

Theological Themes (From ESV Introduction)

1. Yahweh is the only true God.
2. Yahweh controls history.
3. Yahweh demands exclusive worship.
4. The content and place of worship.
5. The consequences of false worship.
6. Yahweh is a just and gracious Lawgiver.
7. Yahweh is a promise-giver.

Teaching Narrative (excerpt from <https://bible.org/article/how-teach-bible-beginners>)

“Narrative material (e.g., stories) is indirect in the way it communicates its message, appealing primarily to the senses, not so much to the intellect directly as expositional writing does. It invites you to enter the world of the characters and experience what they experience. It is built on settings, characters, and plot (usually involving some conflict, test, journey, desire, etc.) and does not usually come right out and tell you what its meaning is (cf. the Good Samaritan). When we teach narrative, we must open up our listeners to the world of the stories by taking the time to paint the setting in such a way that the listeners feel transported into another world, i.e., the world of the story. There is the need for the creative and fertile use of the imagination, to smell the sea breeze, hear the sounds of children crying, see the lame man jump for joy, as it were. This will help your people enter into the lives and struggles/victories of the characters. The structure of narrative material proceeds more by scenes and episodes than strictly by paragraphs, as in the case of the epistles. (So, identify the different scenes—setting, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution—and identify where we experience the same “scenes” in our lives)... When teaching a story from the Bible, help the people in the audience identify with the characters in the story, especially the ones who are good examples to follow. Help them to live it, as if they were there when it happened. Thus, recreation is of the essence in teaching narrative material.”

I would add two things:

1. See the bad examples in the story and learn from their mistakes.
2. Seek to see how Christ fits in the story. He is our righteousness. The Spirit will use the examples to aid in sanctification, but always remember that Christ is the hero and without him we can do nothing.

A Brief History of Israel

(Moses to David)

Moses

We all remember baby Moses being born and then thrown into a basket in the Nile River only to be picked up and raised as an Egyptian. As an adult, he ends up killing an Egyptian and then subsequently fleeing for his life from the land because he knew that the crime had become known. We remember the burning bush that God spoke to him from when he called him to go and lead the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. In total, before returning to Egypt to do as God had commanded, Moses had spent about 40 years as a shepherd in the middle of nowhere learning about God's provision and sustaining ways.

Once he returned to Egypt with his brother, Aaron, by his side, the Lord used them to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to begin a journey to the Promised Land. He used the ten plagues to cause Pharaoh and the Egyptians to let them go. They got near the Promised Land and sent spies into the land. When the spies reported back to the people, ten of them thought it was going to be a death sentence because the people of the land would defeat them in battle. But two of them, Joshua and Caleb, had complete faith and confidence in the Lord to lead them to victory in the land. Unfortunately, the opinion of the ten spies is what the Israelites listened to and so God had the people wander in the wilderness for 40 years!

During the 40 years, the people learned through experience that the Lord is Provider and Sustainer...He is their Guide and Protector.

Joshua

After the death of Moses, Joshua was God's choice to lead the people into the Promised Land. The time had come and so they sent spies in again. This time they went into the city of Jericho and met a prostitute, named Rahab, who hid them and saved their lives in return for the safety of her and her own family when the Israelites would come in and be victorious in battle. We see a picture of God grafting in not only women (in a patriarchal culture), but Gentiles (she was a Canaanite) with not so shiny backgrounds (she was a prostitute). This lets us know that God's plan was for the nations to come to Him in faith and not just for the people of Israel...they were to be the example for the rest of the world to look at as to what life in relationship with God is supposed to look like.

Unfortunately for Israel, they did not heed the warnings and instructions that God had given them about what it was to look like entering into the Promised Land. Rather than ridding the land of all the people and all the idolatry, they left some peoples there and began to intermarry with them and eventually this led to Israel running into a long cycle of idolatry that caused them problems for centuries to come.

Judges

After the death of Joshua, "the people did what was right in their own eyes" (a phrase seen a couple times in the book of Judges). They were not seeking the guidance or leadership of the Lord and ended up in a cycle whereby they fell into idolatry which led to them being enslaved and oppressed by foreign people. After they were oppressed for some time they would call out to God for help and He would send a judge to come and be victorious over the oppressors which would lead to a time of peace for a little while until the cycle started all over again and again and again. With each time through the cycle, the judges themselves became more morally bankrupt and less followers of God, which did not help with the Israelites "being holy because God is holy" as they were commanded to be.

Samuel

The time of the judges ends with Samuel becoming the spiritual head of Israel after being dedicated by his mother as a boy and given to work in the temple alongside Eli, the priest. It was during these days where the Israelites approached Samuel and asked for him to give them a king so “they could be like all the other nations”. Samuel did not like this idea and talked with God about it. The Lord told Samuel that it was going to be okay, they weren’t rejecting Samuel, but they were rejecting God as their king. So he said, give them a king, but let them know that this king was not going to be what they thought he would be. He would be more about himself than he was for them and he was going to take from them to build his kingdom. When Samuel passed the message on, the people said they were good with that and the Lord through Samuel gave them Saul to be their king.

Saul

Saul looked the part for sure. He was a head taller than the others and looked kingly. But he sure didn’t act kingly. And he surely didn’t lead the people to trust God more. One time on the battlefield, Samuel was a little late to get there and so Saul went ahead and made the animal sacrifice without him. This was not in the job description of the king, nor was it obedient to the commands of the Lord and so Samuel had to tell Saul that the kingdom was going to be taken away from him and given to another.

David

David was the youngest son of Jesse. Their family was from Bethlehem, a little town outside of Jerusalem. He was the one that the Lord told Samuel to anoint as the next king of Israel. Through David, the Lord defeated the giant, Goliath, and the Philistines. It was David who was described as “a man after God’s own heart”. He wasn’t perfect; however, we know the story of his affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder plot of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. But we know that even out of the mess and brokenness, God had a plan to carry out His purposes. And that plan included David’s son (through Bathsheba), Solomon.

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Life Group – 1 Kings 1 – June 3, 2018

Who is the King?

CONNECT

What was your favorite summer vacation ever and why? What happens on a trip when someone exalts their ideas over everyone else's?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 1

(Additional Passages: Phil. 2:1-11, 1 Pet. 5:5-11; James 4:1-10; Mark 10:35-45; Deut. 1-2; Rev. 19)

- What is the conflict or problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to pray and humble yourself before the Lord for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Nathan and Bathsheba had a concern for the kingdom so they brought that concern before the king. Jesus, the better King David, is now King and has ushered in his spiritual kingdom. What burdens your heart for the kingdom of God? Is it people who do not know the Lord? Is it believers straying into sin? Is it believers who are not living for the kingdom? Bring your burdens to the King in prayer trusting Him to do what is best for his glory and his kingdom and our good.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships in your neighborhood so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how Jesus is the true King and that we are to submit to and follow him.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 2. Identify the major conflict and characters involved. List out the characters and their good and bad qualities. Do you see God at work in the passage? If not explicitly, how is he at work behind the scenes? How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children... (Deu 6:4-7a ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 1 – June 3, 2018

Who is the King?

Summary

The account found in 1 Kings 1 occurs at a pivotal time in the relatively early history of the Kingdom of Israel. Israel's first royal family was replaced by David and a new ruling family, but now David is nearing death and the question arises, "Who will be king?". 1 Chronicles 22 shows David making preparations for his son Solomon to be king, but the major conflict is introduced by his son Adonijah, who would be next in line if it were not for God setting apart Solomon, exalts himself and declares himself king. Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba, one of David's wives and the mother of Solomon, respond to the conflict by approaching King David to tell him about Adonijah and remind him of the promise he made to Solomon. The story reaches its climax when David decides to name Solomon as king and establishes him on the throne. The story is temporarily resolved when Adonijah and his followers go home in fear of the rightful king. Adonijah offers what turns out to be lip-service to Solomon and pays homage to him as king.

What is the conflict in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?

The major conflict is between Adonijah—the fake king—and Solomon—the rightful king. When a king would take over, typically any person with a potential claim to the throne would be put to death. Thus, Solomon and his mom Bathsheba were in great danger as well as the prophet Nathan, who supported Solomon. This conflict was the result of Adonijah's arrogance. He exalts himself and does not submit to the will of God revealed through his word. This is seen by him not inviting the prophet Nathan who spoke the word of God to the people.

Many conflicts today occur as a result of one person exalting themselves. Most conflicts at work, at home, and within the church can be traced to one or a group of individuals exalting themselves and not submitting to the will of God. *Seek to bring some of these to light in your Life Group.*

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

5 Major Characters: David, Adonijah, Nathan and Bathsheba, and Solomon

The main applications come from Adonijah and Nathan and Bathsheba.

Adonijah is obviously a bad example. He exalts himself and refuses to listen to the word of God. He gathered a bunch of "yes" men and refused to seek out counsel from Nathan, who could potentially contradict him¹. His issue is pride and selfishness. All throughout Scripture, when people demonstrate pride, they refuse to listen to the word of God, and vicious sin is the result. Cain killed Abel. Nebuchadnezzar threw 3 men into the furnace. The Pharisees put Jesus to death. Diotrefes refused to welcome and support God's workers. Pride cannot be present in the life of the believer. C.J. Mahaney defines pride in this way in his book *Humility*: "Pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him." (see 1 Peter 5 and James 4) God opposes pride because our pride exalts ourselves to the status of god, and God hates idolatry. He will not permit the proud to exist unopposed, because he loves people and knows that only He can be God. The tell-tale sign of pride is when someone will not submit to God's word. The main application from the life of Adonijah is: *Humble yourself and submit to God's will as revealed in His word.*

God's will is not mysterious or hidden, but is clearly revealed in his word. *Challenge your Life Group in areas where you see them not submitting to God's word, i.e. not engaging in disciple-making (Matt. 28), not*

¹ Merida, 9.

making corporate worship a priority (Heb. 10:25), complaining about serving in the nursery (Phil. 2:14), etc. Be bold and lovingly honest with your Life Group.

Nathan and Bathsheba serve as positive examples. They had a concern for the kingdom and acted upon it. They brought that concern before the king. Jesus, the better King David, is now King and has ushered in his spiritual kingdom. What burdens your heart for the kingdom of God? Is it people who do not know the Lord? Is it believers straying into sin? Is it believers who are not living for the kingdom? “Nothing is insignificant when it’s done for the glory of King Jesus. Whatever influence you have, you should use it for the advancement of the kingdom.”²

David³ serves as an example to learn from two specific age groups: parents with kids and people who are aging. With regards to parents, we learn that there is a great need to discipline kids when they are straying. Adonijah ended up where he was mainly because of his sinfulness, but also because his dad never confronted the sin in his son’s life, so his sin patterns grew more entrenched. Disciplining your kids is an act of love. It is not easy and it takes time and energy but the results are worth it.

To the aging, it is humbling to see mighty King David in this state, but it is a reality for each of us. Unless Jesus returns in your lifetime, you will die one day. Some of you will grow old and weak before you die. It is a fact of life in our fallen world. We must deal with that and find our identity in Christ and not our abilities or our health, or we will enter into a deep depression. “You aren’t your gifts. Don’t let your abilities lead you to pride, and don’t let your abilities lead you to despair. You are not your accomplishments.”⁴ God is the source of our joy, not those temporary things. Lastly, we learn from David the need for a transitional plan. He was not prepared to die. There was still confusion as to who would take over after he died. The people who pay the price for lack of transitional plans are the people you care about most. Don’t put your children and grandchildren in a bind by not having everything worked out in the case of your passing. It is important too to develop leaders to carry on your kingdom efforts after you go to be with the Lord. Don’t leave this earth without training up the next generation of leaders.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God isn’t seen interacting with people directly in this text. But we see two things. God is sovereign over his Kingdom, and when the right King is in place, worship results. Opposing God’s will is a fruitless endeavor, and when people submit to Jesus as the rightful King, worship is the result.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Solomon is a picture of Christ and Adonijah a picture of Satan in this story. Jesus is the rightful king, though currently another is making a claim for the throne—Satan. Satan has already been defeated and has no power over the kingdom children, but he is seeking to deceive. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father. Jesus will then cast Satan into the Lake of Fire as well as all those on earth who did not submit to Jesus as King. But for those who belong to Christ will experience great joy and celebration at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when God’s eternal kingdom is ushered in. So, the gospel tie-in of 1 Kings 1 is to repent and believe in the gospel of the kingdom, surrendering to the rightful King, Jesus, and tell as many as you can about him!

² Merida, 10-11.

³ Application from David’s life adapted from Merida pgs. 6-7.

⁴ Ibid, 7.

Life Group – 1 Kings 2 – June 10, 2018

What Should the King Do?

CONNECT

Go around the group and finish this sentence:

If I were King (or Queen), I would create a holiday where everyone had to

_____.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 2

(Additional Passages: Amos 1:1-2:8; 5:24; Ps. 1; Josh. 1:6-9; Rom. 3; 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4)

- What is going on in this story?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn and apply to our lives?
- What aspects of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Read Joshua 1:6-9 out loud as a group and pray for godly strength and courage in this life. Pray that we would be those who meditate on the Word of God day and night and are careful to do according to all that is written in it.

Pray for one another this week regarding those same things that over time we would all develop to be like trees by streams of water that yield much fruit (Psalm 1).

Pray as a group for our local, state, and national elected officials. Pray for wisdom and that the believers that are in office would not be corrupted by the world but would advance the kingdom.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships in your neighborhood or with your co-workers so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how Jesus is the true King and that we are to submit to and follow him through learning and obeying his word.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 3:1 – 4:19. Think through how Solomon acquired his wisdom, and then how he applied his wisdom.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children..." (Deu 6:4-7a ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 2 – June 10, 2018

What Should the King Do?

What is going on in this story?

The end of David's life and reign as king over Israel are coming to a close. He gives his successor, Solomon, some final words of advice. In the first four verses, David comes from a point of spiritual counsel while the next five verses he gives some political advice to the future king regarding some adversaries and friends within the kingdom. David then dies and his body is laid to rest in Jerusalem. Solomon's kingdom was then established as he set out to obey the counsel of his father and deal accordingly with the different people King David had mentioned to him before he died.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn and apply to our lives?

The spiritual counsel of David

How does what David said to Solomon impact our lives today?

Let's look at what David says in verses 2-4. He gives him several imperatives...

- ***"Be strong and show yourself a man"*** > This reminds us of what the Lord told Joshua when he was appointed the new leader of Israel after Moses died (Joshua 1:6-9). These words are the words of a father telling his son to step up to the plate and be who you are supposed to be. A lot of dads will tell their sons to "be a man" at some point in their lives. But what are they meaning when they say that? You fathers, have you said those words? What did you mean when they came out of your mouth? What did David mean when he told Solomon? "David gives us a simple understanding of godly manhood: obedience to God's Word."⁵ What are the myths surrounding manhood and womanhood?
- ***"Keep the charge of the Lord your God"*** > Obedience to God's Word. David tells Solomon to learn and obey God's Word. He repeated it several times over with different words for emphasis so that Solomon would get the point! *"Keep the charge of the Lord your God"* by walking in his ways, keeping his statutes, commandments, rules, and testimonies!

What did David say would happen if Solomon would learn and obey God's Word? He said that he would "prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." Does that mean that everything then would be good to go and there would be no hardships and suffering? Absolutely not! We live in a broken world and sometimes the brokenness of the world rolls all over us like roaring waves and there is nothing we can do about it, but that doesn't mean that we aren't successful. God measures our success differently than the world...he measures it in our obedience. "We are blessed when we walk in God's Word. This doesn't mean we will never suffer. It means we will experience blessing in a variety of ways...they (individuals who know Jesus and bear fruit) enjoy the blessing of having a firm foundation, even when the floods come."⁶ So let us be those who *delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night*. Let us be *like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season* (Psalm 1:2-3).

The political counsel of David

Was it godly advice? What are we to do with it?

David gives specific instructions to Solomon to eliminate several people based on what they have done in the past...

- Joab for his dealings with Abner (2 Samuel 2:18-23; 3:1-39) and Amasa (2 Samuel 20:1-10; 20:23)
- Shimei for cursing David and throwing stones at him (2 Samuel 16:5-14)

David also instructs Solomon to reward Barzillai who had provided food and supplies to David when he fled from Absalom (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

⁵ Merida, p. 13

⁶ Merida, p. 13

David telling his son to kill these guys seems a bit harsh to us...a bit mafia/hitman-esque. Was this godly advice? “We have to remember that these were kings; it was their job to render justice.”⁷ They were appointed as kings and governments and rulers have to make those types of judgments. Solomon did indeed follow through with the advice of his father.

What are we to do with it? We too must uphold the idea of justice and fairness as these are characteristics that are part of the nature of the Lord. The Gospel itself upholds these ideals as well, which is why it is good news for us to receive mercy (not getting what we deserve in eternal punishment) and grace (getting what we do not deserve in eternal life) through Jesus!

What aspects of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to your life?

In the Old Testament, the people of God led by their king were to be beacons of God’s justice and his righteousness. God desired that his people would, as they bore the image of God, “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

God is righteous.

Everything that God does is right and pure. All his ways are light, and there is no darkness in him. This truth is foundational to our faith. A God who is not righteous is a terrifying thing and Heaven would in reality be Hell if God was not righteous. Oh, how great it is that he is righteous! He has our best interest in mind. His word was given to reveal his righteousness to us. When a person keeps the word of God, we experience a taste of the life that God originally intended for us, and the life that, thanks to Jesus, he will give us in eternity. So, when we are doubtful to whether or not we should keep God’s word when it costs us much, we can know that God is righteous and good and his word is given to us for our good.

God is just.

A righteous God must punish sin, or he would no longer be righteous. Romans 13 reveals that God uses political governments to execute his justice on the wrongdoer. In fact, Amos 1-2 reveals that judgment awaits the nations that do not execute justice on the wrongdoer and abuse their authority. God is just and all sin will be judged. For those who have faith in Jesus, God has already punished their sin and they stand justified before God possessing his righteousness. For those who do not have faith in Jesus, they stand condemned already, dead in their sins, awaiting the eternal wrath of God. In both his judgment and his grace, God reveals himself to be just and righteous.

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:22-26 ESV)

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

God promised to Solomon that the kingdom would come through his obedience (a conditional promise), one that Solomon would ultimately fail at. But he was pointing to the One who would come after him that would not fail, Jesus! “This is why we bow down to Jesus and why we call him ‘King of kings.’ Build your life on the Word of God and worship the hero of the Word: Jesus. What a King we have! Sin is our attempt to make ourselves king; salvation is in Christ, the King substituting Himself for His servants. He lived the life we could not live and died the death we should have died. Now He is the risen and reigning exalted Lord. Glorify and enjoy Him.”⁸

⁷ Merida, p. 15

⁸ Merida, p. 14

Life Group – 1 Kings 3:1-4:20 – June 17, 2018

How to Obtain and Apply Wisdom

CONNECT

Have you ever done something foolish and looked back and wished that you would have had wisdom in that situation? Tell a story of one of the light-hearted occasions where that was the case.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 3:1-4:20

(Additional Passages: Ps. 72, 1 Cor. 1:21-31; James 1:5-8; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; Deut. 5-6; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)

- What is the problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same problem in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

How is God calling you to do justice among the downtrodden with the wisdom he has given you?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to pray and ask God for wisdom in the *specific areas your Life Group mentioned where they need wisdom.*

Solomon used his wisdom to do justice to the poor and powerless. Pray for those in need of justice whom the world overlooks. Ask God to use you to do justice in their lives. Thank him for the justice Christ brought to this earth.

Pray that God would give his wisdom to our elected officials locally and nationally.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships in your neighborhood so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them.

For the Family: Tell the story of Solomon asking for wisdom to your family and talk about how important it is to ask God for wisdom and how Jesus is the true wisdom of God.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 4:20-5:18. Identify the major conflict and characters involved. List out the characters and their good and bad qualities. Do you see God at work in the passage? If not explicitly, how is he at work behind the scenes? How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children... (Deu 6:4-7a ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 3:1-4:20 – June 17, 2018

How to Obtain and Apply Wisdom

Summary

1 Kings 3:1-4:20 contains the well-known account of Solomon asking for wisdom and applying it to the two prostitutes. Though the end of this narrative highlights Solomon's great wisdom, the beginning highlights his foolishness. His first act of foolishness is his marriage alliance with Pharaoh's daughter (cf. Deut. 7:3, 17:16-17) and his second was his practice of worshipping in the high places—"pagan places of worship, instead of the one prescribed place, the tabernacle,"⁹ (cf. Deut. 12). Anytime in Kings that you see an alliance with Egypt or people worshipping in the high places, it is not good. Oftentimes, in our foolishness, we put ourselves in similar situations where failure is imminent.

But, in the midst of his foolishness, the author of Kings declares that Solomon loves the Lord and is heading to Gibeon to sacrifice there (the tabernacle was in Gibeon, cf 1 Chron. 16:39). It was there where the Lord met Solomon in a dream and extended to him a truly incredible offer—"Ask what I shall give you." Here many would be tempted to ask for money, long life, prosperity, etc., but Solomon in perhaps the wisest decision he ever made, asks God in this moment for wisdom. And God gives abundantly. Not only does he give him wisdom, but he also gives riches and prosperity in a way that he has never done before or since. God's only requirement is that Solomon would walk in his ways. After waking up, his first wise act is to go to Jerusalem and worship God before the Ark of the Covenant, making sacrifice for the forgiveness of his sins.

Shortly after, 2 prostitutes come before Solomon to have their case heard before the King. Both had recently given birth, but one child died in an accident. The mother who lost her child switched them in the middle of the night, but the other caught on and now was petitioning the king. Solomon perceives the situation to be difficult to decide, so he orders the living child to be cut in two and divided among them. The true mother, obviously not wanting her child to die, begs Solomon to give the child to other one. While the fake mother, just to spite the other, says fine saw the baby in half, neither of us will have him. Solomon in his wisdom perceives who the true mother is and does justice to this poor and needy woman, whom many would not have heard her case. The narrative closes with Solomon's kingdom firmly established, and him multiplying his leadership into trusted officials.

What is the problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same problem in your life today?

Solomon's problem is that he lacked the wisdom needed to lead God's people. He lacked wisdom because he was born into a fallen world and was born foolish.

Each person born lacks wisdom. No one has fully grasped wisdom perfectly. Some are wiser than others for sure. But all of us need more of the wisdom that comes from God. Where are the areas in your life where you need wisdom? *Seek to bring some of these to light in your Life Group.*

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

God and Solomon serve as the central characters in this story. There are others—the two prostitutes and the officials Solomon appoints—but they are significant because of Solomon's interactions with them. Solomon serves as the focal character who interacts with God and others, from whom we can learn.

1. Worship God properly and trust in his sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

The wisdom of God always leads to us understanding our sinfulness and trusting in Jesus' finished work on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. This leads to proper worship of God as he transforms us into worshippers who worship God in spirit and in truth (cf. John). Solomon's sacrifice points towards Christ's sacrifice for us.

⁹ Rydelnik, 488.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ... And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:21-25, 30-31 ESV)

2. Use wisdom to do justice for the poor and the powerless.

Two qualities surface in this story as to how this is carried out—valuing human life and discernment. These two things are needed when ministering to others. It is easy to define people by the decisions they make, rather than an individual created in the image of God who needs the same redemption we experienced in Jesus. Solomon saw past the fact that this woman was a prostitute who had made poor choices, and saw that she was a mother who loved and cared for her child.¹⁰ He also demonstrated great discernment. If not careful, good intentions that lack discernment enable bad behavior.

3. Multiply your ministry in the Kingdom of God.

Solomon had the charge of leading God's Kingdom. One man could not do it alone. So, he multiplied his leadership. We are called to spread God's kingdom. We cannot do it by ourselves. We must invest into faithful men who will invest into others also (2 Tim. 2:2). If we want to be the most effective for the kingdom, we must multiply ourselves into others.

Who are you discipling and investing in?

Challenge yourself and your group to multiply in an effort to spread God's kingdom.

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

- God gives graciously and abundantly. He answers the prayer for wisdom. Pray as a group for the wisdom of God.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8 ESV)

- God does not give wisdom or any gift, without the responsibility of us using it for his kingdom and his glory. Use your gifts.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV)

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Though Solomon's wisdom was great, Christ's was greater. Though Solomon brought justice to the poor in this story, he was not perfect. Christ is perfect in his wisdom and in his justice. Trust him and listen to him as he is revealed through his word.

¹⁰ Merida, 27.

Life Group – 1 Kings 4:20-5:18 – June 24, 2018

The Kingdom of God

CONNECT

What does a perfect day look like for you?
Describe the setting, the events, and the people you are with.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 4:20-5:18

(Additional Passages: Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 21-22; Eph. 3:14-20; Deut. 7-8; 2 Sam. 7; 2 Cor. 1:19-22)

- What is the conflict or problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Visit joshuaproject.net and pray for the unreached people group of the day. Pray for the missionaries around the world engaging the lost from the nations. Pray for the areas we as a church are engaged in mission.

God is faithful to his promises and is abundant in his nature. Spend time rejoicing over the promises of God and asking God to move abundantly in our church and community.

Take time to ask God for wisdom. Pray for those in need of his wisdom.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships in your neighborhood so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how this is a shadow of what Heaven will be like. Instill in your family the wonder of Heaven.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 6-7:12. As you read about the specifications for the temple, reflect on what they reveal about the nature and purpose God intends for worship.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children... (Deu 6:4-7a ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 4:20-5:18 – June 24, 2018

The Kingdom of God

What is the conflict in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?

Atypical for the book of Kings, we see a distinct lack of conflict in Solomon's Kingdom. God has given him "rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune." But the rest and peace was not purposeless. It was so that Solomon would be able to build the Temple for the name of Yahweh which would result in his worship.

Oftentimes, the enemy uses earthly peace and prosperity to lull us into spiritual forgetfulness and pride. But God gives peace that might result in his worship and the spreading of his message. Times of prosperity are supposed to move us to grateful worship, not spiritual laziness. When the blessings God gives us do not move us to worship him, we have fallen into a trap of the enemy. The peace and blessings of God reveal the nature of God so that his people might respond with the worship of God.

Are the peace and blessings of God moving you to worship God?

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Solomon again is the focal character of this section of story. We see him interacting with God and with leaders of other nations. Here are some of the key aspects of the example Solomon sets (some we need to follow and one we need to avoid):

Solomon spoke the wisdom of the Lord to others.

God gave Solomon wisdom and he shared it with the nations. God has always had plans for the nations to be brought into his kingdom. Whereas then the nations went to Israel to hear the wisdom of the Lord, today God has sent us out to the nations to share the wisdom of the Lord—the gospel—with all nations. That begins with us sharing the gospel with our friends, co-workers, neighbors, clients, and acquaintances and then moves to us seeking out those from other cultures with the gospel. A great way to engage the nations here at MeadowBrook is through our International Student Ministry at Gadsden State or going on one of our many mission trips around the world.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV)

Solomon obeyed the word of the Lord.

Solomon knew God had commanded him to build the temple, so he began moving in that direction. God commands us to repent of our sins and believe in Jesus. God commands us love him with everything and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And God commands us to share the gospel with others, among many other things. Discipleship involves grace-motivated obedience. Where is the Spirit revealing areas of disobedience in your life and Life Group? Ask for forgiveness and rely on the Spirit to work that obedience in you.

Solomon uses his wisdom in a practical way in his dealing with Hiram.

Hiram proposed a counter-offer to Solomon, which in his wisdom, he ignored. The wisdom of the Lord revealed itself in a practical way. It is the same today. Taking the Great Commission as an example, what are some practical ways your Life Group can follow that command in an effective manner in this community? Where are the strategic places? What is a good method for those places? etc. Have a discussion about these things.

Solomon still disobeys part of God's Word and uses forced labor.

Solomon was not perfect. He accumulated many horses which we later find out were from Egypt (Deut. 17). And he utilized slave labor. Neither of these were a part of God's original design, but God used Solomon in a mighty way. Each of us struggles with sin, but God can still use us and will still use us to accomplish his purpose in this world if we let him.

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God is faithful.

God kept his promise to give Solomon wisdom, and he kept the promise he made to David. God keeps his promises. Always. What promises of God do you need to trust in?

God gives abundantly.

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure. God is a good Father who gives good gifts to his children. And when he gives, he gives abundantly. He does more with our godly prayers than all that we could ask or think. Take time and pray according to God's will asking him to give abundant wisdom.

God is victorious.

God put the enemies underneath David's feet. And he has put the enemies of sin, shame and death underneath Jesus' feet through the death and resurrection. God will be victorious and he shares that victory with us. Walk in victory.

God's name is to be represented well.

The temple was to be built for the name of the Lord. It represented him to the world. We are God's temple now. We have the responsibility to bear his image to the world. But don't worry, he has given us his Spirit. Rely on him through reading his word and prayer. We need God, ourselves, to represent God well in this world.

God is the true King.

Solomon recognizes who really is in charge. We need to do that as well. We are not in control of our lives. We do not have autonomy. God alone is King.

God orchestrates for his worship.

Everything in this passage, God orchestrated to bring about the genuine worship of his people. Worship is the goal. Nothing in this world happens apart from God's will, and it all has the same purpose in mind—to achieve godly worship. Look at your life—the good and the bad—and let it move you to worship.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

In this story, we see a shadow of what Christ's Kingdom will be like. In the New Heaven and the New Earth there will be everlasting peace. There will be no disunity between humans. We will no longer have to deal with the inner turmoil in our flesh that seeks to weigh our spirits down. We will have a perfect relationship with God with no more sin. Creation will be at rest and there will be no more disaster. Like in this story, all the nations will be represented. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will spread to all nations and it will be a beautifully diverse expression of the image of God. Lastly, as it was meant to be in the temple, His Kingdom will be full of worship. We will finally be fulfilling our ultimate purpose to know God and enjoy him forever. Christ's Kingdom will truly be a glorious place full of life and joy and satisfaction.

Life Group – 1 Kings 6:1-7:12 – July 1, 2018

Beholding God's Glory

CONNECT

Do you have an object that reminds you of a memory you want to cherish? If so, what is it and what memory does it remind you of?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 6:1-7:12

(Additional Passages: Ps. 96; Gen. 1-2; Rom. 12; Lk. 12:15-21; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 13:1-4; Deut. 9-10)

- What is going on in this story?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Discuss different attributes of God's character, and take time to praise God for his holiness, power, righteousness, and authority.

Solomon had great reverence for the Lord and gave honor in how he built the temple. This reverence and honor he had for God resulted in the worship and praise to God by people from all over the world. Ask the Lord to make your reverence and honor of the Lord an active demonstration of your faith. Pray for an active faith that affects other people's lives and brings even more glory and honor to the Lord. Pray for those who you know don't have a relationship with God and ask for an opportunity this week to talk with them about the Lord.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having spiritual conversations with those in your neighborhood for whom you have been praying and building relationships.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how God has made our bodies a temple of the Holy Spirit and how to honor him with it.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 7:13-51. Think through how Hiram honored God through his work, and what ways you could honor God through your work.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 6:1-7:12 – July 1, 2018

Beholding God's Glory

What's going on in this story?

At this time in Israel's history, the Israelites are living in a time "of peace, great wealth, remarkable literature, and worldwide fame"¹¹. God had promised that they would be delivered from the rule of the Egyptians (Exod 6:6) and settle in a land where they would build a house for Him to dwell (Exod 15:17; Deut 12:10-11; 16:2; 2 Sam 7:12-13)¹². During Solomon's 4th year of reign, he began building the promised temple and finished in just 7 years. Most of Chapter 6 is used to describe the extravagance of the temple – covering everything in gold, elaborate and intentional designs on the walls, as well as the temple's specific dimensions. Solomon spared no expense when building the temple and paid great homage to the Lord through the remembrance of the Garden of Eden and looking forward to the promised Messiah. We also read in chapter 7, Solomon building his own palace, which he built near the temple.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

2 Major Characters: God and Solomon

As Solomon began building the temple, the Lord spoke to him concerning his heart and motivations behind building the temple. "Despite the importance of the temple, what God desires from His people isn't a building but obedience"¹³. This kind of steadfast, all-sacrificial obedience can only come from a deep love for the Lord. Even Jesus said this to his disciples, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments* (John 14:15 ESV). And isn't God still reminding us of this today? He interrupts our plans and redirects our heart back to His Word, telling us that our heart is more important to him than the actions we do or the things we accomplish for his Kingdom. Just like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, *and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing* (1 Cor 13:2 ESV).

If we are continuously seeking the Lord through his word and prayer, we will desire the will of God over our own, we will treat our spouses, children, co-workers, neighbors, and parents on our kids' sports teams with grace, patience, and love. The Holy Spirit will grow us from one degree of glory to another and we will find it easier to obey what God has commanded us to do. *Ask your Life Group what are ways that they have been doing mindless acts of devotion to the Lord because that is what they think they are "supposed to be doing". Challenge them to ask the Lord to reveal these areas to them, pray Ps. 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of your [word]", and ask the Holy Spirit to allow their hearts to have a greater capacity to love God.*

Solomon was obedient to build the temple the Lord had promised. He followed the traditions of his fathers and gave reverence to the Lord by having no sound of tools near the construction of the building (Hab 2:20). However, it's interesting that Solomon built the temple in only 7 years and his palace in 13. His palace was much larger than the temple and it too was very extravagant. There are a couple ways of interpreting this – God had blessed him for his work on the temple or Solomon was acting out of self-indulgence. Whatever conclusion you come to, it is clear that his heart was divided.

We know that it's not sinful to have a lot of money, but we also know of the warning Jesus gave in Luke 12:15-21 about indulgence in worldly treasures. As believers, we should be considering how we can use what God has given us for his kingdom ministry, our homes included. Refrain from getting caught up in this cultural war of abundance and luxury. The enemy uses this mindset to keep us from advancing the Kingdom of God. He distracts us by placing our focus on temporary things so that we forget the eternal. Let's purpose together to live according to God's Word with an eternal mindset.

¹¹ Merida, 36.

¹² Merida, 37.

¹³ Merida, 41.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God fulfills his promises. In the first verse, we see that the Lord fulfilled his promise to the Israelites to build a place where he would dwell (Deut. 12:11). Keep in mind that this fulfillment happened 480 years after the promise was made. We might be tempted to doubt the goodness or faithfulness of God when we’re not seeing any fruit of our labor or we become weary of doing good; remember that God is a keeper of his promises, even if his timing is different than our own. Trust in his plan for your life, that he is sovereign over every detail, and wait on him to fulfill his promises.

In this passage, we see **the holiness of God** – one who is set apart, so pure and awesome that man could not look on the presence of the Lord and still live (Exo. 33:20). The room known as the Holy of Holies was God’s dwelling place among the people. Only the High Priest could enter through a heavy veil one time a year – during Yom Kippur – to present the blood of a sacrificed animal as an act of atonement for their sins. “The temple should cause us to elevate our concept of God and, in seeing Him, cause us to worship Him with more passion”¹⁴.

Discuss with your Life Group ways that God’s holiness should impact our lives (i.e. “You shall be holy, for I am holy” 1 Pet 1:16; he is distinct from his creation, therefore we should be distinct from the world; etc.)

Looking back to the Garden of Eden

Around all the walls of the house he carved engraved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms (v. 29). These were all symbols signifying God’s holiness, but it was also a direct reference to the time when God dwelt with man in perfect harmony. It was reminiscent of the Garden of Eden where each tree was “pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen 2:9). After Adam and Eve sinned against God, he banished them from the Garden and placed two cherubim to the east to “guard the way to the Tree of Life” (Gen 3:24), which was an act of grace. Being reminded of the Garden served purposes:

- 1) It reminded them of God’s original design for our relationship with Him – one of vulnerability, love, and unity.
- 2) It reminded them of God’s judgement for those who do not obey God’s commands.

Their reminder of the Garden brought hope and also warning. For us, now being on this side of the revelation of Jesus, we have hope that one day there will be a better Garden and our relationship with him will be restored. *Discuss with your Life Group the implications that our hope of heaven has on our lives today.*

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Before Christ came, believers would go to the temple to pray, make sacrifices, and worship the Lord. In Solomon’s temple, God’s Spirit resided in the room called Holy of Holies. So, once a year when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies to make a living sacrifice with the blood of a pure animal, he was doing so in the presence of God. But because Christ came, died, rose, and ascended into heaven, believers now have the Spirit of God dwelling inside them. We no longer have to travel to a temple to be in the presence of God, for those who are in Christ, we are always in his presence. The temple was simply a placeholder for Christ. It was meant, by God, to point to the greater sacrifice that would be given for us as well as an example of how our bodies house the Holy Spirit.

Discuss with your Life Group the practical implications of our bodies being a temple (Rom 12; 1 Cor 6:17-20). Challenge your group to have a spirit of accountability among each other and to discuss ways that they are struggling with this and how to honor God with their body.

¹⁴ Merida, 36.

Life Group – 1 Kings 7:13-51 – July 8, 2018

Working for the Glory of God

CONNECT

As a child, what was it that you wanted to be when you grew up? How does that compare to what you do now? You may want to see if everyone knows the professions of each person in your Life Group.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 7:13-51

(Additional Passages: Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; James 1:17; Ps. 21; Ti. 3:3-8; Gen 2:15; Deut. 11-12)

- What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Spend time praying asking God for wisdom, understanding, and the development of necessary skills to help you exalt God through your work.

Pray over each person's workplace and that God would be exalted in the workplace and in the home. Pray for those who are lost that we come into contact with throughout the week.

Confess to God the ways that He has not been exalted through your work and repent.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having spiritual conversations with those in your neighborhood for whom you have been praying and building relationships.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how we can exalt God through our work and our chores. Talk about how God provides the strength needed to do his work.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 (2 Week Study). As you observe the prayer of Solomon and the reaction to the people. Pay special attention to his blessings and the people's response at the beginning and end of chapter 8.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 7:13-51 – July 8, 2018

Working for the Glory of God

What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.

(Gen 2:15 CSB)

Work has been around since the beginning, and it may be a surprise to many but we will work in Heaven (see Amos 9). God ordained work. Sin made work difficult, not God. God created men and women to glorify him through their work. This story in 1 Kings is a story of a man named Hiram (not to be confused with the Hiram from chapter 5) who glorified God through his work.

Work is a part of life. It's a part of God's plan for creation that he might receive glory through your work. Whether you are blue collar or white collar or work from home or are a stay at home mom, whether full-time or part-time or over-time or retired, we are called to glorify God through our work. The only question is "how?"

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Hiram was a bronze craftsman. He worked with his hands. He wasn't a priest, a Levite, or a prophet. He was a widow's son who worked hard for the glory of God. God had gifted him with "wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze." God gifts his people not only with spiritual gifts upon salvation, but also with a variety of natural talents and gifts when they were born. James 1:17 says that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Take a moment to have your list out where God has gifted you. See attached handout.

Hiram used his "gifts for God's glory and the good of others."¹⁵ His devotion to excellence glorified God. The names he chose for the pillars exalted both the faithfulness of God and the strength of God¹⁶. Jachin means "He will establish" and Boaz means "In Him is strength." He used his work to communicate the message of God's faithfulness and strength to not only the people of Israel but all the people who would come to the temple over the years. And the way he worked beauty in the details of the other temple furnishings communicated the beauty of God to others as well—even if it was just a shadow. We are called to do the same with our work today. Here is a table adapted from Timothy Keller's book *Every Good Endeavor* which is about exalting God through your work. (See Colossians 3:17 and 1 Peter 4:10-11)

Potential ways to exalt God through your work:	
Further social justice in this world through your work.	Show integrity at work and evangelize your co-workers and clients.
Work in a skillful and excellent way for the glory of God.	Create beauty through your work.
Seek to engage and influence culture through your work to be God-glorifying.	Have a grateful attitude at work during the high and low points.
Do something and work in a way that displays the joy you have in the Lord.	Be generous with the money you earn through work supporting Kingdom work.

Take time to write out specifically how God is wanting you to exalt him through your work. See attached handout.

¹⁵ Merida, 45.

¹⁶ Ibid, 44.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God gifts his people for his purposes and his glory.

God gifted Hiram and every good and perfect gift comes from him and is meant to be used for his glory and purposes. Our God is a giving God. He is so generous to us. Hiram was a son of a widow. Nothing special in the world’s eyes, but God gifted him beautifully. He does not see as we see. Praise Him and thank him for the good gifts in your life. Ask him to give you wisdom and understanding and to develop the skills he has given you for the purpose of kingdom ministry.

God will establish his kingdom.

Jachin means “He will establish.” God is faithful to his promises and just as he established David’s kingdom, He will establish his eternal kingdom. Rest in his faithfulness and be filled with hope.

God is strength and he has the ability to accomplish his will.

Boaz means “In Him is Strength.” Apart from God we can do nothing and everything God purposes comes about because he possesses the strength to carry it out. God is not stingy with his strength but he desires for us to live and serve and rest in his strength.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 4:10-11 ESV)

By God’s grace he has gifted us with talents and gifts to carry out his work. He expects us to use those gifts. But he does not expect us to do it on our own. By his grace, he also provides the grace to use his gifts and talents.

God provides the way to cleansing—eternally and daily¹⁷.

Hiram also made a cast metal basin to contain 11,000 gallons of water as well as other carts with basins to carry smaller amounts of water. Why? This demonstrated God’s concern for cleansing. The priests would use this as a part of the cleansing rituals. This was the means God provided in the law. It was meant to be a shadow of the cleansing that would come through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. There is cleansing that comes once and for all when one comes to Christ and there is a daily cleansing that comes through the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 1:7).

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Hiram’s God exalting work is a shadow of the perfect work Christ did while he was on earth. Everything Christ did while on earth exalted God and served others perfectly and Christ will restore work when he returns and establishes his kingdom. The cleansing that took place within the temple was a shadow of the better cleansing that was accomplished by Christ.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7 ESV)

¹⁷ Merida, 44-45.

Life Group – 1 Kings 7:13-51 – July 8, 2018

Working for the Glory of God

Where has God gifted you with talents and artistic ability?

Potential ways to exalt God through your work:	
Further social justice in this world through your work.	Show integrity at work and evangelize your co-workers and clients.
Work in a skillful and excellent way for the glory of God.	Create beauty through your work.
Seek to engage and influence culture through your work to be God-glorifying.	Have a grateful attitude at work during the high and low points.
Do something and work in a way that displays the joy you have in the Lord.	Be generous with the money you earn through work supporting Kingdom work.

Which of the above ideas as to how to exalt God through your work best fits with the work you do? Are there other ways?

Now, what is the specific way God is calling you to apply this to your work? Be as specific as possible.

Write out a prayer asking God for wisdom, understanding, and the development of necessary skills to help you exalt God through your work.

Life Group – 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 – July 15, 2018

God with His People, Part One—Responding to the Glory of God

CONNECT

Have you ever bumped into a celebrity out in public or had the opportunity to meet one before at an event? Who was it and what was it like?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 8:1-21,54-66

(Additional Passages: Heb. 10:1-11:2; Gal. 3; Isa. 6; Mk. 11:15-19; Acts 13:47; Deut. 13-14)

- What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What attitude towards God and his glory needs to be changed in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time as a Life Group and do sentence prayers praising God for his glorious attributes. All you need to do is say one sentence of praise toward God. It does not have to be lengthy nor should it be. It is just a way for your group to pray out loud together.

Pray for those who still have not have their sins covered by the sacrifice of Jesus.

Spend time prayer journaling this week the various ways that you need God in this life. Ask him to incline your heart to his.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having spiritual conversations with those in your neighborhood for whom you have been praying and building relationships.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how big and praiseworthy God is. Talk about how God is so much above us and that our sin is a big deal to him. Talk about the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross to deal with our sin.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 (2 Week Study). As you observe the prayer of Solomon and the reaction to the people. Pay special attention to his petitions and God's response in chapter 9.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 – July 15, 2018

God with His People, Part One—Responding to the Glory of God

What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?

This story captures a high point in the united Kingdom. The Temple has been built, God's glory fills the temple signifying his presence with them as He did in the wilderness at the tabernacle. The amount of sacrifices for sin abound and are too numerous to count, and the people worship in stunned awe of the glory of God. Solomon, using God's word, reflects on the faithfulness of God and blesses the congregation. Solomon then makes a sevenfold petition to the Lord (which we will study next week as well as God's response) and when he finishes praying, he blesses the Lord and the congregation. The people then respond with more sacrifices and celebration.

Now, much of this is foreign to us. We live in a different era. We are the Temple (1 Cor. 6). We do not need to offer up bulls and goats as sacrifices. Christ has already given himself as the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10). However, there are events that take place in this story that should take place today.

- The people's acknowledgement of sin and the need for cleansing.
- The stunned awe at the glory of God.
- The worship of God for his characteristics.
- Reflecting on the faithfulness of God.
- Petitioning God as a congregation.
- Celebrating the presence of the Lord.

Each of these should be occurring today as a response to the sacrifice Jesus made and the grace he revealed on the cross.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Solomon again stands out as the major character this story focuses on, as well as the entire congregation of Israel as a whole. We also see the Temple priests and Levites performing some of their duties in the Temple. As king, it is Solomon's responsibility to lead his people in the worship of their God. And he does just that. For 14 days, he leads the people in a celebration of the goodness of God. What can we learn from his example?

Solomon recognized the gravity of sin. (8:1-11)

The cattle could not be numbered. Now, we know that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Heb. 10:4)" But Christ had not come yet. It was not the sacrifices themselves that removed sin, but faith in the one whom the sacrifices were just a shadow of what was to come. The sacrifices were just the means established by God in the law of Moses to express that faith in God. Solomon knew the sin that was in his heart as well as the people of Israel. Sin that was deserving of death and judgment from God. He understood that it is a "terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31, CSB). Where then it moved him to sacrifice in faith, today it moves to the cross in faith where the one who made the perfect sacrifice. Before we can experience and live in the grace of Christ, we must understand the gravity of our sin. And the continual understanding of how wicked our sin is helps us to continually be in awe of the grace and mercy of God, which leads to us proclaiming that same grace and mercy to others.

Solomon praised God even in his mystery. (8:12-13)

Solomon didn't have everything figured out about God, yet he worshipped him. So often, we think that we need to know everything about God and his plan to worship him. That is simply not true. God is inexhaustible and we will never know all that there is to know about him. So, we worship Him in faith, being assured of things hoped for and with the conviction of things not seen by us.

Solomon used God's word to reflect on his faithfulness. (8:12-21)

When highlighting the faithfulness of God, Solomon didn't simply say God is faithful. He took God's word and showed how God had fulfilled those promises in their lives. It is a good practice for us to follow today. Oftentimes we struggle with believing the faithfulness of God because we do not know the promises God has made to us and fulfilled in our circumstances and in Christ.

Solomon encourages his people to recognize their need for God.¹⁸ (8:57-58)

We need God as does everyone else. We should consistently consider our deep need for God to uphold and sustain us. It is his grace that carries us in this life. We can do nothing apart from him. We need God to incline our hearts to him and away from the worthless idols and pursuits of this world. We need him to "cause us to be devoted to him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments." God does not expect us to live the Christian life in the flesh. See Galatians 3.

Solomon recognized God's global plan. (8:59-61)

Solomon knew that God's plan for the temple was much larger than the people of Israel. All nations were to be included. They failed in that regard, see Mark 11:15-19¹⁹. Now, instead of the nations coming to a temple, Jesus has sent his disciples to the nations to bring the gospel to them.

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God requires sacrifice for sin.

He satisfied that in Jesus. Trust in him, not your works.

God is present with his people.

The Ark of the Covenant symbolized God's presence²⁰. Now we have his Spirit indwelling us and the promise of Jesus that he will be with us always.

God is glorious and exalted.

There is none higher than him. His glory has no end. The people were in stunned awe of the glory of God. We should never lose our awe of Him. Don't fool around with worthless idols.

God is revealed clearly, yet still mysterious.

The cloud shows this. The cloud is visible and seen, yet still mysterious.²¹ God has clearly revealed himself in his word and through his Son.

God is faithful.

Faithfulness is a repeated theme early in this book, because Kings is written to an audience in early exile. It demonstrates the people's covenant failure, not God's. The book of Kings ends in exile and destruction, but also a glimmer of hope and God's abiding faithfulness in protecting the Davidic Line. We can know that God is faithful, even in the most troubling of times.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

The sacrifices we see in the temple serve as a shadow of the sacrifice Christ made on the cross on our behalf. *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.* (Hebrews 10:12-14, ESV)

¹⁸ Merida, 48.

¹⁹ The temple cleansing occurred because the merchants set up in the court of the Gentiles where God had set aside an area for the nations to worship him. The Jews were prohibiting that worship for their own greed.

²⁰ Merida, 46.

²¹ Merida, 47.

Life Group – 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 – July 22, 2018

God with His People, Part Two—The Foundation and Practice of Prayer

CONNECT

What is a prayer God has answered for you recently?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 8:22-53,9:1-9

(Additional Passages: 1 Jn. 1:5-10; Amos 5:22-24; Matt. 6; James 5; Heb. 4:14-16; Deut. 14-15)

- What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What about your prayer life needs to be changed in the upcoming weeks and months? Does your foundation need to be changed? Or the practices?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time as a Life Group and do sentence praying picking two or three of the petition themes of Solomon.

1. Justice
2. Rescue
3. Provision (Spiritual)
4. Deliverance
5. The lost Nations
6. Victory
7. Restoration

Keep a journal log of the petitions you make and write the dates beside them when they are answered.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having spiritual conversations with those in your neighborhood for whom you have been praying and building relationships.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about what prayer is, why we do it, and how to do it. Spend time praying with your family.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 9:10-10:14. As you observe the kingdom of Solomon, compare it with Deut. 17. As you read, think about how Jesus said he was greater than Solomon.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 – July 22, 2018

God with His People, Part Two—The Foundation and Practice of Prayer

What is going on in this story? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?

Last week, we focused on the sacrifice, blessing and celebration that occurred during this Temple dedication. This week we focus on Solomon's prayer and God's response. Prayer is an elusive discipline for many believers. Asking people about their prayer life often brings up feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment. We just struggle to pray. This lesson is not meant to shame people nor highlight Solomon as the perfect example, because he is not. Even in his great wisdom he failed miserably. We all need Jesus to capture our hearts toward him. It is him that sustains us. Prayer is one of the means that we engage him relationally. Prayer is not a way to earn God's favor, but to respond to the favor he has already given us in full through Jesus. Hopefully, the model we see in Solomon's Prayer helps us know better what to pray for and how to go about it. Prayer is essential to the ministry of God's people. God, help us to be people of prayer.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Solomon's prayer at the temple provides a good model for prayer that we can learn from today. We see both the foundation for prayer and some types of things to be praying for.

The foundation for our prayers is the character and nature of God. Before Solomon begins his 7 petitions each marked by the phrase "hear in heaven" (ESV), He praises God for who he is and what he does (v.22-29). God's nature and name is the foundation for our prayers. Jesus reiterates this when he begins his model prayer with the phrase, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name (or let your name be revered)" Solomon began his prayer with the worship of God. Jesus began the model prayer with the worship of God. It seems good that we would follow suit.

Solomon introduces his 7 petitions with an encompassing prayer for God to hear and forgive. 5 times Solomon pleads with God for forgiveness. He recognizes that "there is no one who does not sin," so his petitions often center on God's mercy and compassion. We too sin and should be diligent in confessing our sins to God and asking for his forgiveness. Repentance and confession should be a given in our prayers because we know that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, ESV). So, on the foundation of who God is and understanding his need for forgiveness and mercy, Solomon makes 7 petitions²² that provide ideas for us to pray for.

Petition One: A Prayer for Justice (8:31-32)

Solomon had great wisdom and we've seen him execute justice for others, but he was not perfect. There would be times where he did not know what judgment to give. There are times when we have no power to execute justice for the righteous. We should be praying that God would provide justice for those who are doing right in this world. We ultimately know that God has already demonstrated his justice on the cross and will one day vindicate the righteous in eternity. We are just petitioning simply for the justice that is in heaven to be on earth. Pray that God would execute his justice on the wrongdoer in this world and that those who cannot speak for themselves would be supported.

Petition Two: A Prayer for Rescue (8:33-34)

Israel had often gone to war in sinful rebellion against God, and experienced defeat. Solomon prays that God would rescue them after that defeat and that they would return safely. Those who do not know Jesus are defeated by the enemy of sin and the only rescue comes through Jesus Christ. Pray that God would rescue those defeated by their sin.

Petition Three: A Prayer for Provision that Results in Righteousness (8:35-36)

²² I owe the headings and some of the content to Merida, 49-52.

Solomon prays for the time when the people will sin against God, and he would discipline them through withholding rain. His prayer is that, when the people eventually repent, God would provide rain, which would lead to righteousness. (This actually happens later in this book chapters 17-18). Often when we sin a spiritual drought occurs as a part of God’s discipline. We should pray for those in those seasons that they would repent and that God would provide spiritual “rain” that leads to walking in righteousness. We should pray this ourselves when we are in those seasons.

Petition Four: A Prayer for Deliverance that Results in Godly Fear (8:37-40)

This is similar to the third petition. The difference is that defeat is imminent unless God intervenes, and the result is the Godly fear of the Lord (a stunned awe).

Petition Five: A Prayer for the Nations to Worship God (8:41-43)

As mentioned in other lessons, God’s plan for the Temple was for all nations. Solomon prays hear that the lost nations of the world would become worshippers of God. John Piper denotes worship as the primary motivation for missions. “Missions exist because worship does not” is how he famously opened his book *Let the Nations Be Glad!* When we share the gospel with others, it should be done from a motivation of seeing God getting the praise he deserves. His glory motivates us. We should be praying often for those around the world who are not worshipping the true God. We should pray for the missionaries and that God would send more of them out from all around the world. Pray that people repent of their sins and worship the true God.

Petition Six: A Prayer for Victory (8:44-45)

Solomon prays for victory against the enemies of Israel. Our victory has already been secured in Christ, yet we are still engaged in a battle not against flesh and blood but the dark spiritual forces in this world. We need Christ to secure that victory for us, so we pray. Pray that we would walk in his victory as we battle against the schemes of the evil one.

Petition Seven: A Prayer for Restoration (8:46-53)

This describes the “worst-case scenario.” The people have been carried into exile. Solomon prays that if and when that happens that the people would repent and that God would restore them. We are currently exiles on this earth and we should be praying eagerly for Christ to return and restore all things and make them new.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God’s Character and Nature Revealed through Solomon’s Prayer and God’s Warning	
God stands alone. There is none like him. (8:23)	God disciplines his people. (8:35)
God keeps and fulfills his promises by his strength. (8:24)	God knows every human heart. (8:39)
God is bigger than this world. (8:27)	God sets apart his people. (8:53)
God is compassionate. (8:30)	God hears our prayers. (9:3)
God executes justice. (8:32)	God hates idolatry. (9:6)

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

The Temple was never the final plan. God knew his people would rebel. Each of Solomon’s petitions finds their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the one who brings about true justice. He is the rescuer. He is our provider, our deliverer. He will bring about the worship of all nations. He is victorious. He will restore all that has been broken by the curse of sin. He is the answer to Solomon’s prayer. He is the answer to your prayers as well. Jesus is the one who is greater than Solomon.

Life Group – 1 Kings 9:10-10:13 – July 29, 2018

Our Protector and Provider

CONNECT

Where is the furthest place you've travelled?
Where did you go and what did you do there?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 9:10-10:13

(Additional Passages: Jas. 3:13-18; 1 Cor. 3:5-23; Rev. 7:9-12; Matt. 12:42; 28:18-20; Deut. 16)

- What is the conflict or problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to praise God for his wisdom and sovereignty over this world.

Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom, God granted it to him, and he used his gift for Kingdom purposes. The queen of Sheba sought after answers and found the Lord. Ask the Lord for wisdom that is only found in him. Ask that he would develop a heart in us to use this wisdom for Kingdom advancement. Who can you share the truth of God's Word with, just as Solomon did with the queen of Sheba? Pause and pray for them. Take time this week to pray with and for those people in your life and trust the wisdom that God will grant you in that hour.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having spiritual conversations with those in your neighborhood for whom you have been praying and building relationships.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how Jesus is our eternal protector and the provider for all that we need.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 10:15-11:18. Identify the major conflict and characters involved. List out the characters and their good and bad qualities. Do you see God at work in the passage? If not explicitly, how is he at work behind the scenes? How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 14:2 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 9:10-10:13 – July 29, 2018

Our Protector and Provide

What is going on in the passage? How does this happen still today?

Solomon's fame had spread throughout the region, his riches only increased, and his influence grew. As a result, the fame of Yahweh grew among the nations, and Israel was fulfilling her purpose. Rulers gave generous gifts of gold and timber to aid in building the Lord's temple. Once the temple was built and Solomon's fame spread, he was visited by the Gentile Queen of Sheba who questioned and tested him thoroughly. She was so impressed by the wisdom of his answers that she began to worship the Lord and *then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones* (1 Kings 10:10a). *Discuss with your Life Group ways that godly wisdom is applied to and shared with others. (refer to James 3:13-18 for guidance).*

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Solomon

Solomon, in his great wealth and wisdom, is portrayed the protector and provider of Israel. In 9:10-28, Solomon receives great riches from wood to gold from neighboring rulers. He uses these gifts to prosper and protect his nation by building *store cities...and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion* (v. 19). Although elaborate, these cities were wisely placed in strategic areas. "Six cities formed a line of defense from north to south... These were fortified towns that protected the people and the trade routes"²³. Solomon was also very wise. The queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to hear of his rumored wisdom and found that the wisdom he possessed far surpassed what she had heard. What we have in Christ, far surpasses what the world has apart from him. We must be faithful to share that with others.

Some things to think about:

- *How do you steward your finances? Is it for Kingdom advancement and protection or for selfish gain?*
- *What is your reputation in the community? Are you known for godly wisdom, integrity or one who seeks after the Most-High God? Or are you known for the misuse of money, unfaithful to your word, or one who seeks after things of this world?*

Queen of Sheba

The queen of Sheba (present-day Yemen) was familiar with a small portion of God's truth and *heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, [so] she came to test him with hard questions* (v. 1). She traveled hundreds of miles to hear the truth about who God is, and Solomon, in his God-given wisdom, was able to answer all of her questions to the fullest extent. Her response: praise and worship of the Lord.

We know more of who God is and the fullness of the mystery of the gospel because we have the complete Bible, but do you seek God's truth as earnestly as the queen of Sheba? "Study His Word – even if you have to travel far, make sacrifices, relocate, get up early, or stay up late"²⁴.

Challenge your Life Group to consider these questions: Are you making every effort to understand and learn the Scriptures individually? How about corporate worship, is it a priority to you and your family? Are you willing to sacrifice to grow in your relationship with the Lord?

²³ Merida, 59.

²⁴ Merida, 60.

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

We do not read explicitly God interacting with the story, however, we do see him working through Solomon in three different ways.

First, we see the Lord's wisdom being given to one of his servants, Solomon. Solomon uses this God-given wisdom in his strategic fortification of Israel, ability to answer the queen of Sheba's questions in full, as well as navigating foreign affairs with favor. Remember back to 1 Kings 3. Solomon asked God for wisdom to discern what is right and how to govern people. Because Solomon asked for this, God was pleased and granted him wisdom. It was only by God's power that Solomon was able to govern and discern the way he did. *If any of you lacks wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking* (James 1:5 ESV). Solomon sets a great example for us – ask the Lord for wisdom. Whether you're asking him for wisdom in godly parenting, managing your people at work well, what to say when ministering to others, developing relationships with your neighbors, or spending your finances in a godly manner, the Lord will provide. He delights in our pursuit of holiness.

Second, we see him moving in the queen of Sheba's heart. Because of the wisdom he gave Solomon, the queen began to worship him. When we allow the Lord to speak through us, he moves in a way we might not expect. Our obedience results in the advancement of God's Kingdom and ultimately his glory. The Spirit convicts and brings about growth, we are simply called to be faithful stewards of the gospel. The gospel, not your ability to share it well, is the power of God for salvation.

Lastly, we see God's sovereign plan to have people from all nations worship in action. The Temple had space designated for the Gentile nations to worship God, so that the Temple and the kingdom of Israel would be a place where the nations came and were introduced to the true God. God has always had and still has a deep longing to see people from all nations worship him. He has given his Spirit to us, making us the Temple and charging us to go out into the world to make disciples of all nations and to introduce them to the true God of this world, who can save them from their sins.

Are you using the wisdom of the gospel that God has given you to make disciples of all nations trusting God with the results? If not what is holding you back?

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Christ is the greater Solomon. Solomon protected and provided for his people; however, he also used his great wealth and power on luxury and selfish gain. Due to Solomon's failures as a king, we see that Jesus is the greater provider and protector of his people. Christ has all power and authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18), and to those who seek first his Kingdom and righteousness, he provides all good things that we need (Matt 6:33). *Are you resting in the protection and provision of Christ?*

Just as Solomon led his people in great wisdom, Jesus does the same. Unlike Solomon though, Jesus is all-wise and is perfectly gracious and sovereign when dealing with his people.

Lastly, this story provides a picture of what is yet to come when people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will stand clean from the stain of sin and worship Christ in heaven as described in Rev. 7:9-12.

⁹ *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

¹¹ *And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,*¹² *saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."* (Revelation 7:9-12 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 10:14-11:14 – August 05, 2018

Half-Hearted

CONNECT

Have you ever done anything halfway? If so what was the result?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 10:14-11:14

(Additional Passages: Rom. 8; Matt. 4:1-11; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:10; Deut. 6:13, 17:14-20)

- What is the conflict in this story? Do you see the same conflict occurring in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What is drawing your heart away from God currently? What are practices that may help you confront these things?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Spend time this week honestly evaluating yourself spiritually. Ask yourself tough questions like "Do I frequently make excuses for my failure to be obedient and faithful to God's Word?" Or "Am I growing in faithfulness or stagnating by being too comfortable in my spiritual life?" Or "Am I whole-heartedly devoted to God in every area of my life?" Then repent where there needs to be repentance, and praise God for his grace where his grace is being revealed in holiness.

Pray for those who are not children of God who experience his discipline, but currently are lost souls that stand condemned to experience his wrath. Pray that their eyes would be opened to the truths of the gospel.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to have a gospel conversation with someone with whom you have been building a relationship. Consider inviting them to your home for a dinner where this could take place.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how the things of this world try to battle against God for our hearts. Talk about how Jesus is better than all this world has to offer.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 11:9-43 and Ecclesiastes 12. Pay special attention to Solomon's final words of wisdom in Ecclesiastes.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deut. 30:6 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 10:14-11:14 – August 05, 2018

Half-Hearted

What is the conflict in this story? Do you see the same conflict occurring in your life today?

Upon first reading, one might see a clear conflict emerging in this story, but, in fact, the conflict in this story is the conflict of all conflicts—the conflict between a person’s life and the Word of God. God in his foresight gave Moses instructions for the king of Israel to follow. These are found in Deut. 17:14-20, here is an excerpt:

Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.
(Deuteronomy 17:16-17 ESV)

Ultimately, Christ has resolved this conflict on the cross, and now through his sacrifice we have peace with God. But, there is still a war raging between the flesh and the spirit, and we are called to put to death by the power of the Spirit the things of the flesh which are in conflict with the Word of God. *Challenge your group to examine their lives and to search out areas where they are in conflict with the Word of God, and by the power given to us by the grace of our Lord, put those things to death.* (See Romans 8:1-17)

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Solomon again is the focal character, but there is nothing about his example that we want to follow. Here we want to avoid his example.

(There is a danger in studying the Old Testament in elevating the characters and letting the force of the message be moralistic. But, we must remember that the Old Testament authors presented these characters warts and all. There are definitely aspects from their lives where we should learn from, but Christ alone can make us right and through his Spirit work his righteousness in us. Solomon had all the wisdom in the world yet still was incredibly sinful. We need Jesus to transform our hearts, and thus our lives. We learn from Solomon’s example both good and bad, and apply it to our lives through the interpretative lens of gospel)

What was Solomon’s problem? Fundamentally, Solomon had a heart problem. He loved the things of this world more than he loved God.

Solomon loved the riches of this world more than the riches found in God.

“nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.” God’s word commanded Solomon not to acquire much gold for himself, but that is what Solomon did. He became self-indulgent as a result of his love for riches. Jesus warns about the love of money. He says that you cannot love both God and money. Many misquote Paul saying that “money is the root of all evil.” That is not true. There is nothing wrong with money by itself. What Paul actually says in 1 Timothy 6:10a is that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Not every evil thing springs from a love for money, but all sorts of evil things result from the love of money. The riches found in Christ are so much more than anything this world has to offer. When we let the love for money develop in our heart, our faithless hearts are drawn away from the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ. We begin to become half-hearted.

Solomon loved his earthly security more than he trusted the sovereignty of God.

“Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses” Horses and chariots demonstrated the strength of a nation’s military strength. So, what was wrong with Solomon building his military? Why did God command the king not to acquire many horses? Deuteronomy again provides the answer (It is impossible to understand the book of Kings apart from Deuteronomy). *You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you.* (Deut. 3:22 ESV) Israel

did not win battles based on their military strength, but because it was the Lord God who fought for them. So, Solomon's army building did not reveal practical wisdom, in fact, it revealed his foolishness. He was foolish for thinking that horses and chariots could protect Israel better than the God who is sovereignty of the Living God. His actions were a result of a lack of trust in God and a prideful love for security. We fall into the same trap today by trying to make our lives as secure as possible, revealing our lack of trust in God's sovereignty. Sometimes God's commands put us in danger—not all the time, however. We are not to seek out danger, but we are not supposed to build our security when it conflicts with the word of God. Our security is in Heaven. That is our eternal home. We're just passing through. A love for security upon this earth, leads to half-heartedness.

Solomon loved the fleeting pleasures of this world more than the eternal pleasure found in God.

(And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away) It's no question that Solomon's pursuits for pleasure drew his heart away from his God. The same happens today. A life seeking after the pleasures of this world reveals someone who does not know the supreme pleasure found in glorifying God and living for him. The pleasure of this world is temporary, and leads to half-heartedness. The pleasure found in God is eternal.

Ask your group which of these is seeking to draw their heart away from God right now.

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

God is angered by our sin.

"God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil." – J.I. Packer. Praise God that Jesus absorbed God's wrath for us!

God is concerned about our worship.

He is not looking for people to conform externally to a set of rules, but a people who are inwardly transformed by the Spirit who worship God. He desires for us to worship him.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

Jesus is the better Solomon. Solomon totally missed the mark with his life. Every requirement God made of a king, he broke. Jesus, however, kept every commandment of God perfectly. In fact, when reading the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 in light of 1 Kings 10:14-11:14, we see how Jesus sets himself in contrast to Solomon.

Jesus loved God over pleasure. (The bread)

Jesus loved God over security. (Throwing himself down)

"Such a spectacular display as jumping from this great height unharmed would have gained him an enthusiastic following, but it would not have followed the Father's messianic and redemptive plan of suffering and proclaiming the kingdom of heaven."²⁵

Jesus loved God over riches. (All the kingdoms of the earth)

Jesus is our true and perfect king. He is the better Solomon. He alone is worthy of whole-hearted devotion, it is by him alone that we can be devoted wholeheartedly.

²⁵ ESV Study Bible, Note on verse 4:6-7, 1825.

Life Group – 1 Kings 11:9-11:43; Ecclesiastes 12:1-14 – August 12, 2018

The Futility of Living for this World

CONNECT

Have you ever hyped something up, only to find that it did not live up to the hype? What was it?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

**Read Main Passages: 1 Kings 11:9-43;
Ecclesiastes 12:1-14**

(Additional Passages: Ps. 119:105; Prov. 9:10; Jas 2:14-26; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Deut. 18-20)

- What is going on in these passages? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

How can we take the grace God has shown us and show it to others this fall? List out a few goals for your Life Group.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Where are you seeking fulfillment in this world? Take time to confess those to the Lord and praise God for the greater pleasure found in him. Pray through Psalm 63.

Pray for those who are pursuing the things in this world. Pray that God would reveal to them the futility of their ways and that they would leave their elementary pursuits and pursue the only one who can give true satisfaction. See John 10:10.

Ask God to develop a stunned awe of him in your heart and attitude. Ask him to empower you to keep his commandment to love one another.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to have a gospel conversation with someone with whom you have been building a relationship. Consider inviting them to your home for a dinner where this could take place.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how the things of this world promise a satisfaction that they cannot deliver. Talk about how satisfaction is found in Christ. Sing a hymn with your family in praise.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 12:1-24. What sins of Rehoboam led to the downfall of Israel?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deut. 30:6 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 11:9-11:43; Ecclesiastes 12:1-14 – August 12, 2018

The Futility of Living for this World

What is going on in these passages? Do you see the same things occurring in your life today?

Chapter 11 contains the narrative of God raising up adversaries around Solomon in his discipline of Solomon's persistent sins that resulted in idolatry. We are introduced to Jeroboam for the first time who ends up being the one who divides the kingdom and leads Israel into great idolatry. At the end of Chapter 11, we see Solomon die. This chapter captures one of the fears common among many—not living up to potential and finishing poorly. God gifted Solomon with great wisdom, yet he acted like a great fool. He squandered his potential and the entire kingdom suffered as a result. Late in life, after an apparent repentance, Solomon writes the book of Ecclesiastes reflecting on his life living for the things of this world. His conclusion: "Absolute futility. Everything is futile." (Ecc. 12:8 CSB)

Many believers today are deceived as Solomon was into pursuing worldly things over the things of God. Solomon recounts how his **wisdom, pleasure, possessions, and work** all result in emptiness apart from God. People traveled all around the world to hear his wisdom. He had over 1000 beautiful women to choose who he went to bed with that night. He brought in 25,000 tons of gold a year. And his building project was one of the seven wonders of the world. He had everything the world says you need to be happy abundantly, but he says that everything is futile. This world does not satisfy. Only Jesus can satisfy. He has come to give life and give it abundantly (John 10:10). Yet, so often, like Solomon, we seek to find satisfaction in the things of this world, but it is emptiness. At the end of his life, Solomon wanted others to know that one truth. Don't learn that lesson the hard way as Solomon did.

Ask your group which of the pursuits that are in bold print above seek to draw their attention away from God the most. Maybe pass out pieces of paper and take an anonymous poll and reveal the tallied results.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam are characters that serve as the means through which God disciplines Solomon. Jeroboam is the most important of the three as he will be the king of the northern kingdom. Ahijah is a prophet who communicates the word of the Lord to Jeroboam. From here on out prophets will take a much more significant role in Kings with the rise of Elijah and Elisha.

Solomon, in his sinfulness, seeks to escape the discipline of the Lord by murdering Jeroboam. Of course, he cannot. That is the last thing recorded by the author of Kings about Solomon—his failed attempt of murder. Solomon did not finish well. He led the people into great wickedness. And even though God protected his line on account of His promise with David, his sin set the people of Israel on a path of "division, idolatry, and exile."²⁶ What can we learn from Solomon? That's where Ecclesiastes 12 helps us out.

- **This world cannot satisfy us. (Ecc. 12:8)**

- **The wisdom found in the Word of God guides us through this life. (Ecc. 12:9-12)**

The king was supposed to write out a copy of the Law and read it the entirety of his life (Deut. 17:18-19). Solomon clearly did obey that command. Solomon refers to the wisdom that is given by the one Shepherd, God, as cattle prods or goads. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105). Solomon highlights the necessity of letting God's Word guide one through life. God's Word however must be read in order to guide. *Someone in your group may think it is too late to jump into the church reading plan, but the best day to start is today. Challenge your group to read God's Word for themselves. We are at a unique time in history to have God's Word in our hands like we do. Literally, people died to bring about what we take for granted today. A preacher once said that if we want to endure in this life against the schemes of the evil one, then God's Word must be our first word.*²⁷ This can't happen if we aren't reading the Bible daily.

²⁶ Merida, 68.

²⁷ Jack Raymond in his chapel service at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on 4/25/2018.

- **At the end of everything, our whole duty is to fear God and keep his commandments. (Ecc. 12:13)**

The fear of the Lord (stunned awe, not fear of a tyrant, but fear of a loving father) is the beginning of wisdom and genuine faith results in works of righteousness (Prov. 9:10; James 2:26). *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.* (1 John 3:23 ESV). By grace, through faith is the Christian life. What results from that faith is what Solomon describes as the whole duty of man. That is what we are called to in this life of faith—the fear of the Lord and holiness.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

- **God disciplines sin and rewards faith motivated works. (Ecc. 12:14)**

Solomon experienced both of these in his life. His faith moved him to do works of righteousness that God honored. His sins resulted in discipline. The penalty of sin has already been paid by Christ, and we have no fear of judgment. God has given us his righteousness, and we lack nothing. But there is a second judgment for believers only where we give an account for what we did with the grace God showed us. There the works of righteousness will remain and the works of hay and stubble will burn away (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Read this brief article on the Bema Seat: <https://www.gotquestions.org/judgment-seat-Christ.html>

- **God is sovereign over all.**

No one operates outside of the will of God. Everything that happens in this world is a part of God’s plan to redeem his people through Jesus and be glorified in this world. However, this does not mean that God causes wickedness. But that the wickedness he allows ultimately serves his purposes more than the enemy’s purposes. (Rom. 8:28)

- **God disciplines his children.**

God does not allow his children to continue in sin. When we sin, God disciplines us. This can be revealed in our lives in many different ways, both physical and spiritual, though not all suffering is God’s discipline. Read D.A. Carson answer the question “How do we know God is disciplining us?” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-does-god-discipline-christians/>

- **God is faithful to his covenant.**

God could have eradicated Solomon and his family. But he did not. Why? He made a covenant to David that was unconditional and ultimately fulfilled in Christ. We sin. It is unfortunate but we do. However, we have no fear of the punishment of judgment in Christ even when he disciplines us. His covenant secured by his blood and sealed by the Spirit is unconditional and there is nothing that could separate us from the love of God.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

While many may have thought that Solomon would be the one who establish the kingdom forever, it became clear that he was not. He did not finish well, but the true Son of David did finish well. Jesus accomplished his task. While he was hanging on the cross about to breath his last breath, he proclaimed confidently “It is finished.” He endured to the bitter end, and now as a result we have life in his name. His kingdom will be established and the invitation is open to all who would repent of their sins and believe in the gospel. Jesus’ wisdom is greater than Solomon’s. His wealth is greater than Solomon’s. His work is greater than Solomon’s. And in him is pleasure forever more. Don’t walk away from these stories enamored with Solomon. He was a shadow of the true king to come. Sure, we can learn from him, but Christ is our ultimate example and the only means to true righteousness. Follow him!

Life Group – 1 Kings 12:1-24 – August 19, 2018

Pride and the Inevitable Fall

CONNECT

Have you ever been in a conflict with a sibling or friend? What was the outcome of that conflict? Did the outcome result in a better outcome for both sides?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 12:1-24

(Additional Passages: 2 Chron. 10:1-12:16;

Jas. 4:1-10; Prov. 16; Phil. 2:1-11; Deut. 21-23)

- What is the conflict or problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What actions for the Kingdom of God is God calling you to make in the upcoming weeks and months?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to pray and to ask the Lord for guidance by His Spirit. We know that apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Rehoboam, rather than following in the footsteps of his father, choose to take the advice of those who were not connected with the things of God. Pray for the wisdom to be able to see and walk in the truths of God.

By the end of the passage, despite the division, we see the hearing of God's voice and a response. Pray for ears to hear the words of God spoken to us, and for the faith to respond.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to have a gospel conversation with someone with whom you have been building a relationship. Consider inviting them to your home for a dinner where this could take place.

For the Family: Tell this story to your family and talk about how when we allow ungodly things to take root, the outcome will never be positive.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read 1 Kings 12:25 -33. Identify the major conflict and characters involved. List out the characters and their good and bad qualities. Do you see God at work in the passage? If not explicitly, how is he at work behind the scenes?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deut. 30:6 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 12:1-24 – August 19, 2018

Pride and the Inevitable Fall

Summary

This section of scripture highlights a pivotal moment in the Kingdom of Israel just after the death of Solomon and his son Rehoboam takes the throne. We see God working behind the scenes to bring his purposes about, while at the same time we see the conflict that results from Rehoboam's pride and ungodly leadership. Rehoboam steers the kingdom further away from the path God intended when he seeks the foolish council of some of his childhood acquaintances rather than the wise council of those who had stood before his father Solomon. In his pride, Rehoboam seeks to rule the fullness of the kingdom with an iron fist. In this pride we see murder, and an ultimate showdown with Jeroboam that results in a divided Kingdom. In what looked to be a battle for control is ultimately settled by the unshakable firmness of God's will.

What is the conflict in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?

The major conflict we see in the story is between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, who was a servant of Solomon, but had been approached by a prophet regarding his role in God's division of the Kingdom. This conflict was in regard to who would be king, and how they would rule. We can see three specific reasons for the conflict:

1. Rehoboam's desire to be king, and rule with a firmer hand than his father;
2. Jeroboam's fulfillment of the call of God given to him in chapter 11;
3. We see this conflict as an allowed action by God. Not that He caused the conflict, but that He allowed it to occur to fulfill his word [12:15]. Ultimately the conflict erupts from the pride of Rehoboam to bring about a heavier burden.

Pride is a sin that God directly opposes (James 4:6). In our lives today, pride can be the root cause of many, if not all of the conflict that we see in our lives. It is this pride that moves us from the word of God and toward our own agendas. We must strive to put to death the areas of pride in our lives so that God may be glorified.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

Rehoboam

Rehoboam was in line to take the throne from his father, and in fact was even in the place of Shechem so that he may officially be declared King. Once in Shechem, Rehoboam and Jeroboam were gathered before the people of Israel so that the people could express their concerns. Once Jeroboam and the people expressed their concerns, Rehoboam told them to leave for three days. It is in this time period that we see the pride of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam sets an example that is opposite of that that a Christian should follow. Rehoboam turns his back on what he knows to be true, and in turn, leads an entire nation into rebellion. It is important to be warned by Rehoboam's actions, especially those who believe themselves to be established, because that Bible says that "when Rehoboam was established and strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him" (2 Chron. 12:1). His abandonment did not come at a moment of weakness and want but at a moment of power and plenty.

While it could be easy to brush over Rehoboam and question what we could possibly learn and apply from him, but there are three truths that we can carry from this.

- **Pride will bring us down.** While Rehoboam did become King, he only ruled over two tribes. If we think pride advances us, we will find that in the end it leads to destruction.

- **Take council from those who are mature in their faith.** Rather than listening to those who walked with his father, Rehoboam listened to and agreed with those who share his opinion. Rehoboam wanted “yes men,” but what he needed was people who were mature in the ways of God who would honestly speak the truth whether or not it favored or opposed Rehoboam’s plans. Getting this kind of life-giving council is not always comfortable, but when we receive this council based on God’s word, it bears much fruit.
- **God’s will is always the best path to take.** Rehoboam, didn’t take God’s path, and it cost him. We take God’s path, not because it is always easiest, but because we know that it is always the best way for us (Romans 8:28).

Jeroboam

Jeroboam, as it turns out, becomes one of the most wicked kings of Israel, becoming the standard of wickedness for the kings that follow. The example that we see him setting in this section of scripture could easily be viewed a positive example for us to follow (Take wise counsel, care for the people of your kingdom). However, once you dig into the context here, we see that Jeroboam was more concerned with his life, and with living in comfort. We see a man who is quickly turning away from the ways of David (12:20b). These are not necessarily traits that we should strive after above all things. In light of his shortcomings, what can we learn and apply from Jeroboam?

- **The unchanging truth of God is what we must rest upon.** We see that as Jeroboam was made king, that the tribe he led did not follow the house of David. This King after God’s own heart laid a foundation that Jeroboam was unwilling to follow. We can’t let our circumstances, or people around us shift our focus from the unchanging truth of God.

What aspect of God’s nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

We see God in two specific sections of this passage: 12:15, and 12:24. We see that God will use whatever circumstances he needs to bring about his purposes, and we see that God’s hand can be seen in all circumstances. These aspects are applied in two ways within this passage.

We see God allowing Rehoboam to proceed with his desire to rule with a heavy hand. The scripture states that this “turn of affairs was brought about by the Lord to fulfill his word.” God will fulfill his word, he cannot deny himself. Here in v. 15 we see this playing out in the lives of Jeroboam. Secondly, we see that even in the midst of conflict that the Lord is seen. We see God calling out to them as they are preparing to go to battle and tells them to go home. God didn’t run, he spoke. We can apply this specifically in two ways:

- When we don’t understand what is going on around us, we must know that God is working things according to his will.
- When conflict is going on around us, we need to listen to his word.

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

We see through this story that Christ is the ultimate author. We see that when we don’t understand our circumstances, God is right in the middle of them. We see that in chaos, Jesus speaks. We see that no matter the outside influence, Christ and His purposes will ultimately be fulfilled. Jesus wasn’t simply an outside player in this story, but rather had his hand within all that was going on, and we can exalt Christ knowing that the same is true of our lives.

Christ also contrasts Rehoboam as the humble king and Jeroboam as the king who worships the one true God. Jesus is the true king of Israel. Every failure by a king in 1-2 Kings is made right in Christ—the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Life Group – 1 Kings 12:25-33 – August 26, 2018

The Folly of Idolatry

CONNECT

What are some of the most memorable places you have visited (specifically sights)? Have you ever found yourself comparing all other places to those specific places?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Kings 12:25-33

(Additional Passages: Exo. 32; 2 Cor. 4:1-6, 5:17; Rom. 1:18-32, 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-17; Deut. 24-27)

- What is the conflict or problem in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?
- Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?
- What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?
- How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

What are the idols in your life that you need to tear down? In what areas of your life need to turn back to God?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to pray and ask God to show you the idols in your life, and to show you the areas of your life you have turned from Him. Jeroboam wanted things his way, he didn't want his people returning to the truth of God. Are you living in a way that is pushing people away from the Lord? Are you proclaiming false truths about God to get your way or manipulate? Pray and repent if the Holy Spirit is revealing any of these ideas to be true in your own life.

Pray for those who have been deceived by the allures of false gods. Pray the light of the glory of Christ would shine into their hearts revealing to them the glory of God in the face of Christ.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to have a gospel conversation with someone with whom you have been building a relationship. Consider inviting them to your home for a dinner where this could take place.

For the Family: Talk to your family about the importance of not placing idols above Christ in your lives. Discuss as a family if this is a struggle in your home.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

To be provided at a later date.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deut. 30:6 ESV)

Life Group – 1 Kings 12:25-33 – August 26, 2018

The Folly of Idolatry

Summary

Following God's division of the kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, Jeroboam immediately begins to turn his heart away from God. Rather than looking toward to eternal kingdom of God, he focuses his eyes firmly on his own kingship and how to maintain that control. Jeroboam initially builds up his fortification so that he can establish security for himself and his kingdom. This was the beginning of the move from the things of God. Jeroboam acknowledges in his own mind and heart that the people will turn back to the ways of God, and he established at that point that he had to lay a foundation so that this would not be what happened within his kingdom. Jeroboam turns his heart back to the people of Israel and the golden calf, and proceeds in the same way by build two calves and placing them in two cities. He then proceeds further by building temples, establishing feasts, and sacrificing to the golden calves. All this Jeroboam devised out of his own heart.

What is the conflict in this story? What caused it? Do you see the same conflict in your life today?

The main conflict in this story is the battle between walking in the ways of God, or walking in the way of familiar things. Ultimately, however, the main issue in this story is that of a worship conflict. The primary cause of this conflict comes out of a heart that is not fully given to God.

While we may not come out and declare it idolatry, this is a major issue within the hearts of each believer. We set up these "images" and worship them as the most important thing in our lives. It is vital in light of this story to not brush over this idea. While we may not have a "golden calf" in our home that we worship, are there other things in our lives that are becoming the focus or object of our worship. If so, these idols must be cast out from our lives.

Revisiting 40 Days – Excerpt from Curriculum

"Idolatry may be something hard for people to wrap their heads around today because it looks so different than it did in the Bible. No one is worshipping statues of animals or the sun in our culture today, at least not the vast majority of the population. But that does not mean that we do not struggle with idolatry. Kyle Idleman claims that "if you start scratching at whatever struggle you're dealing with, eventually you'll find that underneath it is a false god."²⁸ Once that is recognized we can renew our hearts by putting away and putting to death the idol and repent, renewing our hearts in the worship of the one true God. SO what are the idols people struggle with today? Eric Geiger identifies four root idols that are beneath the surface lead to many idols that are easily seen.

1. *Power*: a longing for influence or recognition
2. *Control*: a longing to have everything go according to my plan
3. *Comfort*: a longing for pleasure
4. *Approval*: a longing to be accepted or desired²⁹

Idleman lists out in his book and addresses these surface idols: food, sex, entertainment, success, money, achievement, romance, family and self.³⁰ Idols are all around us calling for our attention, and fasting draws our attention to the ones we have given our hearts toward and helps us express our repentance. There are more out there than we listed so we must be diligent about putting to death the earthly ways we tend to cling to and put on what is of Christ."

Revisit this discussion with your class. Tie it back to 40 Days at the beginning of the year. See how people are doing in their renewal these many months later.

²⁸ Kyle Idleman, *Gods at War: Defeating the Idols that Battle for Your Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 22.

²⁹ <https://ericgeiger.com/2013/10/four-root-idols/>

³⁰ Idleman, 8.

Who are the major characters? What example do they set? What can we learn from them and apply to our lives?

The key character in this passage of scripture is Jeroboam. Jeroboam at the time was king over 10 tribes of what made of the Northern Kingdom.

Jeroboam sets a terrible example to model your life after. We see some specific areas in him that are extremely dangerous, and if you are not careful could easily rise up in our own lives.

- We see a man whose heart is not fully given to God (v.26).
- We see a man who looked back to captivity (v.28).
- We see a man opposed to God (v.27).
- We see a man with a worship issue (v.29-33).

We can learn vital applications from each of these faults of Jeroboam.

- **Give everything that is in you to Christ.** Jesus is clear that indifference is not an option (Matt. 12:30).
- **Live out your new identity in Christ, not the old identity in sin.** God has made you righteous and given us his Spirit, who enables us to live in righteousness. We are no longer slaves to sin. (Luke 9:62; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- **Put to death by the Spirit any habits that contradict the word of God.** (Gal. 5:16-17, Rom. 8:1-17).
- **Worship God in spirit and in truth.** Do not pick choose the things you like about God. Worship God as he is revealed in Scripture. (John 4:24).

What aspect of God's nature do we see in the story? How is it applied to the lives of the people in it? How does it apply to your life?

While we don't see a direct interaction of God in this scripture, but we know from our supplemental passage in Exodus 32 that God isn't passive when His people want to commit adultery against Him. Through this story we can see that God is jealous (Ex. 34:14). A second aspect of God's nature we see through this passage is His mercy.

We don't see a direct application of this aspect of God's nature in this passage, but we do know that there are consequences for those who would set up and worship and set up false gods to worship. The simple fact that Jeroboam was still alive shows how mercy is applied in this passage. God could have easily destroyed Jeroboam in that moment (especially considering that God knew the intention of his heart), but in his mercy and sovereignty he chose not to.

For us this application is specific and direct. We must be a people whose hearts are fully given to Christ, a people who worship God in the fullness of what that entails, and a people who are willing to put to death/tear down those idols/high places in our lives. Secondly, we must be a people who walk in the mercy of Christ, but don't use it as a reason to keep on sinning (Rom. 6:1).

How does this story point towards and exalt Christ?

We find two key truths that point to and exalt Christ in this passage. First, we see that God is mighty, and awesome, and without equal. There are no other gods beside Him, and one day everyone will bow to Him. We can't try and explain God away through a manmade object to represent Him. He is I AM. And we worship Him for who He is.

Secondly, we exalt Christ for His mercy. Jesus could have easily ended it all with Adam and Eve when they chose to walk away from Him. The same could be said for the people at Mt. Sinai, this instance with Jeroboam, and in our own lives. So, it is in light of the mercy of Christ that we worship and exalt Him.