

I KINGS

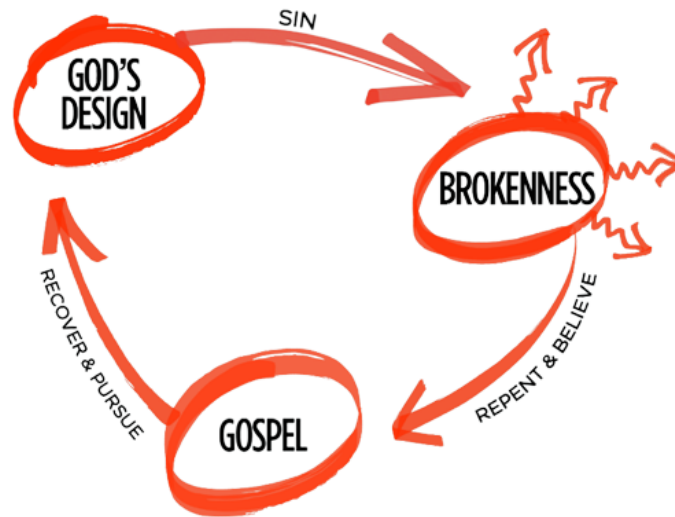
SHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



MeadowBrook
CHURCH

life
group
*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*

The Gospel



Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20 ESV)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a ESV)

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- 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. (Romans 3:20-25 ESV)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ... ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20-22 ESV)

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ... ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:10, 13 ESV)

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:12-14 ESV)

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; (Isaiah 55:6 ESV)

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Dear Life Group Member,

My hope and prayer is that the Spirit would use this curriculum to empower you and aid you in your study of the Word of God, that you would grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that you will experience deeper levels of intimacy with our God and Father through his Son Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is full of stories that testify of Jesus and his goodness, while at the same time helping the reader navigate what it means to live out God's design in the midst of wicked and unfaithful people. So, dive into this study. Seek to learn as much as you can about God through these stories for the purpose of growing in your enjoyment him as he is revealed in his eternal and immutable Word.

In Christ,
Hunter Hindsman
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Life Group – 1 Kings 13:1-34 – June 2nd, 2019

Living by the Word of the Lord

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Character:** The Man of God from Judah

The man of God directed his entire life by the Word of the Lord. His messages were determined by the Word of the Lord, and he sought to obey it wholeheartedly, not straying from it to the right or to the left. As a result, he saw the power of God demonstrated against a prideful king and his worthless idols... but he did not finish his life this way. He was deceived by a prophet who lied about the Word of the Lord, and it led to his ruin. He should have known better, because God's Word never contradicts itself. In a weak moment of hunger and thirst, he was deceived by false teaching. The allure of temporary satisfaction enticed him, and it cost him his life.

- **Key Repetitions:** The Word of the Lord

Note how many times the Word of the Lord is referenced in this story. _____. What do you think the significance of the repetition is? _____.

- **The Bad Guys:** Jeroboam and the Prophet

Both these men seek to lead the man of God astray. Only the prophet succeeds. For many, it may not be the idolatrous wicked person that leads us astray, but a deceiver who claims to be speaking on behalf of the Lord. In fact, many are succumbing to this treachery today. Many teachers are communicating falsehoods about God and luring people in with their nice facilities, excellent music, and relevant programs. That being said, they miss the main idea of conforming to the word of the Lord. These may meet immediate wants and "needs," but they ultimately end in destruction. As long as man has heard the Word of the Lord, there has been someone else lying about it.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God's speaks to the people, and His authoritative Word must be obeyed.**

Neither Jeroboam, the king of Israel, nor the man of God who had a pass when it came to obeying God's Word. No one is exempt or out from under the authority of God's Word. It applies to all people.

- **God rewards obedience to his Word done in faith with greater rewards than anything the world could offer.**

Sin promises reward, but it leads to death. Obedience, done in faith, requires self-denial and hardship now, but results in heavenly reward to be experienced with joy when we see the Lord face to face.

- **God's is true and unchanging; therefore, his Word is unchanging and true, without contradiction and always accomplishing its purpose.**

God's Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit and God-breathed. Since God is true and unchanging, God's Word is true and unchanging. It will never contradict itself and it will never change. The enemy still loves to ask the children of God, "Did God really say...?"

- **God will hold people accountable to how they respond to his Word.**

God will hold all people accountable to how they obeyed his Word, and his standard is perfection. Nothing less will satisfy. Even one act of disobedience separates someone from God. In fact, we are born into sin, spiritually dead, enemies of God. A judgment much worse than a lion awaits those who are disobedient to the Word of God.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **In our flesh, we think we have more authority to direct our lives than the word of the Lord.**

Jeroboam thought he had the authority to direct his life in disobedience to God's will. God in his grace to Jeroboam revealed to him just how weak he really was and how foolish his pride was.

- **In our flesh, we want the blessings of God's Word without the obedience.**

Jeroboam seemed to respond in repentance in the beginning of the story, but the conclusion reveals he persisted in wickedness. He wanted his hand to work; he did not really care about obedience. He did not come to terms with the destructiveness of his sin. Often, we are the same way. We want God to fix what's wrong in our lives, but we don't want to live in obedience to his Word that comes from an intimate relationship with him through faith. We want both the healing and the sin, while God stands at arm's length. But sin destroys and God heals. We cannot serve two masters.

- **In our flesh, we are easily deceived by teachings that over-promise, but under-deliver.**

The prophet promised food and water to strengthen him for the journey home. Instead, he delivered death and robbed this man from ever seeing home again. We are so easily deceived by sin's enticements, but in the end it delivers death and destruction in every aspect of our lives.

- **We, like this man of God, have all gone astray and are guilty of breaking God's law.**

Perfect adherence to God's Word is the standard of righteousness. It is the standard by which we must give an account. We have all sinned and disobeyed God's Word, and the wages of sin is death—temporary and eternal. We need a righteousness alien to ourselves that has met the standard.

How does the story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Jesus is the man of God who persevered in obedience on our behalf.**

This man of God failed to obey God's Word. We fail to obey God's Word. But the good news of the gospel is that God sent his Son to fulfill all righteousness, take the punishment for sin upon himself. He died, was buried, and was raised from the dead in victory, freely giving his righteousness to anyone who would turn from their sins and believe in Jesus, surrendering to him as Lord. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15 ESV). *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)

- **Jesus is the Great Prophet who speaks the truth about eternity.**

The other prophet was a liar who God used to speak the truth about the judgment that was coming to the man of God because of his disobedience. Jesus is the Great Prophet who speaks the truth about eternity—the eternal life that is in him and the eternal death that awaits those who reject him. Those in faith can put their hope securely in Jesus, the Great Prophet, the Son of God, who speaks the truth about our future. It will surely come to pass.

Apply the Word

Live by the Word. The book of Kings was written to a people questioning God's justice in their exile. Throughout the narrative, we see a disregard for the Law as was given by Moses. The people did not love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. They went after idols. They did not love their neighbors as themselves, but lied, murdered, coveted, embraced impurity, and stole from others what was not theirs. We, as God's people, redeemed by Christ and filled with his Spirit, must live by God's Word—loving God and loving others well.

Be changed by the Word. No one is perfect, and all are to wage war against their sin. To do this effectively, we must let the Word of God change us from the inside out. We must humble ourselves and allow it to correct us and ask others to correct us as well when we stray from the Word.

Speak truly about the Word. So often, we say things we have heard before or seen posted online but are simply not true. Here are some examples of often quoted falsehoods about God and his word: "God helps those who help themselves." "Share the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." "If God closes a door, he opens a window." "The safest place to be is in God's will.*"¹ "If you just have faith, God will fix _____." All of these represent how easy it can be to just take something we have heard, repeat it, and then speak falsely about God's Word.

Persevere in obedience to God's Word. This man of God started incredibly well, but he did not finish well. There are many examples of people who had great careers, only to have it overshadowed by a mistake made in the end of their careers. We should strive to finish well so we can say alongside our brother in the faith, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

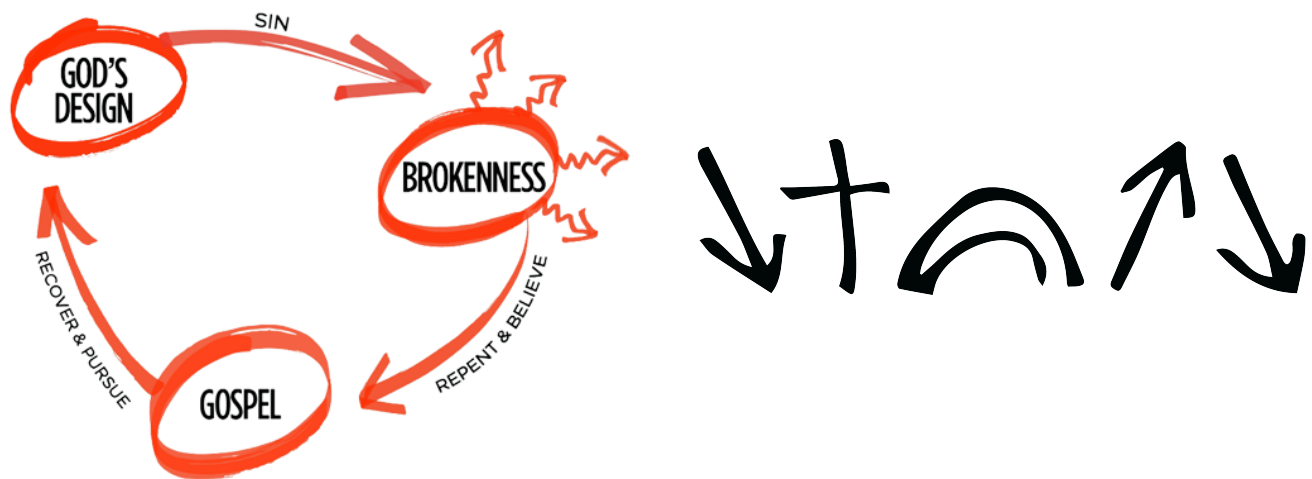
Pray the Word

Father,

You are true and righteous altogether. Your word is powerful, true in everything it asserts, always accomplishing its purpose, and perfectly revealing you to us. It testifies of your holiness and your power. All of creation is at your command. Lord, I confess that I have not kept your word in these areas _____ . Forgive me according to your promise. I recognize the destruction of my disobedience and I repent of those sins. Thank you for providing perfect righteousness for me through your Son Jesus. Thank you for sending him to pay the price for my sins. Thank you for cleansing me by his blood and giving life by your Spirit. Thank you for the hope of eternal life and the escape from judgment I have in Christ, the perfect Son of Man, Son of God, the true and better Prophet. Father, I ask that you open the eyes of _____ to the destructiveness of their sins and their alienation from you and their desperate need for your Son's righteousness. May they come to him through repentance and faith. Let my life and the lives of the people at MeadowBrook be characterized by your Word. May we live by it, be changed by it, speak truly about it, and endure in obedience to it. We need you for that to be the case. Keep our eyes fixed on your Son and strengthen us by your Spirit. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



¹ If it is eternal safety the person is referring to, then this statement is true. If it is temporary safety, then it is absolutely not true.

Life Group – 1 Kings 14:1-31 – June 9th, 2019

Cheap Substitutes

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Jeroboam and Rehoboam

The first two kings of the divided kingdoms are the focal characters of this set of stories. Both were wicked kings who led the people of God into idolatry at great cost to both themselves and their people. Jeroboam's idolatry ultimately cost him the life of his son, his legacy, and the safety of his people. He led the people into wickedness, a wickedness that eventually caused them to lose their land. Rehoboam's idolatry cost his people the identity of being set apart and specially blessed by God. They were given to worldliness. His leading cost his people peace and protection. God did not stop the king of Egypt from robbing the Temple and there was continual war between Israel and Judah. It also cost the nation their wealth. Rehoboam led the people into conformity to the world, diminishing the glory of the people of God in the world. These two kings reveal the far-reaching effects of an individual's sin.

- **Key Repetitions:** They provoked the Lord...

Note how many times this is referenced in this story. _____. What seems to be the cause of this provoking? _____.

- **The Foils:** Ahijah and Shishak

A foil is a character in the story that opposes one of the focal characters. Ahijah is a prophet of the Lord who speaks judgment on the house of Jeroboam. Though physically blind, Ahijah sees more clearly than both Jeroboam and his wife. He knows the living God and is committed to obeying and proclaiming his Word, while the King forsakes the law and the God to whom he is supposed to be devoted. Down in Judah, we are introduced to Shishak a pagan king from Egypt who does not fear the Lord. God uses this king to discipline the house of Rehoboam. He has departed from his Grandfather David's ways and has led the people astray. God in his sovereignty used the wicked king Shishak to discipline his people and bring them back to a place of repentance. Ultimately, neither Israel or Judah heed the message and both end up in exile. In Judah, God was faithful to his promise to David, but the kingdom was never at the height it was under Solomon again. Idolatry only provided cheap substitutes that reflected a diminished glory.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God is not deceived nor manipulated.**

In their great foolishness, Jeroboam and his wife attempt to deceive God. It could have been their pride, lust for power, or wealth that led to their deception. Whatever the cause, the effect illustrates we cannot impress or deceive God. He knows all things about us. We are laid before him in our nakedness, wickedness, shame, and all. In the final judgment, there will be no pleading, bargaining, or deceiving. Unless one has a righteousness alien to what we can produce, which is the righteousness of Christ, they are without hope.

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

¹³ **And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.** ¹⁴ *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the*

heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:12-16 ESV)

- **God is jealous.**

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (Exodus 20:5 ESV)

for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, (Exodus 34:14 ESV)

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 4:24 ESV)

God is ferociously jealous and will stand for no rivals. God is incomparable. We cannot compare him to anything else. He is holy, holy, holy. We cannot share our affection that is due God with anyone else. What things have you dared to compare to him or devote yourself to other than him? God will have no rival. The basic root of sin is our desire to be like God and to be loved as he is loved. There is only one being in the universe who deserves all of our love, and he is the Triune God. Holy does not simply mean ethically pure. Holy means God is unique, unlike anything in reality. All of our sins are a rejection of the truth that God is incomparable.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **Our flesh is inclined toward running after false idols which are cheap substitutes.**

It's easy to sit from this position and cast judgment on both Jeroboam, Rehoboam, and the people of God for their idolatry, but so often we are given to the same struggles. In fact, every manifestation of sin is at its root an idolatry problem, a failure to love the Lord with our all. When we allow an idol to take the seat of affections that only God deserves, whether that be family, comfort, career, sex, success, power, money, sports, food, significance, convenience, control, etc., brokenness results. Look at what it cost Jeroboam. He lost his son, his throne, and his legacy because he was given to idolatry. Because he led the people into idolatry, he set them on a path that caused them to be uprooted from the promised land and taken into exile by the Assyrians. Look at what Rehoboam lost. The people lost their holiness and looked just like the surrounding world. Rehoboam lost peace with the other people in the Northern Kingdom. He lost God's protection and the temple was ransacked. He lost the glory of the nation and ended up with a cheaper version. He had gold and ended up with bronze. That's the thing with idols, they promise all kinds of satisfaction and always under-deliver leaving the one deceived with a cheaper substitute of what is offered in Christ. In our flesh, we are fooled by the lies of idols over and over again. We need a new nature that loves the Lord and forsakes any and all idols.

How does this story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ the King leads his people into righteousness and will give them a glorious land as their inheritance.**

Christ, by his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and his victorious resurrection, leads the people into righteousness by taking their sin, regenerating them in the Spirit, giving them his righteousness, and filling them with the Spirit so they can continue to walk in righteousness. He makes every

provision for our righteous standing before God and our righteous living. He is a good king who not only provides our righteousness, but also provides for us a glorious land. This land is yet to be revealed in the new heavens and the new earth where his people will dwell securely with him forever.

- **Christ the King conforms his people into his image by the working of the Spirit, revealing the glory of the Father.**

Christ, through his continued ministry by the Holy Spirit in us, is setting us apart from the world and conforming us from one degree of glory to another—his own image. Because of what Christ did and is doing, there is a marked difference between the true disciples of Jesus Christ and the false Christians with which the American church is flooded. This work of sanctification reveals the glory of God to mankind. This beckons some to eternal life, yet others respond by persecuting the church. Either way the glory of the Father is revealed and we are fulfilling our purpose as image bearers of the King of Glory. Some will love it and join us, while others hate it with everything they are, and kill us.

Apply the Word

Forsake any and all idols for the Lord our God is a jealous God.

Be conformed into the image of Christ for the Lord our God is a holy God. ¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

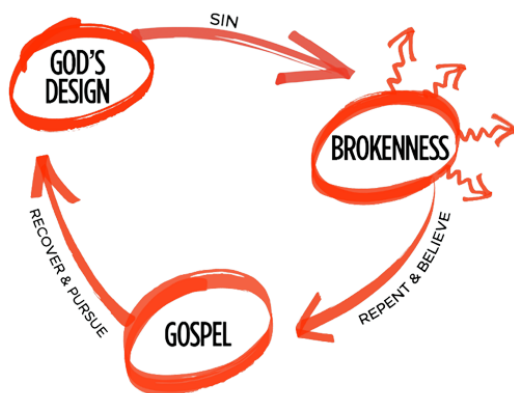
Pray the Word

Father,

You are holy, holy, holy, there is none like you. Nothing can be compared to you. You alone deserve all of my heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength. Forgive me for casting you behind my back and running after the idols of _____ and the sinister idol of me. Lead me into righteousness and conform me to the image of your Son by your Spirit. _____ is given to false worship and they do not know you. Please in your grace woo them to repentance. May my life reflect your glory and my lips communicate your salvation so you might save them from your judgment. Lead our church family to worship you and you alone. Tear down the high places in the hearts of the people at MeadowBrook and tear down the high places in our nation. I pray this in the name of Jesus, the King of Glory and Righteousness. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 15:1-24 – June 16th, 2019

Covenant Faithfulness

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Abijam and Asa

This section focuses on two of Judah's Kings, Asa and Abijam. Asa being one of the most successful and God-honoring kings in Judah's history, along with his son Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Asa's father, Abijam, on the other hand, was incredibly wicked, continuing in the sins of Rehoboam. We do not know much about his life from this passage other than that he was wicked and his reign was short. This serves as a brief reminder to the reader as to how boring, uninteresting, and insignificant sin truly is. Even though Abijam was unfaithful, God proved to be faithful to the promise he made David. Asa was able to move the Kingdom in the right direction. He overcame the sins of his father and grandfather, and letting his heart be wholly true to the Lord all of his days. Asa made God his first allegiance, even over his idolatrous mother. He lived sacrificially for the good of the people, called the people to action, and produced visible, tangible results. These results validated his leadership and revealed God's blessing on his kingship, as was the case under the Old Covenant. God was faithful to bless the obedience of his people as he said he would. The people in Judah flourished under the leadership of their faithful king, because of God's faithfulness to his promises in Deuteronomy 28.

- **Key Repetitions:** heart... wholly true to the Lord

Note how many times this is referenced in this story. _____. How does each instance reveal God's covenant faithfulness? _____.

- **The Foil:** Baasha

A foil is a character in the story that opposes one of the focal character(s). Baasha is a wicked king of Israel who we will read about next week. He broke God's law by moving aggressively against his brother Asa. Baasha serves as a reminder that God blesses covenant faithfulness and does not bless covenant unfaithfulness. In context, the book of Kings (1st and 2nd Kings) was written to a people taken into exile who were questioning the justice of God. The people of God, however, were unfaithful in their covenant with God. Their hearts went after idols and God moved against their unfaithfulness with the judgment of exile. Abijam and Asa are a reminder that God has been faithful and will continue to be faithful. Baasha, an enemy of God and his people, did not experience the victory and blessing of covenant faithfulness.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

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

God promised David his throne would be established forever, ultimately to be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Abijam was disobedient, yet God proved to be faithful to his promise. The house deserved to be cut off, but not only did God preserve David's line, he provided Asa who would set the kingdom back on track for two generations, bringing stability to the land. God's promise to David was an unconditional covenant, meaning that regardless of how his future descendants would act, God was going to be uphold his promise. The New Covenant inaugurated by Christ is an unconditional covenant as well. If we enter it by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, then God will be faithful to his promises. ¹¹ *The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;* ¹² *if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;* ¹³ *if we are faithless, he*

remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2:11-13 ESV). God will sanctify us and produce within us an endurance that perseveres. He will glorify us upon the return of Christ, and he will reward faithfulness lived out upon this earth.

- **God blesses covenant faithfulness.**

In the Old Covenant, God blessed his people, the nation of Israel, with material blessings and political success. In the New Covenant, God blesses his people's faithfulness with spiritual blessings during their earthly lives, withholding any material blessings until eternity. ³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ⁴ *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* ⁵ *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* ⁶ *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* ⁷ *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* ⁸ *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* ⁹ *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.* ¹⁰ *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* ¹² *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* (Matthew 5:3-12 ESV) The blessings of New Covenant faithfulness are increased satisfaction, comfort, peace, and joy. We take confidence in who God is as we walk through this tumultuous world, awaiting the day we will see God and inherit the earth. These blessings manifest themselves in outward acts of righteousness that elevate every aspect of society. Where the people of God flourish, society flourishes. Where the people of God diminish and forsake God for idols, all of society diminishes.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **Without a heart that is wholly true to the Lord, it is impossible to produce actions that are pleasing to the Lord.**

Our problem as humans is not a behavioral problem. It is a heart problem. Our hearts love to run after idols and commit themselves to things or people other than the Lord. All actions flow from the heart. A heart devoted to idols reflects the brokenness and emptiness of those same idols. A heart devoted to the Lord reflects his wholesomeness and righteousness. We need a heart change. We need a heart that is wholly true to the Lord.

How does the story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ the King is the true Son of David who was wholly true to the Lord and secured blessing for his people.**

It was God's faithfulness to his promise to David that produced Asa, but Asa was not the fulfillment of the prophecy. His kingdom ended. His reign, though good, was not perfect—the high places remained. God's promise to David has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the King of Kings and his throne has no end. On earth, He established His kingdom spiritually, and it is growing each day through the spreading of the gospel message. Jesus was wholly true to the Father all of his life and secured the blessing of peace with God and a regenerate heart through his death, burial and resurrection to all who would turn from their sins and believe in Him. Though His kingdom is spiritual now, it will become visible one day. Any opposition will be destroyed, not through political alliances, but through his powerful word.

Apply the Word

Overcome the sins of your parents through faith in Jesus Christ. Just because our upbringing and/or genetics make us predisposed to certain sinful behaviors and patterns does not mean we are free from the responsibility of avoiding those sins. Asa, because his heart was given to the Lord through

faith, was able to walk not in the sins of his father and grandfather, but in righteousness according to God's Word. If you have been using your upbringing or natural inclinations to excuse sin, know that in Christ you can break the generational cycles of sin and walk in newness of life!

Let your first allegiance be to God above all other allegiances. Asa was faced with a tough decision early in his kingship—his mother was an idolater. Asa revealed his true devotion when he removed as Queen Mother and cut down and burned all of her idolatrous images. He revealed his heart was devoted to the Lord above all else, even his own mother. We too must be devoted to the Lord above all else. Family is a great thing, established by God himself, but if we elevate the family or any member of our family above God and are more committed to family than we are to God, we are walking in idolatry. Remember these shocking words of Jesus, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* (Luke 14:26 ESV). Even good things, like family, can become wicked and worthless idols if we are not careful. We must be vigilant in our devotion to the Lord.

Put the good of others over the accumulation of wealth. A time came when Asa's people were in danger. All of his gold and silver was required to protect his people. Asa, in his love for his God and his people, did not hesitate to forfeit his financial security for the good of others. This love is the mark of Christian generosity seen in the new testament. No one twisted arms. People simply cared about the good of others because they loved them, so they gave generously, some even selling land and houses so they might give. We too must be marked by this same love and generosity toward others.

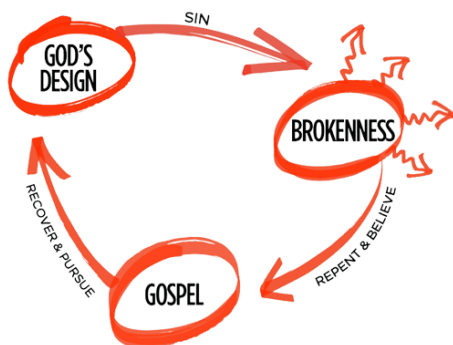
Pray the Word

Father,

You are faithful. Not a single promise you have made is false. All that has come to pass has come to pass exactly as you have said. You never lie. I have complete hope and security in the promises you have made us through the gospel. You are faithful to your word, even in the times I prove to be faithless. Lord, help my heart to be wholly true to you. Let my life be marked by a complete devotion to you and a deep love for your people. I fall desperately short so often. Lord I confess that my heart at times has been more devoted to _____ than to you. Father, I repent of such foolishness and turn to you, the Living God, faithful and true. Thank you for the wonderful promise of eternal life and intimacy with you in Heaven. Lord, I find my hope in Christ and the promise of his return. Let me be found faithful on the day of his return when he establishes his kingdom physically here on earth. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 15:25-16:34 – June 23rd, 2019

The Downward Spiral of Idolatry

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** The Wicked Kings of Israel culminating with Ahab

This section focuses on six of Israel's Kings who reign during the time of Asa, Judah's good king. A downward spiral ensues brought about the idolatry of the Kings and the people—there are three dynasty changes, a three-way battle for the throne, and one king ruling for just seven days! The section ends with the introduction of one of Israel's most wicked kings—Ahab. He thought nothing of walking in the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam. He married Jezebel, a pagan worshipper of Baal who proved to be one of the most wicked woman in Biblical history. He worshipped two prominent idols of the other nations that were in the land, Baal (controlled the weather) and Asherah (fertility, cult prostitutes). To make matters worse, he institutionalized their idolatrous religions in the eyes of the people by building a temple to Baal. He rebuilt Jericho against the Word of the Lord specified in Joshua 6:26, and in that process he sacrificed two of his children in pagan worship.² Things were not good in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but God was not absent. He was sovereignly reigning over this sinful kingdom and executing justice the entire time, and he was about to raise up the prophet Elijah to speak against Ahab and his wickedness.

- **Key Repetitions:** walking in the way of Jeroboam

Note how many times this is referenced in this story. _____. How does each instance reveal the progression of idolatry? _____.

- **Overview of the Kings in this Story**

1. Nadab: Son of Jeroboam. Reigns 2 years. Killed by Baasha, who annihilated his entire household. Nadab walked in the way of Jeroboam.
2. Baasha: Reigns 24 years. Walks in the way of Jeroboam. God announces judgment against him by Jehu the prophet for his idolatry and his murders.
3. Elah: Reigns 2 years. Continued in the same sins as his father. A drunk and an idolater. Killed by Zimri, his Commander, who annihilated his whole household and any friends of Elah.
4. Zimri: Reigned 7 days. Idolater and murderer. Killed himself.
5. Omri and Tibni: Split rule for 5 years. Omri overtakes and kills Tibni and his people and rules 7 more years. Builds Samaria and moves capital, but author is unimpressed. Worst king to date for the people of Israel. Idolater.
6. Ahab: The Most Wicked king to date. Reigns 22 years. Institutionalizes idolatry by building temple to Baal. Foil to Elijah for rest of 1 Kings narrative. Marries Jezebel who is a worshipper of the false, dead god Baal and ironically the daughter of Ethbaal, which means 'Baal is alive,' which is later proven to be utterly false.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God accomplishes his purposes no matter the circumstances. God executes his justice.**

In the midst of all this chaos, God was there governing his creation and his people, though they were rejecting him. In his sovereignty and goodness, God permitted evils that fit into his will and certainly

² Paul House, *1,2 Kings*. Vol. 8. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers 1995, 204.

held back evils that did not. Baasha's murders accomplished God's judgment on the house of Jeroboam for his idolatry. Baasha, however, walked in the same idolatrous manner of Jeroboam and was murderous. As a result, Baasha was given over to the same fate in that Zimri's murder accomplished God's judgment on the house of Baasha. Zimri in turn killed himself. Lastly, Ahab's idolatrous worship was the means through which God accomplished his judgment on the house of Ahab. The idols these people had revered, "they had come to be like and this likeness was spiritually destructive to them. "This is an ironic punishment, since the people thought their worship of the idols would lead to enhanced life and prosperity, but in reality it resulted in further deterioration of their spiritual life and ultimately their material prosperity."³ Instead of reflecting the image of the true God, they reflected the image of the false gods, and it was destructive. They worshipped dead idols that reflected death. They worshipped idols that were crafted to maintain power (1 Ki. 12), however they lost power. They worshipped false gods of fertility, yet they reflected child sacrifice. They worshipped false gods of weather, so God would announce a drought. God's judgment on these wicked kings is the same judgment we see repeated in Romans 1. They suppressed the truth about God, and worshipped what was created rather than the Creator, so God gave them over to their sins as part of their just punishment. What promised life brought judgment.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **"What we revere, we resemble, either for ruin or restoration."⁴**

When one worships idols, they become like them—empty, spiritually blind and deaf, and lifeless. This is what we see in this story. Each king is walking in idolatry, the commitment to something other than the true God, and chaos ensues. Every behavioral sin finds its root in idolatry. Adam's first sin occurred because he committed himself to the serpent lie rather than the truth. He desired to elevate himself rather than reflect God's glory, so he took the fruit and ate. He immediately became deceptive and ashamed of himself, blaming others for his sin. His behavior problems were primarily rooted in a worship problem. The same is true for these kings and for us today. What we typically identify as the problem is simply a symptom of the true problem: idolatry. *What is your heart committed to other than God? How is that being revealed in your behavior?*

How does it foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **This story identifies the problem that only has one solution—Jesus Christ.**

The book of Romans is the New Testament response to the problem identified here. These kings had bad beliefs about God which led to bad worship resulting in wicked behavior (Rom. 1). The solution of course is proper relationship with Yahweh which is founded on good beliefs about God and transformed living. The Old Covenant was looking forward to the Messiah to come and establish the New Covenant (Jer. 31). This Messiah would be the prophet Moses prophesied about (Deut. 18), the offspring of Abraham in whom all the families would be blessed (Gen. 12), the king promised to David (2 Sam. 7), and the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3). In the New Covenant, we look back to Christ. We come to a knowledge of our wickedness and the new life to be found in Christ (Rom. 1-8) and realize the transformed way of life that comes through proper knowledge and worship of God through Christ (Rom. 12:1-2).

³ G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, Downers Grove: IVP, 2008, 49.

⁴ Ibid, 22.

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

Apply the Word

Trust in the goodness of God’s governance and justice. In this life it may seem that the wicked prosper. Baasha, Omri, and Ahab all had worldly success, but in what really counted, they failed miserably. In the midst of their wickedness, God never lost control or deviated from his perfect will. He governed his creation with righteousness and justice. Sometimes it may seem in this life that God is not just in allowing certain things to occur, but in those moments we are to live by faith in what God’s word reveals. We will not know all the answers, and in this life we will have trouble. We take heart in Christ because he overcame. In Christ, we have forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of future resurrection and glory. No matter what happens around us or in our lives, God is good, righteous, just, and in control. Live by faith in him.

Forsake idols and worship the living God.

Pray the Word

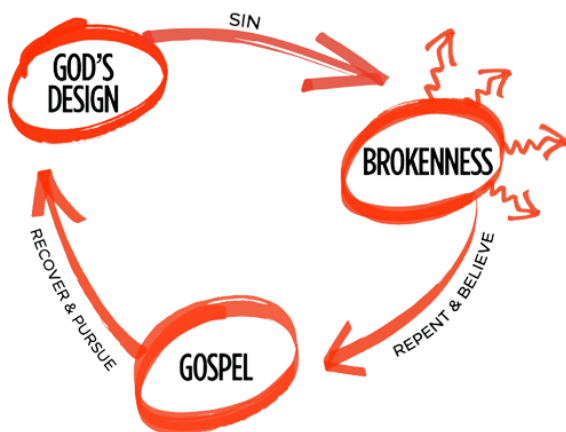
Father,

You are sovereign over your creation. Nothing occurs outside of your good and perfect will. Even in the chaos of this life, I trust in you. You will vindicate the righteous and usher those who have placed their faith in your Son into your kingdom. It does not make sense now, but I know you are in control and working all things, even the acts of the wicked, according to your righteous and just will. Let my hope, then, be firmly rooted in you. May I be committed to you with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength. Let not my heart run after wicked, worthless idols. You have revealed yourself in your Son Jesus Christ and your Spirit testifies within me that He is God. Let my life be lived committing to him, conformed to his image and not the world’s. Lord, you alone are God and you alone are good. I trust in you.

Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 17:1-24 – June 30th, 2019

The True and Authoritative Word of the Lord

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Elijah and the Gentile Widow

This story abruptly introduces us to Elijah, a breath of fresh air in the narrative of wicked kings. He is a prophet who is committed to proclaiming and living according to the Word of the Lord. He is thus the anti-Ahab. Ahab disregards the word of the Lord, Elijah obeys the word of the Lord. Ahab serves dead idols, Elijah serves the Lord God who lives. Ahab experiences drought, Elijah experiences provision from the Lord—both through animals and through other human beings under the sovereignty of God. The Woman in the story is a poor, gentile widow with a son, both of whom are on the brink of death. She, too, serves as an anti-Ahab. Ahab is a rich king from the people of God, yet not a spiritual son of Abraham by faith. This woman is not of God's people genetic line, but becomes part of his people spiritually through faith. Her faith allows her to see God move in powerful ways in her life, while Ahab's lack of faith results in his entire nation seeing the vanity and barrenness of life without God. This woman's journey in faith can teach many, though we might not experience each of the events or outcomes as she did. Elijah reveals the woman as a woman of faith, however her faith is shaken when her son dies. Elijah, a prophet sent by God in a time that saw God validate His Word with signs and wonders, raises the woman's son from the dead. Elijah's prayers and their miraculous result reaffirm this woman's faith in the Word of God and his prophet.

- **Key Repetitions:** The Word of the Lord

Note how many times this is referenced in this story. _____. How does each instance reveal the nature of God's Word? _____.

- **The Setting:** The Drought-ridden land.

In this chapter and the next, the setting helps the reader understand what is happening spiritually in the land of Israel. There is a real drought in the land, but the physical drought is a picture of the spiritual drought that is in the hearts of the people of God resulting from their idolatry. The drought also serves as a judgment for the idolatry of the people. Baal was a god who promised rain, but since he was an empty and worthless god, the Living God's judgment was to withhold the rain. He judged the people and the land by giving them over to reflect the image of the idol. The false god they were worshipping could not produce rain, thus the reflected image of their god was barrenness and drought brought about by the true God who controls the rain and everything else in his creation.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God is alive and in control of every aspect of his Creation.**

In contrast to the idols Baal and Asherah, Yahweh is a living God. He is the source and sustainer of all life and everything within the universe. Not one thing moves or takes a breath outside of his sovereign reign. Every movement of a molecule, every drop of rain, every flight pattern of a bird, every action of humans occur according to the perfect will of the Lord. In this story, we see God withhold rain and dew at his word for three and a half years, and we see God bless Elijah's obedience by providing for his food and water needs through ravens and a brook. We also see God working through a widow and her son to provide for Elijah while also ushering her into a saving relationship with him. This is a unique insight into God's sovereignty and human freedom working together. God

promised Elijah and commanded the woman to provide the food and drink for Elijah, rendering it certain the woman would respond positively to the request of Elijah. The woman clearly made the choice to respond in faith to Elijah's word spoken from the Lord, revealing that she was not coerced into making a decision. God was sovereign and in control of the situation, but the woman was responsible for her actions and acted in her freedom as an individual. It is a seeming paradox that does not make sense to us: how God can be absolutely sovereign and humans be responsible for their own free choices and actions, but it is not a paradox to God. His ways are higher than ours and we praise him for that!

- **God's word is true and authoritative.**

This passage highlights the truthfulness and authority of God's Word. It is true, it always accomplishes its purposes, and it must be received in faith and obeyed. Today, there is an over-fascination with "signs and wonders." In reality, these miracles were very rare, even in Bible times, and they always accompanied major shifts in God's progressive revelation. The purpose was clear: to validate the messenger and the truthfulness of God's Word. Elijah marks a new era in God's revelation—The Prophets. The revelation of God is now completed in what we know as the 39 Books of the Old Testament and the 27 Books of the New Testament. Each book is true in everything it asserts and is without any mixture of error. Everything we need to know about God, life and godliness is in this book. Though certainly there are things about God and this life not written in the Bible, we have everything we need to be restored to proper relationship with God and walk in obedience to his commands in every aspect of our life.

- **God works through prayer.**

Part of God's sovereign rule takes place through human means. This is one of the most glorious aspects of God's sovereignty. Through the persistent prayers of Elijah, God raised this widow's son from the dead. Elijah did not change God's mind or his will, but God chose that it would be through the prayers of Elijah that he would raise this boy from the dead, so that if Elijah had not prayed, this boy would not have been raised from the dead. This is another glorious example of God's sovereignty and human responsibility coming together in the ministry of prayer. It is mysterious and glorious at the same time and should prompt us to pray fervently and persistently for the spiritual life of others.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **Apart from Christ, we are spiritually thirsty, hungry, and dead.**

Each of the scenes in this story serve as physical pictures of the spiritual reality of life without God. Apart from faith in the Word of God, Jesus Christ, we are spiritually dead, unable to satisfy the deepest longing of our souls. When we run after false gods, only barrenness and destruction awaits.

How does this story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ is the Great Prophet who brings spiritual life to those who believe his gospel.**

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matt. 5:6 ESV)
¹ *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins* ² *in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--* ³ *among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* ⁴ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,* ⁵ *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--* ⁶ *and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* ⁷ *so that in the coming ages he*

might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10 ESV)
So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 ESV)

Apply the Word

Believe and obey God's Word, resting in his sovereignty and faithfulness. God's word has glorious promises for his people. He promises to forgive us our sins. He promises to indwell us through his Spirit. He promises to resurrect our bodies in glory at Christ's return. These three promises provide great joy and hope for the believer, even when circumstances are not favorable. These are the promises to which our faith should cling when all else seems to fail. Our faith in these promises produces a deep love for God that is expressed in obedience to his commands and peace in the circumstances of this life in a broken, sinful world.

Pray for the spiritual life of others fervently and spiritually. Elijah had the privilege to see this boy rise from the dead. When someone becomes a disciple of Jesus through our witness, we see an even greater miracle—spiritual rebirth which can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit. As Elijah prayed for this boy to come back to life, we should pray for the spiritual rebirth of individuals we desire to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Who knows, God in his sovereignty may use our prayers as the means to bring someone into his kingdom! Who are you praying for?

Pray the Word

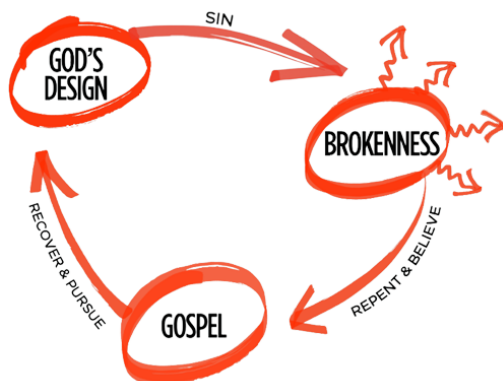
Father,

You are true and your word is true. Let my life constantly conform itself to your Word. Help my unbelief. When things in life cause my faith to be shaken, let your word continually draw my attention back to your goodness and your promises. Lord, _____
are spiritually dead and are in need of your life that only comes through faith in your Son. Open their eyes to the truth. Call them into your kingdom through mine or someone else's gospel presentation. Lord give me opportunities to share your word of truth and the boldness to obey your word. Breath your life into them by your word.

In Jesus' name by your life-giving Spirit, I pray. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 18:1-16 – July 7th, 2019

Obadiah: Overcoming the Fear of Man

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Elijah, Ahab, and Obadiah

“Many days” have passed since the end of Chapter 17 and the beginning of Chapter 18. It has now been over three years since rain has fallen in the land of Israel. The word of the Lord comes to Elijah, sending him to confront Ahab. Elijah, of course obeys God’s word, for he knows who he stands before. Working perfectly in the story, God wanted to strengthen the faith of Obadiah, a faithful servant who was serving the Lord in secrecy. Obadiah was a high ranking official in the house of Ahab, but unlike Ahab, who worshipped idols and cared more about the well-being of his horses than his people, Obadiah feared the Lord and went to great lengths to provide for and protect a remnant of prophets and men who were serving the true God during Jezebel’s slaughter of the prophets of God. Obadiah had managed to keep this secret at great risk to his job and life, but now he was unable to do so. Elijah had chosen to announce his arrival to Ahab through Obadiah. Obadiah, fearful he would lose his life, protests at first, but after hearing the word of the Prophet he obeys Elijah and announces to Ahab the Elijah had arrived to see him.

- **Key Repetitions:** The Theme of Fear: Obadiah feared the Lord, Obadiah’s response, Elijah revealing that is the Lord “before whom [he] stand[s]”

What does this teach us about fear in today’s world? _____

Whom shall we fear and what does that look like? _____

- **Lessons for Fearing God in the Workplace:** Looking at Obadiah

“Not everyone will be called to formal ministry like Elijah, but many will be called to serve as ‘secular saints’ like Obadiah... Obadiah is like the man working for an unbelieving boss. How should you work in such an environment (or in any environment, perhaps one where the Government makes public practice of your faith illegal)? **Obadiah teaches us to do good work.** He was elevated to his position because he apparently did a good job. Christians should be known for good work. Paul says, ‘Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord’ (Colossians 3:23-24). Obadiah also illustrates how one should use one’s influences and resources. Obadiah had access to provisions and made them available to these persecuted prophets. **Those who work in professions that allow them to have good salaries and benefits should consider how to use such blessings to advance the kingdom.** (Even if you do not feel you have a good salary or benefits, you have something that can and should be used to advance God’s kingdom. To the measure one is given, that same measure is expected in return). One might object, claiming that Obadiah was being deceptive but nothing in the text says that he lied or did anything unethical. He knew about suffering believers, and he used his resources to provide for them. **Finally, Obadiah teaches us to be courageous.** He ultimately followed Elijah’s instructions at great risk to his own life. The lesson here is that if you are ever in a position where you must choose between obedience to God or obedience to man, choose God (Acts 5:29), even if it might cost you your job—or your life.” –Tony Merida, *1 & 2 Kings*, Emphases and parenthetical statements added. *Evaluate your work life. Are there areas where you are falling short of the example set by Obadiah?*

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God's will for your life does not guarantee temporary safety.**

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 ESV)

¹² *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:12-13 ESV)*

¹² *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:12-13 ESV)*

In light of these scriptures, it seems foolish to think of God's blessing as temporary comfort and security. However, if we are not careful, we will be unknowingly influenced by some false teachings that have taken hold in our culture. Coming to Christ does not guarantee the sickness you have will be healed, even if you have faith and are praying to God. Sometimes, God chooses not to heal. Following the will of God is not the safest place you can be, if safety is to be taken as temporary safety. Missionaries throughout history have been called by God and have been obedient to God's command only to lose their life either through murder or sickness. Following God's will is the safest place you can be, if safety is meant in an eternal framework. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hand of the living God and experience his wrath. Nonetheless, we must remind ourselves that God's will does not guarantee temporary jobs, life, or money. We are called to obey the Lord at his word, even if it cost us everything. Our prosperity is not in this life, but in the one to come. Obadiah was confronted with this very truth. He chose to obey and lived. There is another person who chooses to obey the Lord and loses his life in just a few chapters. God is not obligated to reward our obedience with any temporary comfort or safety. His promise is eternal. We must decide, as both Obadiah and Elijah did, who it is we will stand before, who it is we will fear, who it is we will be committed to—God or man. If we chose God, it may cost us everything, but God is more than worth it and promises great reward for those who suffer in this life for his sake.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **Our bad worship problem leads to brokenness in the way we interact with other people.**

How one treats others, especially those who are the most vulnerable, reveals the god they worship. Ahab cared more about the lives of his horses than the lives of his people. He worshipped a false god, so he did not view people as created in the image of the One True God. Today, sins like abortion and racism, reveal a worship problem. When we view people as less than human and act out on that belief as we live, we have a worship problem. God is love, and if we truly love Him we will love those created in His image. This holds true for those different than us and especially for those who are vulnerable e.g. babies in the womb. Idolatry, the work of demons, always leads to the devaluing of human life.

¹⁹ *What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20 ESV)*

- **In our flesh, we are inclined to fear man over God.**

Part of the curse of sin is our inability to see the truth of the invisible God. We need our eyes opened to the reality of God so we may learn to fear Him who we cannot see instead of those who we can.

How does it foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ was the one obedient unto death on a cross, that his people might learn to walk in the fear of the Lord and realize this fear is the beginning of wisdom.**

Christ came and fulfilled God’s will and died a gruesome death, both physically and spiritually, so we might walk in the fear of the Lord. The gospel not only forgives us of our sin, but opens our eyes to the truth so we are able to fear the Lord and walk in wisdom. We are not only saved from sin but also saved to obedience. In Christ, we can walk in victory over sin. We can honor God with our lives for the Spirit of Christ dwells within us. By his power we put to death the deeds of the flesh and put on Christ and his righteousness.

Apply the Word

Obey God no matter the cost.

Be strengthened by the Word of God. When Obadiah heard and believed the word of the prophet, he was strengthened. Today, we have the whole counsel of God’s word. When we are tempted to give into a fear of man, we must fly to the word of God and find strength in its promises to obey its commands no matter the cost.

Treat other people as people created in the image of God.

Work unto the glory of God.

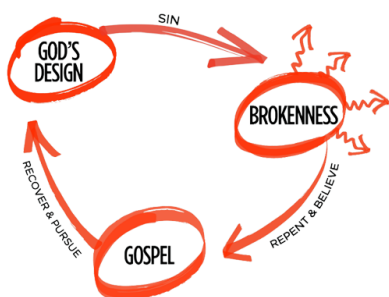
Pray the Word

Father,

You alone are God. Lord, to go against you is to go to certain death. Your wrath being stored up for unbelievers is terrifying. Your discipline of the saints causes me to tremble with fear and draw ever so closer to your will. I would much rather obey you than man, for what can man do to me? You have promised me eternal life and rewards. What could man take from me that I do not have tenfold in you? Lord, help me to live with my eyes fixed on your promises and fixed on eternity. In my workplace, give me the boldness to obey you no matter the cost. Forgive me for cowardice or lack of love I have displayed in my work. I repent of my sins _____. Lead me in the way of obedience to your true and perfect word. Thank you for sending your Son who was obedient unto death that I may know life through your Spirit. Strengthen me today by your word for the task at hand. In Jesus’ name and by the power of you Holy Spirit I pray, Amen

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 18:17-40 – July 14th, 2019

The Showdown

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Elijah, Ahab, the Prophets of Baal, and the nation of Israel

The characters have been introduced. The author has contrasted the wickedness of Ahab who follows idols with the righteousness of Elijah, whose name means “My God is Yahweh.”⁵ Now is the time for the showdown of 1 vs. 450. Make no mistake, this is much more than a conflict between people. The true conflict is between Yahweh and Baal. Will the people repent from following the worthless idol which has led to both spiritual and physical drought? Or will they continue in their folly?

- **Repeated Ideas:** The Silence of Baal

What is significant about this repeated idea in this text? _____

- **Key Terms:** Troubler, Limping, Raving, The Israel

Troubler: In scene one we see Elijah seeking Ahab to confront him so the foolishness of Israel can come to an end. When Ahab sees Elijah in the distance, he cries out, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17). Ahab seeks to strike a blow to Elijah with this barbed question, a question rich in meaning because it references the Jericho episode recorded in Joshua. When transliterated into English, the Hebrew word meaning “troubler” is written as Achor, the name of the valley where the Israelites buried Achan, whose name is another form of the word, meaning “to bring into disaster and to throw into confusion.”⁶ Achan is infamous because he took some of the spoil from Jericho as a result of his own idolatrous heart and blatant disobedience to God’s command. As a result of his sin, 36 families lost sons, husbands, and fathers in an embarrassing military defeat, and he and his entire family were put to death. He was the troubler of Israel. In contrast to the truth, Ahab accuses Elijah of being Israel’s troubler because he remembers their conversation from three years earlier. In his eyes, he sees that conversation as cause for the drought they were experiencing. Elijah quickly responds saying that Ahab was the troubler of Israel, because of his idolatry and disobedience to the law of God. As King, he was meant to shepherd the people of Israel “with upright heart” (Psalm 78:72) as David had done. Instead, he was a wicked shepherd who was leading the people away from their God. Not only was he a wicked shepherd to the house of Israel, he also allowed 850 other wicked shepherds to ravage the people. Elijah tells him to gather the leaders of the people of Israel and the false prophets at Mount Carmel.⁷

Limping: In hopes of convincing the people to return to the Lord, Elijah issues a rebuke to the people of Israel as they gathered at Carmel. He asks them, “How will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). The word translated “limping” paints a picture of a man hobbling on crutches back and forth between two places in a useless stumble.⁸ The people decide to hobble a little longer, because they do not answer Elijah a word. They were as silent as the false god they had been worshipping. In response, Elijah issues a challenge. An altar was to be built and a sacrifice prepared, however no one would light the fire. The God who lit the fire would be the true God, and the people agreed this was the best way to

⁵ Merida, 116.

⁶ Faithlife Corporation. “Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon.” Logos Bible Software, Computer software. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, September 14, 2018.

⁷ Wiseman, 180.

⁸ Ibid, 181.

definitively know. The prophets of Baal step up as the first to call out to their god. They prepare the sacrifice and call out to him. Silence. “There was no voice and no one answered” (1 Kings 18:26). They begin to hobble around the altar as they cry out. The narrator repeats the verb Elijah used to refer to the people of God “limping” in describing the false prophets limping around the altar. The people reflected the shepherds they were allowing to influence them.

Raving: This goes on from morning until midday. With the sun burning overhead in the cloudless sky, Elijah calls out to the prophets and begins to mock their god, asking if perhaps he had left town, or couldn’t hear them, or that he might be sleeping or relieving himself. The prophets respond by intensifying their pleas. They cut themselves and rave on into the evening. This raving literally means to go about in a manic, ecstatic trance. Previously, the word was used to describe how Saul would rave about when a harmful spirit came upon him and he would seek to kill David, linking the prophets and Ahab, back to another person described as troubler (achan) in the history of Israel (1 Sam. 18:10, 14:29). The narrator concludes the attempts of the Baal prophets by re-emphasizing the fact that “there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention” (1 Ki. 18:29). The narrator wanted to put special emphasis on the silence of Baal to shed light on the futility of idols.

Israel: As the murmurs of the bloodied prophets fall into silence, Elijah invites the people to come near to him. He then begins to rebuild the altar of God the people tore down long ago.⁹ He sets up twelve stones to symbolize the twelve tribes of the once unified Israel as interpreted by the narrator. This reminds the people of their identity as the people of God, a people named Israel which carries the meaning that God strives and prevails.¹⁰ For too long the people have trusted in Baal to strive for them and prevail. Elijah is reminding them of their true identity as the people for whom Yahweh strives, foreshadowing the impending display of power where God will prevail over Baal.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God is the powerful Good Shepherd to his people.**

To remove any shadow of doubt, Elijah commands for 4 jars of water to be poured over the sacrifice. This is repeated three times for good measure. Then, in stark contrast to the ecstatic raving, Elijah draws near to God in prayer and simply prays aloud, asking God to vindicate himself and his servant by raining fire down upon the altar. Immediately, fire barrels down from Heaven and consumes the “burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Ki. 18:38). At once, the people fall on their faces and prostrate themselves before the Living God, calling out in repentance, “the Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God” (1 Ki. 18:39). Elijah commands the people to seize the prophets of Baal. He leads them into the valley, and slaughters them there. God rained down his power over the useless idols and the wicked shepherds. He revealed to the people of Israel what true power looked like. The power to live the abundant and victorious life was not found in following the Baals and idols, but in following Yahweh, the Good Shepherd. This was true of the people of Israel then, and is of the church today. Jesus revealed himself as the Good Shepherd and that he had come to give life and give it abundantly (John 10:10)

⁹ Sweeney, Marvin A.. I and II Kings (2007), Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2006, 229. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/swbts/detail.action?docID=3416779>. Accessed 2018-09-14.

¹⁰ Robert L. Thomas. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated Edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **Emptiness and futility is the curse of idolatry and sin.**

This life lived apart from God is empty. *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.* (Ecclesiastes 1:2 ESV). When we go after idols and are enticed by the promises of sin, silence and emptiness result. Sin and idolatry never fulfill. They never deliver on their promises of happiness, satisfaction, purpose, and meaning. Sin and idols always under-deliver. In fact, not only do idols fail to deliver on their promises, they deliver the opposite. Promising rain, they provide drought. Promising satisfaction, they provide emptiness. Promising help in the hour of need, they provide soul-crushing silence. Apart from Christ, this is the world people live in—the world in which we too once walked.

How does it foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ came so that we may have abundant life through him.**

Jesus promises us through the gospel the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the resurrection of the body all for the purpose of intimacy with the Father which is abundant life. We get to know and enjoy God the Father through the Son by the Spirit in all of their fullness!

- **Christ will rain down fire on his enemies in the last days in the final judgment. (Rev. 20)**

Apply the Word

Make a firm decision about Christ. If you are limping back and forth between two opinions, stop it! Decide today which God you will follow and follow Him! Decide to follow the Living God.

Follow the Good Shepherd. Don't just make a mental decision. Put feet to your decision. With all of your being, follow Jesus and his teachings, the entire counsel of Scripture.

Avoid false teachers. There are many troublers out in the world today. Discern their end and avoid such people.

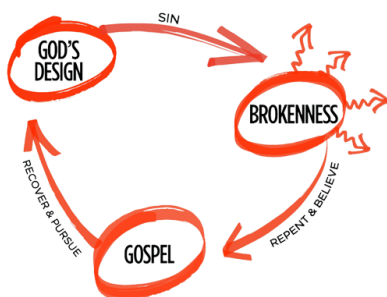
Pray the Word

Father,

You are victorious. When other gods are silent, you speak. When other gods reveal their impotence, you move in power. You are Holy, Holy, Holy, a consuming fire destroying every enemy in your path. Today, I choose to follow you and you alone. Forgive me for limping between you and _____.
I confess my folly and confess that you, the Lord, are God. Let my life reflect my decision and let me know the wonderful abundance that is to be found in you. You are gracious, loving, and kind. Help me to understand, know, and pursue intimacy with you through your Son by the indwelling power of your Holy Spirit. It is in Jesus the Good Shepherd's name I pray, Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 18:41-46 – July 21st, 2019

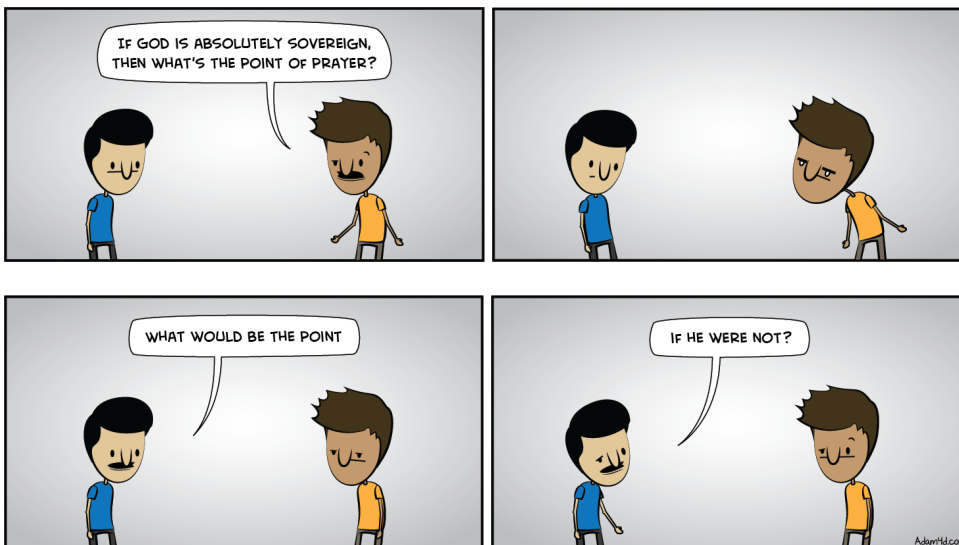
The Prayer of the Righteous Person

Prayer Points

This will be a time devoted to prayer. Here are some points from this passage that may help you engage in prayer biblically and powerfully. The point of this time is to spend as much time praying as possible.

- **Pray the will of God.**

Elijah knew it was God's will for it to rain (1 Kings 18:1), not for the relief of the people but for the glory of God to be demonstrated over the false rain god Baal. What God wills he brings to pass 100% of the time. So, Elijah knowing that God was going to accomplish his will prays even more fervently and persistently. The sovereignty of God and prayer are not in conflict. Likewise, we should constantly be praying for what we know conforms with the will of God as we see in Scripture and praying that the will of God would be done in situations where we do not know. For example, we have no idea if it is the will of God for someone to be healed of an illness. We do know, however, that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. The resulting "good" he works in our lives is our conformation to the image of the Son both in sanctification and glorification. Ask for healing, but more than that ask that the person would allow this sickness to be used by the Spirit for their growth in Christlikeness. We know the latter is the will of God, however we cannot be sure about the former.



Comic courtesy of Adam4d.com

- **Pray humbly.**

Elijah adopted a posture of humility in his prayer before the Lord. Even though he knew it was the will of the Lord, Elijah was not arrogant in the way he approached the Lord. We must adopt this same spiritual posture of humility in our prayers. *Consider being intentional in your physical posture of prayer. Sometimes the physical posture helps one prepare their hearts spiritually.*

- **Pray passionately.**

Elijah was not haphazardly praying. The word used in this passage paints a picture of Elijah stretching himself out before the Lord, deeply calling out to him. Part of prayer's purpose is to align our hearts with the Lord's heart. If we desire the will of God to be accomplished above all else, that will be reflected in passionate prayer.

- **Pray persistently.**

Curiously, God does not answer the first prayer like he did with the fire, nor the second, nor the third, nor the fourth, nor the fifth, nor the sixth... It was the seventh prayer that God answered, and even then the results weren't seen immediately. Why? The text does not say. What we do know is that God, in his glorious sovereignty, chooses to govern, in part, his Creation through the persistent prayers of the saints. We also know the prayer of the righteous person has great power as it is working. What are we to do with this? We are to keep praying. We do not know the will of God in a specific situation, nor is it possible to manipulate God by our many prayers. We pray persistently because God may use the next prayer to be the means by which he accomplishes his unmovable and perfect plan. It is in the glorious framework we pray persistently for the will of God to be expressed.

Prayer Time: Praying for the Will of God

Break up into groups of two to three of the same gender and pray together.

Pray for holiness to be expressed in your lives and the lives of the people at MeadowBrook.

³ *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 ESV)*

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16 ESV)

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)

Pray for the salvation of those yet to be brought into the kingdom of God.

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:16 ESV)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

Pray for the church during The Time is Now Initiative that the will of the Lord would be done.

¹ *Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Psalm 127:1-2 ESV)*

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ 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)*

¹¹ *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Ephesians 4:11-14 ESV)*

Life Group – 1 Kings 19:1-21 – July 28th, 2019

Overcoming Discouragement

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Elijah and Elisha

Has there ever been a time when you were discouraged in ministry? Perhaps your discouragement resulted from interactions at church, with a close friend, or even with a child who was rebelling against the Lord. Ministry, in whichever form it takes, has the potential to discourage us. Oftentimes, it succeeds. We so desperately want the people to whom we minister to understand the depth of the joy of following Christ as we do, yet oftentimes it feels like we see little if any results from our labor. Elijah experienced this same discouragement in his ministry. After the spectacular showdown at Mount Carmel, Ahab still did not repent. The king chose to continue to worship Baal, which meant it would only be a matter of time before he influenced more Israelites to worship Baal instead of Yahweh. This greatly discouraged Elijah, and he found this out because Jezebel—Ahab's wicked and murderous wife—sent word to him that she was going to kill him. Since she had already killed hundreds of the Lord's prophets, Elijah believed her and ran. He felt defeated, dejected, and afraid to the point where he called out to God asking him to just go ahead and kill him. He had experienced enough. The world he lived in is the same world we live in today.

After Elijah's interaction with the Lord, we are introduced to Elisha. He is plowing with 12 pairs of oxen, a sign he had some money. Through the symbolic gesture of Elijah casting his coat on Elisha, Elijah begins the discipleship relationship with Elisha. Elisha understands the call and asks to go and kiss mom and dad goodbye, realizing the urgency and the commitment level required for the ministry for which Elijah was preparing him. In a display of total commitment to the mission and vision, Elisha returned home, sacrificed all 24 oxen and held a goodbye feast and went on his way to grow under the direction and investment of Elijah.

- **Repeated Ideas:** "Behold" and "What are you doing here?"

What is the significance of the repetition of this word and phrase?

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God strengthens the faithful by his word.**

In the midst of the chaos, Elijah heard the still, small voice of the Lord, and in faith wrapped his face in reverent fear. He then went out to hear the word of the Lord. God is using this situation as an object lesson for this discouraged prophet. The world is discouraging, but God strengthens the faithful by his word. The faithful who seek the voice of the Lord are strengthened by study of his Word and prayer.

God is at work in this discouraging world.

God reveals something to Elijah that had been until now unknown to him—God had been doing a lot of work as well. In fact, he would leave 7000 in Israel to be a faithful remnant who had never once worshipped Baal. The ministry of the word of the Lord would have its effect. God was at work well before Elijah came onto the scene and well after. Elijah was simply joining up with the ministry God was already orchestrating. He had no idea he was a small stone in a much larger

mosaic. Likewise, today God is active and working in the lives of people all around us. It may not feel like it, but God surely is at work, convicting people by his Spirit and preparing people to respond to his call of salvation through his Son. God is at work in the lives of believers, conforming them into the image of the Son by his Spirit. God is also at work sustaining and upholding his creation and the world, working all things to the purpose of his perfect will.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **We are easily distracted by this world away from the promises of God.**

Oftentimes we grow discouraged because we miss the still, quiet voice of the Lord in the clamor of opposition and failure. In Israel, the voice of Jezebel's threats rang louder in Elijah's ears than the word of God found in Joshua which reads, ⁸ *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* ⁹ *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*" (Joshua 1:8-9 ESV). Or one of the many other promises God made to his people.

- **We are easily drawn to what is comfortable rather than to that which we have been called.**

Elijah had apparently been called to be the prophet in Israel, however he fled to Judah and even further south into the wilderness. The same wilderness where God appeared to Moses, a place at which Elijah knew God had worked in the past. In our moments of discouragement we may be tempted to do the same thing. We could abandon our current post of ministry. It would be easy to look back to "the good old days." Time has removed the reality of the past and left a nostalgic mirage of an oasis in its place. This practice is not from wisdom and only leads to more discouragement, because we compare the present situation with the fantasy past that we have created.

- **We easily miss what God is doing around us because of pride.**

Elijah thinks it's only him who is faithful to God and doing the work of the ministry. He misses the big picture. His self-focused ministry outlook caused him to miss how God was working in the lives of others. He grew discouraged. His spiritual pride and impatience led to spiritual discouragement, and the Lord was gently restoring him and encouraging him.

How does it foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ is the Word of God and the Bread of Life in whom we live and move and have our being.**

Elijah found his strength and vitality in the bread that came from God and the word that was spoken to him. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the Word and the Bread of Life. He is the truth, and he is the source of eternal life to all who would come to him in faith and surrender. These pictures of temporary satisfaction and strength point to the greater reality of the eternal satisfaction, purpose, meaning, security, and identity that is to be found in Jesus Christ through faith in his gospel.

Apply the Word

Live by faith. We believe God's truths and obey his commands in his power. We believe that God will reward those who invest in kingdom ministry.

Have a vision. Some of us may not have experienced spiritual discouragement simply because we haven't sought to engage in specific kingdom ministry. Vision is the preferred future of kingdom

growth you are working towards. It fits into the mission of glorifying and loving God and loving others as you love yourself. MeadowBrook's mission is to *connect people to Christ and His Church, grow them as disciples and equip them to serve through mission, ministry and worship all to glorify God.* Elijah's vision was that the people of Israel would worship God and that idolatry would be destroyed. God has specifically gifted each one of us by his Spirit with specific gifts that can be used either to support the vision of the many ministries of this church or to create new visionary ministry for this church. Where is God wanting you to serve? What needs do you see that you feel God has specifically equipped you to minister to? With vision however could come discouragement, which is why we are intentional to live by faith as we cast and seek to implement the vision God has given us for ministry.

Stay the course. It is easy to grow discouraged at a perceived lack of fruit and seek to call it quits. Don't do it. Have faith in the power of the ministry of the Word and stay the course. If you need to readjust, then readjust, but live by faith and persevere.

Make committed disciples. Elisha after being discipled by Elijah, was actually the one to anoint the two kings and see the greater expression of the fruit of the ministry. When discouraged, Elijah found strength in God's word and engaged in ministry that outlived him. Disciple-making is vital to the ministry of the church. It is the last thing that Jesus tasked us with before he went to be with the Father. God has equipped us with his word and his Spirit, so through faith in his power we seek to make disciples and make investments that will continue here long after we go to be with the Lord. Make committed disciples in the younger generations so that the ministry of the word will continue into the future. The Lord is going to do it already, will you experience the joy of being a part of it? Who will you commit to seeking to disciple? _____

Pray the Word

Father,

Your Word is true and perfect. In your Son, we see you. He strengthens us, satisfies us with himself, and guides us in this life by his Holy Spirit. Lord, you are constantly working in your creation. When I do not see you at work, I live by faith in your word which assures me that you are indeed governing all of creation and working all things to the purposes of your perfect will. Strengthen me by Word this morning. Give me a mind to understand it, a heart to cherish it, and a will to obey it. Lord, give me discernment as to where it is I am called to serve in the body of Christ, the church. Strengthen me that I may endure in faith and good works. Lord, I pray for _____ whom I am discipling. Let them grow in knowledge of you, in worship, and in obedience. If there is someone in my life I am to disciple, Lord direct me to them this week that we may both begin to grow closer to you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____



Life Group – 1 Kings 20:1-43 – August 4th, 2019

The LORD who Fights for Us

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Ahab

This story presents the unique situation where we are actually rooting for Ahab. In all of his wickedness, he is still the King of Israel, called to shepherd the people of God and protect them from enemies. In the main part of the story, we see Ahab demonstrate great leadership and valor as he leads his people against an army that far outnumbers him. Ahab does this primarily because an unnamed prophet speaks to him, assuring him the Lord would provide victory. The Lord remains patient with Ahab, giving him yet another opportunity to forsake idols and know the Lord is God. Ahab, however, does not obey the Lord completely. Although the king of Syria was given into his hand for destruction, Ahab does not kill him. After what should have been a great cause for celebration, Ahab returns home pouting after hearing the tragic pronouncement of judgment for disregarding the will of the Lord.

- **Repeated Ideas:** The Lord will fight for you

What is the significance of the repetition of this theme?

- **Foil:** Ben-hadad

Ben-hadad is the wicked King of Syria, whose very name has idolatrous undertones. Ben-hadad means Son of the Hadad, a false god worshipped in that area and time.¹¹ He wields the great power he has been given not for justice, but injustice. He covets that which has been given to Ahab and seeks to bully and humiliate Ahab into taking that which is pleasing to him. In Ben-hadad's thinking, he and his gods are stronger and mightier than this small nation. He is an enemy too powerful and too vast for the people to defeat in their own strength, but he is too foolish to know the power of the Living God he is opposing.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **The Lord fights for his people.**

The Lord does not expect Ahab to be able to defeat the Syrians in his own strength. He assures that it will be him who fights for them. In his love for his people and his patience toward them, God fought for and defeated their enemies that they may share in his victory. He is the hero of the story, not Ahab, the prophet, or any of the soldiers. God proved then and he proves over and over again that he is the victor and the one who fights on behalf of his people.

- **The Lord desires faith.**

The Lord does not give the victory for the sake of victory and comfort. He desires for Ahab to repent and demonstrate true faith. God wants Ahab to *know* that He is the Lord and there is no other. Since mankind fell with Adam's sin, God has been working in special ways to help his fallen creation forsake their idols and be reconciled to right relationship with him by his grace through faith. It has been this way from the beginning. God has always desired faith from mankind. The Old Testament was not salvation by works. The Pharisees at the time of Christ had added to the Bible and turned it into a

¹¹ Donald Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 187.

works-based legalism built on the traditions of men. True salvation has always been by grace through faith. True believers know the Lord and know that there is no other. The Old Testament looked forward to the Messiah. Now we look back.

- **The Lord is omnipresent.**

The Lord is not the god of the hills or the plains as the Syrians foolishly assumed. He is the God over all creation and can accomplish his will at any place at any time. He also knows all things, whether internal or external, that occur, are thought, or are said at any place and any time. Though He is spirit and invisible, he knows all things and can do all things, regardless of the location or time.

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13 ESV)

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:7-10 ESV)

'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32:17 ESV)

- **The Lord expects obedience.**

The Lord fought the battle on behalf of the people of Israel so Ahab would know that the Lord is God and walk in obedience to his ways. Unfortunately, Ahab did not. Faith in God always leads to conforming to his ways, for that is what is best for us. What humanity knows apart from faith is enslavement to sin, sin that leads to shame and guilt. When one is saved from sin through faith, they are empowered to and expected to walk in obedience—and they should want to! Lack of obedience reveals lack of love and lack of love reveals lack of faith. Faith without works is dead.

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:26 ESV)

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **We need the Lord to fight for us.**

Just as Ahab and the people of Israel needed God to defeat their enemy Ben-hadad, we need God to fight for us against our enemies. We are powerless against the enemies of sin, death, and Satan. We need a mighty conqueror to fight and continue to fight on our behalf. We are powerless in and of ourselves. We need a Savior.

- **We have responsibility in the fight as well.**

Once the people believed the word of the prophet and began to fight with the assurance that the Lord was fighting for them, they realized the responsibility required of them. We have responsibility in the fight against evil as well. First, we must believe the gospel and that Jesus has secured the victory. Then, we are to join with him in the power of the Holy Spirit in living the Christian life. Both the work of Christ in our lives and our own efforts are required for living the Christian life.

How does this text foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Christ fought and defeated our enemies on the Cross.**

On the cross, Jesus definitively, although not yet finally, defeated his enemies sin, death, and Satan. His Word promises a day when Christ will return and finally defeat all of his enemies and cast them into the eternal lake of fire. The victory is already secure. Christ is the victor.

- **Christ fills us with his Spirit that we may join him in the fight.**

Until that day when Christ's final victory is secure, we engage in the battle against the sin in our lives. We already have the victory, so we are not fighting for victory but from victory. Because Christ has filled us a Helper, His Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the body and walk according to the way of Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Strengthen yourself for battle. ¹¹ *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* ¹³ *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* ¹⁴ *Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* ¹⁵ *and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.* ¹⁶ *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;* ¹⁷ *and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* ¹⁸ *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.* (Ephesians 6:11-18a ESV)

Consider well how to fight against sin. Walking in holiness is not something that happens haphazardly. Like a boxer who trains, or a general who makes plans, that battle is fought in the moment but typically won in the hours of preparation. We need to pray in preparation, and be intentional about the situations we put ourselves in, the media we consume, and meditate on that which is pure.

Put to death. ¹¹ *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* ¹² *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.* ¹³ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* (Romans 8:11-13 ESV)

Follow God's Word, not your comfort or pragmatic wisdom. In the case of the soldier, comfort won out over obeying the word of the Lord as spoken by the Prophet. In Ahab's case, it was pragmatic wisdom in securing a temporary blessing. Now the commands for us have changed, but the problem of doing what is comfortable and easy at the time has not. We must be committed to obeying God's Word even when it is not comfortable or easy.

Pray the Word

Father,

You are all-powerful and all-knowing, able to accomplish your perfect will at any place and any time. You are victorious in all things. Thank you for sending your Son to fight on our behalf through his death, burial, and resurrection. Thank you for sending you Spirit to indwell and empower us to obey your Word. Strengthen me by your Word that I may walk according to your precepts. Help me to trust your unfailing wisdom and see nothing as more important than obeying your Word. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel? _____

Life Group – 1 Kings 21:1-29 – August 11th, 2019

The Justice and Mercy of God

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Naboth and Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah
 - **Naboth:** Naboth is a God-fearing commoner with honor. He chooses to obey what he perceives to be God's will according to the Scriptures (Num. 36 and Lev. 23). He denies temporary prosperity for the sake of honoring his family and the Word of God. In exchange for his obedience and faith in God, he is killed by dishonorable men as a blasphemer. He was innocent yet suffered for righteousness' sake.
 - **Ahab:** This story is a low-point for Ahab. He now turns, as one inevitably does, from breaking the first commandment to breaking the last ones. He covets what isn't his. He encourages another Israelite to break God's law by dishonoring his father and mother. Indirectly, he incites others to bear false witness against the innocent. Indirectly, he murders Naboth then Ahab steals his vineyard. His poor view of God has revealed itself, as it always does, in injustice towards others. The end of the story reveals God is not fooled and Ahab's kingdom is taken away from him. Ahab humbles himself and repents, becoming the recipient of God's mercy.
 - **Jezebel:** As she has done in the past, she continues to do evil in this story. She entices Ahab to disregard the Word of the Lord and the dignity of human life. She manipulates the situation for her husband and commits grave injustice on behalf of and with approval of Ahab. She receives harsh judgment from the prophet Elijah, giving no sign of repentance as her husband did.
 - **Elijah:** After a brief absence from the narrative, Elijah returns into Ahab's life again in obedience to the Word of the Lord. He returns to communicate the justice of God, the very judgment that led to Ahab's repentance.
- **Compare/Contrast the characters in this story.**
 - **Elijah and Naboth:** Both are faithful to obey God. One dies, one lives. Why?
 - **Jezebel and Elijah:** "For every Jezebel that tells an Ahab to get up and do injustice, God has Elijah to whom he says get up and speak justice."¹²
 - **Naboth and Ahab:** Naboth carries himself with honor and integrity. Ahab with dishonor.
 - **Ahab and Jezebel:** Ahab humbles himself and repents before the Lord. Jezebel shows no remorse.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God owes his people nothing.**

Naboth was faithful to obey God's Word in a time where great wickedness and idolatry abounded. What was his reward (on earth)? Death by stoning. The time for his death had come. He had been faithful, but it was God's will his death would come at that moment. Why? God's ways are higher than our ways. He sees on a scale we cannot comprehend, and he owes us nothing. No matter how much we think we do for God, he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything (Acts 17). He is never in our debt. He who gives life takes away. Temporary prosperity, answers to prayers, healing

¹² Merida, 173.

from disease, and rescue from persecution are not promised to us. Tomorrow is not promised to us. There is never injustice on God's part, because God never owes anyone anything.

- **God executes justice in his own timing.**

God in his grace and mercy promises to vindicate the righteous, like Naboth, and bring judgment to the wicked, like Jezebel and Ahab (Rom. 12:19). The wicked will not go unpunished. Period. Either all of their sin will be judged in the person of Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection, or they will reject the free gift of God and experience his wrath for their sins for all eternity. That doesn't mean we always see the results of that judgment in this life. In fact, it appears that the wicked prosper, which can lead us to despair (Ps. 73). But when we go to the word of God, we know the end of the wicked is death. The Word also teaches that in Christ any suffering we experience in this world is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory to be revealed in the New Creation (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 4:17 "God defends the weak. God knows. God sees. God will judge the unjust in His own timing."¹³

- **God is merciful and gracious.**

After all that Ahab did and all the wickedness he multiplied in the land, God extends mercy and grace. Whether Ahab responded genuinely or not is beside the point, the fact is God extended his grace and mercy to Ahab regardless of the sincerity of his repentance. God was true to His Word, however it was His will to use Elijah's pronouncement of judgement to move Ahab toward repentance. God honored Ahab's repentance by delaying the judgement of his son. God is merciful and gracious, not undoing the consequences of sin yet extending mercy and grace for the navigation of the future.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **In our flesh, we are covetous people.**

To covet is to desire that which is not yours. From an early age, kids say 'mine' when it is not theirs. No one has to teach us to covet. It is a part of the inherited, depraved nature we received from Adam. In fact, coveting was a part of the original sin: Eve saw the fruit, coveted it, took it, and hid. Ahab saw the vineyard, coveted it, took it, and hid the evidence (though the Lord was not fooled). Covetousness leads to a multitude of sins, and it is ingrained in our flesh. We need the Spirit of God to come into our lives, make us new, and enable us to fulfill God's law, which includes the command, 'Do not covet.'

- **Faith in God produces honor within an individual.**

Honor refers to the "adherence to what is right or to a conventional standard of conduct". Naboth was a man of honor. "Trading or selling his property would be a disregard of the law and, thus displeasing in God's eyes, because the vineyard was his ancestral property. The Lord, the owner of all the land of Israel, had forbidden Israelite families to permanently surrender ownership of family lands (cf. Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7-9). Out of loyalty to God, Naboth declined Ahab's offer."¹⁴ Our faith in God and his Word, should produce within us a sense of honor that is revealed in loyalty to God's standard. Our faith reveals itself in obedience. *What do we see in a life lived with honor, a life lived in contrast to a wicked society?*

How does the story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Even at our lowest point, God extends mercy.**

No one is outside the reach of the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever repents and believes in the gospel, they will receive eternal life, regardless of how wicked they are currently.

¹³ Merida, 174.

¹⁴ MacArthur, 425.

Repentance— to agree with God that one is a wretched sinner bound for his wrath and turn from their lifestyle of brokenness and to Christ.

Believe— to believe that the Son of God took on flesh, lived for our righteousness, died for our sins, was buried, and rose on third day in victory over sin, death, and Satan, and committing one's life to Jesus, following after him as Lord.

- **Jesus is the greater Naboth.**

"Jesus' enemies conspired against him. They falsely accused him of blasphemy, mocked, and beat him, and eventually took him outside the city to kill him. Jesus' blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel and the blood of Naboth, for their blood cries out for vengeance, but Jesus' blood cries out with forgiveness to everyone. Jesus is the innocent scapegoat offering salvation to the world and promising that one day the cries of the martyrs will be heard and their blood avenged."¹⁵

Apply the Word

Prepare to suffer. ¹⁹ *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:19 ESV)*

³³ *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33 ESV)

Do not covet. ¹ *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?* ² *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.* ³ *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* ⁴ *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:1-4 ESV)*

Humble yourself and repent.

Live honorably. ¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (Romans 12:17 ESV)*

²¹ *for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. (2 Corinthians 8:21 ESV)*

Pray the Word

Father,

You are good regardless of my circumstances. You are just and merciful, abounding in grace and steadfast love. Any wrongs against me I leave for you to deal with in your timing according to your perfect will. Forgive me for my covetousness in _____ and lead me to walk in honor, both in your sight and in the sight of my fellow man. Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel?

¹⁵ Merida, 176.

Life Group – 1 Kings 22:1-40 – August 18th, 2019

The Vindication of the Word of God

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Jehosaphat, Ahab, Zedekiah, and Micaiah (mihk-AY-uh, AY is like the ie in lie)
 - **Jehosaphat:** This is the first time we are introduced to Asa's Son Jehosaphat, the King of Judah. He was one of the better kings of Judah and we will discuss more of his life next week. He stands out in contrast to Ahab in this story. Whereas Ahab is ready to go to battle immediately, Jehosaphat recognizes the need to first inquire of the Word of the Lord. Then, when Ahab has 400 prophets falsely speaking what Ahab wants to hear in the name of Yahweh, Jehosaphat perceives that these men do not speak the truth. He is not perfect in this story, in fact he is condemned by Jehu the prophet for his alliance (2 Chron. 19:1-3). He does set himself apart from Ahab in that he desires to hear what the Lord has to say, even though he did not listen to the warning of Micaiah.
 - **Ahab:** The reckoning Ahab had acquired through his sin had arrived. The natural consequences of his previous sins would play out due to another act of disobedience and a refusal to listen to the word of the Lord. He had great success in Israel in a worldly sense, he had peace with Judah, he defeated Syria twice, and he had a long reign of 22 years. He restored a sense of stability, short-lived as it was. He built many cities and lived in a house of prominence and wealth. His legacy, however is not remembered this way. He is remembered as an enemy of God for much, if not all of his life. Much of his legacy was wasted. He had opportunity after opportunity to repent and walk in fellowship with God, yet time and time again he disregarded the Word of the Lord and walked in great wickedness and idolatry, setting in motion events that would end with the fall of Israel and their exile into Assyria. *What can we learn from the legacy Ahab left? What would be said of your legacy if you died today? Would it be of any eternal value, or would it be merely temporary, fading into the obscurity of time?*
 - **Zedekiah:** He is the chief false prophet. He claims to speak by the Spirit of God, yet his words prove false. He failed the test of a true prophet of the Lord (Deut. 18). His message was one that tickled the ears of Ahab, deceived him, and led to his destruction.
 - **Micaiah:** He, like Elijah was previously, is the sole prophet speaking the word of truth to the King. He does not bow to the pressure of the group. He speaks the truth boldly, reveals to Ahab the deception he is under as part of a gracious warning from the Lord, and invites him to repent. Ahab refuses. Zedekiah strikes and mocks him. Micaiah is thrown in prison, continuing to urge Ahab to listen to his message and live and for the people to know the truth. "Micaiah stands as a hero of the faith, speaking God's word courageously and faithfully."¹⁶
- **What about vv. 19-23?** Micaiah warns Ahab by speaking of a vision of Heaven. It is a vision that has created much discussion, but what is occurring here is a warning to Ahab, a revelation of the sovereignty and goodness of God. "[The lying spirit] must be Satan, whom the Lord allowed to speak through 400 demons who indwelt the false prophets."¹⁷ God is sovereign over all that

¹⁶ Merida, 177.

¹⁷ MacArthur, 427.

goes on in this world, nothing occurring outside his jurisdiction. God does not tempt, but he is sovereign over the tempter, only allowing him to work within certain guidelines. This should bring great comfort to the believer because we know God is good and has given us his Word and his Spirit to empower us to walk in obedience. This section serves as an illustration of what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* God does not tempt Ahab, but allows the temptation which entices Ahab by his own flesh. God provides Ahab a way out through his prophet's warning. Ahab unfortunately did not take the way out.

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God is sovereign and good.**
- **God's Word will come to pass, and we cannot hide from it.**

Ahab did not obey God's word but he feared it enough to put on a disguise.¹⁸ Ahab foolishly thought that he could thwart God's judgment with a disguise, but God's judgment found him by seemingly "random" happenstance. An unnamed bowman fired at random, striking Ahab and causing him to bleed out as the battle went on. He did not die in glory. He died alone and in obscurity. No one can hide from God's judgment; all will be known and brought into account. No one will escape.

- **God speaks what is true, not what is comfortable.**

Sometimes God's Word cuts deep into us, rebuking us and calling us to walk in repentance. Any preaching or teaching from God's word that never convicts or confronts you in sin is not biblical preaching. God's word speaks the truth, not necessarily what we want to hear in a given moment.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **We all will face judgment and cannot hide from it.**

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27 ESV) ¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* (Hebrews 4:13 ESV) In the day of judgment, there will be no disguises, no masks. All will be laid bare. Every thought, feeling, and action done in secret will come to light and we will have to give an account. Those whom Jesus does not know as his own through faith will not be able to stand in the judgment and will face eternal condemnation.

- **We need to inquire of the Word of the Lord.**

If we are to have any hope of enduring the temptation that surrounds us and walk according to the will of the Lord, we must consult the Word of the Lord. ¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

The Holy Spirit uses our knowledge from scripture to strengthen us in the moment of temptation and decision. The Spirit works to teach us how our actions can conform to God's will. This is not a hidden "mystery" reserved for a few. It is in fact part of the Spirit's role, a role clearly revealed in the Old and New Testament.

¹⁸ lbif, 428.

How does the story foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **As Ahab was judged by God on earth, all will be judged in Heaven. Christ is the only way to escape God's wrath and enter into his mercy and grace.**

"In six plus chapters about Ahab, we learn the incredible folly of rejecting God's Word and the absolute certainty of God's judgment. Allow his story to lead you to repentance."¹⁹ Repent and believe in Christ, surrendering yourself to his Lordship. Do this before judgment comes to you, for when it does it will be too late.

Apply the Word

Know the Word of God. ³³ *Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.* ³⁴ *Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. (Psalm 119:33-34 ESV)*

Obey the Word of God. ³⁵ *Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.* ³⁶ *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!* ³⁷ *Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.* ³⁸ *Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. (Psalm 119:35-38 ESV)*

Speak the Word of God faithfully and boldly. ¹³ *With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. ...* ⁴⁶ *I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame,* ⁴⁷ *for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. (Psalm 119:13, 46-47 ESV)*

Use the Word of God to battle temptation. *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (Psalm 119:9 ESV)*

Be aware of and reject false teaching. *Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! (Psalm 119:29 ESV)*

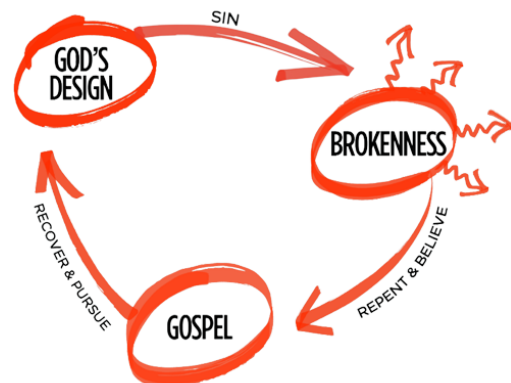
Pray the Word

Father,

Your word is altogether true and righteous. Teach me your Word that I may know you and your ways through it. Give me understanding by your Spirit that I may walk in it. I recognize that I have not been obedient to your word in _____ in my life. Lord, I repent. Strengthen me by your word that I may endure any further temptation. If there be any false teaching in me that I have embraced, Lord, please reveal it and put it far from me. I desire to walk in truth. Help me to be faithful to speak your word of grace and judgment to those in darkness that they might live. In Christ, I pray, Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel?



¹⁹ Merida, 178.

Life Group – 1 Kings 22:41-49 – August 25th, 2019

Jehosophat

Read the Word

What stands out?

- **Focal Characters:** Jehosophat

Timeline of Events in Jehosophat's Life

vv. 41-43: Jehosophat begins his reforms, continuing the work of Asa. ⁷ *In the third year of his reign he sent his officials...⁹ And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.* (2 Chronicles 17:7-9 ESV)

v. 44: Jehosophat enters into a marriage treaty with Ahab and goes to war with him. The prophet Jehu rebukes Jehosophat for his alliance with Ahab, and the relationship has a negative effect on him, his family, and the future of Judah. He nearly dies (1 Ki. 22:32-33) and of both his sons who married Ahab's daughters, one becomes king of Israel the other king of Judah. They depart from the faith and do not worship Yahweh. ² *But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD."³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God." (2 Chronicles 19:2-3 ESV)*

vv. 45-46: Jehosophat responds to the discipline of the Lord and launches a new set of reforms in the land, resulting in the eradication of the cult prostitutes, the elevation of justice, and military strength. ⁴ *Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers.⁵ He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city,⁶ and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment.* (2 Chronicles 19:4-6 ESV)

vv. 45: Jehosophat leads the people of God into victory over his enemies by declaring a fast in the land and collectively calling on the Lord for help. This results in peace in the land of Judah during his reign. ¹³ *Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.¹⁴ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.¹⁵ And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. ...²⁹ And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.* (2 Chronicles 20:13-15, 29-30 ESV)

vv. 47-50: Jehosophat makes the same mistake he made with Ahab with his son Ahaziah and is met with the same denouncement. ³⁵ *After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly.³⁶ He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber.³⁷ Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.* (2 Chronicles 20:35-37 ESV) After losing the ships, Jehosophat learned his lesson and did not again yoke himself unequally to the wicked king Ahaziah. He learned through painful experience that *bad company ruins good morals* (1 Co. 15:33).

Study the Word

What do we learn about God and what he does?

- **God is worthy of sole worship.**

Jehosaphat receives a positive review solely because he moved the people in the right direction by ridding the land of idols. However, like the kings who came before him and after him, he did not completely finish the job, ultimately leading to exile in Judah's future. God is a jealous God; he will not share affections with an idol.

- **God disciplines his children.**

God being a loving Father who disciplines his children. This is so they can be holy as He is holy. He disciplined Jehosaphat for unequally yoking himself to wicked kings. This discipline resulted in his holiness, which was the best thing for Jehosaphat. It is also the best thing for us.

What do we learn about the fallen condition of mankind in this passage?

- **We are corruptible.**

We are not so strong as to be impervious to the sin of others. If we are not intentional about the relationships in which we engage, we will be led into sin. This does not mean we do not seek the lost or engage in relationship with them. It just means it is prideful for us to think we can enter into deep and lasting partnerships with people opposed to God and not be negatively affected. Our deep relationships, relationships where hearts are shared and counsel is given, are to be with other believers. Our relationships with the lost are to be intentional and for the purpose of introducing them to Jesus through the gospel proclamation in the spirit of gentleness and respect.

- **We are foolish.**

Jehosaphat chose the lowest level of learning: experience. It was not until two occurrences of being burned by his partnership with the wicked king that he learned his lesson. The wise learn from God's word and the instruction of those God has put in their life to train them in righteousness. The foolish insist on learning by experience, and in our flesh we naturally gravitate to that position.

How does it foreshadow Christ and the Gospel?

- **Jesus is the better king.**

- **Jesus saw his ministry through to the very end.** There were no high places left at the end of His ministry. Everything the Father gave him to do, he did.
- **Jesus provided a better peace.** The peace Jehosaphat secured was achieved in unholiness and led to lack of peace with God. It was also short-lived, passing away in a matter of a generation or two. Jesus provided a peace with God and others through his holiness and sacrifice that is eternal for all who turn and believe in Christ. This peace has not yet been revealed in its fullness but will be fully revealed when God remakes the heavens and the earth and forever dwells with his people in the new creation.
- **Jesus possessed a greater wisdom.** Jesus never had to learn of the evil consequences of sin through experience. In his wisdom, he was tempted in every way we are, yet he never sinned. He knew of sin's destruction revealed in the word of God, and he trusted the Word and lived by it. He did not need the experience of a negative consequence of sin to teach him. He had the greater wisdom of perfectly knowing and living by the Word of God.

Apply the Word

Root out the idols. *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24 ESV)*

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21 ESV)

"Whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, that is your God." –Martin Luther

"The idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone." – J.A. Motyer

What are idols in your life? Why is it necessary to root them out completely? How has this session on 1 Kings emphasized that truth?

Submit to the discipline of the Lord. ⁷ *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:7-13 ESV)*

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1 ESV)

Pursue good community. ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV)*

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." (1 Corinthians 15:33 ESV)

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV) [This command refers to all kinds of human relationships beyond just marriage, but including marriage—deep friendships, counselors, business partners, etc.] What does the community in your life look like?

Pray the Word

Father,

You alone are God. Empower me by your Spirit to put to death any idol my heart clings to instead of you. Let me have no other god before you and let it be that I make no idol in your place. Father, help me to see your discipline and submit to it that it may yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Let me live in wisdom by your word and not in foolishness. Lord, help me to evaluate the relationships in my life. If they are not leading me closer to you, give me the faith to trust that you are better than any earthly relationship. Thank you for the church you have graciously established for the purpose of being a community of faith that spurs one another on in faith, love, and good works. In Christ, Amen.

Share the Word

How could this story be used to share the gospel?

