



SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
1 KINGS

24 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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DAY 1

Introduction

Originally one book, 1 and 2 Kings follow Israel from Solomon's reign through the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. A key theme in 1 Kings is the importance of leadership. As we read about the kings we see a direct correlation between the state of a king and the state of the nation. Sinful kings set the tone for the nation to rebel against Yahweh and follow false gods. Righteous kings lead the nation to repent and obey Him.

This period in history reveals many important characteristics of God. We see His mercy displayed as He patiently gives Israel the opportunity to turn back to Him. We see His grace as He sends prophets to warn the people of the consequences of disobedience. We see His justice and His holiness as He sends Israel and Judah into exile for their consistent rebellion. We also see God's faithfulness as He promises to bring His people back from captivity (Isaiah 44:28-45:1) and, in His perfect timing, delivers on that promise (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God what He wants to do in your life through your time with Him in 1 Kings. Record what He says so you can look back on it when you finish this devotional.
2. God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He is still a holy God who requires us to submit to Him. He will still discipline those who reject Him. Pray for Canada today. Pray that the Church would arise and lead the nation to repent of our wicked ways and follow Jesus.

DAY 2**READ:** 1 Kings 1

David has ruled Israel for forty years, leading them through war and rebellion. Under his rule, Israel moved from a group of semi-autonomous tribes to a unified nation with a single king and capital city (Jerusalem). David has modelled for his subjects how to live a life "after God's own heart." Whenever he fell into sin, David repented, turning wholeheartedly back to a relationship with God. Now, this beloved king is sick. He is nearing his last days and the entire nation is holding its breath: what will happen next?

Adonijah, one of David's sons, sees an opportunity to act. He gathers chariots, horsemen and supporters in a daring act to set himself up as the next king of Israel. They must act quickly and secretly. Those loyal to David cannot know what is afoot or Adonijah's plans will be thwarted.

However, such events can never remain a secret. Nathan, a prophet loyal to David, hears about the rebellion. He quickly approaches Bathsheba to share the news. Adonijah must be stopped. Bathsheba's life is in danger, as is that of her son, Solomon. She flees to the sickly David and presents her case. While Bathsheba is explaining the events to David, Nathan enters and confirms her story. People are already saying "Love live King Adonijah," even though David has not bestowed this title. In his last official act as king, David must stop the rebellion and install Solomon as the rightful king.

While Adonijah is feasting with his followers, he hears a commotion in the distance. Jonathon, son of Abiathar the priest, gives the news to Adonijah. Solomon has been crowned king. As a symbol of authority Solomon is already sitting on the royal throne. The dinner guests are terrified. If they are caught supporting Adonijah, their lives may be at stake. Their apparent loyalty is proven false as they flee, valuing their own safety more than their support of Adonijah. Adonijah now has only one choice: fall before Solomon and plead for forgiveness. Solomon wisely declares that Adonijah's judgment will be determined when his true worth is revealed.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- 1 Kings 1:6 tells us that David did not question Adonijah's actions leading up to the rebellion. While we cannot say for sure, this verse hints that the rebellion could have been stopped pre-emptively if David kept a closer watch over those in his responsibility. Ask God if there is anyone in your sphere of influence who is showing signs of unrepentant sin. Pray for God to bring this person to repentance. Ask Him if there is anything He would like you to do in this situation. Perhaps He wants you to lovingly but firmly approach this person or maybe He wants you to commit to interceding over the situation.
- Solomon displayed great wisdom by delaying his verdict on Adonijah (v 52). Rather than reacting to Adonijah in a time of heightened emotions, Solomon waited to determine how best to deal with Adonijah's rebellion. Have you ever faced negative consequences because you acted rashly? Ask God to show you how to make decisions wisely instead of rashly.
- Pray for unity in the Church today. Ask the Lord to be merciful towards those who struggle with rebellion and to bring them to repentance.

DAY 3

 **READ:** 1 Kings 2

1 Kings 2 tells us how Solomon consolidated his power as king. The chapter begins with David on his deathbed. As is often the case with people facing long-term illness, David knows his death is drawing near. He calls Solomon and bestows a final fatherly charge: serve God and lead your kingdom. David exhorts Solomon to obey the Law in everything he does. Further, he gives Solomon practical advice on leading his kingdom, in particular how to deal with political threats. After guiding his beloved son, David passes away and is buried in Jerusalem.

The rest of chapter 2 unfolds with Solomon fulfilling the second half of his father's charge. First, Solomon deals with his rebellious half-brother, Adonijah. The story begins when Adonijah requests Abishag the Shunammite as a wife. Adonijah approaches Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, as a way of avoiding a direct request to the king. Solomon puts Adonijah to death for this request. This decision seems odd from a modern, Western perspective. However, Abishag was considered part of King David's harem, even though she remained a virgin. Marrying her would be a symbolic attempt to lay claim to the throne (for other examples of marriage as a royal claim, see 2 Samuel 3:6-7, 12:7-8, and 16:20-24). This request proved that Adonijah was unrepentant and disloyal. If Solomon did not punish

him, Adonijah would continue to rebel and attempt to take the throne.

Second, Solomon removes Abiathar from the priesthood for siding with Adonijah in the rebellion. Solomon says, "... you deserve to die [for your rebellion], but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before my father David, and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted." Solomon shows mercy for Abiathar's former service, while acknowledging that punishment is necessary for his recent actions. Third, Solomon orders that Joab be put to death for murdering Abner and Amasa (v 5). Finally, Solomon punishes Shimei for cursing David at Mahanaim (v 8). David had promised not to kill Shimei for this curse, so Solomon devises a clever scheme. He forbids Shimei from ever leaving Jerusalem. Three years later, Solomon knows immediately when Shimei goes to Gath, indicating that Solomon was keeping close watch on him. For breaking the terms of his house arrest, Shimei is put to death.

Solomon has now defeated these threats to his reign and "the kingdom is firmly in his hands" (v 46). Defeating his opponents will give Solomon the liberty to diligently lead his kingdom instead of constantly vying for power. It will free his time, energy, and resources to be used for governing, rather than fighting.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- This chapter shows that rebellion carries serious consequences. Ask God to search your heart. Are there any situations where you are rebelling (outwardly – through action, or inwardly – through thoughts and motives) against your family, employer or other leaders?
- If Solomon had ignored the disloyal people around him, he might have had to spend a great deal of his reign quashing rebellions. This would limit him from doing beneficial things for the kingdom. Is there a situation in your life that you are avoiding dealing with? Ask God to show you any good things this is keeping you from. Also, ask Him how He would like you to deal with the situation.
- Pray for government today. Pray that God would empower our leaders (locally, provincially and nationally) to focus on governing instead of vying for political power. Pray that God would give them wisdom, insight and creativity in their positions. Pray that many of our leaders would choose to submit themselves as tools to advance God's kingdom in our nation.

DAY 4

 **READ:** 1 Kings 3

Now that Solomon has firmly established his reign over Israel, we can observe how he conducts himself as king. First, he chooses Pharaoh's daughter to be his wife. It is likely that, by outward affirmation if not inward belief, she converted from the Egyptian faith to Judaism prior to marriage. If this were not the case, Solomon would be breaking the Law by marrying her (Deut. 7:2-4). At the time, Solomon was abiding by the Law as fully as possible (v 3). Further, Egyptian gods are noticeably absent from the list of foreign gods Solomon eventually worshipped (1 Kings 11:5-6). However, this marriage was a case of following the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law. By accepting a foreign wife, Solomon began to blur the lines of morality – both for himself and the subjects who

followed him. The human heart is wicked and deceitful. Our broken nature will default to going as close to the line as possible without crossing over. Brothers and sisters, this is not true obedience. A truly obedient heart eagerly seeks to fulfill God's commands out of love for Him, not simply to meet a minimum behavioural threshold.

Despite this indicator of a straying heart, the Scriptures tell us that Solomon "loved the Lord." He sacrifices one thousand burnt offerings – a truly extravagant display of love! When we lavish our love upon God, He loves to respond to us! In this case, God appears to Solomon in a dream. God tells Solomon, "Ask what you wish me to give you" (v 5). Solomon displays humility in his response. He admits that he is ill-equipped to lead a nation and asks God for an understanding heart to judge and the ability to discern between good and evil (v 9). This humble prayer pleases God greatly. He chooses not only to grant Solomon wisdom as requested, but also riches and honour. Matthew 7:11 reflects this sentiment: "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Chapter 3 closes with a display of Solomon's wise judgement. God's gift is clearly at work here! In this familiar story, two women of harlotry bring a child before Solomon, each claiming she is the mother. Solomon wisely appeals to a property law (Ex 21:35). While it was not his intention to literally cut the child in half, Solomon uses this ruling as a test to reveal the real mother. The result of the case is far-reaching. "When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice" (v 28).

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What is the heart behind your obedience? Are there any areas where you are outwardly obeying God, but inwardly toeing the line? Is the position of your heart one that joyfully obeys or one that desires to go as far as possible without being caught? Confess as necessary. Ask God to grow your desire to follow Him (Philippians 2:13).
2. Solomon offered an extravagant sacrifice (v 4) out of his love for Yahweh. He recognized that whatever we have is merely on loan from our Creator. Solomon gave his possessions back to God, because he knew God is worthy of everything we have and everything we are. While most people do not have the resources available to kings, we are all required to give whatever we have wholeheartedly to Jesus. What would living a life of extravagant, loving sacrifice look like for you? Ask God to show you how you can present yourself completely as a love offering to Him.
3. True obedience comes from knowing God intimately, walking with Him closely and loving Him deeply. Ask God to speak to you about who He is today. Journal what He reveals to you. Does this affect how you feel about obedience?

DAY 5

 **READ:** 1 Kings 4

Solomon, as a wise king, established structure. Wisdom dictates that one person cannot do everything. Thus, Solomon set officials over the various departments in his kingdom. Solomon chose to adopt several of David's officials as his own, because David had exercised sound judgment during his reign. Zadok and Abiathar were priests under both Solomon

and David (v 4, 2 Sam. 20:25). Benaiah remained leader of the army (v 4, 2 Sam 23:20-23). Solomon's choice of officials displayed respect for his father and adherence to the fifth commandment: "Honour your mother and your father, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex 20:12).

Next, we read of Solomon's great riches (v 21-28). The Lord has fulfilled his promise to multiply Solomon's wealth and honour (3:13). Solomon also recognized that the riches in Israel must be properly managed. He set up a system whereby one official was responsible for each month of the year (v 7, 27). Each official had a region he managed. When it was a region's appointed month, they were required to provide resources for the king. This system limited the unfair distribution of wealth that is common when one region alone provides for a monarch (and thereby struggles to grow their own economy), while another (namely the region in which the monarch resides) benefits economically from him.

We see two insights into Solomon's character in this chapter. The first insight is into Solomon's heart. In 1 Kings 3 we saw Solomon's willingness to compromise with a spouse. Here we see his willingness to blur the lines of the laws for kings (see Deut 17:16, which prohibits a king from amassing horses). The way a person sets up the practical aspects of their life reflects the true nature of their heart before God. Second, we are reminded of Solomon's exceptional wisdom, which far surpassed that of his contemporaries. Solomon's wisdom drew many pilgrims, keeping Israel in the international spotlight.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God loves structure and order. This is displayed by His choice to include detailed lists of kings' official leadership structures in Scripture. Ask God how you can grow in managing the life He has given you. Ask God to speak to you about any changes you need to make in organizing/managing the following areas:
 1. Your schedule
 2. Your relationships
 3. Your finances and physical belongings
2. Ask God for grace to grow in managing your life under His direction. If you are naturally disorganized, pray for empowerment to take responsibility over the things in your care. If you are naturally over-organized, pray for the ability to release control and trust God. Pray that God's people would be a light to the world through how they steward their lives and resources.

DAY 6

 **READ:** 1 Kings 5

God promised David that his son would reign and build a temple for Yahweh in Israel (2 Sam 7:12-13). The first half of this promise has been fulfilled – Solomon is on the throne. Now it is time to complete the second half by beginning work on the temple. Hiram, king of Tyre to the north, sends an ambassador to congratulate Solomon on becoming king. An intended by-product of sending a delegation to Solomon was renewing the friendship formed between Tyre and Israel during the reign of David. In response, Solomon strikes a business deal with Hiram. In order to build the temple, Solomon would need building materials. Solomon offers to provide food and wages for Hiram's servants if they will

provide him with quality cut timber (a specialty of Hiram's kingdom). Hiram agrees and the deal is fulfilled (v 10-11). This transaction allowed the neighbouring kingdoms to develop peaceful relations and form a treaty (v 12). Solomon also contracted workers from within Israel to transport timber from the coast (v 9) and to mine and cut valuable stones for the temple's foundations (v 17).

Solomon could have chosen a lower grade of materials in order to complete the temple quicker and at a lower financial cost. He could have chosen wood from within Israel's borders and kept the funds paid to Hiram in his own kingdom. However, Solomon knew this would be unacceptable. The Lord is a glorious king! While no human effort can build a temple worthy of His splendour, Solomon wanted to present the best temple possible as an offering to God.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God is pleased when we offer our best to Him. He is worth everything we are and everything we have! Spend some time praising God for His glory today. He is the matchless king upon the throne! If you need help with this, meditate on Isaiah 6:1-7.
2. God always fulfills His promises. One of the ways we can grow to become more like Him is learning to do the things we say we will do. Solomon fulfilled his pledge to Hiram, and God honoured him by recording it in Scripture. Are there any promises you have broken or not completed? If it is still possible, commit to fulfilling them.
3. Pray for your family today. Reflect on the things God has taught you through the Scripture passage you read today, and pray that your family members would grow in these areas. Ask God to display His glory to your family, so they would know Him more.

DAY 7



READ: 1 Kings 6

In 1 Kings 6 we are given a detailed description of the temple as it is built. The Scripture records the dimensions, materials, architectural features, and artistic details of the temple. Again we see that no detail is spared in honouring the true King. Great care and attention are taken. Seven years are spent completing the temple (v 38). This is not a small job.

At some point during the construction period, the Lord appears to Solomon. God does not want Solomon to become discouraged that the process is taking so long. Solomon must not lose heart and give up. God tells Solomon, "I see your work and dedication. Great blessing lies at the finish line." He further reminds Solomon of the purpose behind this job. It is not merely a construction site or a national job-creation program. The temple will be a place to teach God's statutes and ordinances. This project will have eternal implications as it will lead people into obedient relationships with Yahweh.

While we cannot know for certain the state of Solomon's heart before hearing from God, we do know about his heart afterwards. Because of this meeting, "Solomon built the house and finished it."



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you discouraged about anything today? Sometimes we work with all of our might, seemingly to no avail. We do everything we can and do not see any fruit for our efforts. God sees your heart and your work. This is true in your prayers, your family, your career, your education, your ministry and every other area of life. Let God speak to you today. Ask Him to encourage you to run the race set before you (1 Corinthians 9:24).
2. God longs to give us everything we need to complete the tasks He sets before us. He encourages us, strengthens us, gives us spiritual gifts and material resources, and so much more. Reflect on the ways He has helped you so far in the area you just prayed about. Spend time in thanksgiving - He has brought you this far and He wants to continue to help you!
3. Pray for parents you know today (including yourself if you have children!). Raising children is a special calling, which brings a set of joys, struggles, triumphs and disappointments. Pray that God would encourage his people in their parenting. Pray that, as people reflect on their Heavenly Father, they would *become* godly fathers and mothers. Pray that God would grow fruit in children because of the efforts of godly parents.

DAY 8



READ: 1 Kings 7

Just as his father was a renowned warrior, Solomon was a renowned builder. Solomon commissioned and oversaw the building of the God's house. This took seven years. After building the temple, Solomon commissioned and oversaw the construction of several buildings for his own house. This took thirteen years. Solomon's personal buildings included a gathering hall ("the house of the forest of Lebanon," v 2), a colonnade ("hall of pillars," v 6), the "Hall of Justice" (where he conducted his judicial work, v 7), his personal palace (v 8), and a palace for his wife (v 8).

Chapter 7 closes with a description of the brass work Solomon commissioned for the temple. This section is out of order chronologically, as Solomon commissioned this work before the temple was completed (2 Chronicles 2). He employed a man named Hiram for this job (v 13). This man should not be confused with Hiram, king of Tyre, from 1 Kings 5. Indeed, the king of Tyre sent this similarly-named man to Solomon as a worker (2 Chronicles 2:12-13 - Here King Hiram is called Hiram and Hiram the worker is called Hiram-abi). Hiram's father was from Tyre and his mother from Israel. His heritage gave him both the skills of a craftsman and the heart for Yahweh needed to work on the temple instruments. The extravagant offering of the temple continues, as the amount of brass used was so large it could not be measured (v 47).

In this chapter, we see another indication that Solomon's heart was not entirely dedicated to the Lord. Surely, Solomon loved God or he would not have built such an excellent temple. However, Solomon's personal buildings exceeded those he built for the Lord. Solomon's story is a complex one, filled with mixed motives. In one moment we see Him make offerings to Yahweh. In the next we see Him compromising the integrity of his dedication to God in the name of personal gain.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Scripture elevates Solomon as a builder and a wise man. These are both gifts from God. What gifts has God given you? How has He uniquely molded and created you? Ask Him how He wants you to use your gifts and characteristics.
2. Solomon and Hiram came from different family backgrounds, but both were able to play a role in God's story because of their upbringing. God wants you to play a role in His story, and placed you in the specific upbringing you had for a reason. Sometimes he blesses people with a strong foundation because they are born into faithful families. Sometimes he blesses people with the chance to build character and reliance on Him because they were born into more difficult family situations. Ask God to reveal part of the reason why He gave you your personal upbringing and family heritage.
3. Pray for Christians in the marketplace today. Pray that they would work diligently and with integrity. Pray that how they work would reflect how God works. Pray that they would lead co-workers, employers, employees, clients and customers closer to God through both their deeds and their words. Ask God to empower them with the gifts and abilities needed to perform their jobs.

DAY 9**READ:** 1 Kings 8

The temple is completed. The implements are made and preparations set in place. Israel is gathered at Jerusalem for the dedication of the temple. The priests bring the Ark of the Covenant into the Most Holy place, reminding us of the sacred position Yahweh deserves. His holiness deserves the deepest, most reverential place in our hearts. God, seeing the worship in Israel's hearts, descends into the temple, filling it with the cloud of His presence. His glory is so strong that only the High Priest may enter the Holy of Holies. And then, he may only enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. Sin cannot live in the presence of holiness, preventing the priests (sinful humans, like you and I) from entering God's presence fully.

Solomon first dedicates the temple before the assembly of Israel, praising God for fulfilling His promises (v 15-20). Next, Solomon turns to the altar and pours out his prayers to Yahweh. Solomon worships God and asks God to hear his prayers, even in light of His holiness (v 23-28). The heart of this prayer is this: while God's holiness requires discipline for the sinful, His love will show mercy to the truly repentant. The temple is established as a focal point for God's relationship with Israel. It is meant to be a house of prayer, where man can communicate with God (Isaiah 56:7). God's desire, beginning with Adam and Eve and extending into eternity is to be in close relationship with mankind. The temple system is a key point in God's history with mankind. God's presence in the temple gives us a taste of intimacy with Him, whetting our appetites for more. However, it also reveals how our sin keeps us separated from God, even though He remains close to us (Hebrews 9:8-12). Sin will always create a barrier in our relationship with Him. Thus, the temple system revealed the void which could only be filled by Christ's death and resurrection.

While growing our hunger for God and revealing the impossibility of reaching Him on our own, the temple also foreshadows our eternity with Him. God's presence came from heaven and filled a place on earth. The Israelites feasted and celebrated His presence.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Read Hebrews 9:8-12. Meditate on how the temple reveals our need for Jesus' work on the Cross.
2. This chapter reveals many of God's attributes, whether explicitly written in the text or hinted at through the events and prayers that take place. Review the chapter you just read and list as many of God's attributes as you can in your journal. Spend some time praising Him for who He is.
3. The gift of salvation and eternal life is too wonderful for words. The thought of walking in intimacy with God for eternity stirs our hearts deeply. Pray for your loved ones who do not yet know Christ. Pray that God would stir the longing for eternity that He has written on their hearts. Pray that they would grow in their desire for God, their awareness of the problem of sin, and in their knowledge of what Christ has done for us. Pray that you would be able to spend eternity in heaven with these loved ones!

DAY 10**READ:** 1 Kings 9

When the festivities fade and the revelers go home, we are left with silence. In the silence, the true quality of our relationship with God is revealed. Were our hearts filled with joy because of the corporate merriment or because of God? God, the revealer of all truth, will help us find the answer if we will listen. After the temple dedication, God appears to Solomon at Gibeon. Solomon's heart blessed God, and such his prayers were heard. God reminds Solomon of the promised blessings that will arise from obedience. He also reminds Solomon of the necessary discipline if Solomon and Israel turn to sin. God knows mankind is quick to forget, so He is quick to remind us.

Solomon continues on in his kingly duties. His agreement with Hiram of Tyre is completed, and Solomon gives Hiram an additional twenty cities in Galilee. As these cities were not mentioned in the original contract, we do not know definitively why Solomon gives them to Hiram. It is possible that they are a goodwill offering between neighbours, or that they were part of a different agreement seeing Hiram gain the cities in exchange for 120 talents of gold (v 14). Rather than accepting the cities, Hiram rejects them, even naming the region "Calum" or "as good as nothing."

The chapter closes with a further account of Solomon's greatness. We are reminded of his impressive building accomplishments (v 15-19 and 24), his workers and servants (v 19-23), his personal devotion to God (v 25), and his merchant fleet (v 26-28). Solomon's splendour as king benefitted Israel's international reputation. All eyes were on God's chosen people.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Often people swing to one extreme or another in mindset. We are either entirely negative, forgetting that there is always hope in Jesus, or entirely positive, not acknowledging the reality of our situations. God offers us a balanced, *true* perspective. When He spoke to Solomon, God offered encouragement and warnings, knowing that Solomon needed both. Do you tend to lean to pervasive negativity or idealistic positivity? Confess this to God and ask Him to renew your mind.
2. Reflect on a difficult situation you are currently facing (or one you recently walked through). Ask God how your natural tendencies toward positivity or negativity have affected how you have approached this situation. Then ask Him to speak His *true* perspective to you.
3. Praise God – He hears our prayers! “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14). What are your deepest desires? Perhaps you are facing a family crisis or a difficult season at work. Maybe someone you love is facing illness or has walked away from God and His Church. Maybe your heart yearns to see God transform our nation. Present these longings to God. Ask Him how you can pray, listen to His response, and then pray what He shows you. When we submit our desires to God and pray in accordance with Scripture and His direction, we are promised our prayers will be heard!

DAY 11**READ:** 1 Kings 10

1 Kings 10 shows Solomon at the pinnacle of his majesty. First we read of the Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon. The Queen has heard of Solomon’s fame and knows that it is somehow connected to his God (v 1). She intends to question him and determine if his reputation is accurate. After hearing Solomon’s wise answers to her questions and seeing his house, servants, and other material accomplishments, and observing his devoutness, the queen’s inquisitive mind is satisfied. Beyond mere satisfaction, the queen is actually amazed at what she sees. She responds by declaring the blessings of Solomon, his people and his God. In parting, she gives Solomon a lavish gift of gold and spices. This fulfilled David’s prophetic psalm concerning Solomon (Ps 72:15). Solomon responded with gifts of his own, solidifying a relationship between the two monarchs (v 13).

The rest of chapter 10 consists of a description of Solomon’s many riches. He grows these riches through trade and tariffs as Israel is at a strategic position where many trading routes meet (v 15). He is a partner with Hiram’s Tarshish fleet (v 22), received much in gifts (v 24), and traded with Egypt (v 28-29). Solomon personally enjoys some of his riches. For example, he builds a lavish throne and surrounds himself with gold shields and drinking glasses. We must take this description of Solomon in the context of the entire Bible. In 1 Kings 3 Solomon did not ask God for riches, but for a wise and understanding heart. Further, Solomon also wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, a central theme in which is the folly of setting our hearts on worldly riches. While we must study this description of Solomon and acknowledge his majesty, we should not believe that this is the standard set out for all people. Money and material possessions are not evil in and of themselves. However, we must always set the truth in our minds that loving money before God is the root of many evils (1 Timothy 6:10).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. What does it say about worldly riches? Ask God to search your heart in this area. Confess as necessary.
2. Pray for our government today. Pray that how they govern would lead people to worship God, just as Solomon’s governance led the Queen of Sheba to exalt God. Pray that our national, provincial and local leaders would stand firm for godly morality. Pray that they would experience God, learn about his heart for people, and boldly enact His wishes.

DAY 12**READ:** 1 Kings 11

In his youth, Solomon loved Yahweh. He built the temple, offered extravagant sacrifices and followed the Law. However, there were seeds of compromise in his heart. Now, in his later years, his heart is fully turned from God. After pushing boundaries with his first wife, the Pharaoh’s daughter, Solomon marries other foreign women. He has “seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away” (v 3). Solomon has broken each of the commands God laid out for Israel’s king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). He has directly disobeyed God’s command (v 1-2) and is now facing the Lord’s anger (v 9). God had previously warned Solomon against rebelling. Now the royal line will not remain intact for Solomon’s son (v-11-13). It is only because of David’s righteousness that one tribe will remain in Solomon’s line.

God responds to Solomon’s disobedience by raising up adversaries: Hadad the Edomite and Rezon, son of Eliada (v 14, 23). We are not told what Hadad did to Solomon, but we know that Rezon led a band of marauders (v 24). God is sovereign. Both of these adversaries had grievances that began in the time of David (v 15-17 and 24). It has been a decade since David’s death and God is just now allowing these men to cause trouble for Solomon. God protected Solomon while he was faithful. Now that Solomon has stirred up God’s wrath, God is allowing these adversaries as punishment.

The key curse brought by Solomon’s disobedience was a division of the kingdom. The ten northern tribes will be given to one of Solomon’s servants (v 11), a disgraceful legacy for the king. Before Solomon’s death, his servant Jeroboam meets the prophet Ahijah. Ahijah prophesies that Jeroboam will be the servant to take control of the ten tribes (v 30-39). At this, Solomon seeks to put Jeroboam to death, but Jeroboam flees to Egypt for refuge (v 40).

Solomon reigned over Israel for forty years. For much of that time he was praised as wise, industrious and majestic. However, in the end his heart proved unfaithful. He turned from Yahweh to foreign gods. He chose to follow his fleshly desires instead of God’s perfect laws. In Solomon’s judgment we see that our disobedience cannot cancel out God’s faithfulness. God promised that a member of David’s line will sit on the throne in Jerusalem forever. He grants that Judah will remain in control of the Southern Kingdom (along with Benjamin), while the remaining ten tribes will split off. Solomon ended his life in disgrace, but David’s promise will be fulfilled. Through David’s line, the Messiah will be born. He will be the eternal King, reigning over Israel (and the whole earth) forevermore.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Spend some time in confession today. Ask God to search your heart and root out any sinful thoughts, motives, or actions that may prevent you from finishing your life faithfully before Him.
2. We must take God seriously. He fulfills His promises of blessing and He fulfills His warnings of judgment. Is there any area where you have ignored God's warnings? Confess and repent of this. Commit to following through on what God has shown you.
3. Do you believe, even in a hidden corner of your heart, that your imperfection can prevent God from working? Ask God to speak to you about His sovereignty today.

DAY 13**READ:** 1 Kings 12

Another king has died. When David's reign neared its end there was trouble concerning his successor. So too there will be trouble concerning Solomon's successor. Whenever there is a seat of power available, the wicked hearts of humans will seek after it. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was the designated successor. After his father's death, Rehoboam went to Shechem to be crowned king over Israel. Meanwhile, Jeroboam was returning from Egypt. He intended to fulfill the prophecy given to him by Ahijah (1 Kings 11:30-39). Along with the assembly of Israel, Jeroboam offered a truce to Rehoboam. If Rehoboam would lessen the hard yoke given by Solomon, the kingdom could remain peaceful. First, Rehoboam consulted the elders of his father, who counselled Rehoboam to oblige to Jeroboam's request. Then, Rehoboam consulted his peers, who said to reject Jeroboam's requests and increase the yoke on the people. Rehoboam foolishly accepted the advice of his peers. This event was orchestrated by God, to allow the nation of Israel to split according to Solomon's curse (v 15). Those who live in the cities of Judah continue to follow Rehoboam. The rest of the nation splits off and crowns Jeroboam as their king. We now see the clear division of the nation: the Northern Kingdom (called Israel) is led by Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom (called Judah) is led by Rehoboam. Such was the division that God had to speak through a prophet to prevent the two kingdoms from going to war (v 21-24).

Now we see the first of the truly wicked kings. David, Solomon, and even Saul are all remembered with a mix of positive and negative descriptions. In David's case, he repented and moved from a negative legacy to a positive one. In Saul and Solomon's cases, they turned to sin repeatedly and ended their reigns with a bad legacy. We are told nothing positive of Jeroboam's character. He led the Northern Kingdom to idolatry. His heart was so greedy for power that he was afraid to allow his subjects to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, lest their hearts be turned to Rehoboam. He built two golden calves, one at Bethel and one at Dan, and commanded his subjects to worship there. He instituted his own feasts to compete with those ordained by God. As king, Jeroboam set the tone for his nation. From the beginning, the Northern Kingdom is known for their sinful ways.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. When we read about the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, it can be easy to get confused. The Holy Spirit decided to go back and forth between kingdoms when He wrote the Bible so we could understand how the kings affected, related to and

contrasted each other. Set up a system to keep yourself organized and understanding as you study this passage of Scripture. For example, you could underline a king's name in your Bible in one colour if he led Israel and another colour if he led Judah. You could also mark whether they are remembered as evil or good in the margins. Doing this for all of the kings will give you a visual cue to remember which kingdom you are reading about. Or you could also make a chart in your journal with "Northern Kingdom" as the title of one column and "Southern Kingdom" as the title of the other, and in each column include the kings' names, length of reign, and any other details you would like. You could also draw a diagram or set up a completely different system that works for how God made your brain!

2. The source of our advice can have serious consequences. In Rehoboam's case, listening to one group over another changed the course of an entire nation. Who do you go to for advice? Ask God if you are seeking wise counsel. If not, ask Him to show you specific people you can turn to for godly counsel.
3. Pray for Israel today. As we study the nation's history, we must also look to its present and future. Pray that God would strengthen the churches in Israel. Pray that He would give believers the spiritual gifts and tools they need to make disciples. Pray that God would protect Israel, as it is surrounded by enemies. Pray that, just as in biblical times, God's name would be exalted through the nation of Israel.

DAY 14**READ:** 1 Kings 13

When God sees His people straying, He sends them opportunities to return to Him. These opportunities may come in the form of a friendly face, a tragedy or the inner nudges of a person's conscience. In the time of the kings, God often provided these opportunities through prophets. In this story, Jeroboam, ruler of the Northern Kingdom, is worshipping at his false altar. A man of God from the Southern Kingdom comes to Jeroboam and prophesies against the altar. He foretells of King Josiah who will destroy the false altars. Josiah ruled about three hundred years after Jeroboam. God gave the Northern Kingdom three centuries to repent before raising up Josiah to cleanse the nation of idols. This prophecy can serve to strengthen our faith in the reliability of God's spoken and written Word. When God says something He will follow through.

After his encounter with Jeroboam at the false altar, the unnamed prophet continues on his way. He refuses to eat the food offered to him by Jeroboam. God had forbidden the prophet from eating or drinking anything while he was in the Northern Kingdom. To become comfortable in the sinful nation would leave the prophet at risk of being influenced by the sins surrounding him. An old prophet lived in the area. He hears of this man of God and sets his resolve to invite this man into his home. The old prophet lies to the new one, tricking him into breaking his vow not to eat or drink. The old prophet claims God told him it was okay for the new prophet to eat in the old prophet's home. It would be easy to make excuses for the new prophet's disobedience. He was lied to, tricked into believing God was speaking something different. However, the new prophet was responsible for following God to the best of His conscience's ability. Even if God had spoken to the old prophet, the new prophet believed that God had spoken to him. It would have been better for the new prophet to follow his conscience, even if he was incorrect, than

to disregard it and fall into sin. We are told nothing of the new prophet inquiring of God personally on this matter. He did not ask God to confirm the old prophet's words; he simply took these words as truth. The consequences of the new prophet's disobedience are dire: his punishment is death.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to speak to you about your future today. Record what He says, big or small, in your journal. You may understand what God reveals to you immediately or it may be hazy. Tell God that you trust Him to fulfill what He has shown you. Pray that, when He fulfills this word, He will remind you of this devotional time and build your faith.
2. God forgives our inability to hear Him perfectly. He expects us to follow Him to the best of our ability and gives us mercy and grace where we fail. Have you ever thought you were hearing God and it turned out it wasn't Him speaking after all? Reflect on this time of hearing Him incorrectly. Ask God to show you why He allowed you to misinterpret Him. What does He want you to learn from this?
3. Thank God for giving the gift of prophecy to His Church. God gave prophets to encourage the Church where she is faithful, strengthen the Church where she is weak, speak to the Church where she has not been able to hear and warn the Church where she has been disobedient. Pray that churches across Canada would learn to love God's voice. Pray that believers would seek His will when making decisions and turn to Him when they need wisdom. Pray that Christ's bride in Canada would earnestly desire to hear His voice.

DAY 15

 **READ:** 1 Kings 14

1 Kings 14 continues with the story of Jeroboam. His son, Abijah, has fallen ill. Jeroboam convinces his wife to disguise herself and go to the prophet Ahijah to inquire about their son's future. The all-knowing Lord saw these schemes. Before Jeroboam's wife could reach Ahijah, the Lord met the prophet. God told him in advance what to say. It was a prophecy of doom for Jeroboam's family. Abijah will die and be buried. The rest of Jeroboam's family will die in an undignified matter, their bodies will be eaten by animals and not a single one will have a proper burial. God will raise up a new king to lead Israel – one who will permanently cut off the house of Jeroboam. However, Israel's idolatry will not be forgotten. Because of their sin, Israel will be sent out of the land. God is just. He warned about the possibility of exile several times before using it as a punishment (Deut. 28:63-64, 29:28; Joshua 23:15-16; 1 Kings 8:33-34, 46-53). To signify the reliability of the prophecy, Jeroboam's son dies as soon as his wife enters the city (v 12, 17).

Now the story switches gears. The focus shifts from the Northern Kingdom to the Southern Kingdom. A glimmer of hope for Judah still lies in our hearts. Maybe they have remained faithful, despite Israel's sin. Under Rehoboam, Judah has turned to sin just as their northern brothers did. The Southern Kingdom has built high places, sacred pillars and Asherim (v 23). They are engaging in prostitution as part of their idol worship (v 24). The writer sums it up by saying, "[Judah] did according to the nations which the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel" (v 24). This sentence foreshadows what is to come for Judah. Again, God is just. We can discern that He will deal with Judah's sins as He dealt with the sins of those

who previously inhabited the land. He will patiently wait, giving Judah many chances to repent. If they do not turn, they will be sent away from the Promised Land.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The Israelites built idols made of stone, wood and clay. We build our idols out of things found more firmly rooted in our contemporary culture. Our idols are hobbies, media, social approval, etc. Our idols are anything we fear, desire and/or love more than God. Ask God to search your heart. Do you have any idols in your life? Confess and repent. Ask God for practical steps in permanently removing this idol from your life.
2. Ask God to show you His heart: Why does He hate idolatry so much?
3. Pray for our country today. Our nation is full of idols. Our culture celebrates idolatry. It teaches children how to establish these false gods in their lives. This is not okay. Pray that God would raise up leaders to return our country to the worship of the One True God. Pray that these leaders would not be afraid to destroy the idols we have built. Pray that many people in our country would systematically rid their lives of idols and fill their hearts with the fear of the Lord and love for Him.

DAY 16

 **READ:** 1 Kings 15

1 Kings 15 takes us on a tour of four kings' reigns. We begin with Abijam, king of Judah. When Rehoboam died, he passed the throne to his son Abijam. Abijam is an evil king. He "[walks] in all the sins of his father" (v 3). God is only allowing such an evil man to remain in power out of faithfulness to David (v 4-5). Abijam is David's great-grandson, thus fulfilling God's promise to keep David's line on the throne in Judah.

Next we are told of Asa, king of Judah. Asa received the throne from Abijam, his father – and his brother. Abijam's mother is cited as Maacah, daughter of Abishalom (v 2). Asa's mother is also cited as Maacah, daughter of Abishalom (v 10). We can infer from verses 2, 8, and 10 that one of Abijam's terrible sins was committing incest with his mother. Despite the unfortunate, sinful circumstances of his birth, Asa becomes a righteous king. He rids the land of idols and religious prostitution and re-instates the dedicated things to the Lord (v 15). He did not let personal ties get in his way. Asa even removed his mother from her position of power due to her sins (v 13). Asa also collaborated with the Syrians to stop the constant war with the Northern Kingdom (v 18-20). However, Asa was not perfect. For all of her zeal, he left the high places standing (v 14). Asa ruled over Judah for forty-one years and was succeeded by his son, Jehoshaphat (v 24).

In the second year of Asa's reign, Nadab, son of Jeroboam, becomes king over Israel. He reigns for two years. He was an evil ruler who led his country into sin (v 26).

Baasha, son of Ahijah of Issachar, then kills Nadab and takes over Israel's throne (v 27-28). Baasha doesn't stop with just killing Nadab. He also eliminates the entire house of Jeroboam (v 29-30). This fulfilled the prophecy of Ahijah (1 Kings 14:14). Baasha, like his predecessor, "did what was evil in the Lord's sight and followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins that Jeroboam caused Israel to commit" (v 34).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. God can redeem anything. Judging from Asa's family situation, we would assume he would become a sinful ruler. On the contrary, Asa is remembered as a godly king. Is there anything in your life that makes you feel inferior or disqualified? Ask God to show you how He wants to redeem you in this area.
2. Each of Israel and Judah's kings left a legacy. A few were known as godly: men of reform and followers of Yahweh. Most were known as sinful men who led their subjects away from Yahweh. What do you want your legacy to be? Take a few minutes and journal your answer. Bring this to God. Ask Him to show you the legacy you are actually leaving? What are *His* dreams for your legacy?
3. Pray for our church today. We want to leave a lasting legacy for God's kingdom. Pray that God would continue to empower us to follow Him wholeheartedly. Pray that we would resist the schemes of the enemy and follow in God's plans for us. Pray that many people would receive healing, experience genuine fellowship and receive salvation through our church family.

DAY 17**READ:** 1 Kings 16

Sin, left unchecked, always escalates. This is clearly displayed in Israel's history. 1 Kings 16 follows the decline of the Northern Kingdom. Baasha has recently destroyed Jeroboam's line and taken over the throne. The word of the Lord comes to the prophet Jehu. Baasha's fate will be the same as the fate of those he killed. His family will all be killed because of their sins (v 4, 7). After Baasha dies, his son Elah takes the throne. Elah's reign lasts two years. Zimri, Elah's servant, kills Elah and takes over his throne. Once Zimri is king over Israel, he destroys Baasha's family, just as Baasha had done to the household of Jeroboam (v 12).

Zimri's reign is short. Seven days after he assumed the throne, news travels throughout Israel. The army is camped against Gibbethon. The people of Israel decide Omri, the army commander, should be king instead of Zimri. When Zimri is dethroned he commits suicide. Zimri's death is followed by a power struggle in Israel. Some follow Omri and others follow Tibni. In the end, Omri's followers prevail and he becomes king.

Omri purchased land and built his new capital, naming it Samaria (v 24). The Northern Kingdom now has its own capital to rival Jerusalem of the Southern Kingdom. We don't know many details about Omri's reign. We do know that he was an evil king, acting even "more wickedly than all who were before him" (v 25). Omri's wickedness was passed on to his son, Ahab (v 29-30).

Not to be outdone by his father, Ahab sinned even *more* wickedly, setting an even lower standard of morality for Israel. Omri married Jezebel, daughter of the Sidonian king Ethbaal. This marriage signified official approval of Baal worship in Israel. It allowed the Baal-worshipping Sidonians to influence the culture of Israel. Satan's work is often an evil reverse-image of God's work. Solomon built a temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem. Now Ahab builds an altar to Baal in his capital, Samaria (v 32). He also made Asherah, wooden figures of the Caananite goddess who was a consort of Baal (v 33). This official institution of Baal-worship as the state religion, officially replacing the true worship of Yahweh, provokes

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. There is no true God but Yahweh. Spend time in worship today. Praise God for who He is and what He has done. If you can, play some worship music and praise God through song. Declaring His goodness brings an incredible joy!
2. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thank God for the gift of Scripture. In His mercy, He has given us a history of Israel so we may be warned away from their sins. Reflect on the many wonderful purposes of Scripture today and thank God for His Word.
3. While God's anger is provoked by the worship of false gods, He still desires to save people trapped in false religions. We are seeing this unfold today in the Muslim world, where countless people are meeting Jesus. He regularly meets people in dreams and visions, changing their lives for eternity. Pray that God would provide Bibles and training to His followers in Muslim countries. Pray that their influence would be multiplied by the power of the Holy Spirit, leading many people to become disciples of Jesus. Pray that God would open the eyes of Muslims to the oppression found in their religion and the freedom found in Christ.

DAY 18**READ:** 1 Kings 17

In 1 Kings 17 one of the most beloved people in Scripture first appears: the prophet Elijah. Elijah is a normal man, a Tishbite from the land of Gilead (v 1). One day, God send Elijah to the evil king Ahab. The Elijah proclaims that a drought will fall upon Israel. Surely this is punishment for Israel's idolatry under Ahab. God then protects Elijah from Ahab's wrath. He sends Elijah to the wilderness. Elijah is to drink from the brook at Cherith and receive food miraculously from ravens (v 4-6). When we obey God we can trust that He will sustain us. Jesus repeats this promise in Matthew 6:25-34. Seeking God's kingdom first had the by-product of knowing the God will provide for our essential needs.

When the brook at Cherith dries out due to the drought, God sends Eiljah to a widow at Zarephath. In a land scorned for Baal-worship, God sees a woman who is open to the words of Yahweh. God knows those who truly seek Him. When Elijah asks the widow for food she is initially hesitant. She only has a small amount of food left. After it is done she and her son will die. Elijah makes her a promise. If she first brings him some bread, God will miraculously extend her food supply to sustain both Elijah and her household throughout the drought. Often we have to commit to God and take a practical step of faith before seeing His promises fulfilled.

While Elijah is staying with the widow, her son falls ill. People are imperfect. Our faith is often limited and we forget about what God has done for us. The widow immediately turns on Elijah, accusing him for bringing this illness upon her son. As Elijah is God's representative here, the widow is actually accusing God of this. Rather than responding out of his own thoughts, Elijah turns to God. He brings the son to the upper room and calls out to God. He stretches himself across the child three times and pleads for God to bring the child back to life (v 21). God hears Elijah's prayers and revives the child (v 22). Our God is capable of great miracles! This situation further solidified the widow's faith that Elijah was a prophet of God (v 24).

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Read James 5:13-18. Why do you think the Holy Spirit chose to include this passage in Scripture? As you read about Elijah, periodically reflect on this passage. Elijah was a normal human being. A person in humble submission is a powerful tool in the hands of God!
2. God knew that the widow at Zarephath would be receptive to his prophet. He knew that she wasn't hardened by Baal-worship, as many in Israel were at that time. God knows the heart of every person. Ask God to reveal to you what is in your heart.
3. The widow had to take a step of obedience before partaking in God's miraculous provision. Ask God if there is an area where He would like you to take a practical step of faith. Ask Him what He wants to do in this area through your obedience.

DAY 19

 **READ:** 1 Kings 18

The drought has continued in Israel for three years. Ahab and his household manager, Obadiah, agree to scout the land in search of water and vegetation. If they do not find any, the king's horses and mules will die and his cattle will have to be slaughtered. This would leave Israel vulnerable to other nations, who would still have their own animals for work and warfare. Obadiah had the fear of the Lord in his heart. Despite Jezebel's persecution of Yahweh's prophets, Obadiah remained faithful to the True God. Obadiah hid a hundred prophets and provided them with food and water. He saved the lives of these faithful ones who were hunted by Jezebel. While Obadiah is searching for green pasture, he meets the prophet Elijah. God recently called Elijah to return from exile and face Ahab. Elijah promises not to harm Obadiah be fleeing again and asks Obadiah to bring Ahab to meet him.

When Ahab arrives, Elijah speaks boldly. It is because of the sins of Ahab and Ahab's fathers that Israel is facing this drought (v 18). Elijah offers a test. They will gather 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. They will offer a sacrifice to their gods. Elijah also will offer a sacrifice to Yahweh. The god who consumes his sacrifice with fire will be proven as the True God (v 24). The people of Israel agreed that this was a good idea (v 24).

When the day of sacrifice came, the prophets of Baal and Asherah prepared their offering. They prayed to their gods, called out in loud voices and even committed self-mutilation to get the attention of their gods. Yet Baal and Asherah remained silent. Then Elijah called the people to him and prepared his offering to Yahweh. He rebuilt the altar to Yahweh and

placed his offering on it. Further, he poured so much water on the offering that it filled the surrounding trenches. There would be no room left for doubt in the minds of onlookers. Because of all the water, it would be impossible for the offering to catch on fire through natural methods. However, Yahweh can work in ways that exceed the means of nature. He sends fire from heaven, consuming the offering, burning the stones and wood, and even evaporating all of the water. At this the people declare that the Lord is God (v 39).

Elijah sends Ahab to feast because the rain is coming. Elijah then retreats to the top of Mount Carmel and prays to the Lord for rain. Seven times he sends his servant to examine the skies for a sign of clouds. When a small cloud finally appears, Elijah sends word to Ahab to go to Jezreel, for a great storm is coming. By the power of God, Elijah outruns Ahab to Jezreel. We are left in anticipation for their Elijah and Ahab's next meeting.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God is sovereign. He controls everything, including weather. We cannot say for sure that every weather pattern is a sign of blessing or discipline. However, we can trust that God sometimes works this way. Spend time praising God for His sovereign power today. If He is bigger than the weather, He is certainly bigger than your personal problems.
2. Twice in this chapter Elijah fervently prays to God. Both times God grants Elijah's request. Think of a situation where you need to see God display His sovereign power. Ask Him how you can pray for this situation. Then pray with an earnest heart.
3. Pray for God to display His glory in our country. He is majestic, sovereign and powerful! Pray that, people who are turning from Jesus to false gods would be rescued. Pray that God would meet these people and draw them back to Him. Pray for specific people you know who are walking away from the Lord. Ask God if there is any way you can partner with Him to rescuing these people.

DAY 20

 **READ:** 1 Kings 19

Elijah is waiting outside of Jezreel, expecting to meet Ahab. However, instead of meeting Elijah, Ahab goes to his wife, Jezebel. He tells Jezebel about Elijah calling down fire from heaven, making a mockery of Baal. Further, Ahab tells Jezebel that Elijah killed Baal's prophets. The wicked Jezebel has great influence over her husband's reign. She commands that Elijah be killed. When Elijah receives word that there is a target on his life, he flees. Elijah takes his servant to Beersheba and continues further by himself.

But God is our ever-present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). God meets Elijah, providing both physical and spiritual strength for Elijah to continue on his journey of obedience to the true King. At the end of Elijah's first day on the run, he is emotionally dry. He is discouraged and prays, "It is enough; now O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers" (v 4). He is ready to give up and throw away his role as a prophet to God's people. As Elijah lies down in defeat an angel comes to meet him. The angel brings food and water to sustain Elijah physically. After Elijah lies down a second time, the angel of the Lord greets him. He acknowledges that the journey ahead is indeed too great for Elijah. However, God's divine strength will accomplish what Elijah's humanity cannot. We see that Elijah was nourished for forty days and forty nights from that single meal provided by God's angel!

DAY 21**READ:** 1 Kings 20; Deuteronomy 7:1-6 and 20:16-18

Chapter 20 focuses back in on Ahab, king of Israel. In contrast to chapter 19, which focused on Elijah's submission to God's direction, chapter 20 displays Ahab's rebellion. Specifically, we see Ahab choosing to follow his own wisdom instead of God's in a time of war. The story begins when Ben-hadad, king of Aram (a region in central Syria), sends messengers to Ahab demanding Ahab's silver and gold, wives and children. Ahab agrees to Ben-hadad's demands in hope that it will prevent war. Note that Ahab did not consult the Lord on this decision. What a far cry from rulers like Joshua and David who habitually consulted God, knowing that victory could only come from Him! Ahab's plan did not work. Seeing an opportunity to gain even more, Ben-hadad sent another message. In addition to Ahab's initial offering, Ben-hadad's servants would seize everything good from Ahab's possession (v 5-6). Now Ahab does not know what to do. However, he again fails to ask the Lord. He goes to the elders of his people and follows their advice (v 8). Ahab's refusal enrages Ben-hadad, inciting him to war (v 10). Ahab remains arrogant, sending a message to Ben-hadad that he should not boast about a victory that has not yet happened (v 11).

Since Ahab will not approach the Lord, the Lord sends a prophet to Ahab. Ahab is quick to take the prophet's guidance (v 14-15), which leads to victory over Ben-hadad's army (v 21). The prophet returns to Ahab saying, "Come, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you have to do, for in the spring the king of Syria will come up against you" (v 22). Indeed, Ben-hadad's servants surmise that the God of Israel is merely a god of the mountains. If they engage with Israel in the plains they will surely win. When the time came for battle, the Aramean troops far outnumbered the Israelite troops (v 27). However, God refuses to have His name debased. He is the God of the mountains and the plains, of the streams and oceans, of the earth and everything in it! God provides Israel with another victory, not because they have been faithful, but because it will bring His name glory (v 28).

In the face of defeat, Ben-hadad goes into hiding. He has one more strategy left to try: plead for mercy from Ahab. Ahab relents. He makes a treaty with Ben-hadad and lets him go free. Chapter 20 ends with a prophecy of doom for Ahab. He had broken the laws God had laid down regarding war (Deuteronomy 7:1-6 and 20:16-18). Because of his rebellion, Ahab will face the Lord's judgment.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. How often are slow to approach God with our problems, yet quick to take the advice of his people. Ahab listened to the prophets (at least initially) but refused to approach God. This revealed the true motives of his heart. He desired advice that would lead him to military victory, but despised submission to God. God does lead and guide us through His people, but that is meant as a *supplement* to our personal relationship with Him, not a *replacement* for it. Whenever we replace a direct connection with God with one that is first mediated by others we place ourselves at risk. In your life do you first seek God's revelation or the advice of other people? Confess as necessary.
2. God's Word is of vital importance. It is the standard against which we must judge all other wisdom. God provides us with instructions and commands in His Word, which He expects us to live by. Commit yourself to studying God's Word. Pray that He gives you a hunger to live a holy life that is pleasing to Him. Pray that your desire to

Elijah embarks on a forty day journey to Mount Horeb, the place where God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses (Deut 5:2). When he arrives, Elijah makes a resting place in a cave. It is in this cave that God begins one of the most well-known conversations He has had with a man. Here God provides the spiritual nourishment Elijah will need to complete his mission. The word of the Lord comes to Elijah and asks, "What are you doing here?" (v 9). God knows all things. He already knew why Elijah was lodging in the cave at Horeb. However, He still desires that we open our hearts to Him. He wants His people to be open and vulnerable with Him so we can learn to trust Him. God calls Elijah out of the cave and speaks to him gently. God asks Elijah once more, "What are you doing here?" (v 13). Elijah gives the same response as before. He describes his zeal for the Lord, the sin of Israel and the danger to his life (v 14).

God listens to Elijah, but does not let him give up. He responds with a set of commands. Elijah is to anoint new leaders over Syria and Israel and anoint Elisha as his own successor (v 15-17). Elijah, being strengthened from this meeting with the Lord, obeys. He courageously leaves behind his fear of death to complete God's mission. Elijah immediately seeks Elisha. Elijah puts his mantle (a type of cloak) as a prophetic symbol of passing on his prophetic authority. Elisha has only one request: allow me to say goodbye to my family first (v 20). Elijah permits this and Elisha returns to his family, offering this oxen as a sacrifice to God. Elisha sacrifices his means of work as a symbol that he is entering a new life and no longer has need for the old one.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Have you ever felt as though God's calling on your life was too much? Have you ever felt inadequate, fearful or discouraged by what is happening in your life? Take heart – God has mercy on us if we shall only turn to Him. When Elijah ran from Jezebel, God met him in a gentle whisper. "Return, my servant, and see my plans for you through to completion." Ask God to reveal the purpose your life has in His kingdom. Write out a prayer of response. What do you feel in response to what God has shown you? Share that with Him. Ask God to be your strength and your help on this mission and commit yourself to obedience.
2. God sometimes speaks in loud, miraculous ways. More often, He speaks in the gentle whisper in our soul. He nudges us and guides us as we move through life with the desire to honour Him. As we choose to listen, we find that He wants to be our ever-present help and our counselor. Ask God to make you more sensitive to His voice. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you throughout your day today. Ask Him to give you ears that are quick to hear, a heart that is quick to receive and hands and feet that a quick to obey what the Spirit says to you.
3. Pray for the Church today. We all need to walk in step with the Spirit's guidance. Pray that we would grow move sensitive and submissive to His guidance. Pray that this would bear much fruit in our own lives (growth in maturity and personal holiness) and in bringing in the harvest in our nation (increased evangelism and effective discipleship).

submit every area of your life to His direction would grow. Pray for grace to obey His commands. Pray that your life would direct those around you to the King of kings. Pray that you would come to know God's mercy and forgiveness when you fall short. He loves His children and desires holiness for us, but also wants us to walk in joy and freedom, not condemnation and shame.

3. We cannot stop with praying for holiness in ourselves. If we long to see revival in our nation we must pray for others to become more like Jesus as well. Ask God for five specific people you can pray for today. Then pray the things listed above over these people. Thank God for what He is going to do in your life and in the lives of these five people as a result of your prayers.

DAY 22

 **READ:** 1 Kings 21

1 Kings 21 illustrates that hazardous consequences of coveting and selfishness. A man named Naboth owns the vineyard beside Ahab's palace. Ahab wants the land to plant a vegetable garden for himself. In a rare display of good character, Ahab offers to buy Naboth's land instead of merely expropriating it. Naboth refuses, citing God's Law, which forbids Israel from the permanent sale of land (Leviticus 25:23, Numbers 36). Ahab, in a surprising move for such a wicked and rebellious king, does not argue with the Law. However, he is not content with having obeyed the Law. Ahab mopes because his selfish desires were not fulfilled. Jezebel sees Ahab's self-pity and resolves to get Naboth's vineyard for Ahab. Jezebel forges Ahab's signature and falsely uses his royal seal to make a proclamation against Naboth. The men of Jezreel obey this proclamation. They stage a mock court, falsely convict Naboth of treason and stone him to death. As the news reaches Ahab that Naboth is dead, Ahab returns to his normal character. He does not display any displeasure with Jezebel for falsely using his name, nor does he show any remorse for what happened to Naboth. Ahab capitalizes on the situation and seizes Naboth's land.

At this the Lord's anger burns against Ahab. God sends Elijah to prophecy over the king one final time. When Ahab sees Elijah he says, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" At this point Ahab knows that any honest servant of Yahweh is an enemy of Ahab. God proclaims through Elijah that Ahab's family line will be completely cut off, just as those of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15) and Baasha (1 Kings 16) were previously ended. Those who die in the city will be eaten by dogs and those who die in the fields will be eaten by birds (v 24). The storyline pauses here to remind us why Ahab deserves judgment. "Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. And he acted accordingly to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel" (v 25-26). God leaves no room for us to doubt his justice. His judgments are true.

Ahab, in response to Elijah's prophecy does not argue or choose unbelief. He does not pridefully assume that he knows the future more accurately than God. Elijah has proven to be a vessel of God's Spirit too many times already for Ahab to argue. Ahab instead accepts the proclamation and enters into a period of mourning. God sees Ahab's response and grants him a mild reprieve. Because Ahab chose humility over pride, God will wait to enact his judgment until after Ahab's death (v 29).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Thank God for the many blessings He has provided you with, both material (e.g. your home, food, clothing, etc.) and immaterial (e.g. salvation, relationships, etc.). Begin listing them in your journal. Be as specific and detailed as you can. This should not be a quick, two-minute exercise. Gratitude is one of the strongest defenses against coveting.
2. Ask God to search your heart today. Is there any way in you that is offensive to Him? Confess and repent as He reveals things to you. Pray that God would cleanse you from sin and fill you with righteousness.
3. Pray for marriages in our church today. Spouses have a unique, powerful connection. They can either lead each other into sin, as Jezebel did for Ahab (v 25) or into righteousness. Pray against the work of the enemy that would try to see the former happen and destroy marriages in our church. Pray that husbands and wives would be strengthened to stand for godliness in their home. Pray that they would seek to put God first in everything they do. Pray that unbelieving spouses would come to know Christ as a result of the godly lifestyles of their partners (1 Peter 3:1). Pray that believing spouses would be spurred to greater passion and commitment in their walks with Christ through their partners.

DAY 23

 **READ:** 1 Kings 22

1 Kings 22 retells the end of Ahab's reign and shows us the succession of kings that followed him. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah approaches Ahab to make a peace settlement. Ahab wants to use this new partnership strategically. Ramoth-Gilead was one of the cities east of the Jordan River that had been one during Israel's conquest of the land (Deut 4:43, Josh 20:8). Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to join forces and reclaim the city. Jehoshaphat asks only that they first inquire of the Lord. When Ahab tries to assemble his pagan prophets, Jehoshaphat insists the answer must come from a prophet of the true God. Ahab relents and calls Michaiah. However, Ahab specifically states that he dislikes Michaiah because he is a true prophet of the Lord. Michaiah will proclaim whatever the Lord says, whether it is positive or negative. Ahab would prefer to surround himself with false prophets who speak positive affirmations, whether or not they are true. Ahab's messenger tries to sway Michaiah to do the same (v 13), but Michaiah refuses (v 14). Michaiah prophesies that the Lord has allowed a deceiving spirit to lead Ahab's prophets, that they may direct him to go to war where he will die. For this, Michaiah is sent to jail (v 27-28). We must note that God Himself is not deceptive. He does not send spirits out on deceptive assignments. However, in His sovereignty He can turn even the work of deceptive, evil spirits around for His purposes (see also 1 Samuel 16:14-16, Job 1:6-8, Jeremiah 14:15).

Jehoshaphat, who insisted on hearing from a prophet of the Lord, disregards Michaiah's words and agrees to go into battle. The king of Aram specifically directs his soldiers to only kill Ahab. Ahab enters into battle disguised. In a moment that can only be described as God sovereignly accomplishing His purposes, a soldier randomly shoots an arrow into the battle and it pierces the joint of Ahab's armour. This was the fatal blow that ended Ahab's life. Elijah's prophecy (21:19) is fulfilled.

The chapter closes with a brief mention of two other kings. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, reigned over the same time that Ahab ruled over Israel. In contrast to Ahab's wickedness, Jehoshaphat was a godly king (v 43). The author notes that Jehoshaphat's reign, while good overall, was marked by some compromise. The high places were not torn down. Ahaziah, Ahab's son, took the throne of the northern kingdom when Ahab died. He was evil like his father. "He served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger according to all his father had done."



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you willing to listen to God, whether He speaks blessing or rebuke to you? Do you love all parts of the Bible equally – both the promises and the warnings? Confess as necessary. Ask God to give you a heart that is willing to listen to Him and obey, regardless of what He asks you.
2. Some of Israel's kings influenced the nation for good, others influenced them for evil. How do you influence those around you? Ask God for specific, practical ways you can influence those around you for God's kingdom today. Pray for grace to carry out what He shows you.
3. Pray for our national, provincial and local governments today. Pray that God would soften the hearts of our leaders so they would be eager to listen to Him. Pray that He would humble them so they would seek His will. Ask Him to give them hearts that are ready to obey, regardless of the consequences. God is sovereign. He will accomplish His purposes regardless of whether or not our leaders choose to align themselves with Him. Pray that our government would long to be found faithful on the day Jesus returns and asks them how they have stewarded the resources and power He gave them.

DAY 24



READ: Psalm 138

Conclusion

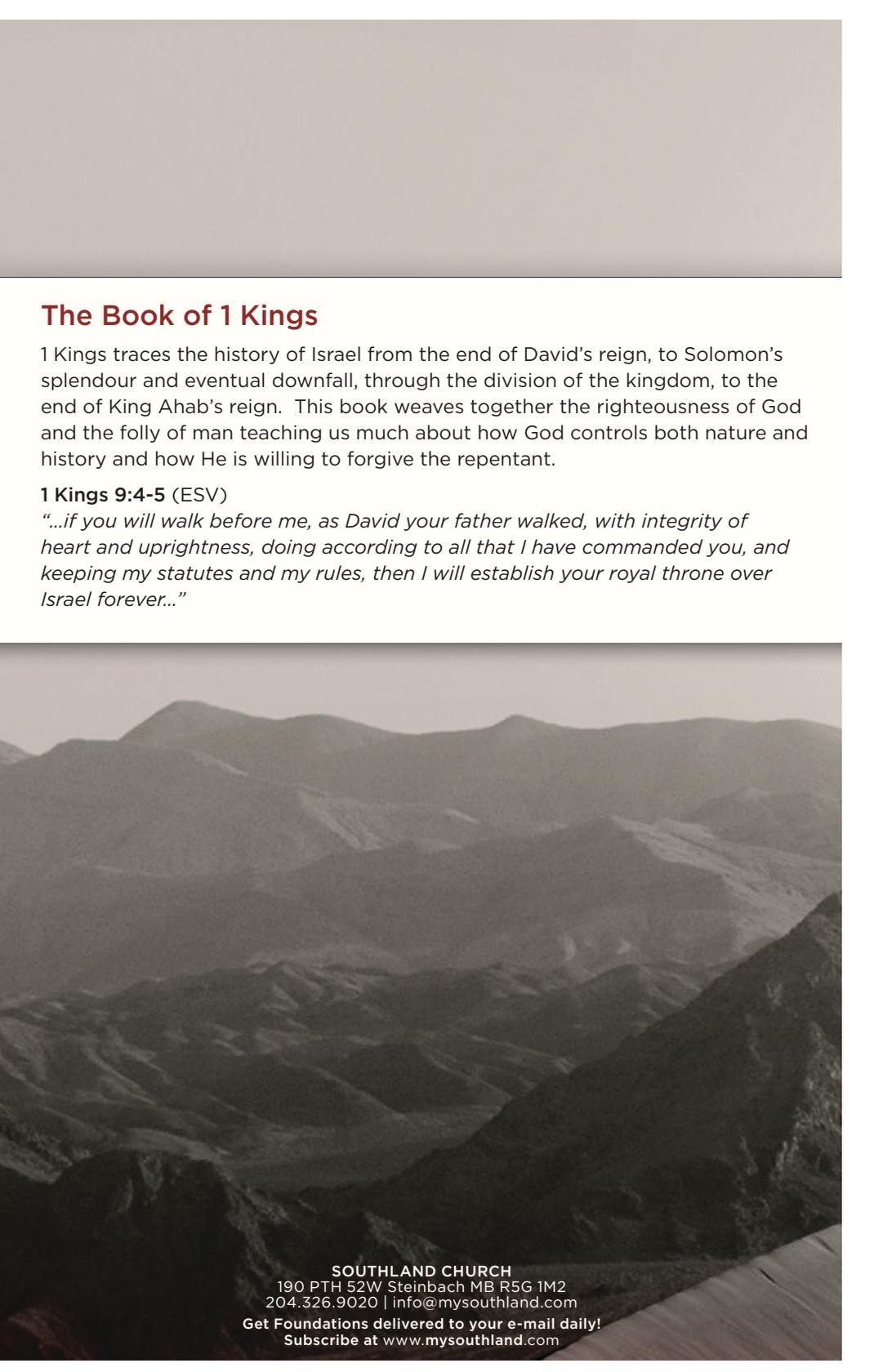
As we see the progression of Israel one thing is clear. The kings have forgotten what God taught their forefathers. More and more there is national disregard for God's laws. There remain a faithful remnant who desire to honour God and see His people do the same. However, the kings are, for the most part, overtaken by sin. They chose to satisfy their selfish desires and pursue foreign idols. We can only wonder if things would have been different if Israel's leadership obeyed God's decree to read His Law every day (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

We must learn from their negative example. We must choose to honour God and walk in His ways. There is great value in reviewing the things you have learned. People are imperfect and quick to forget what we read, desiring to move on to newer, seemingly better things. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." How can we hide God's Word in our hearts if we forget what it says? Spend time today going back over your journal entries from your time in 1 Kings. Ask God to solidify His truth in your heart as you review.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Reflect on the history you read about in 1 Kings (you can go back through your Bible to refresh your memory!). What verses or stories stood out to you? What are some key lessons you learned? What did you learn about God's character? What did you learn about yourself? Record these answers in your journal.
2. Go back to your journal entry from the first day of this devotional. What did God say He was going to do in your life as a result of studying 1 Kings? Have you seen this come to fruition? If so, spend time praising God for the great and wonderful work He has done! If you have yet to see the answer, commit yourself to trusting God. His words are faithful and true. If God promises something, He will see it through to the end! Thank God in advance for the work He had begun and will complete in your life as a result of your time fellowshiping with Him through this book of the Bible.
3. It is vital that we remain connected with God. Finishing one season (completing this devotional, for example) does not mean we can take a period of rest from our pursuit of God. Ask God to show you how you can continue to be faithful in your devotional life. How can you grow to love and fear Him more through your devotions? What spiritual disciplines does He want you to practice?
4. Pray for yourself today. Ask God to place a seal on your heart, securing what you have gained from your time with Him in 1 Kings. Ask Him to help you see the world through the lens of Biblical truth. Pray that He will continue to grow the seeds He has planted in your heart through this devotional. Pray that your love for God's presence and His Word would increase until the day you meet Him face to face.



The Book of 1 Kings

1 Kings traces the history of Israel from the end of David's reign, to Solomon's splendour and eventual downfall, through the division of the kingdom, to the end of King Ahab's reign. This book weaves together the righteousness of God and the folly of man teaching us much about how God controls both nature and history and how He is willing to forgive the repentant.

1 Kings 9:4-5 (ESV)

"...if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever..."