

1

Solomon:

Praying with God's Values

1 Kings 3

1. If you wanted someone to pray for you, who would you call?

Why would you choose that person?

2. Read 1 Kings 3:1–15. What were some of Solomon's actions in the early years of his reign (1 Kings 3:1–4)?

What do these actions say about Solomon's character?

3. Solomon answered God's question with a prayer (1 Kings 3:5–9). What does Solomon's prayer suggest about his attitude toward himself, his job and his God?

4. What did God promise Solomon (1 Kings 3:10–14)?

5. What conditions did God attach to granting Solomon a long life?

6. What changes did these promises bring in Solomon's behavior?

7. How would you describe a discerning heart?

8. Think of one of your current responsibilities that seems a bit too big for you just now. What would you *like* to ask of God in that area?

What *should* you ask of God?

9. Read 1 Kings 3:16–28. Imagine yourself as a bystander in King Solomon's court. What emotions would you feel during the different stages of the hearing?

10. Do you agree that Solomon's method of judgment was wise? Why, or why not?

11. In what specific ways does this show that God was answering Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 3:7–9)?

12. How can you begin to bring your prayers more into line with God's values?

13. Think of one person who particularly needs a discerning heart right now. Pray one or two sentences asking God's help for that person.

2

Solomon: Faithless in Love

1 Kings 11

- 1.** What have you seen happen when spiritual values are kept separate from everyday life?
- 2.** Read 1 Kings 11:1–25. What negative effects did wealth and power have on Solomon?
- 3.** Why had God commanded his people not to intermarry with the nations around them (1 Kings 11:2)?
- 4.** In what ways did Solomon break the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (1 Kings 11:1–13)?
- 5.** In 1 Kings 11:13 God says that the consequence of Solomon’s sin will be that his kingdom will be taken away. What mercy does God promise? Why?
- 6.** Solomon allowed his acquisition of wives to ease out his faith in God. When has your own love for a person created tensions with your faith?
- 7.** How can we balance our love for the important people in our lives with our love for God?
- 8.** What indications do you see that Hadad had the potential to become a serious threat to Solomon (1 Kings 11:14–22)?

What about Rezon (1 Kings 11:23–25)?

- 9.** Read 1 Kings 11:26–43. How did God use Ahijah’s new cloak as a message to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:29–31)?
- 10.** If Jeroboam chose to benefit from the experience of Israel’s previous two kings, how would it affect his reign?

11.1 Kings 11:6 characterizes Solomon’s life with the words, “So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD.” Why do you think God described such a successful king in this way?

12. If you were to name one sin that brought this description on Solomon, what would it be? Explain.

13. Solomon's marriages to pagans testified to his lack of wholehearted commitment to God. In what area of your life do you struggle to keep your actions in line with your beliefs?

3

Jeroboam/Rehoboam: Internal Conflict *1 Kings 12*

1. How do you respond to conflict within your church or fellowship group?

How does that kind of conflict affect your faith?

2. Read 1 Kings 12:1–24. What steps in these verses led to the division recorded in 1 Kings 12:20?

3. At what points did reconciliation seem possible?

4. What volatile words and actions on both sides fanned the disagreement into open war (1 Kings 12:10–16)?

5. What indications do you find that God had not abandoned his people during this time of conflict?

6. If you had to go through a civil war, of what value would it be for you to know that nothing is outside the power of God?

7. Read 1 Kings 12:25–33. Looking at the map, what geographic reasons can you see for Jeroboam's selection of these sites?

8. What motivated Jeroboam to set up alternate places of worship (1 Kings 12:26–27)?

9. What spiritual results for the people of Israel would you expect to grow out of Jeroboam's new places of worship?

10. What did Jeroboam do that was contrary to God's law for his people? (Find all that you can in 1 Kings 12:31–33.)

11. If you were a godly person living under Jeroboam's rule, what choices would you have to make?

12. In what ways do your actions show a take-it-for-granted attitude toward your current opportunities to worship?

13. What steps could you take to worship God more fully?

4

Asa:

Seeker of God
2 Chronicles 14–15

1. How have you seen people being drawn to God?
2. Read 2 Chron. 14. List the action words in 2 Chron. 14:1–7.

What do these words tell you about Asa?

3. What does Asa’s prayer (2 Chron. 14:11) reveal about his relationship with God?
4. According to Asa’s actions and his prayer, what are some things that he believed about God?
5. What events recorded in this chapter suggest that Asa’s beliefs were correct?
6. How has God helped you to keep on believing in him?
7. Read 2 Chron. 15. Looking at 2 Chron. 15:1–7, what past conditions in Israel might cause Asa to listen carefully to God’s message?
8. What warnings are implied in Azariah’s prophecy?

What blessings are implied?

9. What information can you gather from this prophecy about what God expects from his followers?
10. What words and phrases in 2 Chron. 15:8–19 show the wholeheartedness with which Asa and his people turned to God?
11. What changes can you imagine in the day-to-day living of ordinary people because of this reform?

12. These chapters show that if you seek the Lord, he will be found by you. What does this suggest about the nature of spiritual development?

13. At your current stage of spiritual development, what steps could you take right now to seek the Lord?

5
Ahab:
Deaf to God
1 Kings 22:1–40

- 1.** What do you do that sometimes makes you “deaf” to God?
- 2.** Read 1 Kings 21:17–19. Why do you think that God gave Ahab this information?
- 3.** Read 1 Kings 22:1–28. List all the characters in this drama.

Why is each one important to the story?

- 4.** What was Ahab the king of Israel’s proposal (1 Kings 22:1–4)?
- 5.** How did the two kings view the project differently?
- 6.** What was hard about Micaiah’s job?
- 7.** Look again at Micaiah’s statements in 1 Kings 22:17–23. Why do you think that Ahab was an easy prey for the lying prophets?
- 8.** What did it cost Micaiah to speak God’s truth?
- 9.** Why do you sometimes hesitate to talk about what you know to be God’s truth?
- 10.** What responsibilities seem to accompany familiarity with God?
- 11.** Read 1 Kings 22:29–40. Ahab had many opportunities for hearing truths from God in the course of his life. In view of this, what do you see as the difference between hearing and receiving God’s Word?
- 12.** What precautions could you take to keep from acquiring Ahab’s kind of deafness?

6

Jehoshaphat: Battle Weary *2 Chronicles 20:1–30*

- 1.** When do you feel weary?
- 2.** Read 2 Chron. 20:1–30. How did Jehoshaphat and his people respond to the news of the army's approach?
- 3.** What elements of praise do you find in Jehoshaphat's prayer (2 Chron. 20:6–12)?
- 4.** What reasons did Jehoshaphat give God for dealing with this problem (2 Chron. 20:7–10)?

Why did Jehoshaphat ask for God's judgment?

- 5.** Imagine yourself standing in the crowd of people described in 2 Chron. 20:13. How would you have felt about Jahaziel's words in 2 Chron. 20:15–17? Why?
- 6.** What risks would a person who truly believed this prophecy take?
- 7.** In what different ways did the people of Judah worship God (2 Chron. 20:18–30)?
- 8.** What methods did God use to fulfill his prophecy of the previous day?
- 9.** Why do you think God answered Jehoshaphat's prayer in this way?
- 10.** Notice the fear of God in surrounding kingdoms (2 Chron. 20:29). In what sense were they correct to say, "The LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel"?
- 11.** Look again at the words in 2 Chron. 20:15–17: "For the battle is not yours.... You will not have to fight this battle." When do you most need to hear this kind of message from God?
- 12.** What can you learn from Jehoshaphat about the way to pray during such situations?

13. God will not fight all of our battles for us. (He didn't fight all of Jehoshaphat's. Besides, we might even be in the wrong battle!) But what can you learn from Jehoshaphat's walk with God that will help you cope when you feel battle weary?

7

Ahaz:

Faithless in Trouble

2 Kings 16

1. When is it hard for you to have faith in God?
2. Read 2 Kings 16:1–20. In what different ways did Ahaz express his idolatry?
3. What military crisis did Ahaz face (2 Kings 16:5–6)? (Use your map to picture this.)
4. Why do you think Ahaz appealed to Assyria?
5. What did help from Assyria cost the people of Judah?
6. What reasons did Ahaz have to be wary of this alliance?
7. What specific changes did Ahaz make in the temple?
8. God gave Moses specific instructions for arrangements in his tabernacle. In view of this, what was Ahaz saying by his actions in the temple?
9. Think of difficult times you have experienced, for example, a fight within your church, the death of someone you have prayed for, unemployment, family or friends going through a divorce. What are some negative ways you have responded to such situations?

What are some positive ways you have responded?

10. In what ways does your response to trouble seem to be a search for other gods and other altars?

To what extent does your response to trouble reflect a determined faith in God?

11. Much of our worship can become, like Ahaz's, an attempt to get what we want out of God. When this occurs, we need to ask ourselves, "Who is my god: God or me?" How can you make your worship less self-centered and more God-centered?

8

Hoshea: Idolatry's Reward

2 Kings 17

- 1.** How would you define idolatry?

- 2.** Read 2 Kings 17. How does this chapter make you feel?

- 3.** Notice the people and places in 2 Kings 17:1–6. How do these verses outline the final steps to Israel's death as a nation?

- 4.** Why was the Assyrian technique of conquering an effective way to wipe out a nation (2 Kings 17:1–6, 24)?

- 5.** Review the list of sins (there are about twenty) in 2 Kings 17:7–22. What common characteristics do you find?

- 6.** How would you summarize Israel's sin in one sentence?

- 7.** The writer of 2 Kings says repeatedly of Israel, "The LORD removed them from his presence." Consider the events of this chapter. What did it mean to Israel in practical terms to be removed from the presence of God (2 Kings 17:18, 20 and 23)?

- 8.** Do you think that it is possible for people or nations today to be removed from the presence of God? Explain.

- 9.** Notice the references to Judah, Israel's sister nation to the south. If you had been living in Judah at the time of the events recorded here, what might you have learned about the relationship of God to his chosen people?

- 10.** Why did Israel find it hard to serve one God alone (2 Kings 17:14–17)?

Why did the new Samaritans find it so hard (2 Kings 17:24–33)?

11. We too are vulnerable to serving “other gods.” Take a private inventory of your own temptations by jotting down answers to the following questions:

I couldn't live without _____.

When my mind is idle, it automatically turns to _____.

If I could have anything in the world, I would choose _____.

The most important thing (or person) to me is _____.

I know God wants me to _____, but I can't.

In view of your inventory, in what areas of your life do you need to be alert to the temptation of idolatry?

12. What steps can you take to keep normal healthy interests in the world around you from turning into idolatry?

9

Hezekiah:
King in Crisis
Isaiah 36–37

- 1.** What is one of your typical ways of dealing with crisis?
- 2.** Read Isaiah 36. Notice the people and places in Isaiah 36:1–4. How do they help you define what was about to happen?
- 3.** What reasons did Hezekiah have to take this meeting seriously? (See Isaiah 36:4–10, as well as 2 Kings 18:13–16.)
- 4.** In what ways did the Assyrian field commander misuse truth to undermine Hezekiah's people (Isaiah 36:11–22)?
- 5.** If you had been on the wall listening to this conversation, what would you have worried about?
- 6.** Three times the Assyrian commander taunted his Hebrew listeners with the threat that their Lord would not protect them from his attacks. When have you worried about God's apparent lack of protection?
- 7.** Read Isaiah 37:1–20. What words and phrases show that Hezekiah took the Assyrian threat seriously (Isaiah 37:1–8)?
- 8.** Notice the dialogue and activities throughout Isaiah 37:1–20. In what sense was this a spiritual as well as a political confrontation?

Would the spiritual dimension bring comfort or fear to Hezekiah? Why?

- 9.** How was Hezekiah's response to the Assyrian letter rooted in the character of God? (Notice both words and actions.)
- 10.** Read Isaiah 37:21–38. How might Isaiah's song help you to worship God during a time of crisis?

11. This message from Isaiah is often called a “taunt song.” In what ways did it rebut the Assyrian taunts that Hezekiah had endured?

12. What do the final events in Isaiah 37:36–38 contribute to this story’s revelations about God?

13. In what ways is Hezekiah a good model for handling crises?

14. Take a moment now to write a brief statement of your own most recent personal crisis. Spread it, in prayer, before God.

10

Manasseh: One Giant Step Backward

2 Kings 20:1–21:18

1. What popular cultural trends seem to go against God's standard of what is right?
2. Read 2 Kings 20:1–21. What do the details in the communication between God and Hezekiah reveal about their relationship (2 Kings 20:1–11)?
3. Why do you think Hezekiah treated the messengers from Babylon the way he did (2 Kings 20:12–21)?
4. What connections did Isaiah find between Hezekiah's actions and the future of Judah?
5. In view of your picture of Hezekiah's prayer in the previous study, how would you expect him to respond to this prophecy from Isaiah?

What explanation can you offer for the response recorded here?

6. Read 2 Kings 21:1–18. When you try to imagine life in Judah under Manasseh's reign, what pictures come to your mind?
7. Find as many references to the people of Judah as you can in 2 Kings 21:7–15. How do these help explain why Manasseh was able to make such a total reversal of his father's reforms?
8. What does the prophet's use of symbols help illustrate about the future?
9. Suppose you were living in Judah at this time. You heard this prophecy and believed it to be true. What would you do?
10. Why do you think no Old Testament prophet claims to have written during Manasseh's reign?
11. Look back at Hezekiah's situation in 2 Kings 20:1–11. If Hezekiah could have known the future, including the birth of his son, do you think he would have wanted God to add fifteen years to his life? Why, or why not?

12. What do you know about God that helps you to stand against popular trends that go against what you know is right?

13. How can you serve God in your response to these trends?

11

Josiah:

Following God's Law

2 Kings 22:1–23:30

1. What rules annoyed you during your own teen years?

Why do you think so many of us bristle at rules and laws?

2. Read 2 Kings 22:1–23:3. What steps led to finding the Book of the Law (2 Kings 22:1–8)?

3. What can you know about Huldah from 2 Kings 22:14–20?

What could Josiah know about God from her message?

4. What effect would you expect the scene in 2 Kings 23:1–3 to have on the people?

5. Read 2 Kings 23:4–30. These verses list some sixteen religious reforms that Josiah instituted. As you read through these reforms, what do you learn about the spiritual practices of the people before Josiah became king?

6. How would you expect the life of an ordinary person to be affected by these changes?

7. Much of today's culture ignores God's laws. What pressures do you feel to follow the culture rather than the law of God?

8. In what different ways did Josiah show respect for the law of God? (Draw from all of 2 Kings 22–23.)

9. What words and phrases describe Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25?

10. What relationship do you see between our response to God's law and our concept of God?

11. Study more carefully the words in 2 Kings 23:25 describing Josiah's commitment to God and to God's law. What aspect of that description would you like to make more a part of your own commitment?

12. God's law is tied to his character. As you think of your own natural resistance to law, what steps could you take to bring your response to God's law into line with what you believe to be true of God?

12

Zedekiah: End of the Line *2 Kings 24:1–25:21*

1. How do you feel when a Christian leader falls deep into sin?
2. Read 2 Kings 24:1–25:21. How does this account of the fall of God’s nation make you feel? Why?
3. Using the material you’ve read, trace the final steps of the nation of Judah.
4. What events in those final years make the strongest impression on your mind? Why do these events seem especially haunting?
5. Look more carefully at 2 Kings 24:3–4 and 20. What cautions might these words bring to your own life?
6. Consider the history of Israel and Judah. What turning points do you see that led to this kind of end?
7. How might this study of Jewish history affect the way you pray for your own nation and its leaders?
8. For what specific national needs or leaders should you be praying?
9. Take time now to pray together for the needs and people you have just discussed.
10. During the time that Zedekiah and his people were about to be deported to Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Hebrew people already captive in Babylon. Read God’s words to them in Jeremiah 29:10–14. If you had been a Hebrew captive in Babylon, what effect would these words have on the way you conducted your life during captivity?
11. What does this passage reveal about the character of God?

12. What personal hope do these words from Jeremiah offer to you?