



# LESSONS

## FROM THE KINGS

A BIBLE STUDY  
ON THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

---

PART 1 - A UNIFIED KINGDOM

.....	1
 Introduction 	4
“We Want a King!”	4
Abuse of Power	5
Patterns in History	6
This Man Will Be the One To Fix Everything	7
	
King Saul	8
Give Him An Inch And He'll Take A Mile	10
“There is no one like him!”	11
A Graciously Yielding God	12
Yield to God’s Representatives	12
“Come, Follow Me, Or Else!”	13
Watch Where your Heart is Headed	14
Pretend Piety	15
Faithful verses Fearful	16
Harsh Rulers Lose Real Respect	17
God Sees Past the False Piety	18
The Lord Rejects the King Who Rejects His Word	19
Anoint the One I Indicate	20
Breaking Away	21
Are You Crazy?	22
Hounded, Hunted, Helped	23
No Fooling!	24

The Dark Night Before Saul dies.....25



King David .....26

Dancing and Rejoicing Before the Lord.....27

The Son of David, an Eternal King.....28

The Devil Snares the Proud.....29

Selfish Pride Always Leads to Sin.....30

What is Love?.....31

A King Who Does What is Just and Right.....32



King Solomon .....33

Ask for Whatever You Want.....34

First Thing's First, Right?.....36

The Temple is Dedicated.....37

Unless the Lord Builds and Guards.....38



King Rehoboam .....40

Good Idea; Bad Idea.....41



# INTRODUCTION



## **“WE WANT A KING!”**

Samuel's sons failed to be just and honest rulers. Make two lists: 1) The top five traits most people look for in a ruler. 2) Your own / your group's top five desirable traits for a ruler. Read 1 Samuel 8 and evaluate Israel's reason for pleading for a king. What might their trait list must have looked like?

- 1) What most look for in a ruler:
  
- 2) Your group's list of top five desirable traits for a ruler
  
- 3) Discuss Israel's priorities: What dangers come from desiring rulers "such as other nations have."?
  
- 4) The Lord said, "They have rejected me as king." Explain.
  
- 5) How is Jesus ruling as our king? Discuss how only he can meet our every need.

## **ABUSE OF POWER**

- 1) Abuse of power is always going to be a problem. Identify two different ways it comes up in 1 Samuel 8.
  
- 2) List some examples in Scripture which show God as one who never abuses his divine power and authority.
  
- 3) What false promises does the devil use to get people to turn to worldly rulers and trust them above God? Explain why this is such a tragedy.

## PATTERNS IN HISTORY

The time of the judges ranged from when the Israelites first entered the promised land in 1400 BC until the prophet Samuel anointed the first king of Israel 1050 BC. We see a constant cycle of the people fluctuating from faithfulness to unfaithfulness. Each time they drift away from him the Lord sends an adversary so that they might repent and turn back to him. After many of them repent he raises up a ruler who leads the people to victory over their enemies. Each time, however, the people eventually turn back into the cycle of sin. Can you relate to any similar experiences in your life or the lives of anyone you know?

- 1) What does this pattern teach us about human nature?
  
- 2) In your own words / with your group: what parallels to this trend are evident in recent world history and today?
  
- 3) The book of Judges concludes with the commentary, "In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as they saw fit." Yet they did have a king who would never abandon them. Explain. How does this record of the people's straying magnify God's record of grace and give you comfort?

## **THIS MAN WILL BE THE ONE TO FIX EVERYTHING**

It is easy to be swept away by empty promises. When David's son Absalom, for example, started to make grand claims to the people, he quickly won over their hearts. Politicians do this. Products are advertised to do this. And we are tempted to turn to people and things as a fix-all solution. Think back to the most recent election year. What grand ideas or promises have politicians led people to believe they could achieve?

- 1) Make a list of at least four things (or people) that you trust will make life better for you. How could you end up trusting too much in those things?
- 2) Psalm 146 tells us not to put our trust in mortal man. Explain why we shouldn't. In Isaiah 55 and John 6 we are reminded not to labor for bread that spoils. Explain how everything we work for will spoil. God offers something far greater! Explain the axiom: "We are restless until we find rest in Jesus."
- 3) The people insisted on having a king. They hoped he would solve all their problems. Reread 1 Samuel 8:18 -22. Agree or Disagree: "God gave the people just what they were asking for."
- 4) Discuss: "When God says to the stubborn heart: 'Have it your way,' he can do this in both judgment and love.
- 5) What things has Jesus already done for you? Make a list of the top five things you look forward to having fixed in Jesus' eternal kingdom:

# KING SAUL

Saul is a tragic example of what happens when we demand something from God. Sometimes the worst thing God can say to the sinful demands people make is "Have it your way." He concedes to the clamoring from Israel and selects a king. The Lord graciously equips Saul with his Spirit and gives him success in battle. He gave them their request. He was gracious with them.

But what so often happens when we find blessing and success? Saul wants to call the shots. He wants more power than is given him. Saul begins to think he is above God his King. So, God has to step in. God lifted up Saul in grace. When Saul abused that gift God would bring him down in judgment. God lifts up the lowly -even an unknown man from the tribe of Benjamin. God brings down the proud - even the first king over Israel. Won't he do the same with you and me when we take more than we should and think we can call the shots?

You will see many patterns in Saul's life which every person struggles with. Don't we all struggle to have the proper attitude toward God as our King? See the dangers of the progression of unrepentant sin. We learn by example from Saul the meaning of Paul's words, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Cor 7:10)

But also note God's great patience in dealing with Saul and his people. The Lord remains their gracious King. He continues to lead, guide, and protect through his Word.

The Lord himself has already chosen the humble King who will come who will do what is right -he will be lifted up. That

coming King, Jesus, is the only one who truly brings the kingdom from tragedy to triumph.

## **GIVE HIM AN INCH AND HE'LL TAKE A MILE**

Read 1 Samuel 9-10. Identify three things that demonstrate Saul's good character and two things which cause you to wonder about his character.

Good?

Questionable?

Jesus is the true first king of Israel and as the only one in who remains king forever. Identify at least three examples or events from his earthly ministry that demonstrate his true character for us and cause us to marvel at his good character:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **“THERE IS NO ONE LIKE HIM!”**

Read 1 Samuel 10:23-24. Samuel had to serve as the first “campaign manager” for the first king. Evaluate how he does his job. How would you describe the man God chose? What traits made him please some right away and leave others displeased at his selection?

- 1) Explain why it might have been better for Samuel to focus on Saul’s title as “the one the Lord has chosen” rather than his impressive appearance.
  
- 2) What can happen if we focus more on appearances than on the divine call given to leaders in God’s church?
  
- 3) In what ways might we end up focusing more on inconsequential and trivial outward things rather than God’s calling when speaking about those he calls and appoints to lead his Church.
  
- 4) The prophet Micah’s name means “Who is like God?” Jesus was also chosen as King, but he alone was chosen because of his inherit qualifications and traits. List some unique aspects and traits of our King Jesus that you would present when describing him to someone.

## **A GRACIOUSLY YIELDING GOD**

God had Samuel warn Israel about seeking a King. Scan through 1 Samuel 9-10. to find examples of God's gracious dealings with the people despite their sinful plea for a king.

## **YIELD TO GOD'S REPRESENTATIVES**

Read 1 Samuel 10:24b-27. Samuel wanted the people to honor God's appointed ruler. Saul was received well by some. Others despised and rejected him from the start.

- 1) Identify (according to Romans 13:1-7) who is over us as an authority? Who put them in a position of authority?
  
- 2) List some things you or others might be guilty of which wrongly dishonor God's governing authorities today.
  
- 3) What ought we do for authorities in our government?
  
- 4) How can you apply these same truths to other authorities such as parents and spiritual leaders in your life?

## **“COME, FOLLOW ME, OR ELSE!”**

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 11. What does Saul's occupation at the start of this account reveal about his new kingship? What did it take to arouse him into action? What did he use to move Israel into action?
  
- 2) List some other times when those appointed or called to serve God delayed or hesitated in carrying out their calling. What reasons might there be for such a delay?
  
- 3) What causes each of us to hesitate in our own life of sanctification?
  
- 4) List some other times when God used a crisis or injustice to bring his people into action. How might he do this in your life?
  
- 5) Evaluate Saul's call to action. When might we need to use this type of motivation?
  
- 6) Jesus' call to follow him is far different in nature. List all the things the King of kings has done that we might "came out together as one" to follow him through all things?

## **WATCH WHERE YOUR HEART IS HEADED**

Read 1 Samuel 12. How often have you experienced anyone repenting of an evil desire only after they were forced to realize the severity of their sin? Samuel gives a final warning as he steps down from being ruler over Israel. To confirm it rain and thunder come during the usually hot and dry harvest season. They now realized what evil path they were headed down.

- 1) Identify what Samuel's main message is to the people on this occasion. Evaluate the people's response.
- 2) The people of Israel simply did not realize how evil their request for a king had been. What other sins could someone slip into without even realizing the severity?
- 3) What is lesson taught in this section regarding repentance and forgiveness?
- 4) Discuss: "It is never too late to realize your sin and to repent."
- 5) What gospel do you find in this section? Apply that to your life.

## PRETEND PIETY

What is "false piety"? Read 1 Samuel 13. Appraise Saul's actions at Gilgal.

- 1) In what ways might we or leaders today in God's kingdom be tempted to deviate from his plan for our mission?
- 2) How can reasoning "*it's the best in the situation I'm given*" lead us to deviate from God's will and into false piety?
- 3) In your group come up with three or more common situations in which believers end up deviating from God's plan even while appearing to be serving him. Include some of the excuses they give for their actions.
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.
- 4) Can you identify the false piety in the situations above?
- 5) Give several reasons why the harder road of faith is always the best course of action in your examples listed above.

## FAITHFUL VERSES FEARFUL

Read 1 Samuel 14 :1-23.

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 14 :1-23. Give some reasons why Jonathan was sneaking off to go fight the enemy. What bold confession reveals his motives?
  
- 2) When have you found yourself afraid to act when faith should have moved you into action? What situations have led you to make a bold and daring effort on your own?
  
- 3) Jonathan knew that the Lord was fighting for Israel. List two things which defend his actions as done in faith. What evidence is there that God did indeed cause the victory?
  
- 4) Contrast Jonathan's heart with Saul's actions in this battle.
  
- 5) Discuss: Where would the Christian church be right now if we all always followed Jonathan's approach in our mission... Saul's approach?
  
- 6) Christ Jesus has led the charge and miraculously defeated our enemies for us. List some ways that you can now motivate fellow believers into boldly confronting every spiritual struggle they face.

## **HARSH RULERS LOSE REAL RESPECT**

Read 1 Samuel 14 :24-52

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 14 :24-52. What aspects of Saul's oath are foolish and selfish?
- 2) Who does Jonathan blame for Israel not being able to complete the day's battle?
- 3) Saul seems determined to blame the wrong person for Israel's failure to complete the battle that day. Evaluate: "Saul wanted his own son dead because he was jealous of him and needed a scapegoat to blame for his failing to finish the battle that day."
- 4) When we make foolish decisions, why is it so hard for us to just admit it?
- 5) How did Saul's efforts to enforce his foolish oath only further cause him to lose respect?
- 6) Agree or Disagree "Leaders that admit their own faults gain more respect than leaders that never admit any faults."
- 7) What traits in a leader gain far more respect than harshness? Explain how Christ has all of these traits.

## **GOD SEES PAST THE FALSE PIETY**

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-24. Saul lies about why he didn't destroy everything of the Amalekites. He seems to be believing his own lies to justify his deviating from the Lord's will.

- 1) How do you see that same pattern happening in people's lives today when they turn away from the Lord?
- 2) Consider the faithfulness of God's anointed King over all. What excuses of "false piety" could Christ have given for deviating from God's rescue plan for his kingdom?

## **THE LORD REJECTS THE KING WHO REJECTS HIS WORD**

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 15:22-35. Evaluate Saul's plea and display of repentance.
  
- 2) What's the difference between repentance and being sorry you got caught and have to face the consequences?
  
- 3) Saul begs Samuel to allow him to "save face" in front of his men. How might a member of your church under discipline try to get this type of false "divine approval" in front of his peers?
  
- 4) How is Samuel's response fitting?
  
- 5) Apply "To obey is better than sacrifice" to your life.
  
- 6) Explain how Jesus is the epitome of obedience and sacrifice.

## **ANOINT THE ONE I INDICATE**

- 1) How do people normally go about choosing their leaders?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What factors lead people into choosing leaders who fail them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13 Identify one of the main important truths that we learn in this section.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) How did that truth apply to the newly chosen king?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How does that truth apply to those God calls and appoints to serve his people today?

## BREAKING AWAY

A man is speeding down McLane even as children are present. How do you feel about him? Does your attitude change when you learn he is rushing to the hospital in an emergency? "Rules are rules" but when might it be okay to suspend the rules?

1 Samuel 17-20 record David's rise to fame as a servant of Saul and commander in the army of Israel. As David grows in popularity Saul's jealousy increases -even to the point of now trying to kill David in rage. After reluctantly breaking away, David begins his journey of living hunted by Saul.

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 21:1-9. Contrast David's rule-breaking here with what we saw Saul do. (see also Mt 12:1-12) Can you think of an example situation when a leader in the church might rightly "suspend the rules" for the sake of something greater?
  
- 2) Now read 1 Samuel 22. Saul can't sink much lower than this. Of what other significant event are you reminded as you read this account? How is this action even more wicked? David claims responsibility, but who would you say is really guilty?

## ARE YOU CRAZY?

Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15. This is at least the third time David uses deception in order to survive. Gath was the hometown of Goliath and one of the five chief cities of the Philistines.

- 1) Evaluate David's fight to a foreign land. List some reasons he had for staying in Judah.
  
- 2) What difficult situations might we be tempted to flee when God would have us stay and trust in him?
  
- 3) What comforting promises do we hold to help us face our enemies as we serve our God?
  
- 4) David recorded for us his personal reflections on some of his life. Read Psalm 34 to see who David credits for his survival.
  
- 5) See also Psalm 56 and note the heading of both Psalms. What level of fear do you think David felt when he was discovered? What does he teach us in these Psalms about facing our fears?

## HOUNDED, HUNTED, HELPED

Is there anything harder than being hurt by someone you have helped and loved? Read 1 Samuel 23. David returned back from Philistine territory. Yet David's life remained under threat from Saul's pursuit.

- 1) What made David's flight especially hard here? How does this chapter explain David's survival of each pursuit?
  
- 2) In what ways are God's faithful people often "attacked from all sides"? How is our survival really based on the same thing which David had?
  
- 3) What parallels do you see between David and "the Son of David" who came to rescue a people only to have them betray him? List what makes King Jesus' rescue so much greater and much more noble.

## **NO FOOLING!**

Saul had made foolish decisions in his anger. So does David. David's character is consistently flawed. He may be a forgiven believer, but he struggles with a sinful heart just like all believers. The victory over sin belongs to Christ. Our new life of thanksgiving grows each day we remain in him and his Word. The new self recognizes the foolishness of the old self so that by the Spirit's working we can grow in godly living.

- 1) Can you recall the last time you made a rash decision? List some reasons why anger is usually not a good thing to act upon.
  
- 2) Read 1 Samuel 25. How would you characterize David after reading this section?
  
- 3) See 1 Sam 25:14 for the real unsung hero.
  
- 4) Give at least four examples of times when it is necessary to "pull an Abigail" because someone else is about to act in anger.
  
- 5) Explain how God's characteristics, "slow to anger, patient, long suffering, gracious," comfort and motivate you.

## THE DARK NIGHT BEFORE SAUL DIES

Rulers don't always want to obey the laws they are supposed to uphold. Can you think of any examples of this truth? Why is this the case?

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 28:3-25 What are some reasons why Saul would turn to witchcraft even though he had officially banned it?
- 2) Some argue that the spiritual medium could not have actually called back Samuel from the dead to communicate with him. Others argue that the text reads as if that is in fact what really occurred. Can you give any reasons to defend what position you take regarding this event?
- 3) What problems and temptations do people face today from the occult and witchcraft?
- 4) What other superstitions can take hold of people's hearts today?
- 5) Explain: "If you don't look for truth from God you look for it from the devil."
- 6) Evaluate Saul's response to the message.
- 7) What does Jesus' descent into hell remind us he has accomplished?

# KING DAVID

David had about 600 soldiers and lived for a time in Philistine territory pretending to be fighting Israel for the Philistines. He fought Israel's enemies south of Judah by Egypt's border and claimed to the Philistines he was raiding Judah. When Saul died David made his way to Hebron to rule over Judah (2 Sam 2:1-10.) Next he had to fight with Ish-Boseth son of Saul and Saul's commander Abner for the throne. 2 Sam 3:1 summarizes this conflict as a long civil war. Abner defected to David to help secure David's position. Abner dies and we are introduced to Joab, the frequently insubordinate but highly successful commander of David's army. David's throne over all Israel is secured as Saul's son Ish-Boseth is assassinated by his own people. (2 Samuel 5:1-5 ) We'll begin examining David's reign as king at 2 Samuel 6. He comes to the throne at about thirty years old. Like Saul before him he will rule for forty years. David's love of music is evident as well as his sincere faith. He falls into many sins but turns to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness. He is the first king from Judah's line, (Ge 49:8-12). Yet he is not the prophesied King of all from Judah's line. His life and writings bring out many pictures and prophecies regarding the great and everlasting King promised to come from his line, namely, Jesus of Nazareth, the "Son of David".

## **DANCING AND REJOICING BEFORE THE LORD**

Our worship of God should include both reverence and rejoicing. What is one of your favorite parts of the worship services at your church? Explain what you like about it.

- 1) Read 2 Samuel 6. How are reverence and joy both displayed as the ark is transported from the place it rested when first returned from the Philistines to David's new capital city?
- 2) What lesson do we learn from God striking down Uzzah?
- 3) What lesson do we learn from David's humble liturgical dance of joy?
- 4) Describe aspects of our worship that display the following:
  - i. reverence
  - ii. joy
  - iii. humility.
- 5) Read 1 Chronicles 16 to get a full picture of this event. Thirty-thousand men were part of this procession! The Levites joined David. What do you notice in the set-up for praising God which is emulated in our worship today?

## **THE SON OF DAVID, AN ETERNAL KING**

Review all you know about David's life up to this point and summarize what he faced and how God blessed him. God continues to lift up David, the lowly shepherd to great height and favor. Read 2 Samuel 7.

- 1) All the promises of the world's Savior, a King over all the earth, trace back in time through this chapter and through the prophecy to Judah in Genesis 49:8-12, and ultimately to the serpent crusher to be born of a woman in Genesis 3:15. Review those verses now.
  
- 2) David wants to further honor the Lord by building a temple. Summarize the Lord's response.
  
- 3) This promise to David is partially fulfilled in Solomon, who like David is a type of Christ. Explain. (1 Chr 22:8-10)
  
- 4) How does this section help us further appreciate Matthew 1? What does it add to our understanding of Luke 1:31-33?

## THE DEVIL SNARES THE PROUD

Wasn't David rightly focused on the Lord's strength and not his own as he faced Goliath? Can you think of times we focus too much on our own strength instead of the Lord's? Read 1 Chronicles 21 and 22:1.

- 1) It is uncertain where this account falls chronologically. It gives a back-story to why David planned to build the temple on the location it was built by Solomon. Why do you suppose God did not want Kings of Israel counting their warriors like other nations did?
  
- 2) How has David's attitude begun to shift from when we first saw him fight?
  
- 3) Israel belonged to God and it seems it was understood only God could call for a census, and a ransom price would be collected at each counting. (Exodus 30:12) David was "conscience-stricken" (2 Sa 24:10) because he understood what he had done was wrong. What traps of pride and reliance on human stats and strength can the devil tempt churches to turn to today?
  
- 4) Why do we have no need for confidence in human strength?
  
- 5) Explain how we join in the plea, "Let fall into the hands of the Lord for his mercy is great."

## **SELFISH PRIDE ALWAYS LEADS TO SIN**

- 1) Read 2 Samuel 11. What clues do we get that David's pride has gone to his head?
- 2) Trace the progression of David's sin. List some things which make his sins especially despicable. (See also & 2 Samuel 23:39)
- 3) Read 2 Samuel 12:13. What differentiates David's downfall from Saul's'?
- 4) What do you consider the most valuable lesson from this section?
- 5) Read David's response to all this in Psalm 51. Find four key spiritual truths in this Psalm.

## WHAT IS LOVE?

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22

- 1) How is the world confused about sexuality and the meaning of "love"? Describe Amnon's idea of love?
- 2) What things in a family culture, like David's, promote this misguided and twisted idea of love?
- 3) Can you explain the sudden hatred he feels for Tamar after Amnon sexually abuses her?
- 4) Read 2 Samuel 13:23-39 What parallels do you notice between David's sexual sin and his family's sins?
- 5) Evaluate David's handling of the whole affair. (Scan ahead to see who Absalom was really upset at!)
- 6) Discuss how David could have better handled things to deal with the sins of Amnon and Absalom.
- 7) Use the Bible's definition of love to contrast it with Amnon's idea of love. (1 John 4:9-10, Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 13)

## **A KING WHO DOES WHAT IS JUST AND RIGHT**

After much bloodshed David narrowly escaped from losing his throne to attacks and conspiracies from his own son Absalom and others in Israel. 2 Samuel 14-20 records the strife and how David handled it all. Through these troubles God kept David humble and lifted him up. David wrote: "I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and have been saved from my enemies." (2 Samuel 22:4)

- 1) Read 2 Samuel 21:1-14 for an example of God's desire for both justice and peace in Israel.
  
- 2) List some things we see revealed about David's character after all this:
  - a. 2 Samuel 21:15-17
  - b. 2 Samuel 23:1-4
  - c. 2 Samuel 23:13-17
  
- 3) List some other notable examples you can recall that exemplify "the man after the Lord's own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14)
  
- 4) Compare now with how these traits are seen perfectly in our King Jesus.

# KING SOLOMON

Solomon was born to David in Jerusalem early in his father's reign. (2 Sa 5:14) He narrowly misses taking the throne when Joab and the priest Abiathar rally in support of Adonijah, a rival son of David. Solomon, however, is declared the next king by his father, David, and is anointed. He doesn't delay in securing the throne by eliminating all who opposed him. Keep in mind: had he failed to become king he himself would have been eliminated by his peers. (1 Kings 1:12)

Bathsheba, mother of the new King, plays an important role. A precedent begins and the rest of the kings all have their mother's name recorded.

Solomon is the third and last king over all Israel and Judah until the coming of the King who would gather together his scattered and divided people. Israel reaches its highest earthly prosperity and the temple is built.

Solomon is the author of two major sections of Proverbs (10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27) and is credited as the chief contributor of the book as a whole. In addition, he wrote Song of Songs, Psalm 127, and Psalm 72. Many ascribe Ecclesiastes to him as well.

The people grow increasingly resentful over his conscription of labor and taxation systems. The warning given by Samuel against desiring an earthly king was finding growing fulfillment.

He displays shrewdness in conducting the business and trade of the kingdom and prosperity increases. Though he sought the Lord's will at first he does evil and is decried for his idolatry. Spiritual prosperity is noticeably and increasingly absent.

## **ASK FOR WHATEVER YOU WANT...**

Create a list of the three things you most desire to have from God. How has what you desire most changed as you've matured from childhood onward?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 3:1-15. Solomon was clearly concerned with the welfare of God's people. What things in this section demonstrate that?
  
- 2) What things demonstrate that his concern for their welfare was lacking?
  
- 3) Describe what is meant by "wisdom" in this section. What important truth does James 1:5 add for us?
  
- 4) How can you teach someone (such as a child or young person) the value of wisdom?
  
- 5) Scan through the first chapter of Proverbs to see what Solomon says about gaining and using wisdom.

## **PROSPEROUS, NUMEROUS, AND HAPPY**

What did Theodore Roosevelt mean by “Speak softly and carry a big stick”?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 4:20-34, and 1 Kings 10:14-29 to describe just how Solomon was able to do what President T.R. advocated. (Recall God’s promise in 1 Kings 3).
  
- 2) What parallels do you see with the condition of Judah and Israel under Solomon and our nation’s position today? Explain why the situation described 1 Kings 4:20 can’t last long in this world.
  
- 3) Is “speak softly and carry a big stick” good policy for the church as it carries out its mission? Describe how the world ought to see God’s people.

## **FIRST THING'S FIRST, RIGHT?**

- 1) Read 1 Kings 5. Evaluate Solomon's first order of business upon securing peace and prosperity. Now scan through 1 Kings 6 and focus on the last verse of the chapter and the first verse of the next. Does this change your evaluation of how he conducted things?
  
- 2) Consider and discuss:
  1. the "palace" of our King Jesus;
  2. who paid for and built it;
  3. who will enjoy his home.

## THE TEMPLE IS DEDICATED

What's the length of time you think most people spend in prayer? How long would you say was the longest prayer you ever heard in worship? Read one of the longest recorded prayers in Scripture, 1 Kings 8:22-53.

1. Identify as you read how God answered this prayer during the history that followed.
2. Identify Solomon's main concern and request as he dedicates the temple.
3. Find five things he teaches about God's grace and five things he teaches about sin.
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.
  - iv.
  - v.
4. Following Solomon's example could lead us to expand our time in prayer. With your group make your list of the top four things that you think would be good to include more often in our prayers.

## **UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS AND GUARDS**

What do most consider their greatest achievement in life?

What is your greatest achievement in life so far? Discuss what Solomon could have listed as his greatest achievements.

- 1) Read 1 Kings 11:1-14. What happened? What warning does this give us?
  
- 2) Solomon built a magnificent house. Read Psalm 127:1 for wisdom from Solomon, who himself did not build his house as he ought. How does the Lord build and guard a house?
  
- 3) How does someone go about building on their own without him?
  
- 4) What does this mean for those who are heads in the church and home?
  
- 5) What temptations in life can make our greatest achievements meaningless?
  
- 6) What godly wisdom would you like to pass on to those in your group about the “the Lord building” and “the Lord guarding” their home?

## **WHAT IS LIFE WITHOUT FEAR OF THE LORD?**

For the conclusion for Solomon consider the book of Ecclesiastes, which was most likely written by him. That book reflects back from experience on life. Ecclesiastes offers no simple answer to life's dilemmas but cultivates a sober-minded world-view under God. It can be divided into two main sections 1) Life Under the Sun (1-6) and Life Under God (7-12)

- 1) Agree or Disagree: "Solomon died in unbelief."  
Defend your answer and explain why either position is so remarkable.

# KING REHOBOAM

Rehoboam became king at age forty-one and ruled for seventeen years. The influence of his father Solomon and his mother (an Ammonite) were evident in his life. He is much like the antithesis of America's Abraham Lincoln -he sets out to reunite a divided country but fails with foolish tactics. There is much idolatry during his reign in Judah -but still some good remained.

## GOOD IDEA; BAD IDEA

Leadership calls for hard decisions. Have you ever reached a difficult fork in the road where one decision was right and the other proved tragically wrong?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 12:1-24 Describe how the split came about between Judah and the rest of Israel.
  
- 2) What do we learn about Rehoboam's approach toward making decisions?
  
- 3) How might the lesson learned apply to the way a Christian congregation's leadership functions?
  
- 4) Identify in this section two good and two bad things done by leaders when they are confronted by the people they lead.
  
- 5) When is it necessary for forceful leadership? When should leadership yield to demands of the people it leads? What's the best course of action when reaching a difficult fork in the road?
  
- 6) A yoke is a frequent picture in scripture for something you are made to submit under. Contrast the yoke of Rehoboam with the yoke of our King the Christ (Matthew 11:28-29).

