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**PRODUCTION AND
MINISTRY TEAM**
**VICE PRESIDENT, LIFEWAY
RESOURCES:** Eric Geiger
GENERAL EDITOR: Ed Stetzer
MANAGING EDITOR: Trevin Wax
CONTENT EDITOR: Andy McLean
**MANAGER, STUDENT MINISTRY
PUBLISHING:** Chris Swain
DIRECTOR, STUDENT MINISTRY:
Ben Trueblood

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project for
Students Leader Guide*,
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234-0144;
or make comments on the Web at
www.lifeway.com.

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its author; salvation for its end; and
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FROM THE EDITOR



Andy McLean

Editor

*The Gospel Project
for Students*

As we continue our journey through the storyline of Scripture, we find ourselves looking in on a very interesting time period in Israel's history. We see the rise of Saul, Israel's first king, and learn what half-hearted obedience looks like as we consider his downfall. We witness the anointing of David and his rise to the throne, encouraged by not only his faith in God in the midst of difficulties like facing Goliath, but also by his own pursuit of personal repentance in his life after his sin with Bathsheba. And we observe Solomon in all of his God-given wisdom, while at the same time recognizing that even a wise king can make foolish decisions. It is a fascinating time in Israel's history, one that signals the establishment of the kingdom.

As students walk through these narratives and learn about these biblical characters, they will quickly learn that these stories aren't just retelling historical accounts from the nation of Israel. No, these stories are commentaries on our own lives today. They show us how we often reject God's loving rule in our own lives and set up "lesser kings" on the throne of our hearts. They show us what it looks like to have a heart that pursues after God, as well as a heart that seeks repentance when it fails. They show us the importance of not only pursuing wisdom, but the importance of living it out in order to avoid falling into spiritual idolatry. And finally, with crystal clarity, they show the greater King who would eventually come—the One who would truly reflect God's heart and fight on behalf of His people—Jesus! May you and your students be both encouraged and challenged to make much of Jesus, the King of kings, during this study as you not only treasure Him in your own hearts, but also seek to make Him a treasure in the lives of those around you.

AUTHORS

UNIT 1



J. D. GREEAR is the lead pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He's the author of *Gospel, Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, and *Jesus, Continued...: Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. J. D. holds a PhD from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Veronica, have four children.



SPENCE SHELTON lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife, Courtney, and their four children. Spence and his family were sent by The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham to plant Mercy Church in the fall of 2015. He holds a BSBA from UNC-Chapel Hill and an MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

UNIT 2



GREG BREAZEALE (sessions 7-12) resides with his wife, Heather, and three sons in Austin, Texas, where he is the North Campus pastor at The Austin Stone Community Church. He holds an MDiv from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a DMin in Expository Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



KEITH AND KRISTYN GETTY (session 13) are writers of modern hymns that teach Christian doctrine sung in globally-accessible melodies. Some of their best known hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Speak, O Lord," and "The Power of the Cross," all three co-written by Keith with Stuart Townend. Their hymns are sung in churches around the world, in fine concert halls of Europe and North America, and on US network and public television and the UK's BBC. Keith and Kristyn live between Northern Ireland and Nashville with their three young daughters.

THIS STUDY

- **Essential Doctrines:** Each session will also contain an essential doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material. The essential doctrine is also located in the student's personal study guide, though in an abbreviated format.
- **Christ Connection:** Each session will end with a direct look at how the content studied connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture is pointing to Him. The material in the Christ Connection will also be provided in the student's personal study guide.

▶ YOUR STORY

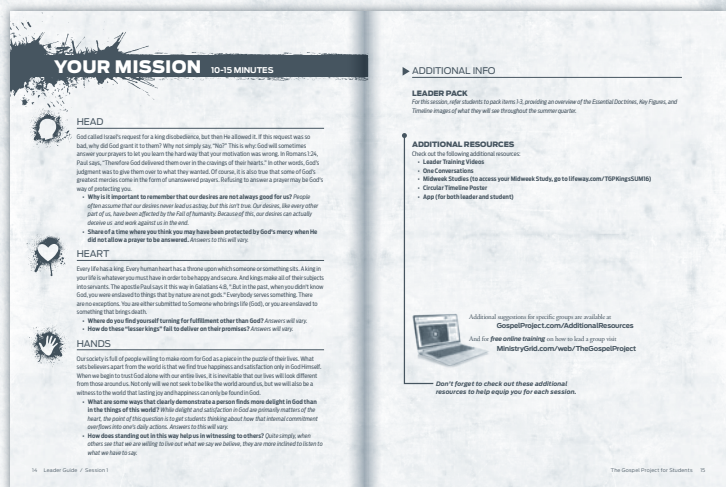
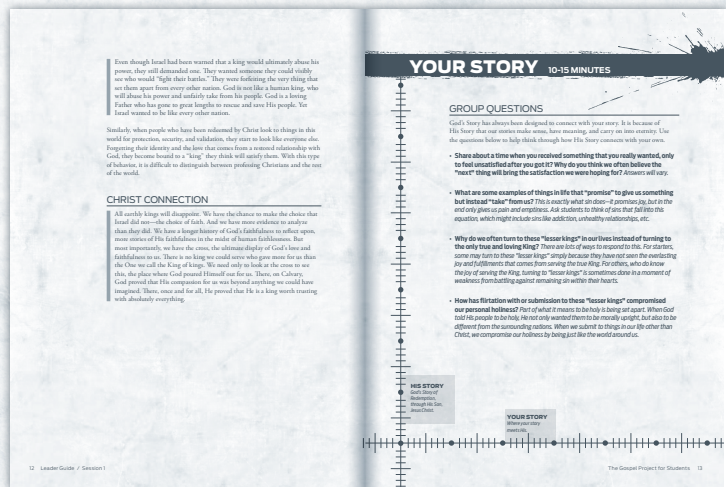
The Your Story section is designed to connect what God has done in the past to students' lives today by introducing group discussion questions that highlight how God's Story connects with their story. There are lead-ins with each question in the Leader Guide to help the leader walk students through each question.

▶ YOUR MISSION

The Your Mission section is designed to show how God's Story is capable of creating lasting transformation into how we think, feel, and live from day to day. By doing so, we emphasize to students that every session goes beyond mere Bible study to a calling to be on mission with God.

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

The final page of each session points leaders to additional resources that can be used in conjunction with each study. The resources listed, such as teaching tips videos and One Conversations, are designed to help leaders prepare for each session. There is also information about the leader pack posters that can be used with each session.



01

SESSION 1

The People Demand a King

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we see the Israelites rejecting God as their king by demanding a human king to rule over them. This desire revealed that the Israelites did not believe God was sufficient for them. Their request opened the door for enslavement and made them resemble other nations. Although today we may not demand a monarch, we search for “kings” to provide security for us. Israel’s story reminds us of the need to be fully satisfied in God as the true King.

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 8:1-22

THE POINT

Rejecting God's loving rule reveals a lack of satisfaction in Him and personal holiness within our lives.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

For most people the idea of “God” is a welcomed thought. Yes, there are those who reject the notion of a higher power, but according to a 2015 study by the Pew Research Forum, atheists account for only 3.1% of the U.S. population. The other 97% may not believe in God as He is understood by Christians, but they still affirm belief in God’s existence.

The tension for most people isn’t whether or not God exists, but how much authority this God has in their lives. Many seem to be okay with God as long as He is only a spiritually uplifting thought, or someone to turn to in hard times. But what about a God who dictates the purpose and shape of their lives? People often find the notion of an intrusive, obedience-demanding deity offensive. And because they do not see the evidence of God’s provision in their lives, they do not trust Him and His ways for their wellbeing.

- **Have you ever heard the phrase “My God is like...” or “My God would never do...?” What do these phrases communicate about one’s view of God?**

Option 2

Progressive Insurance has the name-your-price-tool. Today, your students get to use the name-your-boss-tool. Ask them to choose an authority figure (coach, employer, teacher, etc.), and then instruct them to come up with a list of characteristics they want in their boss.

Allow each student to share his or her top five. Debrief what they suggested. Did they tend to want lax, easy-going authorities? Did they want strict authorities? Were their authority figures similar to or distinct from the world (point 2)? If so, in what ways?

Close your activity time by connecting the exercise to the fact that the authority figures in our lives can either encourage us toward holiness (living distinct from the world) or point us to conformity with the world and its values. Explain to the students that this is most clearly seen when it comes to submitting to God’s authority in our lives. By submitting to Him, we are encouraged and empowered toward holiness; however, if we reject His authority, we become like the rest of the world around us.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Rejecting God's loving rule reveals a lack of satisfaction in Him and personal holiness within our lives.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Samuel** - dedicated to the Lord before his birth; prophet and final judge of Israel

PLOT

As we resume our journey through the biblical narrative, we move from the period of the judges into the period of the kings. In this session, we see the Israelites rejecting God as their king by demanding a human king to rule over them. This desire revealed that the Israelites did not believe God was sufficient for them. Their request opened the door for enslavement and made them resemble other nations. Although today we may not demand a monarch, we search for “kings” to provide security for us. Israel’s story reminds us of the need to be fully satisfied in God as the true King.

Remember, every time you see this bar in the leader guide, it indicates the same material is also found in the personal study guide as well.

THE ISRAELITES REJECT GOD AS THEIR KING

Samuel was the boy who was miraculously born to Hannah and later became one of Israel's greatest prophets. He heard directly from God and then spoke on behalf of God to the people. Unfortunately, Samuel's sons turned from the Lord, and their rebellion provided the chance for Israel to request something they had been searching after for quite some time.

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." (1 Sam. 8:1-9)

Samuel sensed that the people's request represented a lack of trust in God. God was supposed to be their true King, as they were to depend on Him for everything. But the people were asking for something more than God to bring them security. The people had not rejected God outright; they were, in effect, saying, "God, yes, we want You . . . but we also need a guarantee of this, and that, and this, and that."

In Israel's story, we see two ways to reject God: one is to reject Him outright; the other is to say you follow Him, but you do not truly depend on Him. This second form of rebellion is expressed whenever you insist on a number of other things being present in your life before you can feel secure.

Is it not easier to "trust God" when everything that you think you need for life is right in front of you? School is going well, your relationships with your peers are good, and the people within your life are healthy. But when one of those things is missing, do you notice feelings of insecurity, anxiety, or unhappiness arising within you? Wouldn't it be easier to trust God and follow Him if you had some kind of binding, legal guarantee of what He would do?

TIMELINE

DEMAND FOR A KING

The people desire to be like the surrounding nations.

SAUL'S DOWNFALL

Israel's first king fails to obey God.

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

The characteristics of a true king.

It would be so much easier to trust God if we could control Him. But we cannot, and so, too often we create a list of requirements in addition to God. We will “follow” Him, but with our own stipulations.

Remember, these sections are optional and can be skipped if preferred.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

In Deuteronomy 17, God clearly laid out the expectation that a king would lead His people one day. So the Israelites’ request for a king in 1 Samuel 8 was no surprise, nor was their wicked motivation behind the request. Did their sinful demand cause God to change His plan? No actions, words, or thoughts of ours can escape God’s foreknowledge and thwart His plan (Job 42:2). And so it is true that God is fulfilling His plan not only despite sin but even through sin. God is able to use anything and everything for His glory and for the good of those who love Him.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, containing God’s special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity’s source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

SAMUEL WARNS THEM OF PUTTING THEIR SECURITY IN A HUMAN KING

Samuel didn’t hold back when he foretold the consequences of Israel’s demand for a king. Here’s what he said:

So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom

you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.” (1 Sam. 8:10-18)

The dominant word in this description is “take.” The king will take your sons and daughters; he will take your crops and your lands; he will take the best years of your lives. And he will exploit them for himself.

The irony here is tremendous. The Israelites looked to a king to guarantee prosperity and security. What they would receive instead were kings who would take those things from them. They wanted a king whom they could control. Instead, their kings would wind up controlling them. What they thought would empower them would actually enslave them!

This is an Old Testament version of a New Testament principle: When you have other kings besides God, those kings do not save you; they enslave you. You become a slave to the things you depend on for happiness and security. For example, if you have to be in a relationship to be happy, you become a slave to romantic relationships.

If you need the praise of man to find fulfillment, you become a slave to the others’ opinions. Everything you do is aimed at getting the approval of others, even to the point of feeling jealous of others and resenting them when you think they are liked better than you.

If you have to have some physical means to release stress or feel relaxed, it can quickly enslave you. What started as an escape you thought you could control ends up as a tyrant that controls you. The type of escape varies—drugs, alcohol, overeating, pornography—but the pattern is the same. It begins as something you can go to on your own terms to escape the tedium of your day. But then you begin to crave it, and more of it, and worse types of it. And you cannot turn the drive off.

- **What are some things that offer you a sense of fulfillment or a feeling of security? What are the signs that we are trusting in these things and not in God alone? (p. 11, PSG)** ●

THE PEOPLE WANT TO BE LIKE THE SURROUNDING NATIONS

We’ve seen that when we demand a king, we are admitting that God is not enough for us and therefore, we are opening the door to enslavement. As the story continues, we see that the demand for a king makes us (just like Israel) look like everyone else.

But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and

TIMELINE

DAVID AND JONATHAN

The gift of true friendship.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David’s fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

Whenever you see PSG page numbers listed, it indicates that there is a section in the personal study guide for students to interact with.

fight our battles.” And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “Go every man to his city.” 1 Sam. 8:19-22

Even though Israel had been warned that a king would ultimately abuse his power, they still demanded one. They wanted someone they could visibly see who would “fight their battles.” They were forfeiting the very thing that set them apart from every other nation. God is not like a human king, who will abuse his power and unfairly take from his people. God is a loving Father who has gone to great lengths to rescue and save His people. Yet Israel wanted to be like every other nation.

Similarly, when people who have been redeemed by Christ look to things in this world for protection, security, and validation, they start to look like everyone else. Forgetting their identity and the love that comes from a restored relationship with God, they become bound to a “king” they think will satisfy them. With this type of behavior, it is difficult to distinguish between professing Christians and the rest of the world.

CHRIST CONNECTION

All earthly kings will disappoint. We have the chance to make the choice that Israel did not—the choice of faith. And we have more evidence to analyze than they did. We have a longer history of God’s faithfulness to reflect upon, more stories of His faithfulness in the midst of human faithlessness. But most importantly, we have the cross, the ultimate display of God’s love and faithfulness to us. There is no king we could serve who gave more for us than the One we call the King of kings. We need only to look at the cross to see this, the place where God poured Himself out for us. There, on Calvary, God proved that His compassion for us was beyond anything we could have imagined. There, once and for all, He proved that He is a king worth trusting with absolutely everything.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Share about a time when you received something that you really wanted, only to feel unsatisfied after you got it? Why do you think we often believe the "next" thing will bring the satisfaction we were hoping for?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some examples of things in life that "promise" to give us something but instead "take" from us?** *This is exactly what sin does—it promises joy, but in the end only gives us pain and emptiness. Ask students to think of sins that fall into this equation, which might include sins like addiction, unhealthy relationships, etc.*
- **Why do we often turn to these "lesser kings" in our lives instead of turning to the only true and loving King?** *There are lots of ways to respond to this. For starters, some may turn to these "lesser kings" simply because they have not seen the everlasting joy and fulfillments that comes from serving the true King. For others, who do know the joy of serving the King, turning to "lesser kings" is sometimes done in a moment of weakness from battling against remaining sin within their hearts.*
- **How has flirtation with or submission to these "lesser kings" compromised our personal holiness?** *Part of what it means to be holy is being set apart. When God told His people to be holy, He not only wanted them to be morally upright, but also to be different from the surrounding nations. When we submit to things in our life other than Christ, we compromise our holiness by being just like the world around us.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

God called Israel's request for a king disobedience, but then He allowed it. If this request was so bad, why did God grant it to them? Why not simply say, "No?" This is why: God will sometimes answer your prayers to let you learn the hard way that your motivation was wrong. In Romans 1:24, Paul says, "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity." In other words, God's judgment was to give them over to what they wanted. Of course, it is also true that some of God's greatest mercies come in the form of unanswered prayers. Refusing to answer a prayer may be God's way of protecting you.

- **Why is it important to remember that our desires are not always good for us?** *People often assume that our desires never lead us astray, but this isn't true. Our desires, like every other part of us, have been affected by the Fall of humanity. Because of this, our desires can actually deceive us and work against us in the end.*
- **Share about a time where you think you may have been protected by God's mercy when He did not allow a prayer to be answered.** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

Every life has a king. Every human heart has a throne upon which someone or something sits. A king in your life is whatever you must have in order to be happy and secure. And kings make all of their subjects into servants. The apostle Paul says it this way in Galatians 4:8, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods." Everybody serves something. There are no exceptions. You are either submitted to Someone who brings life (God), or you are enslaved to something that brings death.

- **Where do you find yourself turning for fulfillment other than God?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How do these "lesser kings" fail to deliver on their promises?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

Our society is full of people willing to make room for God as a piece in the puzzle of their lives. What sets believers apart from the world is that we find true happiness and satisfaction only in God Himself. When we begin to trust God alone with our entire lives, it is inevitable that our lives will look different from those around us. Not only will we not seek to be like the world around us, but we will also be a witness to the world that lasting joy and happiness can only be found in God.

- **What are some ways that clearly demonstrate a person finds more delight in God than in the things of this world?** *While delight and satisfaction in God are primarily matters of the heart, the point of this question is to get students thinking about how that internal commitment overflows into one's daily actions. Answers to this will vary.*
- **How does standing out in this way help us in witnessing to others?** *Quite simply, when others see that we are willing to live out what we say we believe, they are more inclined to listen to what we have to say.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack items 1-3, providing an overview of the Essential Doctrines, Key Figures, and Timeline images of what they will see throughout the summer quarter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

Don't forget to check out these additional resources to help equip you for each session.



02

SESSION 2

The Downfall of Saul

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we witness the downfall of king Saul and his choice to rebel against God. In Saul's story, we see how the failure to completely obey God leads us to rationalize and justify our disobedience—a sin that is compounded by the desire for human approval rather than divine grace. Half-hearted obedience is just another form of disobedience. God calls us to renounce our hypocritical displays of righteousness and submit fully to His purpose and plan.

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 15:10-29

THE POINT

When it comes to following God, half-hearted obedience is still disobedience.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Ask students to think of a person they trust completely. Then, as a group, discuss the characteristics of a trustworthy person by answering the following:

- **What qualities make this person trustworthy?**
- **Why would you follow this person's advice?**

To transition into the next part of this activity, place students in groups of three or four depending on the size of your group. Distribute paper to each group. Now, read aloud the following quote by C. S. Lewis: "To trust Him means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him."

Instruct the students to discuss the following within their groups:

- **What characteristics prove God is trustworthy?**
- **Why do you think we easily follow the advice given by other people, but hesitate when it comes to obeying God?**
- **What keeps you from completely trusting God? How can you learn to obey Him completely?**

Allow students a few minutes to discuss these questions in their groups. Then, explain that God's commands are more than just good advice. When God gives commands, He expects us to trust Him and act in complete obedience. Partial obedience doesn't count.

Option 2

Group students into pairs and allow them five minutes to locate biblical accounts in which partial obedience would have been a disaster. Help students begin by giving them an example, such as Noah not bothering to put a door in the ark, instead leaving an open doorway. Instruct students to find as many accounts as they can in the time permitted. Give teams one point for every account they list that no other teams lists, and two bonus points if they located the reference. Award a small prize to the pair with the most points.

As a class, choose three accounts to discuss. For each account, ask: What would have happened if this person only partially obeyed? What would the consequences be? Explain that when God gives us directions, He expects us to obey Him completely. Partial obedience is not true obedience.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

When it comes to following God, half-hearted obedience is still disobedience.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Samuel** - dedicated to the Lord before his birth; prophet and final judge of Israel
- **Saul** - first king over Israel; failed to obey God completely and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord

PLOT

In the previous session, we saw that Israel demanded a king, a demand that God saw as a betrayal of His authority. God gave the people what they asked for when He chose Saul as the people's first king. Saul was, in many ways, everything you would want in a king. He was a great military leader; he was tall and well built. Saul was "Mr. Israel."

Saul's rule began well, and it seemed like his heart was in the right place. But in the passages we will study today, we observe Saul's faulty and wavering obedience. Saul obeyed God, but only halfway. He followed God's instruction, but not totally. His obedience was compromised, not wholehearted. His half-hearted obedience would be his downfall.

TIMELINE

SAUL'S DOWNFALL

Israel's first king fails to obey God.

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

The characteristics of a true king.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

The gift of true friendship.

SAUL FAILS TO OBEY GOD COMPLETELY

1 Samuel 15 opens with God giving Saul a clear command to conquer the Amalekites and to spare nothing—not even the animals. But Saul refused to follow all of God's instruction. He did conquer the Amalekites, but he skipped over a few of God's commands. So, God spoke to the prophet Samuel.

The word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal." And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD." And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction." (1 Sam. 15:10-15)

God delivered the unsavory news about Saul's disobedience to Samuel, who was rightfully angry. It moved him to cry and pray all night long, and to go to Saul the first chance he had—early the next morning.

When Samuel arrived, Saul was throwing his victory party. Before Samuel even arrived, He received word that Saul set up a monument to *himself* in honor of his recent victory. Not only had Saul disregarded what God clearly commanded, but he was in the midst of recasting the entire battle to make it about him.

Saul boasted of his obedience when Samuel arrived. Take a moment and consider the craziness of the scene Samuel found. The evidence of Saul's disobedience is literally all around him, sheep making noises and the air filled with the smell of livestock. Yet he carried himself with the air of approval. "That's right," he said proudly, "I am faithfully following the Lord."

We shouldn't look at Saul and shake our heads. His story doesn't let us off the hook. How many of us show up at worship services every weekend, acting as if everything is just fine between God and us? How many of us sing songs and put on a good show? Meanwhile, the evidence of our disobedience surrounds us. Those closest to us see our half-hearted obedience as the disobedience it truly is.

- **What examples of half-hearted obedience have you witnessed in your own life? How do these examples serve as a warning to you about the danger of failing to obey God completely?** (*p. 16, PSG*)

SAUL TRIES TO JUSTIFY HIS DISOBEDIENCE

We all get caught in our sin. We are hypocrites from time to time. But what we do next, when the Holy Spirit confronts us, is of life-or-death importance. At this point, Saul still had an opening, a chance to choose a path toward repentance. Instead, he hardened his heart and began to rationalize his misbehavior.

Notice what Saul said earlier about the sheep and the best of the livestock (v. 15). Saul was the one who spearheaded this endeavor yet he decided to shift blame to the people (“The troops brought these!”). But Saul did not stop there—like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he tried to pin this back on God. He argued that the people spared the best sheep to sacrifice to God. Such a worthy goal must justify the disobedience, right?

Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.” And Samuel said, “Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?” And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal. (1 Sam. 15:16-21)

However, it was clear that Saul was seeking a name for himself, his own kingdom, and his own stature. That is why he spared Agag and kept him prisoner. Refusing to kill Agag was not an act of mercy; no, having an enemy king in your prison was an enormous status booster. In those days, conquering kings would frequently parade all of the kings they captured as a sign to the world: “I am the conquering king. I am the king of kings.” In much the same way, Saul paraded the spoils of war in front of his people. His desire for their approval ran deep. As we have learned already, everyone has a king, or something that they crave and must have to feel happy and secure. For Saul, personal recognition was his king. Fame fueled his rebellion.

Saul believed he was successful—he completed his mission and returned with a prisoner king as well as livestock for a sacrifice to God. He should be honored right? Wrong. Disobedience is still disobedience no matter what gain or “good” may come as a result.

And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.” Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the LORD.” And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.” As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.” Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the LORD your God.” So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the LORD. (1 Sam. 15:22-31)

According to Samuel, partial obedience is still disobedience. Unfortunately, many people in our churches are giving 90% obedience, just like Saul, and are completely at peace with it. And those of us who are religious are often tempted to cover over rebellion with rituals. We disobey in one area, and try to “make it up” to God with some offering in another area. Like the student who tries to justify being in an unhealthy romantic relationship by saying he or she is trying to share Christ with the other person.

God is not fired up about people singing some songs or giving some of their money when their hearts are far from Him. What thrills God is a heart that obeys Him.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

You must admit: the Bible has some vivid screen writing. Imagine Samuel turning to leave, when Saul grabs his robe. Rip! Samuel takes one look at his torn shirt and says, “God has torn the kingdom away from you, fool, and given it to a better neighbor of yours.” That neighbor will turn out to be King David. David would not be a perfect king, but he knew how to repent, and he knew how to let repentance be about God’s kingdom, not his own.

This moment is a defining one in Saul’s life. From this point on, he will plummet into an epic tailspin. Instead of repenting, Saul will harden himself further. In response, the Spirit of God departs from him. The absence of God and His approval leaves Saul with an enormous void in his life, and jealousy literally consumes him. The slightest criticism will send him into a violent rage. He will spend years of his life tracking David around in the wilderness, trying to kill a man who continually goes out of his way to honor him.

TIMELINE

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David’s fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Earlier, we saw how Samuel reminded Saul that before God made him a king, he had been a nobody. Saul should have responded in gratitude because of God's amazing grace. Instead, he refused to listen to the Word of God. He refused to remember God's gift of grace.

God has said something similar to us: "When you were a sinner, I came to earth and hung on a cross for you." The God of the universe sacrificed Himself for us. He loves us immeasurably. When we understand this, it liberates us from the driving need to be great. Knowing the value of God's gift breaks us from the captivating power of sin over our lives.

The great news of the gospel is that Christ demonstrated whole-hearted obedience perfectly for us. He died in our place, suffering the penalty for our disobedience.

"to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). The author of Hebrews referenced this verse in Hebrews 10, applying it to Jesus: He obeyed fully, and then sacrificed Himself on top of that. His obedience earned our acceptance before God, the one Person whose opinion matters more than any other—if we will receive it. And when we do, the power of disobedience in our lives is broken, setting us free from anxieties, dissatisfaction, insecurity, and fear.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Unchanging

God's being, attributes, and the ethical commitments He has given cannot change. This means, among other things, that God is committed to being God, and that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. God's unchanging nature is good news for Christians, for it guarantees that God does not change His mind or go back on His promises. Christians can find assurance and peace of mind in knowing that the God who brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light is the God who will carry them through into eternity.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Like Saul, what are some ways you have noticed yourself or others justifying or rationalizing sin?** *Answers will vary but may include things like: students justifying a romantic relationship with an unbeliever because they believe they are being a witness for Christ, someone rationalizing that it is okay to cheat on a homework assignment since in his or her mind it is a minor offense compared to other sins and it would contribute to a better grade in the class, etc.*
- **Have you ever considered the fact that partial, delayed, or conditional obedience in your life is still disobedience? What are some areas where you see these half-hearted types of obedience the most?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Samuel says that God takes more delight in obedience than sacrifice. What are some areas in your life where you see a lot of sacrifice but little obedience?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How has this session challenged you when it comes to obeying God's will for your life?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

When confronted with our sin, we all find ourselves in situations similar to Saul's. Like Saul, we may rationalize our disobedience. We can try to blame others for our disobedience and attempt to make up for our mistakes by pointing out that at least we are not as bad as that guy. But God does not want our rationalizations; He wants our repentance. He does not want our sacrifices; He wants our submission.

- **Why do you think people are more prone to rationalize their sin instead of repent from it?** *Because the human heart is broken and corrupt as a result of the Fall, it comes as no surprise that it will do everything conceivable to avoid blame—the heart will defend itself at all costs. This is why, among many other reasons, we need God to give us new hearts that do battle with sin.*
- **How can we lovingly help each other see through these silly excuses?** *One of the most God-glorifying things about Christ-centered friendships is the ability to lovingly speak truth into each others' lives. From accountability to encouragement, to rebuking and admonishment, our friends can identify blind-spots in order to help us to become more like Christ daily.*



HEART

People's behavior and speech aren't caused by the people and circumstances surrounding them, but by the condition of their hearts. While Saul tried to shift blame for his actions by singling out those around him, the text is clear that Saul's disobedience was internally motivated—he wanted to make a name for himself. Thus, people and situations don't cause us to do or say the things we do, but reveal the truth that is already hidden within us.

- **Based solely upon your actions and words this week, what would you say your heart is being motivated toward?** *Answers will vary, but may include things like: praise from parents, respect from peers, relationships, etc.*
- **How will this truth challenge the way you think through situations?** *At the very least it will challenge students to realize that external factors like people or circumstances aren't the cause of actions and words, but simply reveal what is already inside of us.*



HANDS

In the story of Saul we see a clear example of what empty religion looks like. Empty religion tries to pay God off, so that people can maintain control of their lives. Empty religion wants to obey God, but on its own terms—terms consisting of partial, delayed, or conditional obedience. But as we have learned, all of those are just various forms of disobedience. True religion, on the other hand, is whole-hearted devotion to God through a relationship with Christ. And it recognizes that while we may fail on a daily basis to give God our full obedience, the love of God in Christ empowers us to repent of our shortcomings and once again step back onto the path of discipleship.

- **How does the gospel free us from the desire to disobey, and at the same time free us from the burden of perfect obedience?** *The gospel changes our hearts to not only do the things we ought to do, but also empowers us to get back on our feet when we fail.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



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And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



03

SESSION 3

The Anointing of David

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will take a look at what happened after God rejected Saul as king. He directed the prophet Samuel to anoint David, the son of Jesse. The story of David demonstrates that God does not judge people based on worldly expectations. David's battle against Goliath is an example of a king's trust in the Lord's deliverance and of God's faithfulness to accomplish a decisive victory for His people. God's people needed a warrior-king to defeat the enemy on their behalf, and in the story of David, we catch glimpses of the promised King we need—as well as an example of godly obedience from a heart on fire for God.

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 16:1-13; 17:20-26,33-37,45-51

THE POINT

God is looking for a king who reflects His heart and will fight for His people.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Briefly review the previous session, reminding students about Saul's disobedience and rejection. Saul was God's anointed king, the one to be ruler over Israel. God gave Saul a mission—completely destroy the Amalekites. But Saul imprisoned the king and kept the livestock for himself. Saul failed to fully obey God's commands. Saul turned away from God, and God rejected him as king. God had a new king in mind, one who would later be described as a man after God's own heart.

Place students in small groups or pairs depending on the size of your group. Within their groups, invite students to discuss the following:

- **What are some qualities of a king who refuses to follow God's commands? A godly king?**
- **What do you think it means to have a king who reflects God's heart?**
- **In what ways do people turn away from God today?**
- **How can you reflect God's heart in your own life?**

Explain that David was the next king Samuel anointed, but most importantly, an eternal King would come from David's lineage. A King who did not just reflect God's heart—He was God's Son, Jesus.

Option 2

For this option, students will need access to the Internet in some capacity. Have your students do a scavenger hunt online for quotes about leadership. They should each come up with one to three favorite quotes (based the number on how many students you have). You might need to help them conduct their search, for example you may need to give tips on what to do other than type “leadership quotes” into a search engine. Encourage them to think of their favorite leaders and look up quotes by those people.

Once every student has found a quote, have them read it aloud and share why they like it. Discuss what they found, making sure to point out any quotes that apply to pursuing the heart of God. Given the probability that most of the quotes didn't involve this premise, point out how loving God with all one's heart, mind, and soul will result in loving one's neighbor, including those whom students may serve as a leader.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God is looking for a king who reflects His heart and will fight for His people.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Samuel** - dedicated to the Lord before his birth; prophet and final judge of Israel
- **David** - youngest son of Jesse who was anointed to be king following Saul. David is recognized for a number of things, in terms of both his character—he followed God—and his accomplishments—he defeated Goliath, etc.
- **Goliath** - feared warrior for the armies of Philistia; was killed by David in battle after mocking the armies of the Lord

PLOT

In the previous session, we saw how the Israel's first king, Saul, failed to live up to God's standard and the expectations of God's people. In the middle of the Book of 1 Samuel, after the prophet Samuel confronted Saul about his disobedience, the narrative transitions from the story of Saul to the story of David.

We are introduced to David the shepherd boy—certainly not the king anyone would expect. He will go on to be a great man of God, but his entrance onto the scene is hardly impressive. In every way, he is—to put it bluntly—ordinary. But he will become the kind of king who trusts in God's provision for his success and finds victory. And perhaps in one of the most famous Bible stories of all time, David will be the young champion who brings down a giant.

TIMELINE

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

The characteristics of a true king.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

The gift of true friendship.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.

GOD'S EXPECTATIONS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD'S

The story picks up with the prophet Samuel in deep distress because of Saul's sin. After all, Samuel had anointed him, and Saul seemed like such a promising prospect. But the king turned out to be nothing like what Samuel had hoped. Saul was faithful only to himself, and the king's sin grieved the prophet.

God sent Samuel on a mission to find the next king of Israel. To help with that task, Samuel ordered a consecration for the sacrifice, in which each member of the community offered themselves to God. This was the perfect moment for Samuel to inspect the sons of Jesse, who would come marching by him in succession.

In 1 Samuel 16:1-13, we see a man named Jesse present seven of his sons before Samuel during this time. Eliab was the oldest of Jesse's sons, so he came forward first, looking as kingly as possible. Samuel took one look at him and thought he had found his man—good-looking, tall, and strong. Definitely kingly material. God, however, was unimpressed. Eliab's appearance, height, and stature did not even register as relevant qualities.

One by one we read that each of the seven sons that Jesse initially presented were rejected. We are not given specific reasons why, only that while outwardly they may have seemed qualified, evidently God weighed their hearts and found them lacking. One by one, Jesse trotted his sons out, and one by one, Samuel shot them down. It is an Old Testament version of Cinderella, as the brothers fruitlessly try to cram themselves into the glass slipper of Israel's kingship.

Then a surprising turn of events takes place. Samuel asked Jesse if there were any sons left out. Take a look:

And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah. (1 Sam. 16:10-13)

Samuel finally asked about the youngest son. David was a shepherd, which was not a coveted position in Israel. He was also the smallest, perhaps to the point Jesse didn't even think his youngest son could be a king. The text implies that

David was outwardly unimpressive, even to those who knew him best; yet he was the one God chose!

David would go on to lead an extraordinary life, but we must not miss the truth that every extraordinary event in his life happened in spite of his own ordinariness. David had access to the power of an extraordinary God, in part because he did not think he was extraordinary in himself. This is in strong contrast to Saul, who was fully convinced of his own greatness, a folly that led God's Spirit away from him and brought him crashing back down to earth.

- **Out of all of Jesse's sons, why do you think God chose David to be the next king?** (p. 22, PSG)

GOD WANTS A KING WHO WILL FIGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE

We pick up the story in 1 Samuel 17, when Jesse sent David out to visit his brothers on the battlefield. So David left the tending of sheep, packed his bags, and headed to the front line.

And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:20-26)

Word got back to King Saul that someone might be up for the challenge of taking on Goliath. But as soon as David arrived, Saul took up the same tone with him that his brothers used.

And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a

lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you!” (1 Sam. 17:33-37)

David wasn't affected by the discouragement of people around him. He was the anointed king and he trusted in God's power. Besides, he had done his real training in the pasture, and compared to a lion or a bear, Goliath was not terribly impressive.

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.” When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. (1 Sam. 17:45-51)

There are people today who love to use this as an analogy about the underdog: *no matter the odds, you can do it! Just believe in yourself!* Sadly, this misses the point. God does not want us to read this story and come away with a cocky assurance that given the right confidence, we can achieve whatever we set our minds to. Yes, we can glean insight from David's courage and how he overcame insurmountable odds. But that's not the main point of the story.

The entire scene of David's conflict with Goliath is cast in the light of representative warfare. When David took on Goliath, it was not merely one man against another; this was Israel and Philistia, squaring off. What's more, the battle between Israel and Philistia represented the struggle between their gods, as both David and Goliath mentioned in their taunting monologues. And when he won, the entire nation of Israel shared in his representative victory, even though they did nothing to earn it themselves.

TIMELINE

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

CHRIST CONNECTION

We stand in a situation similar to Israel, in need of a representative to save us from evil. We are like the Israelites: hiding in our tents, ignoring the threat of Satan, sin, and death. What we need, like Israel, is a representative to defeat evil on our behalf. This story prepares the way for God to raise up another King who would accomplish another decisive victory—King Jesus who will come and slay the serpent and rescue people from sin and death.

In David, we see a picture of courageous faith in God's power. We also catch a glimpse of the bigger story of the Bible and of the coming King whom no one would have expected or chosen to win the victory, but through His death and resurrection, He is mighty to save.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Christ as King

God has always been King over His Kingdom from eternity past, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What are some expectations our culture usually holds for those who will become effective leaders?** *For the most part, our culture tends to believe that physical appearance is important, those features that are external in nature. It is also assumed that those with an extraverted personality are at an advantage over those who are more introverted. However, God is more concerned about the internal state of one's heart, and history can testify to the fact that God uses all sorts of personalities for His glory and the good of others.*
- **What are some snap judgments we tend to make about others based on their appearance? How does this account warn us against misjudging others?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How is the truth that "God looks at the heart" both bad news and good news for you?** *On the one hand, it is good news in that we aren't judged by external standards. However, it is bad news as well as it is clear that all of our hearts are sinful and in need of being made new. The good news is that giving us a new heart is exactly what God does when we trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins.*
- **What is something new you have learned about this familiar story of David and Goliath? What does it teach us about the type of people God is molding us to become if we are followers of Christ?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

In one sense, the real giant in this story is the unbelief that dominated the hearts of God's people as they stood in cowardice and unbelief against Goliath and the Philistine army. Unfortunately, the same opposition is often at work in our churches today. Too often, we are like Eliab—scoffing at other believers' grand visions to reach their communities and their world. How different would our schools and cities be if, instead of responding with Eliab's cynical spirit, we assumed with David that God was eager to work powerfully in the lives of His people?

- **Share about a difficult time when you experienced similar unbelief in God's power.** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways we can encourage others to boldly live out their faith in such difficult moments?** *Answers may include: praying with others, reminding them of specific truths and promises from God's word, assuring them of God's character and purpose for them, etc.*



HEART

When you think about it, the pasture was the place where David honed some of the most vital skills in his life. It was there that he grew in courage, fending off lions and bears from his helpless flock. It was there that he learned humility, having to clean up after the sheep day after day. The pasture was the type of place where you could develop an upright heart and shepherding attitude versus growing up in the palace. This is why it is important to remember that God is at work in the different pastures we live in, forging our character, patience, and integrity. We ought not despise the pasture or resent our suffering: these are God's laboratories for molding our hearts to trust in His deliverance.

- **What "pasture" are you in right now or have you experienced in the past?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What does it look like for you to faithfully trust God through that experience?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

As God's people who have been given new hearts and transformed characters through a relationship with Christ, we should seek to live out this transformation in front of those around us, pursuing them with the same message of grace that found us when we were lost in our sins. In a similar way that David was jealous for God's name and glory, we too should seek to make much of Christ and His salvation by pointing others to His great name and glory.

- **How does this story challenge the way you live?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can make much of Jesus this week?** *Answers may include: doing my best in school and thereby glorify God in my education; sharing the gospel with a friend; etc.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #4, containing an artistic poster of David's sling when he battled Goliath.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
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- **Circular Timeline Poster**
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04

SESSION 4

The Faithfulness of a Friend

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we take a look at one of the greatest examples of friendship in the Bible—David and Jonathan. Jonathan shows us what it means to be a true friend by being utterly committed to David’s well being, by risking his own welfare for the sake of David, and by strengthening him in faith. The example of Jonathan points forward to the truest and best friend of all—Jesus Christ Himself, who redefines friendship and transforms us into the kind of people who can be true friends to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 18:1-3; 19:1-7; 23:15-18

THE POINT

God's people need godly friendships.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Friendship is a strange thing nowadays. Just 20 years ago, it would have been seen as the height of exaggeration (not to mention arrogance) for a person to claim hundreds or thousands of “friends.” But today, this is true of almost anyone with a Facebook account.

We have more friends than ever, don't we? Well, not really. What kind of “friends” are these? A person may have 4,500 Facebook friends, but that person probably doesn't really know even half of them, or the other way around.

The problem in our day is not that we lack people around us. We cross paths with people all the time. No, our problem is that we lack true friends. We are overly connected, but those connections are incredibly shallow. Our notion of friendship has shifted to the point that it affects even the few friends we do have, leading to us to settle for shallow relationships everywhere.

- **When you were growing up, who would you say was your closest friend? What made your friendship so close?**
- **As you look toward the future, what kinds of friends do you want to have in your life? How can you work to create deeper friendships?**

Option 2

For this option, engage students in discussing the number of Facebook “friends” they have. Ask questions like the following: “If you were required to name only one person as your Facebook best friend, could you do it? What if there were different categories, such as ‘close friends,’ ‘good friends,’ or ‘not really friends, but I know them.’ How many of your original friends would be in each of those categories?”

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to understand the different levels of friendship with the intention of helping them discover some of the elements that lead to deeper friendships with other people. Wrap up by saying that in today's session, they are going to discover what some of those elements are, providing an example to cultivate godly relationships in their own lives.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God's people need godly friendships.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **David** - youngest son of Jesse who was anointed to be king following Saul. David is recognized for a number of things, in terms of both his character—he followed God—and his accomplishments—he defeated Goliath, etc.
- **Jonathan** - son to Saul and close friend to David. Even at great cost to himself, Jonathan supported David's rightful claim to the throne

PLOT

In between the unfolding story of Saul and David's reigns as kings over Israel lies an incredible story of a surprising friendship, one that teaches us not only about true characteristics of a genuine friend, but also a glimpse into the type of friendship we have been granted access to through the gospel.

TIMELINE

DAVID AND JONATHAN

The gift of true friendship.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

JONATHAN WAS COMMITTED TO DAVID

We saw in the previous session how David was anointed by Samuel and how he stood up to the greatest warrior in the land—Goliath. David brought the giant down with a single flick of the wrist, and with one little stone, David became the prime example of underdog victories for centuries to come.

After David's victory, he grew in popularity. He was celebrated as a national hero, so much so that Saul—the reigning king—began to worry. Saul saw David as a threat to his throne. Saul might have been paranoid, but he wasn't dumb. Perhaps he knew the old proverb: keep your friends close and your enemies closer. So Saul decided to place David where he could keep an eye on him, in the king's palace itself. While David was under "palace arrest," he met Saul's oldest son, Jonathan.

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. (1 Sam. 18:1-3)

It doesn't take much knowledge of royal lineage to figure out that this friendship wasn't an obvious one. As Saul's oldest son, Jonathan was the king-to-be. Even though Jonathan was next in line, David was the one who had been anointed, the man whom God declared as the next king.

Shouldn't David and Jonathan be rivals then? Shouldn't Jonathan see David as a threat? In most cases, yes. But in this story, David and Jonathan become fast friends—with a covenant commitment based in Jonathan's loving David as much as he loved himself.

Consider the commitment between a parent and a child. A mother commits to love and care for her child and to put her child's needs above her own, no matter what happens. Especially during the first few years, the child is unable to reciprocate any love that would even come close to the selfless and sacrificial love of the mother. Yet a mother continues the downpour of love for the child. That kind of unrelenting, "I'm always going to be here for you" love we see modeled by a good parent is the kind of commitment we see here between Jonathan and David. Like siblings who stick together no matter what comes, Jonathan and David are committed to each other's good. Jonathan loved David like he loved himself—a fulfillment of what Jesus would later command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:39).

- **In your world, the word commitment probably doesn't paint the same picture as the covenant bond we see between David and Jonathan. How can you create this kind of commitment, or covenant, in your friendships?** (*p. 28, PSG*)
- **What does it mean to love someone as much as you love yourself? How would your relationships look different if you lived this way?** (*p. 28, PSG*)

JONATHAN PUT DAVID BEFORE HIMSELF

Covenants are a beautiful form of commitment, but they always come at a cost. Jonathan's covenant with David, by human standards, cost him almost everything. That's what sacrifice means—giving up something and committing to something greater. And this is where we see Jonathan risking his own welfare for the sake of his friend.

And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you." And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before. (1 Sam. 19:1-7)

Jonathan had nothing to gain in his relationship with David, but had everything to lose. He lived out his covenant friendship even when things got difficult. When adversity struck David, Jonathan was there. When death seemed certain, Jonathan was there. When the odds were stacked against David, Jonathan was there.

God knows we need friends who are willing to risk their own reputations, their own comfort, or their own welfare for our sake. It's one thing to *have* such friends; it's another thing to *be* that kind of friend.

JONATHAN REMINDED DAVID OF GOD'S PROMISES

As we fast-forward in the story of David, we find him on the run from King Saul. David flees into the desert and moves from cave to cave, running for his life. The friendship of David and Jonathan takes a backseat to Saul's high-speed chase after David. But every now and then, the author lets us know what Jonathan was up to. And as it turns out, Jonathan was doing whatever he could to strengthen David's hand and put him in the best position to survive.

David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this." And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home. (1 Sam. 23:15-18)

In this passage, we read that Jonathan made sure to meet with David and "encourage him in his faith" or "strengthen his hand." In other words, Jonathan was intentionally seeking ways to strengthen David.

Intentionality, of course, isn't everything. In fact, intentionality is pointless if it doesn't have a purpose. After all, your destination in life isn't determined by your *intentions* as much as it is by your *direction*. This is also true of friendship. The people who point you to God and strengthen you to do His will—those are the ones we need. David would be called a man "after God's own heart," yet even he needed someone to encourage him.

Friends who strengthen and encourage our faith in God don't do so by minimizing the problems in our lives. When Jonathan showed up, David was still on the run. Saul still wanted him dead. The fear was still real. But Jonathan provided hope in the midst of the fear. He pointed to a greater promise—God's promise that David would be the king. And just as David had hoped in God in days gone by, he could continue to hope in His promised future. Jonathan didn't present himself as the answer to David's problems. He presented God's promises as the answer.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Here we see David alone and afraid, far from home. But when Jonathan heard about it, he acted. Historians tell us that the distance Jonathan trekked was about 30 miles. That's an incredibly long walk to check on a friend. But Jonathan knew that a true friend is one who walks in when everyone else walks out. So he walked.

TIMELINE

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The story of Jonathan points forward to Jesus. Jonathan may be a wonderful example of friendship, but he is only a shadow of our truest Friend. Jesus would fulfill everything that Jonathan hinted at. Like Jonathan, He would serve us at great personal cost to Himself. Like Jonathan, He would come to us in our need—but instead of walking 30 miles, He crossed the gap between heaven and earth. Jonathan gave up his right to the palace to help David get in; Jesus purchased our place in the palace at the cost of His own blood. He made His cause ours, taking our sins and our sorrows and swallowing death in our place so that we could have life eternal. Here is the friend we've always searched for—the only one who risked it all, who always strengthens our hand in God, who commits Himself eternally to our good.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Edification

Edification refers to the progressive growth and maturity of the church, both individually and collectively. The Bible talks about different ways maturity, or edification, may happen, such as through the fellowship Christians share with one another (1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2). In addition, edification takes place through the church's preaching and teaching of Scripture (Eph. 4:11), helping people understand and internalize the whole counsel of God. In the end, edification is building up the body of Christ, equipping people to live on mission for the kingdom of God.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **When has someone risked something for your sake? What did their actions communicate about their commitment to you?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **When have you shown intentional and consistent kindness to someone, like Jonathan to David?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **The gospel is the greatest act of friendship in history. How does the gospel provide the best model for true friendship?** *The gospel gives us the clearest picture of friendship by showing us what it is like for someone to lay his life down for a friend. Because Christ befriended us, we should be willing to befriend others in the same manner.*
- **How has this story affected your view of friendship? What are some ways you intend to become a better friend to those around you?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

We don't have many covenants these days. The closest we have are contracts, but there's a world of difference between the two. Contracts are limited. The "I" is always foremost with a contract. But when we see our closest relationships in terms of a contract—with the "I" first and foremost—it's a disaster. We start assessing people based on whether they meet our needs. If they don't, we toss them aside for someone or something else. But covenants are different. Covenants start with the needs of the other person. They start with loving someone as you love yourself.

- **What are the ways you can tell that someone is being a friend to you only for what they can receive?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How can you tell that someone genuinely and selflessly cares about you?** *Selflessness is best displayed through one's actions, being an overflow of his or her commitment to putting others first in life.*



HEART

Many of us are afraid to open ourselves up to others for fear that they may see our personal flaws and imperfections and walk away. However, if we remember that Jesus said to us, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16), we can have the confidence that Jesus doesn't call us "friends" because we were the popular ones, the smart ones, or the righteous ones. He calls us friends because of His mercy. Period. This assurance gives us the ability to be vulnerable. We aren't afraid to open ourselves up to people, as if their judgment is going to destroy us. We've already been exposed to someone far more important, and He responded by declaring us His own.

- **What are some ways we try to fake true authenticity with even those closest to us?** *We expose very little about the things going on in our hearts, we play the actor in having people believe we are something we are really not, etc.*
- **Why is it necessary to be transparent with our friends in order to have a genuine connection with them?** *Being honest about our weaknesses with others is the path to really connecting with them. You can impress people with your strengths, but you can only connect with people through your weaknesses.*



HANDS

The world is filled with "passive friends." You call them, and they don't call you back. When someone trashes you in public, they don't step up to defend you. Sometimes, the passivity of a friend can hurt more than something said by someone who's your enemy. At least with an enemy you're expecting trouble. But with a passive friend, you end up under the bus time and time again. However, Jonathan was not a passive friend. He took time, spent energy, and risked his own welfare—all to make sure his friend David was strong.

- **What are some examples of passive friendship?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How can we be more intentional in strengthening a friend's faith in God?** *Answers may include things like: praying with and for them, encouraging them with a promise from God's word, assuring them of God's love and purpose for their life, etc.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #5—an artistic poster of a sword being forged. This poster symbolizes the way godly friendship can sharpen and edify one's life.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



05

SESSION 5

The Covenant is Reestablished

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we see God reaffirming and expanding the covenant promises He made to Abraham—this time to King David. God promised to give David rest from his enemies and to build an eternal house through one of David's descendants. In response to God's unfailing promises, David expressed gratitude and humility, and this is the appropriate response for all believers in light of God's faithfulness.

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 7:8-26

THE POINT

God doesn't need us—we need Him!

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Headlines and newsreels seem to stay filled with news of broken promises. And a quick search on the internet for “keeping promises” yields results on anything from quotes to steps, tips, or other how-to articles to help you learn to keep your promises. What is a promise? *A promise is a seal, a commitment or agreement to follow through with what you said you would do.* Lead students to discuss the following questions:

- **How important is a promise?**
- **What are some negative consequences to broken promises?**

After allowing time for students to answer, say, “Did you know that keeping your word tells people about their value to us? It also expresses our value for speaking truth.” Explain that God always keeps His promises—speaking truth and love are part of His character. He doesn’t need us to fulfill His plan, but He promises to fulfill our needs as we follow His plan.

Option 2

Before the session, create a list of situations that require promises or represent promises and can be acted out in a game of charades. Examples may include: a proposal, oath of office, signing a contract, a pinky promise, a handshake, and so on.

Place students in groups for each scenario, making sure each group has enough members to portray the scene. As each situation is guessed, list the correct theme on a dry erase or large poster board. After each group presents a sketch, ask students if they picked up on a theme. Then, announce that the theme was promises.

- **How important would you say it is to keep your promises? Why?**

Explain that today, we will be studying how God reestablished His covenant promises to Abraham with David, and how He would eventually fulfill His promise for an eternal king through Jesus.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God doesn't need us—we need Him!

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **David** - youngest son of Jesse who was anointed to be king following Saul. David is recognized for a number of things, in terms of both his character—he followed God—and his accomplishments—he defeated Goliath, etc.

PLOT

In the previous sessions, we've seen how David was anointed king but not yet on the throne. We've also seen that even while on the run from King Saul, David scored a number of military victories and became one of the most popular men in the kingdom. Now, after the death of Saul, David finally becomes king. And because David was God's chosen king, God reaffirmed and expanded the covenant promises He made to Abraham. Among them is the promise to give David rest from his enemies and to build an eternal house through one of David's descendants.

TIMELINE

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

GOD PROMISES PEACE FOR HIS PEOPLE

We catch up with David in 2 Samuel 7, where he was living large as the king of Israel. From his palatial balcony, David looked down and saw the travel-worn tabernacle that served as God's house. So David made a commitment to build God a beautiful new house. In response to David's seemingly generous act, God flipped David's script. Instead of accepting David's offer He wrote one of His own:

“Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.’”(2 Sam. 7:8-11a)

Before God issued one of the most notable promises in the Old Testament to David, He referred back to recent history to remind David how he got where he was. God reminded David that, every step of the way—from the pasture to the palace—He was orchestrating David's steps. In keeping with a common pattern in Scripture, God reminded David of His faithfulness before He made His promise.

- **Why is remembering God's past faithfulness in our lives important when it comes to trusting His faithfulness to us in the future?** (*p. 34, PSG*)

While David's desire to build God a house might seem odd to contemporary readers, it was quite the common practice in the ancient world. King Tut, for instance, built a temple for the Egyptian god Amon-Ra. In exchange, Amon-Ra allegedly proclaimed that King Tut would rule a kingdom that spanned the globe and lasted for millions of years. (He fell just a few thousand miles and a couple million years short.)

But note the order: 1) a king builds temple for a god; 2) the temple makes the god famous; 3) the god thanks the king by blessing his kingdom. That's the order of every religion in the world: work hard for me and I'll work hard for you.

God rejected that idea and reversed it. It is not God who needs us, but rather we who need God and are completely dependent upon Him. The house that God

builds will not bear the inscription, “Built by David for God,” but “Built by God for David.”

Grace—it seems so simple—a gift that is costly for the giver, but free for the recipient. Yet this is where so many people stumble. We’re hard-wired to ask, “How much is *enough*?” How often do I need to come to church? How much money do I have to give? Those questions will never get you to the gospel. The gospel begins with God’s extravagant gift. Jesus’ blood, and Jesus’ blood alone, is *enough* for your weary, guilty soul.

GOD PROMISES AN ETERNAL HOME FOR HIS PEOPLE

At this point, God opened David’s eyes to see something amazing. David had been thinking of building God a house, but what God offered to do instead never would have entered David’s mind as something to ask for. Look at what God promised:

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:11b-16)

Here we see God promising to build David an eternal house. This is a promise that refers to the Messiah who would come and reign forever. But one detail immediately strikes a lot of readers as odd: “When he commits iniquity...” If we’re talking about Jesus here (which we are), what is this about? Jesus never sinned!

It is helpful to remember that most biblical prophecies have a dual meaning. There is an immediate meaning, and then there is an ultimate one. From the perspective of the prophets it was often difficult to untie the two, but they remain distinct. Think of it like the experience of seeing a mountain range in the distance. When you first spot it, you might see two distinct peaks, seemingly right next to each other. It’s only as you get closer that you see that these peaks are miles apart.

The first fulfillment of this prophecy was David’s biological son, Solomon. Solomon’s name means *rest*, so in many ways he would exemplify this promise. His reign would extend rest throughout Israel, and it would be on his watch that Israel constructed the temple. And yes, Solomon would do some foolish

things—some Saul-like acts, as God puts it here—like having 700 wives and worshipping idols. Even so, God will keep His promise, and will not strip the kingdom from him.

This prophecy points through Solomon, to another King: Jesus. He was the descendant of David whose kingdom would last. He was the descendant who would establish a real temple, not a building constructed with human hands, but the temple of His own body. And after His ascension, He would send His Spirit to make us, His people, the temple of God.

Unlike Solomon, Jesus would not need to be disciplined with the stripes of men. Instead, He would be bruised for our iniquity, and by His stripes we would be healed. The real Son of David would build the real temple of God and establish God's real presence with His people—forever. And He would not just be David's son. He would be God's own Son, building the house of salvation for God's people on earth.

Wrap your head around that: God would build His own house and He would become the house He promised to build. In Jesus, God would be the fulfillment to His own promise.

David began this discussion wanting to go and build for God. But he ends it sitting, wondering, knowing, considering, adoring, and then exalting the King who deserves all glory.

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,’ and the house of your servant David will be established before you. (2 Sam. 7:18-26)

This is the key to salvation. Asking, “How much is *enough* for God?” is the wrong starting point. Instead, salvation starts with knowing what God has already

TIMELINE

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

done—which leaves us sitting in stunned awe in the presence of God. Yes, trusting Christ will lead you to do things for God. But everything you do is only a grateful response to what He’s done for you.

We often think that the world is supposed to look at Christians and say, “What impressive works they’ve done! They must really love God.” But, as God shows us here, our witness to the world should leave them saying, “Wow, what great things God has done for them!”

CHRIST CONNECTION

God promised David that future kings of Israel would come from his family and that his kingdom would last forever. God kept this promise by sending Jesus as one of David’s descendants. All of history is driving toward the day when Jesus, the Son of David, will be recognized as the King whose kingdom is everlasting.

Christianity is not about you living a good life and then giving your record to God, but Jesus living the perfect life and then giving His record to you, as a gift. He lived the life we were supposed to live and died the death we should have died. His life is ours, but only if we receive it.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Faithful

God’s faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God’s faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Apostle Paul linked the attribute “faithful” to God’s coming through on His word: “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Have you ever struggled with the mind-set that you have to repay God for the grace and mercy He has shown you? Why do you think people often feel this way?** *This mind-set comes from the misguided notion that we can earn or contribute to our right standing with God. It is a prevalent mind-set, represented in every world religion besides Christianity. We could never earn salvation or repay God for it. However, we can respond with gratitude and tangible expressions of thankfulness that flow out of the recognition that we are recipients of God's goodness.*
- **Why do you think the promise of rest was important to God's people? Why should that be important to us as well?** *If we are honest, we all want a place to rest—a place of security, no longer worrying if something bad or tragic is just around the corner. For the Christian, our rest is found in Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28).*
- **David responded to God's grace and faithfulness with gratitude and thanksgiving. What are some ways you respond to God's blessings in your life?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Have you ever felt burned out or tired in your walk of faith because you were asking the question "How much is enough?" How should this session help you avoid this burnout?** *Burnout is often the result of thinking that everything depends on us and rests on our shoulders and abilities. However, ironically, the more we steep ourselves in the finished work of Christ, resting in what He has done for us, the more we will find His Spirit rising up within us. The fire to do in the Christian life comes only from being soaked in the fuel of what He has done.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

We should remember that God does not need us. God is not now, nor has He ever, looked for “helpers” to assist Him in saving the world. That doesn’t mean He isn’t calling us to give ourselves generously to that mission, just that He’s not looking for people to supply His needs. He’s not short on money, talent, or time. He never commands us to go save the world *for* Him; He calls us to *follow* Him as He saves the world.

- **What dangers come with the faulty mindset that God needs us?** *Dangers like the belief that one's salvation depends on our ability to share the gospel and persuade others, or the prideful mind-set that “I” am a necessary part of God's plan to save the world.*
- **Why might humility of mind come easier to the person who recognizes that God doesn't need him or her?** *By recognizing that God doesn't need us, but instead has invited us to play a part, we are in a better position to think of ourselves less in relation to God's plan, resulting in personal humility on our part.*



HEART

Even though God does not need us, we should want to give back to God as an overflow of our gratitude for Him. After all, David wasn’t rebuked for his attitude. God commended it: “Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.” (2 Chron. 6:7). David wasn’t trying to buy God off; he wanted to do something great for God because of God’s great love toward him. David’s heart overflowed with the desire to give of itself back to the God who had given so much to him. That’s precisely how we should be in response to the gospel.

- **What are some graces and mercies in your life that stir up gratitude in your heart?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How can this gratitude can lead you to make much of Jesus as a result?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

What God told David is just as true for us. Our own personal kingdoms will fail. Our loftiest ambitions will fail. Jesus is the only thing that will last forever. And the greatest privilege of our lives is asking God to show us where we can join Jesus. He doesn’t need us, but He will use us for eternal value. He can make our miniscule lives into something beautiful, precious, and everlasting. For far too many of us, our lives are just so small. We think of God as a personal assistant, Someone to get us out of a jam. What He desires for us is so much bigger, so much richer, so much more profound than any of us realize.

- **Share about a time you experienced something and it was evident to everyone involved that God was working. What characterized that time in your life?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **In what ways do you dream of sharing the gospel in your area?** *Answers to this will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



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And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

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06

SESSION 6

David's Story of Sin and Repentance

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we focus on how King David fell into sin and experienced its ugly consequences. In David, we see sin's capacity to enslave us and to motivate us to cover it up. But we also see the possibility of renewal. Believers must see all of our sin as an offense toward God and rely on the forgiveness available to us through the sacrifice of God's Son for restoration.

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 11:1-5,6-17,26-27; Psalm 51:1-13

THE POINT

A true mark of a Christian life is one of continual repentance.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Because of our broken hearts and lack of love for God, we often find that sin can be pleasing. Think about it: we don't rush toward sin because it's painful, but because it's so promising. Sin begins with a thrill, with a rush. Even though sin starts off with the excitement of seemingly endless possibilities, it *always* leads to the same place: brokenness, agony, disappointment, and despair.

What is true of sin generally is especially true of sexual sin. Sexual sin is so powerful, so destructive—and yet so easy to access—that it can bring the strongest believer to complete ruin. That's what it did to David, a man “after God's own heart.”

- **Consider the sin of losing your temper and lashing out at someone with words. What is sin's promise to you in this situation? What is the appeal in that moment?**

Option 2

Bring candy (make sure to be aware of any allergies in your group) and a closed shoebox, with an undesirable item such as a sock, inside. Without making students aware of what you placed in the box, describe the good of the “item” in the box. Your goal is to make the box look like the most enticing choice. Present both items to students and ask them to choose the one they would most enjoy. Use this as a lead-in to discuss the way sin often looks good on the outside and tempts us to choose its path, but doesn't truly give us anything.

Then ask:

- **Why do you think you were tempted to choose the box, even though you did not know what was inside?**
- **Looking back, would your choice be different? What can this teach us about sin?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

A true mark of a Christian life is one of continual repentance.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **David** - youngest son of Jesse who was anointed to be king following Saul. David is recognized for a number of things, in terms of both his character—he followed God—and his accomplishments—he defeated Goliath, etc.
- **Bathsheba** - was wife of Uriah at the time David committed adultery with her. After having Uriah killed in battle, David marries Bathsheba, and together they eventually have a son named Solomon

PLOT

After having seen David rise to power and exemplify characteristics of what it means to be a good king and follower of God, we now come face-to-face with David's plummet into sexual sin and the consequences it would bring David and those around him. In this story not only do we recognize David's need for a Savior, but we also catch a glimpse of the damaging results sin can have for us and those around us. While tragic on many levels, the story also offers us the hope of forgiveness and the vital role of repentance in the lives of believers.

TIMELINE

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

DAVID FALLS INTO SIN

Sin doesn't exist in a vacuum. It takes place at specific times and in specific ways. Let's take a look at David's temptation and sin, which gives us insight into how we fall into captivity to sinful desires.

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." (2 Sam. 11:1-5)

The first thing we should note about how King David became captive to sin is that this temptation comes after he has received the blessing of God. In the preceding chapters, David has emerged as the victor of many battles. So at this point in the biblical narrative, the kingdom of Israel is firmly established. David is at the height of his popularity.

Does it surprise you that David's sin comes after his receiving so much blessing? We tend to think that adversity is what precedes sinful behavior, as if sin becomes nothing more than an escape from reality. But blessings can be just as dangerous.

The danger in times of blessing is that we forget the extent of our dependence on God. When life showers us with goodness, the default response from many is to push God to the side.

- **What blessings has God provided you that are most likely, if you let them, to make you forget your dependence on God?** (p. 40, PSG)

Another element of this temptation is that David was put himself in a place where he could be tempted. It is far easier to avoid temptation than it is to resist sin. Don't get me wrong: resisting sin is important, immensely so. We must cultivate a habit of coming face-to-face with temptation while still resisting sin. But the world throws enough temptation our way. Do we really need to seek out more of it?

- Maybe you know of a certain place where you could be tempted. How can you avoid that place? If you cannot avoid the area, then what can you do to guard yourself against temptation while there? (*p. 41, PSG*)

DAVID ATTEMPTS TO COVER-UP HIS SIN

As the story unfolds, we see David sink lower into the consequences of his sin as he attempts to hide it.

.So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” And Uriah went out of the king’s house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.” Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.” And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD. (2 Sam. 11:6-17,26-27)

Plan A is an obvious one, but a tricky one to accomplish: David attempted to trick Uriah into thinking the baby is his. He invited Uriah home from battle, asked for a briefing on the war, and then sent him home. David thought he had it covered.

Wrong. Uriah was a noble guy, and he was thinking of all his comrades sleeping in the field. They didn’t have the pleasure of sleeping in their own bed and being with their wives. So Uriah camped out with the palace guards for a night. Imagine how convicting that was for David.

David then concocted Plan B. It now included the step of getting Uriah drunk. Uriah, despite his nobility, walked right into David's plot. Uriah was just a few short steps away from his house (and David just a few short steps away from apparent freedom) when the alcohol overcame him. He passed out right there on his front lawn. Strike two for David.

So David started Plan C. He wrote a note to Joab that told him to put Uriah in the front of the battle and to abandon him. It's a death sentence for Uriah, and Uriah himself carried the message to Joab. In the end, David's plan succeeded. Uriah died in battle, and it looked like David was going to get away with it.

But then comes the chilling end to the chapter: ""

No one else may have seen what truly happened. David may have even convinced himself that it was all behind him. But God's eyes were watching. They always are.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Sin as Rebellion

Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God's revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me." Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

DAVID CONFESSES AND REPENTS OF HIS SIN

Few of us have sins as flagrant as David did, in open adultery and murder. But we all sin. And every one of us is capable of David's heinous crimes. When confronted with the results of our sin—as David was when Bathsheba got pregnant—we can hide it, rationalize it, or shift blame. And that may work for a season. But there's only one true remedy for sin, and that is repentance. The question is not, "Do you sin?" The question is, "What do you do after you sin?" The answer to that question is a matter of life and death.

Fortunately for David, God chose to expose what David had covered up. He sent the prophet Nathan to remind David that although he thought he had gotten away with everything, God wouldn't let it end there. And in a moment of profound humility, David finally came clean. The result was one of the most beautiful and exemplary songs in Scripture—Psalm 51. In this psalm, David shows us the keys to gospel-centered repentance and confession.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I

TIMELINE

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.(Ps. 51:1-13)

Look at how gospel-centered repentance makes the mercy of God its sole hope. David begins precisely where he should, by centering on God's grace. Nothing in this prayer suggests that David comes to God looking to make a deal. He's not bargaining with God, trying to commute his sentence. He's not reminding God of all the great things he did in the past (Remember Goliath?). He's not trying to explain away his sin. He's not even promising to do better in the future. No, David appeals to God on the only ground that won't crumble, the ground of God's grace.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Throughout Psalm 51, David points out that our repentance needs to flow from the heart. But there's a problem: our hearts are wicked. We can't change them, and David knows it. So he cries out for God to cleanse him: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7).

Hyssop is only mentioned two other times in Scripture: once in the Exodus story, as the Jews were supposed to dip hyssop in a lamb's blood and spread that blood on their doorposts; and once as a means of cleansing leprosy. To a Jewish reader, the connection David was making here would have been obvious. David is saying he needs something to free him from sin's slavery (like the slavery in Egypt), something to heal him from sin's disease (like the leprous disease). But literal hyssop wouldn't be enough. What David is crying out for is the hope of the gospel.

David needed someone who could "blot out all his iniquities." That someone was Jesus, the true Passover lamb, dying in our place so God's wrath would pass us by. David needed someone to "create in him a clean heart." That someone was Jesus, who came to cleanse our leprous souls—souls so deeply sick that no amount of personal effort could cure them. David needed someone to "renew a right spirit" within him. That someone was Jesus, who imparted His Spirit to us as a sign of God's grace toward us.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **When and where are people most vulnerable to facing temptation?** *Answers to this will vary, but may include times and places like spending time with the wrong company, being on one's phone or computer late at night, etc.*
- **How can we avoid putting ourselves in those places?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **When have you had to cover up your own wrongdoing? How did events spiral out of control?** *Answers to this will vary, but it may help to provide a personal example from your own life to help get the discussion going among your students.*
- **What parts of David's confession stand out to you? What parts can you easily identify with?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

What is clear from this story is that sin hurts people. It affects someone's mother, someone's daughter, someone's son—even if that someone is just you. God's rules, we have to remember, are never unreasonable. They are given to us for our good, to show us the most life-giving way of interacting with others. God doesn't want to keep us from sinning because He's out to ruin our fun. He wants to keep us from sinning because He knows how deeply it will wound us. Sin wounds us and those around us, every time.

- **What are some consequences you or others have experienced because of your own sin?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How should the truth that sin affects those around us help us in our fight against it?** *Love for others should be a motivator for us to fight against sin, especially in light of the possibility of damaging results for those within our lives. By putting the joy of others before our joy in sin, we can better resist temptation when it comes our way.*



HEART

All of our sin starts as a dissolution in our relationship with God. It begins as we grow dissatisfied with what God has given us, as we doubt His goodness toward us. So we start to feel God's boundaries as restrictive, not life-giving. What this means is that the way to deal with sin in our lives isn't to merely suppress the sin; it's to increase our delight in God so that we love Him more than we love the sin. The only way to overcome sinful urges is not by learning to love them *less*, but by learning to love God *more*.

- **What are some ways you have typically fought against sin and temptation? How did these strategies turn out?** *Answers to this will vary, but will likely result in failed attempts if the strategy wasn't rooted in a deep love for God and His glory.*
- **How will focusing more on God and loving Him more give us a better chance at fighting the sin in our lives?** *As stated above, a love for God will conquer any love for sin in our lives.*



HANDS

David's fall into sin teaches us, among other things, the central role repentance plays in the lives of believers. Every believer should continually practice this type of repentance—the type that not only calls believers to deeply feel how they have offended God and others, but also the kind that creates a willingness to publicly confess and actively turn away from the sin. It is repentance of this kind that is representative in all Christians, which makes it a key indicator of a genuine relationship with God.

- **Why is it important for people around us to witness continual repentance over sin in our lives?** *One reason is that repentance publicly shows others that Christ is more valuable to us than our sin.*
- **How has this session challenged you in your fight against sin?** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #6, which is an artistic poster of David's prayer asking God to create in him a clean heart.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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07

SESSION 7

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we examine Solomon's prayer for wisdom and the incredible blessings God granted him in response. We will see how he requested God's wisdom, reigned in wisdom, and the blessings that resulted from his wisdom. We will also see how desperately God's people still need the wisdom and insight that only comes from walking with God.

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 3:5-28; 4:29-34

THE POINT

Wisdom comes from God, and He freely gives wisdom to those who seek Him.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

What makes a great leader? We could list many things here: a prestigious education, high intelligence, a proven track record of achievement, a charismatic personality, or the ability to cast vision. These qualities could make a great leader, but they do not guarantee great leadership.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goldman argues that what makes a great leader is not a high IQ or off the charts talent. What makes a great leader, he argues, is someone with a high level of emotional intelligence. *Emotional intelligence is the sum of five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skill.*

Though he sometimes misses the mark in his analysis, Goldman was essentially describing what the Bible calls *wisdom*. *Wisdom is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.* It's knowing what to do when—quite frankly—we don't know what to do. A good leader is a wise leader. Good leaders must know how to manage themselves, relate well to others, and discern between good and evil. They know how to navigate in choppy waters.

As Christians, we believe that wisdom must go beyond the world's perspective because we believe wisdom comes from an all-wise God. God desires to give us wisdom as part of our relationship with Him. As we pursue Him by faith, He generously gives us the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

- **Take a few minutes to discuss some of the great leaders of history. What makes them great leaders?**

Option 2

Provide each student with lined paper. Instruct students to create a list of requests to God—requests for items, ideas, or skills. Allow a few minutes for this activity. As a group, discuss some of your student's requests. Make sure students know that God is not obligated to fulfill our desires, but tells us to ask Him for what we need. Explain that requesting things from God requires our attitudes and motives to be aligned with His heart and His purpose. For example, Solomon asked for wisdom—a gift that would allow him to be a good leader for God's people. God blessed Solomon above and beyond what he requested because the request pleased God, it aligned with His heart and plan.

- **What are some requests people often make that are motivated by selfish desires? Why are those requests not pleasing to God?**
- **How can you make sure the heart, attitude, and motive behind your requests will honor God?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Wisdom comes from God, and He freely gives wisdom to those who seek Him.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

Moving forward in the biblical story line, we turn to David's son Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel. In 1 Kings 3, we see Solomon asking God for the very thing that he needed to be the king God desired: wisdom. Neither power nor wealth nor charisma would be enough to reign over the people God had called out for Himself. Rather, wisdom would be the distinguishing mark of the kind of king God wanted for Israel. And Solomon displayed this reality like no other.

TIMELINE

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

This is one of the most remarkable stories in the Old Testament. God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said, “Ask what I shall give you.” (v.5).

- **Imagine if God told you to ask for anything from Him. What immediately comes to mind? What would you most likely request?**
(p. 48, PSG)

Solomon could have asked for all sorts of things, but he chose to request wisdom. Below, we will look closely at two things about this prayer: Solomon’s posture in the prayer and his purpose for the prayer.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. (1 Kings 3:5-15)

Notice how Solomon saw himself as he prayed. He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people, and he recognized that he was there only by divine appointment. God placed him there, and it was an act of God's grace.

- **Why is Solomon's humble approach a good model for the way we should go before God?** (*p. 48, PSG*)

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom. Recognizing God's grace in our lives and admitting that the task before us is impossible in our own strength, humbles us and causes us to reach out for divine wisdom. When we think too highly of ourselves, we are in danger of walking in our own wisdom and strength.

In addition to Solomon's posture in prayer, take a look at the purpose behind his praying. Solomon asked for God's wisdom in order to lead God's people well. He made a request for himself, but his intention was to use the wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. In other words, his motivation for wanting wisdom was others-centered. That's why his prayer pleased the Lord.

- **What can we learn about prayer requests from Solomon's choice and God's response?** (*p. 48, PSG*)

SOLOMON DISPLAYS WISDOM

After Solomon's prayer for wisdom, we see him confronted with a situation that will test the depth of understanding God gave him. Two prostitutes approached the king to resolve a dispute. Let's look at the story and see how Solomon responded.

Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king. Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was

brought before the king. And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.” Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.” And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. (1 Kings 3:16-28)

This story shows that God truly answered the prayer of Solomon. The people of Israel saw their king reigning in wisdom and discernment in a way that could only be attributed to God. Here we have proof that when God promised to give Solomon wisdom, He was committed to fulfilling His promise. This is the kind of God we serve, one who does what He says He will do.

I highly doubt you will be confronted with the same situation as Solomon (let’s hope not!). But I can promise that you will face problems in which wisdom (and the application of wisdom) is critical. Maybe you need wisdom to respond to an atheist at school or to explain the biblical view of sexuality to your friends. There are countless situations where we need wisdom. Thankfully, our God alone has all wisdom and understanding.

Of course, Solomon’s wisdom wasn’t just noticed by his own people; rather his reputation spread the surrounding nations. Solomon’s knowledge of the world seemed to have no limits. We see here the wonderful blessings that came to him when he humbly submitted himself to God and walked in the wisdom God provided.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29-34)

We are always at our best when we walk in God’s wisdom. While we may not compose 3,000 proverbs, we can trust God for wisdom as we talk to an unbelieving friend about the gospel. We can wisely respond to our friends who

TIMELINE

SOLOMON’S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

may be walking through a difficult season. We can navigate the rocky terrain of life as we receive the wisdom God provides.

- **Solomon was not the only one who needed wisdom. What requests would you make to God in the situations you're currently facing?**

CHRIST CONNECTION

As we unpack the story of Solomon, we see a king who got it right in so many ways and God used him in a tremendous way. His story shows us much to imitate.

But more than anything, Solomon's life points to King far greater than even himself—a King who would one day rule in perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Solomon points us to this perfect King, the one who would reign in wisdom and never falter in His trust in God. He points us to Jesus Christ, the True King who rules and reigns in infinite wisdom. In fact, Paul said “in whom [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3).

We can know a King who is even greater than Solomon. We can come under the reign and Lordship of this King. The wise person is the one who looks to Jesus and fully submits to Him in everything. You want to see wisdom? Then set your gaze on Jesus. May we live for our True King, and announce His kingship to the world around us.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Truthful

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our Creator. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God, whose Son is the Way, “the Truth,” and the Life (John 14:6).

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think people rarely pray for wisdom?** *Often times people pray for specific outcomes, like physical healing or help on a test. While it is good to pray for specifics, it is also helpful to pray for wisdom as one faces the everyday demands of life. By doing this, one is able to prepare and respond correctly to whatever comes his or her way.*
- **What are some situations in your life (relationships or otherwise) for which you most need God's wisdom right now?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Share about a time when you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision.** *Responses to this will vary.*
- **How has this session challenged you when it comes to seeking wisdom in your own life?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

As we saw with Solomon, one of the reasons God gives us wisdom is so that we can rightly relate to those around us. We need wisdom to be godly sons, daughters, friends, athletes, and students, etc. James, the half-brother of Jesus, once offered a warning about asking for things only for ourselves when he wrote: “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (Jas. 4:2b-3). Often we want God to give us things because of what it does for us. Our comfort and our pleasure are at the center of our minds. Solomon made a request because he had a godly desire to bless and lead others.

- **Which relationships in your life could benefit from wisdom right now?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can begin to think about the needs of others before your own?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

Jesus told His disciples: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned” (John 15:5-6). What a good reminder for us when it comes to our prayer life. We truly are nothing without Him, though many of us have a hard time admitting this. We must trust that humbling ourselves before God in this way is always the best for us. We will never regret fully depending on God and casting all our care and anxiety on Him.

- **Why is it important to remember that apart from Him we can do nothing good?** *Wisdom begins with a humble heart rooted in a healthy fear of God and recognition of our dependence upon Him. By constantly reminding ourselves of this truth, we are in a better position to grow in wisdom and live it out for both our good and for those around us.*
- **How will humility within us serve others?** *By being humble, we are able to put others' needs before our own.*



HANDS

Another reason God gives us wisdom is so we can better announce the gospel to the world. In other words, wisdom is for mission! If we are going to be salt and light in the world, we need wisdom. We need it to rightly relate to the non-Christians around us. We need it to show how money, power, and pleasure are not what matters most in life. We need it as we interact with those who are skeptical or even hostile to Christianity. It was because of Solomon's wisdom that people came from everywhere to hear from him (1 Kings 4:34).

- **Do you value wisdom above things like money, power, or pleasure? Why or why not?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Solomon's wisdom pointed people to the greatness of God. How might your own life and actions do the same?** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #7, which contains an interactive poster of various things students may pray for on a regular basis. One way to use this poster during group discussion would be to ask your students to rate these prayer topics based on how often they pray for them. Chances are that praying for wisdom will score low in comparison with the other topics. This emphasizes the fact that wisdom, though absolutely necessary, often receives little attention in our personal prayer lives.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



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And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

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08

SESSION 8

The Wisdom of Proverbs

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we look at the Proverbs to see that God has given us His Word to instruct us in how to walk in wisdom. We will see how wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, how it leads us to trust in God, and how it offers us practical guidance in everyday matters of life. We'll also see that wisdom points us to Jesus Christ, and wisdom in the lives of believers will lead us to point others to Him as well.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 1:1-7; 3:1-8; 22:1-10

THE POINT

Wisdom isn't merely information, but transformation of one's character intended to be lived out.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

What is wisdom? Some people point to knowledge and information. Others may think of wisdom as life experience. A few might recall pithy one-liners similar to what you find in fortune cookies.

But how does the Bible talk about wisdom? We need look no further than the ant. Yes, the ant! Now, I know ants are rarely chosen as the epitome of ... well, anything. But that is the point Solomon wanted to make when he used the ant as the example of wisdom: “Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. ... Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer” (Prov. 6:6-8; 30:24-25).

The focus here is not the ant’s knowledge, experience, or intellect. The point is, the ant knows how to live. The ant knows what it should do. It knows how to navigate the seasons of life. What an amazing, but unlikely, place to look for wisdom, insight, and discernment!

Wisdom is not less than knowledge, but it is certainly more than knowledge. Wisdom isn’t so much about knowing *that*; it’s more about knowing *how*. Wise people know how to live faithfully in the world.

- **What comes to mind when you hear the word wisdom?**
- **What are some situations you are facing right now where wisdom is needed?**

Option 2

Ask students to discuss what they know about building a house. Students may suggest materials, the types of people involved, what kind of house they want to build. Talk about a blueprint—the plan and instructions for building the house. Then say: “You know what you need to build the house and who you need to call. You even know what the house is supposed to look like. But if you do not know how to build the house, you’ll only have an empty lot.” God gives us the blueprint for living in His Word, but living out wisdom requires more than knowing what His Word says. Living out wisdom requires God transforming our character from the inside out. God’s Word provides us with the information that we need to follow Him, but only trusting in Jesus brings salvation. Then, He gives us the wisdom to live out God’s blueprint for our lives.

- **Share about a time when the Bible has helped you navigate a situation in your life with wisdom.**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Wisdom isn't merely information, but transformation of one's character intended to be lived out.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

As we continue digging into Solomon's life story, it is important we take a session to do a little exploring into the depths of his God-given wisdom expressed in the Book of Proverbs. Unlike the stories and narratives we have covered thus far, the Book of Proverbs falls into the category of wisdom literature. Proverbs is composed of various literary elements, all intended to convey the value of wisdom and the importance of living that wisdom out day to day. With that in mind, let's take a look into the wisdom that is Proverbs.

TIMELINE

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

WISDOM IS ROOTED IN THE FEAR OF GOD

Wisdom starts with a relationship with God. He is the fountain of all wisdom, insight, and knowledge. Thus, only the fool attempts to live without God. That is the argument that Solomon makes in the opening verses of Proverbs.

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:1-7)

First, notice how being wise is related to receiving information. Wisdom involves understanding, insightful sayings, instruction, learning, and knowledge. However, wisdom is more than information, though it is certainly not less. Knowing how to live is dependent upon ideas, sayings, and teachings.

Wisdom involves information. But we must never believe that because we have lots of information we are wise. Solomon goes on to say that wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord (v. 7). We must start with God, who alone possesses all wisdom and knowledge.

Think about that for a moment. God literally knows all things about all things. He never learns. He never has a new thought. He is never surprised by new information. He knows all information exhaustively. He is an expert on everything. For this reason, it is foolish not to fear Him (v. 7). God is not one option among many avenues to true wisdom. He the only option!

Wisdom in the biblical sense is not available to someone who does not fear the Lord or walk in His ways. Fearing the Lord doesn't mean we cower in fear before Him, but that we learn to revere Him and regard Him above all things. No one is more valuable, no possession is more precious to us, than the Lord.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Omniscient

Scripture teaches that God is all knowing. He is the One who "is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God's omniscience, we admit our finite knowledge and trust His decisions as wise and good.

WISDOM LEADS US TO FAITH IN GOD

It's popular in our day to hear people say, "You just have to believe in yourself!" In one sense, a measure of self-confidence is good and healthy. But "just believing in yourself" as a way of life is the way of foolishness. True wisdom does not lead us to faith in ourselves, but in God.

We saw earlier that the fool despises wisdom and discipline, which is another way of saying that the fool despises the Lord since he does not fear the Lord. In this section we will see how wisdom leads us to not only fear the Lord, but also to trust Him, rely on Him, and keep Him at the center of our lives.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. (Prov. 3:1-8)

If we had to summarize Solomon's main point in this passage we might say: put your faith in the Lord, not in yourself. Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, and our fear of God must translate into a rock solid faith in God. So what does faith in God look like?

For starters, it is a faith that runs away from self-reliance and toward dependence upon God. It is the type of faith opposite of the fool. Only fools think they have arrived when it comes to their knowledge when, in fact, the truth is that they can go no further than their worldly wisdom can take them. This is why Solomon pleads with his son to trust in the Lord with all his might. This, in turn, means he is never to trust his own wisdom and understanding or consider himself wise by his own standards.

We are not the standard of wisdom. We are not to trust in ourselves and think that we have mastered life. In fact, it is impossible to trust in ourselves and at the same time trust in the Lord. One will inevitably drive out the other. Leaning on our experience and insight naturally tempers our ability and urgency to trust in the Lord. On the other hand, the more we trust in the Lord, the less we will trust in ourselves. We will discover that as we trust in the Lord, He directs our paths and leads us into joy and peace.

- **Jot down a few areas of life in which you are tempted to rely on yourself. What would it look like if you relied on the Lord instead of yourself in these cases?** (*p. 55, PSG*)

WISDOM SHOWS US HOW TO LIVE IN THE WORLD GOD HAS MADE

Proverbs is a practical book. And that should come as no surprise since wisdom is about life. Wisdom is truth in action. God wants us not only to know things, but to do things. Solomon intended for his hearers to actually live out the truths and sayings he put forth. Here are some examples:

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all. The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life. Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them. Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail. Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor. Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.(Prov. 22:1-10)

It is tempting to read God's word and talk about it, but never actually live it out. James warned us of the dangers of merely hearing the word when he said, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jas. 1:22).

Reading these words without applying their wisdom is self-deception. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). He wants us to do what He said, not simply learn what He said. We often fall into the mindset that information automatically results in transformation. To be sure, we need information, but Jesus wants us to obey the information we've been given.

- **At this point in the session, walk students through each verse in this section and summarize what Solomon is calling them to do. Potential answers are provided for you below. (p. 56, PSG)**
 - V. 1: **Build your character, not just your bank account.**
 - V. 2: **Don't think your worth is based on what you have or don't have.**
 - V. 3: **Know your limitations.**
 - V. 4: **Be humble!**
 - V. 5: **Guard yourself.**
 - V. 6: **Parents are to teach their children wisdom.**
 - V. 7: **Be careful and wise with debt.**
 - V. 8: **Live justly.**
 - V. 9: **Be generous.**
 - V. 10: **Don't be afraid to confront difficult people.**

TIMELINE

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

A look into the psalms and their importance in the Christian life.

Now, step back and look at this list. Think of all the areas that we covered and all the life-issues we addressed. And that was in 10 verses! Wisdom comes crashing into every aspect of our lives—our relationships, our attitudes, and our posture toward the world, and so on. Wisdom leaves no stone unturned when it comes to our lives. God has spoken to us. The question is: will we listen and obey? Will we actually do what He tells us to do?

CHRIST CONNECTION

At the beginning of this session we saw that wisdom starts with a relationship with God. We see this even more vividly in the New Testament when Paul tells us “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). In Jesus, we see that wisdom isn’t merely information or insight; wisdom is a Person.

Jesus is God’s wisdom on full display. And this Person did something that looks like foolishness in the eyes of the world—He laid down His life for us. Now, because of His death and resurrection, we can know and follow this Jesus. We can fear Him. We can place all of our faith in Him. As we do, He makes us wise people who reflect His name and announce His gospel in the world.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Where do people receive information and instruction today?** *Answers may include: pop culture, peers, parents, teachers, etc.*
- **How will a Christian's receiving of instruction differ from an unbeliever?** *The primary difference is that for the Christian, the Bible is the primary source of authority and instruction, whereas for the unbeliever, instruction will be found in earthly sources. That isn't to say that a Christian won't be able to glean truth where truth is found (all truth is God's truth), but it will mean that the Christian tests everything against the backdrop of Scripture and the wisdom it contains.*
- **Who are some people in your life who display biblical wisdom consistently in their actions? What are some characteristics you admire about them?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How has this session challenged you when it comes to pursuing biblical wisdom in your own life?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

There's a difference between worldly wisdom and biblical wisdom. Although people in our society may have some level of wisdom according to the world, Solomon would make a distinction between the world's wisdom and true God-given wisdom. Biblical wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (a central theme not only in Proverbs, but also throughout the Bible). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Prov. 9:10; cf. Ps. 111:110). Wisdom is rooted in fear of the Lord.

- **Why is fearing the Lord the essential to becoming wise?** *With a healthy fear of God comes intellectual humility, the sort that helps us realize we are completely dependent upon God for all things, including wisdom and insight.*
- **Do you consider yourself wise? If not, where should you begin your pursuit of wisdom?** *One way would be to follow Solomon's lead and humble yourself before God, acknowledge your dependence upon Him, and ask Him to equip you with wisdom.*



HEART

It is important to realize that wisdom isn't merely about information, but transformation. While it will certainly involve information, wisdom isn't intended to sit idly in the confines of one's head, but meant to be lived out as a result of a transformed heart and character. It begins on a personal level—an internal fear and love for God—and is continually expressed on a personal level as it influences and shapes one's actions from day to day.

- **Why do you think people often equate wisdom with knowing lots of information?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways your life demonstrates God's wisdom working through you?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

The danger for many of us is to memorize these words, study them more in-depth, discuss them with one another, but never actually get around to doing them. These words, and all that God has said, must take root in our hearts and result in actual obedience to God. Only then can we really call others to embrace them and obey what God has said. Unless His truth pierces our hearts and brings about obedience, we will be ineffective and unfruitful as we call others to follow God.

- **How can you seek to grow in wisdom this week?** *When it comes to wisdom we can see a clear connection between the Head, Heart, and Hands—it involves knowledge and understanding, but includes a change of heart and living out what is learned. So, one answer would be to study. Study God's Word. Read through the book of Proverbs for the month and practice living it out.*
- **What are some ways you can seek to share God's wisdom with others?** *Answers to this will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #8—an informational chart of the wisdom literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon). The purpose of this chart is to highlight the different styles among them, their purpose, and overall, how each one points to Jesus.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
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09

SESSION 9

Solomon Builds the Temple

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will see Solomon building a temple for the Lord. We'll learn why he wanted to build the temple, and how the temple bore God's name, manifested God's presence, and represented God's glory to the world. Christians belong to the church, described by the apostles as "the temple of God." In the Old Testament, the temple referred to a place. In the New Testament, the temple refers to a people. We are being built together as God's residence—a beacon of light and hope to the world.

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:10-14,54-61

THE POINT

Far from being a distant deity, God has always desired to dwell among His people.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Burj Khalifia, located in Dubai, is the tallest building in the world. The building's website states: "More than just the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa is an unprecedented example of international cooperation, symbolic beacon of progress, and an emblem of the new, dynamic and prosperous Middle East. It is also tangible proof of Dubai's growing role in a changing world. In fewer than 30 years, this city has transformed itself from a regional centre to a global one. This success was not based on oil reserves, but on reserves of human talent, ingenuity and initiative. Burj Khalifa embodies that vision."¹

As you can tell from this summary, the Burj Khalifia is not just a building; it's a message. Its significance extends beyond the towering summit. The building is intended to communicate something to the rest of the world.

History has seen its share of large structures—towers, castles, and walls. People have been building things since the Tower of Babel. If you want to get the world's attention, build a large building!

Many of the greatest leaders and the world powers in history have buildings that bear their name. The same was true in King Solomon's day. The surrounding nations had erected temples for their gods. But Yahweh, the God of Israel, was no local deity. He was the God of the whole world (Ex. 9:16). He was the maker and sustainer of the universe, the ruler of all the nations, and Israel was to represent His name and renown before the rest of the world.

- **List some of the great structures and buildings of history. What comes to mind when you think of them? What do these buildings communicate?**

Option 2

Names are important. Think about your last name—it tells about your family of origin, which is your immediate family, including your parents and siblings. You carry the same last name and similar DNA. You represent your family wherever you go because you carry their name with you. As God's children, believers hear His name, show His love to the world, and walk in His ways. We are His representatives to the world around us.

- **What are some words that come to mind when you think of the responsibility of representing God to the world?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Far from being a distant deity, God has always desired to dwell among His people.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

After looking into what king Solomon had to say in regards to wisdom, we now turn our attention to perhaps his greatest achievement—the building of the temple. Unlike his father, David, Solomon reigns during a time of peace on all borders. As God promised David, Solomon would now have the opportunity to build a temple that would not only benefit all of the people of Israel, but even those to the end of the earth. This temple would be a place where God could dwell among His people and where God's glory would be displayed for all to see.

TIMELINE

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

Names are powerful. Mention Adolf Hitler, Steve Jobs, Justin Beiber, Barack Obama, Tiger Woods, or Warren Buffet, and you're likely to start an interesting conversation with people you may barely know. King Solomon knew the power of names too. He knew the esteem and honor that certain names deserve. This is one of the main reasons he wanted to build a house for the Lord.

David, Solomon's father, was unable to build the house because of constant war during his reign. But the Lord gave Solomon rest on every side. The only fitting thing to do now was to build a temple to show the world the might and power of the God of Israel. Look at what Solomon says in 1 Kings 5:1-5:

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram always loved David. And Solomon sent word to Hiram, "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.'" (1 Kings 5:1-5)

Up to this point in redemptive history, Israel's God was not associated with any particular place. He had manifested Himself in visions, in a burning bush, a pillar of fire, on the mountaintop, in the tabernacle, and through the ark of the covenant. But until now, there was no established place where His people could point and say, "This is the house of our God."

That all changed with Solomon. It was time to finally build a structure that would display the glory and renown of the God whose name is majestic in all the earth (Ps. 8). He wanted that name—Yahweh—to be glorified and lifted high for all the nations to see and treasure.

What did Solomon intend to communicate to the world and to Israel through the temple? The answer is in verses 4-5 "But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so I intend to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.'"

- **In what ways do you see people try to honor God's name today? How do you try to honor God's name?** (p. 60, PSG)

GOD FILLS THE TEMPLE WITH HIS PRESENCE

After Solomon completed the temple, he gathered all Israel, along with the priests, Levites, and leaders, to bring the ark of the covenant to the Lord's house (1 Kings 8:1-9). On that day God displayed His glory among His people. As we read our text for this section, imagine that you are standing among the assembly witnessing this spectacular display of God's glory.

And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever." Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. (1 Kings 8:10-14)

Normally, God dwelled in thick darkness (v.12), in a place where no one could see Him. But now, God had come down to be with His people in the place built for His Name and presence. God was so near and real that day that even the priests had to stop what they were doing.

On that day, Israel received the blessing of God Himself. This is the greatest blessing that God can give to His people—His presence. In fact, we see all throughout the Bible that God's intention has always been to dwell among His people.

Have students turn to the selected passages and summarize how God is seen as dwelling among His people in these verses. A summary has been provided for you. (p. 61, PSG)

- **Gen. 1–3.** (Given the length of these chapters, you may just want to provide a summary for your students). God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden before their sin resulted in banishment from God's presence.
- **Ex. 29:42-46.** God gave Moses intricate details for the tabernacle and the ark in order to establish His presence among Israel and meet with them regularly.
- **Ezek. 10:18.** When Israel failed in their faithfulness to God's covenant, the most severe form of judgment from the Lord was removing Himself from the temple.
- **Matt. 1:23.** God's promise to revisit His people and establish them once again is fulfilled in Jesus, who was called 'Immanuel' (which means, God with us).
- **Rev. 21:3.** At the end of history, when all things are set right, we read this promise from Revelation: "The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

The great hope of the Christian life is not getting things from God; it is getting God. This is a God who wants to be known and wants us to sense His presence.

GOD'S PEOPLE GO FROM THE TEMPLE TO FULFILL GOD'S MISSION

Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day." (1 Kings 8:54-61)

As Solomon prays, he blesses the people and offers a prayer for the nation "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God" (v. 60). This was one reason God chose the nation of Israel. He did not choose them for their own sake. He chose them for the sake of the nations. He is a global God who desires all the nations to be glad in Him (Ps. 67). They were to be a particular people with a universal purpose—to extend the name and glory of God to the ends of the earth (Ex. 19:5-6).

The temple in Israel represented what God wanted to do in the whole earth. He wanted to spread His name and fame, not only to Israel, but also among all the nations so that Habakkuk's words might be fulfilled: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

- **God's purpose is to spread His name for His glory. Are you ever tempted to believe that a relationship with God is all about what God can do for you? (p. 62, PSG)**

TIMELINE

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

A look into the psalms and their importance in the Christian life.

Beginning Fall 2016

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

God makes it known that He alone is God.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the true temple of God, and that as His followers, we also are the temple of God. God dwells in His people through His Holy Spirit. Consider what Peter said about this:

**“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
(1 Pet. 2:4-5)**

According to Peter, we are now priests who offer sacrifices to God. God’s people no longer have to stand outside a temple. God now meets with us as we gather in His name. The presence of God is manifested where His people are, since the Spirit resides in our hearts.

Unfortunately many Christians attend worship gatherings every Sunday and fail to encounter the presence and majesty of God through worship, prayer, giving, and listening to the Word of God preached. Our hearts are filled with distractions from our phones, other responsibilities, and anxiety about the week ahead. But if what Peter is saying is true, then when we gather with God’s people we are engaging in the most climactic event of our week.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwells the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17, 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous fruit that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also equips individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:11).

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Share about a time when you sensed the reality of God's presence.** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What was it about that time that convinced you it was the Spirit working?** *Answers may include things like: conviction of sin, repentance from sin, a hunger for God and His word, genuine worship, etc.*
- **Talk honestly about your attitude toward gathering for worship on Sundays. What are some things you can do to prepare for worship to make it more meaningful and edifying?** *Answers may include things like: praying that God would prepare your heart for worship; getting a good night's sleep the night before; putting away your phone; etc.*
- **If we are the temple of God today, then we are to represent God to the world. What should our identity as God's temple communicate to those around us?** *The temple, like all architecture, communicated things about God to those that saw it—things like God's beauty, His sovereign power, and His nearby presence. The same should be the case for Christians as well. When people see us and the way we live our lives, they should be able to conclude certain things about God's greatness from His own work in our lives—things like His grace and mercy, His presence, and His power to transform hearts of stone into hearts like His.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

One of the insights we can take away from this session has to do with the fact that when Solomon decided to build the temple, he was attempting to do something great for God. On one hand, we must recognize that God doesn't need us to do things for Him, as Paul says in Acts 17:24-25. God is not dependent upon us for anything. However, it is also true that even in recognizing our dependence upon Him, we too can have godly goals, dreams, and ambitions that aim to make much of who He is and what He means to us. Solomon had a godly ambition to build the temple, and this ambition was driven not out of a sense of pride or praise for himself, but for God's fame and glory.

- **William Carey is often quoted as saying, "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." What do you think he meant by this?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some "God-sized" goals and ambitions you have? How will those serve to make much of Jesus in your life?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

You can imagine how the Israelites must have felt and the emotions that were invoked upon seeing God's glory fill the temple. The sight of the finished temple would not only have drawn their attention and affections towards God, but seeing God's indwelling would have only added to that experience, resulting in genuine worship. The same should be true of Christians from week to week as well. No matter the place, be it in prayer on the bedroom floor or sitting in the pew at church listening to a sermon, Christians should expect and anticipate God's presence and glory to manifest in their lives.

- **What are some day to day experiences where you can anticipate the presence and glory of God at work?** *In short, every experience—whether it be playing football or eating dinner with friends—all of life's activities for the Christian can point to the glory of God.*
- **How can you seek God's glory in all of those things?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

As Christians, we are now the temple of God on the earth. God indwells us and fills us (Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5) as His missional people. God called us and chose us for the purpose of representing Him on the earth and spreading His fame to the nations. As we think of this great task before us, we must understand that it starts with ordinary Christians having ordinary conversations with ordinary people. It starts with you walking across the classroom and befriending a student you don't know. It starts when you give up time and comfort for the sake of non-Christians. It starts by taking a risk to ask a classmate what she thinks about Christianity. It starts with you choosing each day to live your life on mission and being available for whatever God wants to do through you.

- **What is your greatest fear when it comes to living on mission for the Gospel?** *Answers may include things like: fear of rejection, fear that one won't be able to answer objections, etc.*
- **How does God's heart for the world help you overcome these fears?** *Because God loves the world, and desires for people to be in a right relationship with Him, we should be encouraged as we live intentionally in pursuit of His mission to seek and save that which is lost.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #9, which contains an informational graphic of the temple Solomon built, displaying some of the main architectural features and furnishings that it housed.

SOURCES

1. "Vision," Burj Khalifa, accessed December 7, 2015, <http://burjkhalifa.ae/en/the-tower/vision.aspx>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
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10

SESSION 10

The Foolishness of a Once-Wise King

SESSION SUMMARY

In today's session, we look at the foolishness on display near the end of Solomon's reign. Solomon's story is a reminder that all of us are capable of derailing our walk with God by making foolish choices. It is also a reminder our only hope is in the True King whose wisdom and righteousness is perfect—Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 11:1-13; Luke 11:31

THE POINT

Foolishness is the failure to give God glory in every area of life.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

One of the most compelling scenes in J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*, is when Aragorn, the true king, is finally crowned and takes his rightful place on the throne. If you've seen the movie, you know it's a scene that stirs emotions. Even though most of us have never been ruled by an earthly king, something within us resonates with this picture. Could it be that, deep down, we long for a king? Not just any king, to be sure; but a good, wise, and gracious king. One who will rule and reign with justice and righteousness. One who will set all things right.

As we read the Bible we find that this longing is actually rooted in truth. The true King exists, and He is coming back to set all things right! Unfortunately, history has proven that we too often embrace the wrong king and even good kings can go bad.

When Israel first asked for a king like the other nations, God was displeased with their request. But His displeasure was not that they wanted a king, it's that they wanted the wrong king and they sought to be like other nations. Even though God conceded to their request, He warned them about living under kings whose hearts turned away from following Him.

Perhaps the saddest of these examples is King Solomon. At one time he ruled in wisdom and justice. But as we will see today, Solomon's life and reign spiraled out of control as he turned from the God who called him and established him as king. Earlier we looked at him as the example of wisdom, but now we look to him as an example of foolishness.

- **When have you been disappointed by a godly leader who did something foolish? How did you handle your disappointment?**

Option 2

On June 15, 1858 Abraham Lincoln gave one of the United States' most noteworthy speeches concerning the issue of slavery. Though Lincoln would not be elected as Illinois' Senate representative, this speech propelled him onto the national stage, particularly the quote: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

What many people don't know is that this phrase has biblical roots. Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand." (Matt. 12:25). Solomon's heart became divided between his wives, his riches, and following God. Because of this division, He made some foolish decisions. In the same way, if our hearts are divided, we can easily fall into a pattern of making foolish decisions as well.

- **When have you seen this happen in your own life? What happened to help you realize your focus was misplaced?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Foolishness is the failure to give God glory in every area of life.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

Everything we have seen about Solomon has been positive up to this point in the story. God has blessed him with wisdom and Solomon has used that wisdom to benefit God's people. God has blessed him with peace, giving Solomon the ability to build the temple. Things have gone well. It looked like God's promises to Abraham were coming true: God's people had been rescued, they were living in the land God promised to them, they had a good and wise king, and other nations were being blessed by Solomon's wisdom. But would it last? How would history remember Solomon's reign?

TIMELINE

SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

SOLOMON COMPROMISES HIS DEVOTION TO GOD

1 Kings 10 describes Solomon's great wisdom and his great wealth. It describes the Queen of Sheba as mesmerized by the depth of his insight and it gives us a detailed list of his possessions.

If Solomon's story stopped there, we would be applauding him as the greatest king in Israel. We might even be wondering if he was (at last!) the long-awaited king whose sons would rule over God's people in God's promised land forever. Unfortunately, the story goes on to reveal Solomon's compromise and downfall.

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:1-8)

What we see here is one of the most illustrative pictures of idolatry in the Bible. Idolatry and foolishness go hand in hand. If wisdom means to fear the Lord first and foremost, then foolishness is to place something above the Lord. Foolish choices always accompany idolatry.

In Solomon's case, there is no outright rejection of God. He wasn't setting God aside; he was adding other gods around the Lord. He wasn't disregarding the Lord altogether; he was partially regarding the Lord. He chose to follow Yahweh alongside other gods.

Solomon's sin began when he decided to disregard the Lord's commands. Before God brought Israel to the promised land, He gave them specific

commands about how kings were to conduct themselves. They were not to gather much gold and horses for themselves, and they were not to acquire many wives (Deut. 17:14-20). If they did, their hearts would go astray.

We see this fleshed out in Solomon's life. He acquired much wealth, vast amounts of horses and chariots, and he had 1000 women in his court. The result? His heart was led astray.

Remember Joshua's black-and-white challenge to Israel? "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). For Joshua, it was all or nothing. You're either with God or you're not.

- **How is your focus sometimes divided between God and other people or your possessions?** (*p. 66, PSG*)

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

David had also married foreign wives, but they did not change either his religious life or that of the nation. Solomon's wives, on the other hand, were known devotees of their national deities... These religious compromises were likely seen as politically expedient acts of courtesy to Solomon's foreign wives, comparable to extraterritorial privileges that allow embassies in our time to conduct themselves according to the laws and customs of their native land, but these common-sense principles conflicted with faith in God and God's covenant with Israel. Both Ashtoreth (Astarte, Ishtar) and Milcom (Molech) were international deities worshiped under numerous names in different countries. Chemosh, by contrast, was a god of Moab, probably a god of war.¹

SOLOMON'S CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Our choices impact others, often more than we know. When we make foolish choices, we inevitably create problems for those around us. Solomon's son reaped the consequences of his idolatry, and so did the nation of Israel, which saw a divided monarchy for the first time in its history. Let's read about the Lord's response to the folly Solomon allowed in his life.

And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom

from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.” (1 Kings 11:9-13)

These words must have hit Solomon like a freight train. Not only would Solomon suffer (1 Kings 11:14-40), but the kingdom would be torn from his son's hands. His idolatry led Israel into a downward spiral that would eventually result in their exile into Babylon years later. This is what happens when we allow foolishness to lead us into idolatry. We may think we are only hurting ourselves, but we inevitably hurt other people as well.

Near the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, C.S. Lewis explains to us the nature of kingship when King Caspian announces that he will abandon his ship, forsake his crown, and sail on to the end of the world in search of adventure. Reepicheep makes it clear to Caspian that he cannot do as he wishes. He says, “You are the King of Narnia. You break faith with all of your subjects and especially with Trumpkin, if you do not return. You shall not please yourself with adventures as if you were a private person. And if your Majesty will not hear reason it will be the truest loyalty of every man on board to follow me in disarming and binding you till you come to your senses.”² One wonders if Lewis had Solomon in mind when he wrote these words.

Sadly, Solomon had no one to help him come to his senses. In fact, he did choose to live like he was a private person. The reality is, we are not private people. Our walk with the Lord is personal, no doubt, but it is not private. We may make decisions in private, but our decisions have public consequences.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Sin as Selfishness

When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mindset that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God. Because sin is manifested in our tendency to be “curved inward” toward self, it is the opposite of love. Love looks outwardly to place others before oneself, operating from the mindset that others are more important (Phil. 2:3). Where sin selfishly seeks personal gratification and happiness, love works for the joy of others in the hopes of making others happy in God.

TIMELINE

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

A look into the psalms and their importance in the Christian life.

Beginning Fall 2016

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

God makes it known that He alone is God.

ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.

CHRIST CONNECTION

When we look at the life of Solomon we have reason to be both disheartened and encouraged. We are disheartened that he compromised his devotion to God and derailed his kingship. But we should also be encouraged because we know that the story does not end there. Solomon is not our king. He is not the true king. We are only to glance at Solomon, and then turn our gaze on the True King.

Solomon was never enough. We need a greater king than Solomon. As we come to the New Testament, that is what we find. Let's fast forward to the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus speaks of Himself as greater than Solomon.

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (Luke 11:31)

Solomon dazzled the world with his wisdom, riches, and power, yet look at how things ended. He failed. Earthly kings, rulers, and powers will always fail us. We must not look to them. We must look to Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). He will never leave us or forsake us. His love is constant. His grace is limitless. His mercies are new every day.

In this session, we've seen that even the greatest heroes of the Bible can choose foolishness over wisdom. In seeing their failures, we are stirred up to hope even more in Jesus—our King. We have much to learn from men like Solomon. But beyond all the wise proverbs and sayings that he has given us, perhaps the biggest lesson we take away from him is that we need Jesus more than we've ever imagined.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Solomon disregarded God's command about having too many physical possessions. How can this serve as a warning for us? What are some physical possessions that have interfered with your walk with Christ?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Solomon also allowed personal relationships in his life to direct his affections away from God. How can we avoid similar outcomes in our own relationships?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Solomon's foolishness blinded him to the long term effects his sin would have on those around him. Why do you think people don't usually consider the negative impact sin can have on those around them?** *Most people view personal sin as a private affair, with perhaps the only consequences being to themselves. Not only that, but sin, having the selfish nature that it does, has blatant disregard for others around us to the point that when we are engrossed in our sin, we simply don't care about how it will impact those closest to us.*
- **How has this session challenged you personally?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

In 1 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul addressed a case of immorality of which the entire church seemed to be proud. Listen to his words to them, “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump” (1 Cor. 5:6-7a). Do you see what Paul is saying? The sin of one individual was permeating the entire church. The foolish decisions of one person affected all of them. The same is true for us as well. Choosing to walk in foolishness will impact those around you.

- **How have you been positively affected by someone else’s wise choices?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How have you been negatively affected by someone else’s foolish choices?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

We have seen time and time again the devastating effects that come from heart idols. Idolatry creates division in the hearts of God’s people by setting up on the throne of our hearts. When some other person, experience, or pursuit grabs our attention, thoughts, and affections, God is slowly pushed away from the center of our lives. The Psalmist recognized this when he prayed, “Unite my heart to fear your name” (Ps. 86:11b). He knew that he could not worship and fear the Lord appropriately unless God had his undivided affections.

- **What are some signs that a person has a “divided” heart?** *Answers might include treasuring God’s gifts more than God, putting others before your relationship with God, and so on.*
- **What tends to divide your heart from devotion to God?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

There are several practical applications that stem from this session that should challenge the way we live from day to day. We can learn from Solomon about the traps of material possessions and unhealthy relationships, and how those can lead one’s heart astray. We can be on guard more when it comes to fending off heart idols. We can be challenged with the fact that, as with the people of Solomon’s time, our world today needs a greater wisdom—a wisdom that saves. And as Christians, we are the ones to talk about Him. Whatever the application, be sure to not just hear this story, but allow it to challenge you to live differently as a result.

- **How can we serve and support unbelievers when the wisdom of this world lets them down?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How has this challenged you to live differently this week?** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. *Holman Christian Standard Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010).
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1953), 261.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
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11

SESSION 11

Solomon Reflects on the Meaning of Life

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we are going to align ourselves with Solomon and ask some of the same questions he asked. As we pose these questions together, we should look for their resolution in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Knowing that God exists, we can experience a life of meaning, justice, and purpose. We also call others to seek answers to their questions by looking to Christ.

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 3:16-4:3; 12:9-14

THE POINT

Because God exists, life has meaning and purpose.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

What do you think of when you hear the word *vanity*? The term *vanity* can refer to *breath, emptiness, something temporary, or meaninglessness*. Throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon used a form of this word at least 24 times. Solomon used this phrasing to demonstrate the meaninglessness of living life apart from God. The term *vanity of vanities* is a superlative, emphasizing the emptiness of a Godless life. Without God, life is empty, holds no real meaning, and provides no lasting significance. He showed that only God can add real meaning to life.

- **Does life seem meaningless to you? Why or why not?**

Believers do not have to go through life wondering if they have purpose or meaning. God brings purpose and meaning to life. Sometimes that feeling of hopelessness still seeps in. But a vibrant relationship with the Lord enables people to view their lives in a more positive way.

- **How can a biblical perspective make the difference between joy and hopelessness?**

Option 2

Give your students two or three note cards each, and ask them to write the name of a villain on each one. The villain can be from any medium: history, film, comics, etc.

Next, have them submit their note cards into a common pile. Draw several of them out and have the students, as a group, sort them from least evil to most evil. You can choose how many cards you draw based on the number in your group. (Note: you can also do this same exercise, but with heroes, and have them sort from most good to least good.) Have them explain and defend their reasons.

Now, ask the students to re-arrange the cards using the same criteria, but this time from an atheistic perspective. If they make changes, ask them to explain why.

Bring the exercise together by highlighting how their changes show that good and evil have no meaning apart from God. If, on the other hand, they didn't change anything, point out to them that without God, the least good and the most good hero have the same standing. In other words, choosing between who is most evil and least evil is no different than choosing which condiment to put on your burger—it's just a matter of preference. However, we all know this to not be the case.

- **How does the reality of good and evil point to the existence of God?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Because God exists, life has meaning and purpose.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

In this session, we see Solomon at the end of his life, presenting two different ways of living—a life with meaning and a life without. The general tone of Solomon's writing here makes him seem cynical, but he goes on to demonstrate that a life filled with God is a life filled with meaning.

TIMELINE

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

*Solomon reflects
on the purpose and
meaning of life.*

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

*The suffering of Job
and the mercy of God.*

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

*A look into the psalms
and their importance
in the Christian life.*

LIFE AND MEANING

The opening verses of Ecclesiastes introduce us to the question: Does life have meaning? While Solomon's response initially seems to be quite gloomy and sorrowful, it is important to realize that Solomon is presenting two very different pictures to his readers—a life without God and a life with God. After reflecting on a world without God, Solomon comes to the conclusion that all life under this scenario would be meaningless and futile. Look at what he says:

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. (Eccl. 1:1-11)

The first thing Solomon notes about a life without God is that there would be no permanence in the world. Nothing seems to last. We get up and work a job for twenty or thirty years, and then we die. Generations come and go, but the world seems to take no notice of them. Most human beings seem to make no lasting impact on the world; as soon as one generation thinks they have things figured out, they grow old and die.

Life is like an endless treadmill that one generation runs on for a while before getting replaced by another. Ideas and innovations come and go, but nothing appears to last. Achievements and advancements happen, but is the world really any better? His answer is a resounding no!

All of this leads Solomon to the conclusion that apart from a life with God, nothing is new under the sun. The eyes and ears never seem to be satisfied. Every new invention or gadget that comes down the pike never really satisfies us. Sure, they may entertain us for a little while, but they do not change the monotony and the impermanence of the things previously mentioned. Generations still come and go. The sun continues to rise and set. The latest product that people stand in line

for will do nothing to alter the world as it is. Therefore, it is all futile, according to Solomon.

When we consider this perspective on the world we must conclude that Solomon is spot on—taking into account that God is left out of the picture. Remember, he is showing us a picture of life without God. There is no reference here to loving, obeying, and treasuring God. When He is not the center of our lives, we must conclude that all of life is futile. All that you do, all that you achieve, and all that you gain in this life is nothing unless God is the greatest reality of your life.

The picture Solomon paints here is reality if we push God out of our lives. But when God is at the center of our lives as our King and treasure, all of life is filled with meaning and purpose. All that we do matters. If Jesus is who He said He was, and if He truly is raised from the dead and reigning over all things, then everything we do matters. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he said, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58). Without Him, everything we do is in vain. With Him, everything we do has meaning, value, and purpose.

- **Do you tend to look at the world through the lens of your circumstances or through the lens of your hope in Christ?** (*p. 72, PSG*)

JUSTICE AND GOODNESS

As we move further into the book of Ecclesiastes, the second question that we see Solomon grappling with is the issue of justice in the world. As he looked out and observed, he saw more injustice than justice, and more pain than prosperity.

Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him? Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On

the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. (Eccl 3:16-4:3)

The struggle we see here is one that we all encounter. Theologians and philosophers refer to this as the problem of evil and suffering. Each of us have to face the fact that the world is not as it should be. The curse of sin has fractured and ruptured what God made good, rhythmic, and beautiful. The result is pain, poverty, suffering, oppression, and death. Solomon sees this and observes that it is better to be dead, and better still not even to exist!

All of us long for things to be set right, for things to be put back in their proper place. We lament with Solomon that when we search for righteousness, we often find wickedness in its place. We long for peace and restoration, and our only hope is that God will bring everything into judgment (v.17).

Solomon seems to find some comfort with this idea of God as judge. But we can find even more because we know what Solomon did not know. We know that because God raised Jesus from the dead, He will raise us. And not only us, but the whole of creation will be renewed and redeemed. He will wipe away every tear. He will set all things right. He will make all things new. He will make a new heaven and a new earth. He will put an end to sin, Satan, and death.

HUMANITY'S PURPOSE ON EARTH

Of all the questions that we are prompted to ask as we read Ecclesiastes, this one is the most important: "What are we on earth for?" Solomon concludes his book by warning us of all the other voices we'll hear in the world, but that only One matters.

Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Eccl 12:9-14)

TIMELINE

Beginning Fall 2016

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL*

God makes it known that He alone is God.

ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

Naaman is healed from his leprosy.

What are we on earth for? Attempts to answer that question are at every turn. This text reminds us that countless opinions are offered up regarding this issue (v. 12). Think of all the different philosophies and perspectives on life and why we are here. Talk shows, magazines, blogs, and websites bombard us with advice and counsel on how to live. But unless they conclude that we were made for God and His commands, they are wrong and should be rejected. Deep down, all humans know that they were made for God.

As Christians, we have a tremendous opportunity to offer hope to our world. We know why we are here! We know why we were put on this earth. We know the path to ultimate meaning and purpose. We have a living Savior who came to give us abundant life and overflowing joy (John 10:10; 15:11).

We don't simply offer the world ideas, information, or a philosophy. We offer the world a Person—a Person who died and rose again. We offer living hope, living water, and living bread in a reigning King named Jesus.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds us not to look to anything besides Christ for ultimate meaning and purpose. "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2:8-10). Only in Christ does the fullness of God dwell. Only through Christ do idols and so-called gods lose their power and appeal. Only in Christ do we discover why we are here. We discover that what we've been searching for in pleasure, approval, power, and comfort is actually found in Him. He is better and He is enough.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

General Revelation

General revelation refers to God revealing Himself through His creation (Ps. 19) and through the human conscience (Rom. 2). Knowledge about God through general revelation is limited because it only communicates general knowledge about God and His character. We can look at the vastness and fine-tuning of the universe and recognize that God is all-powerful and wise, or look inward to our innate sense of right and wrong and know there is a moral lawgiver in the universe. General revelation is not sufficient for understanding how to know God or be saved, but it provides enough knowledge about God for us to be held accountable for suppressing God's truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1–2).

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Have you ever succumbed to a pessimistic view of life? How does Christianity help us through those trying moments?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What kinds of injustice or suffering in the world are most likely to get your attention? What kinds of injustice or suffering are you most likely to ignore?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some different answers the world will give to the question "What are we on earth for?"** *One way to approach this question would be to refer to the pack item available for this session, which provides an informational chart of how different worldviews answer the question to life and its meaning.*
- **In what unique ways does Jesus provide a better answer than the world to life's deepest questions?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Romans 1 reminds us that all people possess knowledge of God. The problem is not that we lack truth and knowledge; we suppress truth. Paul wrote “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (Rom. 1:21-23). This is a grim commentary on humanity. God made us to know Him and walk in His ways, but instead we shun Him and try to create our own path to joy and meaning. We essentially know why we are here, but we refuse to act on that truth.

- **In what ways have you been tempted to suppress the truth you know about God?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **In what ways do people often try to create their own path to joy and meaning?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

When it comes to the pain, evil, and suffering we see in this world, we need not despair or lose hope. Our God will act on our behalf. He will bring about the glory of His righteousness and justice. In the meantime we are to follow the words of Peter who said, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet. 5:10-11). All dominion and power ultimately belong to Him, and in His time He will bring about the perfection and peace of which we all long. Let us wait with patience and endurance for our God to act.

- **How does the truth of God’s sovereignty encourage us during difficult times?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How do you draw comfort from the fact that God will act on our behalf?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

The Bible doesn’t shy away from hard questions. God wants us to grapple with issues of meaning, purpose, and justice in the world. And when we do, we’ll find that these questions help us see the uniqueness of Christianity and the glory of Jesus Christ our Savior. This, in turn, makes us even more knowledgeable concerning the culture around us as we seek to offer answers to the deepest questions people are asking. Let us boldly, but with kindness, offer the world the hope it so desperately needs.

- **When have questions about meaning, purpose, and justice caused you to grow closer to God?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How would you answer questions about meaning and purpose if asked by someone struggling to believe in God’s existence?** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #10—an informational chart contrasting how the Christian worldview and atheistic worldview answer some of life's biggest questions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



12

SESSION 12

Job and the Dilemma of Suffering

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will look at the dilemma of suffering in the life of Job. The story of Job confronts us with the question: Why do good people suffer? And the story offers us insight into right and wrong ways to pursue the answer to this question. The suffering of Job points us forward to the ultimate answer to the problem of evil—the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ and the promise of a world made new. And as Jesus’ followers, we seek to alleviate suffering as we walk alongside others.

SCRIPTURE

Job 1:6-12,20-22; 16:1-5,18-22; 40:1-5; 42:7-9

THE POINT

God may not always explain the reason for our suffering, but He does always draw near to comfort us when we suffer.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

To live is to suffer. All of us, regardless of our economic status, our health, our diet, or our skills, suffer. Whatever our worldview, our beliefs about God, or our stance on good and evil, we all will face some kind of trial and suffering in this life.

The question is not if we will suffer, but how we respond to suffering when it happens. Will we suffer toward God (allow our suffering to drive us to Him), or will we suffer away from God (allow our suffering to hinder our relationship with Him)?

In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, we find the story of Job—the classic story on pain and suffering. Even many people unfamiliar with the Bible know the basics of Job’s story, how everything was taken from him and how he remained devoted to God. The New Testament lifts up Job as one of our examples of patience and endurance (James 5:10). Job suffered toward God and found that suffering gave him a greater understanding of God and His ways.

When our lives are comfortable and easy, we don’t tend to think deeply about God. But when suffering comes, we “zoom in” on God. What we discover is that God is working our suffering for good and bringing about exquisite beauty and glory from even our deepest pain (Rom. 8:18,28). We discover, like Job, that God is even greater than we thought, and His goodness is even deeper than we ever dared to dream.

- **When have you asked questions about the trials in your life? Do you think it’s wrong for a Christian to ask these kinds of questions? Why or why not?**

Option 2

Provide paper for each student and instruct them to write about a time of suffering in their own lives. Tell them to describe the experience and any questions they had concerning God. After allowing a few minutes for this, ask the students to take a minute and think about how that situation affected them long term. Are there things they see now that they couldn’t see in the moment? In the same way, when Job reached the end of His trial, He was able to see that God’s plan and purpose would prevail no matter the circumstances in His life. However, in the moment, he asked God some tough questions—questions much like the ones you and I might ask in difficult situations. We don’t have the benefit of seeing the big picture, but God does. And we have to trust that He is greater than we ever thought and His goodness is deeper than we ever imagined.

- **What do you think it means to see the “big picture” when it comes to suffering?**
- **Is it possible to try to step back and see our suffering from God’s perspective? Why or why not?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God may not always explain the reason for our suffering, but He does always draw near to comfort us when we suffer.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Job** - main character in the book of Job who comes to know God's mercy and goodness on a greater level through the suffering surrounding his family and himself

PLOT

Our journey through the storyline of the Bible takes us to the familiar story of Job and his suffering. Like the other books of wisdom literature, the book of Job takes us deep into the struggles of one man and his family, and how he responded to his suffering in light of his faith in God. It is a sobering story, one that brings both compassion and conviction. But overall, it is a true story that allows us to see what every person who suffers ultimately needs—God Himself.

TIMELINE

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

A look into the psalms and their importance in the Christian life.

Beginning Fall 2016

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL*

God makes it known that He alone is God.

JOB AND HIS STORY OF SUFFERING

The book of Job begins with a bizarre scene. The Lord and Satan are having a conversation, and the Lord brings up Job as a model of uprightness and integrity. Let's read how the story begins.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:6-12)

After this scene in the book of Job, we read that Job lost everything. The Sabean took his oxen and donkeys and struck down his servants (1:13-15), a lightning storm burned up his sheep and more of his servants (1:16), the Chaldeans raided his camels and the servants attending them (1:17), and worst of all, a powerful wind caused the house to collapse on his sons and daughters (1:18-19). When tragedy struck, what did Job do?

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22)

Job's story does not answer the question of why good people suffer. But it does offer us some direction. First, Job did not suffer because God was angry with him. One of the greatest temptations for Christians is to think that suffering is a sign of God's anger. We think: "God is paying me back!" But Job's story reminds us that God's anger is not why we suffer. In fact, one of the most interesting things about the conversation between God and Satan is that God is the one who brings Job into the conversation (1:8). The Lord suggested to Satan that he consider Job because of his faithfulness and integrity. God did

not suggest Job to Satan because he was angry with Job. He suggested Job because He was pleased with him! God knew that Job trusted Him for reasons far deeper than cattle and oxen. He trusted God because of who He is.

- **Do you think understanding the reasons for your suffering would help?**
(p. 78, PSG)

Second, Job did not suffer because he had sinned. The Book of Job begins by telling us “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” (Job 1:1). Then, after Job’s family and livestock were taken, we read: “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.” (v. 22). The author is clear on this issue: Job was not suffering because he sinned.

When we suffer, we often think of particular sins we’ve committed or ways we’ve faltered in our obedience. We believe that we are getting what we deserve. Usually our minds go to that one sin that we cannot seem to overcome and we blame that sin for our suffering. Our theology too often goes like this: Do good, be blessed. Do wrong, be cursed.

But Job’s story shows us something different. The righteous do suffer. The Apostle Paul suffered deeply during his ministry but said it was a source of deep joy for him (Col. 1:24-25). One look at the life of Jesus should quickly remind us that suffering and sin aren’t always connected. Even though He was completely sinless, Jesus was mocked, ridiculed, and rejected throughout His life.

James says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (Jas. 1:2-4). This is one of God’s great aims for us during suffering. If God takes us through a season of suffering in order to help us love and trust Him more, it will always be worth the pain.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

The Problem of Evil

Many atheists have argued that if God is all-powerful, all loving, and knows everything, evil would not exist in the world as humans know it today. But because evil exists in the world, God must not exist (or if He does exist, then He is not good or all-powerful). Despite its powerful rhetoric, appealing to evil as an argument against God fails: first, because outrage over bad things in this world presupposes a “good” moral standard that does not exist apart from God, and secondly, because God could have a good reason (though unknown to us) for allowing evil and suffering to continue for a season. Given what we know about God’s character and purposes, Christians can rest assured that, even in the midst of evil, God is working all things for our good (Rom. 8:28).

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO JOB AND HIS FRIENDS

After Job's life came unraveled, his friends showed up on the scene to offer counsel and comfort. Unfortunately, his friends gave answers that angered God and proved unhelpful to Job. Look at Job's response to their wrong advice.

Then Job answered and said: "I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all. Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you. I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain. "O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he who testifies for me is on high. My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, that he would argue the case of a man with God, as a son of man does with his neighbor. For when a few years have come I shall go the way from which I shall not return. (Job 16:1-5,18-22)

When we suffer, we ask many questions. We ask: *Why me? What is God doing right now? What did I do to cause this? Why does suffering come to those who love God? How could a loving God allow this to happen?* Those are legitimate questions and they need good, thoughtful answers.

But what we learn from Job—who asked lots of questions—is that what we need most in times of suffering is God. We need His presence, His voice, and His nearness when we are suffering. The greatest thing God can give us when we suffer is more of Himself. Listen to what the Lord says to Job.

And the LORD said to Job: "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it." Then Job answered the LORD and said: Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."

After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer. (Job 40:1-5; 42:7-9)

TIMELINE

ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

Naaman is healed from his leprosy.

ISAIAH'S ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

Isaiah encounters God and is forever changed.

What a wonderful ending to Job's story! Job received an even grander vision of God's power and goodness through his suffering. He was reminded that no one can bring accusations against Him. Job saw just how small he was in comparison to the vastness of God's glory. What's more, Job saw an even deeper level of God's goodness. The Lord accepted his prayers on behalf of his friends and removed His anger from them.

If nothing else, Job learned that suffering reminds us that we are not God. Suffering has a way of humbling us and reminding us that we don't have control over our lives. Job also learned that even though suffering is often beyond our control, God comes near to us during those times.

Job's journey is both difficult and beautiful. It is difficult because we see just how deeply he suffered and what he endured. Although many of us will never experience what Job did, we shouldn't minimize our own pain and trauma when trials come our way. But Job's story is also beautiful. The way God came to Job's aid, revealed Himself, and eventually restored Job gives us hope and courage. We are reminded that God will not leave us or forsake us. He even gave us His own Son to remind us He wants the best for His people.

- **How is God different from us? How is His view different than ours? What is the problem with our point of view?** (*p. 79, PSG*)

CHRIST CONNECTION

In his time of suffering, Job yearned for a mediator—someone to stand between him and God. If Job only knew then what we know now! We know there is one who stands between God and man and pleads for us as a man pleads for his friends. Jesus Christ is that man; He is that friend. He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13).

Jesus is the one who stands between us and God and lays His life down for us. We need Him. We need His love, affection, and grace. We need His friendship and Him standing up on our behalf, especially in our suffering.

And as we lean on Him, we realize our God comes close to us even in the midst of our suffering. The greatest example of this is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through Jesus, God came close to us and entered into our suffering. He suffered for us, in our place. His suffering reminds us that we never suffer alone, and that one day He will put an end to all suffering. This is our great hope and great message to the world.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How have you typically responded to suffering in your own life? How does Job's response challenge you personally?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **In what ways have you been reminded that God is God and you are not? How has God come near to you during your suffering?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What do you think Job thought about his experience when he looked back on it? Why might a greater understanding of the power and character of God be what all hurting people really need?** *Suffering and pain have a way of revealing what our hearts truly trust in. If we walk into a season of suffering with a deep understanding of who God is and His character, we will be better anchored during these storms knowing that God is good, and He is working all things for our good and joy.*
- **How has the story of Job connected with you on a personal level?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

C. S. Lewis once said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” In other words, as Lewis and the biblical writers knew, there are some things you only come to know through difficult times. Many of us have heard stories of people who endured intense seasons of loss and pain, but said they’ve never experienced God the way they did when they were suffering. This is because God is not distant or aloof when His children are suffering, but near, present, and working all things for their good and joy.

- **Think back to a season of suffering in your own life. Did God use that suffering to lead you into a different kind of relationship with Him? How so?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How encouraging is it to know that God is near and present even when your feelings deceive you into thinking He is not?** *Feelings are not, and have never been since the fall, a reliable indicator of whether God is near. During difficult times, it is always important to allow truth to govern our feelings and not the other way around.*



HEART

Job's reaction to his suffering is a lesson to all of us on how we are to view God's gifts and God Himself as the giver of those gifts. For many, the loss of something or someone can reveal that our hearts were more in love with that thing or person rather than the One who gave it to us. When loss or suffering strikes, it has a way of showing us whether or not God is the foremost treasure of our hearts. While we should be grateful and thankful for God's gifts, we should be mindful that the greatest gift God could give us is not found in any earthly possession or relationship, rather it is the gift of God Himself.

- **Based on Job's response in 1:20-22, how would you describe Job's character?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some gifts from God you have idolized and placed before God Himself?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HANDS

The story of Job teaches us a lot about the types of friends we need and the types of friends we should become to others. For instance, many of us have consumer friendships. This means that we take from our friends, but do not give back. It means that we often choose friends for our own sake, such as having certain friends because it looks good on us, or they give us social capital and ensure us a place with the “in crowd.” That is consumer friendship—a type of friendship we should avoid. Instead of a consumer, self-focused relationship, we should look for ways in which we can put our friends and their needs before our own.

- **Give examples of how you can help provide comfort to others during times of suffering.** *Answers will vary, but it could be said that the greatest thing Job's friends did for him was when they sat silently with him, wept with him, and were simply there for him.*
- **Discuss some of the ways your friends have encouraged you during a difficult time.** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #11, which contains an artistic poster of Job and his encounter with God in the whirlwind.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



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MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



13

SESSION 13

Praises of God's People

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will look briefly at three different psalms. The first (Ps. 1) sets the stage for all the psalms—showing us a vision of God's people who delight in God's Word. Next, in Psalm 100, we see how psalms call us to celebrate who God is and give thanks for what He has done. Then, we look at how Psalm 110 points forward to the coming Messiah who will make all things right. As we read and pray and sing the psalms, we identify with the people of God who offer our lives in worship for His great name.

SCRIPTURE

Psalms 1; 100; 110

THE POINT

Worship is bringing glory to God for His Word, His works, and His promise.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Martin Lloyd-Jones, the famous English preacher from last century, was a dynamic speaker who sought to preach God's Word with power, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Even today, preachers all over the world consult his books. These pastors share the same respect for the formative power of studying and explaining God's Word.

But Lloyd-Jones believed there was more going on in a worship service than just the sermon. On Sundays when he had a guest speaker or was away speaking in other churches, Lloyd-Jones made sure to select beforehand the songs that would be sung and the psalms that would be read out loud. He knew that what people sang from their hearts and recited with their lips was just as important as what the preacher said from the pulpit.

Today, we are part of a generation that has largely forgotten how to pray and sing the psalms. Perhaps for the first time in all of church history, the psalms are no longer the bedrock for our individual devotion or corporate worship. This puts us out of step not only with the rest of church history, but the earliest Christians. The apostles quoted more from the psalms than any other book in the Old Testament. They were steeped in the rhythm, poetry, and theology of their people's prayer book.

- **What are the psalms you are most familiar with? Which ones are your favorite?**

Option 2

As a group, discuss some different views people have about God. Who is God to most of the world? Do they see Him as a loving Father? Wrathful judge? Distant deity? The psalms not only provide the framework for our praise, they teach us about the character of God. They point us toward a deeper knowledge of Him and help us connect in relationship with Him. The psalms point out that God is worthy of praise and give us a model by which we can honor and worship Him for who He is.

- **How would your life look different if you intentionally meditated on the Bible and spent time in prayer with God every day?**
- **Think of some different ways you can honor and worship God through reading or praying the psalms. What steps will you take to commit to these changes in your life?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Worship is bringing glory to God for His Word, His works, and His promise.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

PLOT

Today we come to a pause in the Old Testament storyline. God's covenant people wrote the psalms over a long period of time. Many are written by King David, a few come from other kings, one comes to us from Moses, and many are from Asaph. The purpose of the psalms was to recall the mighty acts of God for the people. Some of the psalms focus on praise. Others cry out and lament the evil in this world. Some are confessions of sin. And others point forward to the coming Messiah.

THE PSALMS CALL US TO DELIGHT IN GOD'S WORD

The first psalm sets the stage for the following 149 psalms. It is the model for what the whole book of psalms is about—delighting in God. Let's take a look:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the but the way of the wicked will perish. (Ps. 1)

Many people who are familiar with Psalm 1 think of it as a proverb—a simple description of wisdom versus folly. And to be sure, there is a contrast between wisdom and foolishness in the psalm.

But the more we study and reflect on this psalm, the more we realize it is ultimately about delight. It's not simply a lesson about doing the right thing, learning the right doctrine, or following the right rules. It's about worship and joy. The psalms do teach us, but the way they teach us is by training us to find our satisfaction in the Lord. Psalm 1 claims that the believer who is blessed is the one whose delight is in the Lord's instruction. It's more about our heart's delight than our mind's choice.

Psalm 1 paints a picture of a believer who delights in God's Word, but this delight is not something that only happens spontaneously. It is built into the pattern of everyday life. "Day and night" this person meditates on God's Word. In other words, delighting in God's Word is not something that will happen by chance. It takes intentional choice and preparation.

For centuries, believers have begun their mornings with a psalm, and have gone to bed at night just after reading a psalm. There is no reason for Christians to settle for falling asleep at night with the soft glow of the television screen or iPhone being the last thing they see. We shouldn't be satisfied to let a late-night talk show host or a show on Netflix have the last word before we climb into bed. One way to increase our delight in the Lord is to make a point about saying the psalms at night.

- **What are some of the benefits of spending time in God's Word?** (p. 84, PSG)

TIMELINE

WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

A look into the psalms and their importance in the Christian life.

Beginning Fall 2016

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL*

God makes it known that He alone is God.

ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.

- **What tools do you use to increase your focus on God's Word and fellowship with Him through prayer?** (p. 84, PSG)

THE PSALMS CALL US TO CELEBRATE GOD'S CHARACTER AND WORK

Not only do the psalms call us to delight in God's Word, but they also call us to celebrate together who God is and what He has done for us. Take a look at this psalm, which prepares the heart for corporate worship.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (Ps. 100)

Psalm 100 is a classic example of preparing your heart to “his gates with thanksgiving” and “his courts with praise.” It is a psalm that celebrates God's character and work. Like all the psalms, it shapes our view of God.

Sometimes, we limit the effectiveness of the songs we sing in church because we only appeal to one or two emotional reactions. But life is difficult, and that's why the psalms give us a wide array of emotions and pictures of God. We see God as good and glorious, angry and jealous, just and infinite, compassionate and merciful. He is the Shepherd who knows us better than we know ourselves (Psalm 23). And yet, the psalms give us the ability to weep in the darkest times.

Reminding is one of the central purposes of worship. Even the sad psalms usually remind us of God and His promise. They are the psalmist's way of reminding the people of what God has said and done. Reminding matters. We take the Lord's Supper *in remembrance*. Why? Because sometimes we haven't even left the church's parking lot and we're already living like the cross and resurrection didn't happen.

Psalm 100 reorients us to the big picture of a glorious God and His wonderful creation. Our society promotes people who are “self-made” and “self-sufficient.” Psalm 100 shows us the difference between “self-made” people and “God-made” people. It reminds us that God is in control. Our times belong to Him. All Christian worship is wrapped up in the reality that humanity is both frail and beautiful—created in the image of God (beautiful), yet broken, sinful, and mortal (frail).

Psalm 100 elevates our mind and shifts our gaze from the things of this world to the Creator of this world. It stirs our affections and guides us to see God

as more attractive and glorious than anything else in the world. This kind of worship is what stirs up our desire to tell others about Christ. Our witness flows from our worship. And yet our worship is also part of our witness! When we show our love for God, outsiders see us transfixed by God’s beauty and desire to see that God for themselves.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Knowing the Lord is God, the psalmist calls for thanksgiving. The Apostle Paul often linked thanksgiving and joy in his letters. He could see the connection between a thankful heart and a joyful heart. What is perhaps most interesting about Paul’s letters is that his thanksgiving is almost always for spiritual blessings. Of course, we should be thankful in all circumstances and for all good things in life, but what does it say about us that it seems natural to give thanks for earthly things (such as health, good grades, a new car, etc.) and awkward to give thanks for spiritual blessings? Could it be that we don’t see God’s salvation as something quite as real as whatever we can see or feel? The psalms help us see both earthly and spiritual blessings and direct our praise back to God.

TIMELINE

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN
Naaman is healed from his leprosy.

ISAIAH’S ENCOUNTER WITH GOD
Isaiah encounters God and is forever changed.

ISAIAH’S PROPHECY
Isaiah prophesies about the Suffering Servant.

THE PSALMS CALL US TO LOOK FOR THE COMING MESSIAH

One of the ways the psalms reorient our hearts is by pointing us to the future. Throughout the psalms, we catch glimpses of Jesus. Psalm 110 is a good example and it’s the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament:

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head. (Ps. 110)

Overall, the psalms turn our attention to Jesus. The first readers of this psalm might see this as anticipating the coming of their Messiah. Today, we read it and think of Jesus’ work in the past and His coming again in the future.

Many of the psalms that point to Jesus contain an element of judgment. Consider the line about God coming back to “judge the nations” and “heap up corpses” and “crush leaders.”

We find it hard to greet such an example of God’s judgment with joy and delight, but perhaps this is because we do not know what it is like to be part of a society where unjust leaders tyrannize the people. When we get a taste of injustice, we long for the world to be made right and God—the just Judge of the universe—is the One who will execute vengeance when He brings justice to the world. And so, with the psalmist, we say, “Yes, Lord, come and judge the nations!” and remember that the Judge of the universe is the Jesus who once was on a cross, dying for our sins before rising to new life.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The psalms were the hymnbook of Jesus. We are told that Jesus sang a psalm with His disciples (Mark 14:26), and we see Jesus quoting from the psalms more than any other book in the Old Testament.

But the psalms do not only belong to Jesus; they are also about Him. Jonathan Leeman writes: Sometimes Jesus said that its verses were about Him, particularly when they referred to a conquering son of David. Sometimes He put its verses into His mouth as if they were by Him, particularly when the psalmist spoke as a suffering man. He is the happy Man of Psalm 1 who meditated on God’s Word. He is the conquering Son of Psalm 2 and the victorious One with enemies under His feet in Psalm 110. But He is also the forsaken and mocked One of Psalm 22. He is the One given vinegar for His thirst in Psalm 69.

This is the beauty of seeing Christ in the psalms. For those of us in Christ, His songbook becomes ours. We sing about Him and to Him, and slowly but surely, we become more like Him. Don’t neglect the psalms. They show us Jesus.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Worship

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian’s life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship not only serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What is the difference between studying God's Word or attending a worship service out of duty instead of delight? Why do you think the psalm focuses on "delight" in God's Word?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can use the psalms to remember God's grace to you throughout the week? How would constant reminders of God's faithfulness impact your spiritual life?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **In what ways do the psalms help form our prayers so that our hearts' desires align with God's heart?** *Given that many of the psalms are prayers and praises of thanksgiving, we have a helpful guide on how we might conduct our own prayer life. For instance, since we see things such as praise, thanksgiving, adoration, confession, and repentance within them, we should implement the same characteristics within our own prayers. By studying the psalms, we better know God's own heart, and by knowing God's heart, we can align our prayers accordingly.*
- **What was your impression of the psalms before this session? How has this session confirmed/challenged that perception?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

In a sense we can think of the psalms in terms of reflection, response, and formation. All the psalms help us reflect on who God is and what He has done. They call us to respond to who God is in worship, but they also form us as we learn from them how to respond to life and talk to God. Because of this and their central role in the life of a Christian, don't neglect the psalms or think of them as outdated hymns with no relevance. On the contrary, you will see upon immersing yourselves within the psalms that you have more in common with them than you may realize.

- **Name a contemporary song that has caused you to pause and reflect on its meaning. What was the song's meaning?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **When was the last time a psalm caused you to reflect on its meaning? How did it form your thinking about God and His character?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

If anything, the psalms are a companion to everyday life. They reorient us to God and His salvation. They help us delight in the Lord and walk in His ways. In fact, we can't really do one without the other. We walk in His ways because we delight in the Lord, and we show our delight is in the Lord by walking in His ways. Furthermore, we focus on the Lord because we want to be fruitful, not in gaining material things for ourselves, but living prosperous, spiritual lives that bear fruit for God's kingdom.

- **What can you do to prioritize reading the psalms as part of your daily schedule?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Why is it important that obedience to God be motivated out of a love and delight in Him?** *When love and delight are the central forces behind obedience, God is magnified more than if it were only done from obligation or duty.*



HANDS

When it comes to praying through the psalms, here are some suggestions to get you started:

1) Say them out loud. The psalms contain both the Word God has to say to us about prayer and the words He wants us to say to Him in prayer. 2) Paraphrase them. Meditate and study a psalm until you understand it well enough to put it into your own words. 3) Learn them by heart. Memorize the psalms, but not by rote. Rather, learn them by heart; make their words your words. 4) Immerse yourself in them. The soul should be immersed in Scripture through repeated, thoughtful, comprehensive, and Spirit-enlightened reading.¹

- **Which one(s) of these suggestions have you done before? Which one(s) do you agree to practice this upcoming week?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What role does our worship play in our witness to the gospel?** *Those around us can sense whether the songs we sing accurately reflect the status of our hearts. As a result, genuine worship can be a strong witness to others, especially when our worship draws people's attention to Christ.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Ben Patterson, *God's Prayer Book* (Grand Rapids: Tyndale, 2008), 20-21.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

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- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
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- **App (for both leader and student)**



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STUDY PLAN

YEAR 1

Fall 2015

God the Creator (Genesis 1-11)
God the Covenant-Maker
(Genesis 12-50)

Winter 2016

God the Redeemer
(Exodus)
God the Lawgiver
(Exodus, Leviticus,
Deuteronomy)

Spring 2016

God the Savior
(Numbers, Joshua)
God the Judge (Judges,
Ruth, 1 Samuel)

Summer 2016

God the King (1-2 Samuel)
God All Wise (1 Kings, Job,
Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs)

YEAR 2

Fall 2016

God the Revealer
(1-2 Kings, Isaiah)
God the Pursuer (Major
and Minor Prophets,
1-2 Chronicles)

Winter 2017

God the Sustainer
(Daniel, Ezra)
God the Provider (Esther,
Nehemiah, Malachi)

Spring 2017

God the Son (Gospels)
God Among Us (Gospels)

Summer 2017

Jesus the Storyteller
(Synoptic Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker
(Gospels)

YEAR 3

Fall 2017

Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King
(Gospels, Acts)

Winter 2018

The Spirit Who
Empowers (Acts)
The God Who Sends (Acts)

Spring 2018

The God Who Directs His
People (Epistles)
The God Who Changes
Us (Epistles)

Summer 2018

God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)
The God Who Makes All
Things New (Epistles,
Revelation)