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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 Personal Study Guide*,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0144, Or make comments on the Web at [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com)

### Send questions/comments to:

Content Editor,  
*The Gospel Project: Personal Study Guide*,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;  
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# 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.

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## 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.

# HOW TO USE

**01** SESSION 1  
**The People Demand a King**

**SCRIPTURE**  
1 Samuel 8:1-22

**THE POINT**  
Rejecting God's loving rule reveals a lack of satisfaction in Him and personal rebellion 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 judges into the period of the kings. In this session, we see the their king by demanding a human king to rule over them. Their heads did not believe God was sufficient for them. Their enslavement and made them resemble other nations. Although a monarch, we search for "kings" to provide security for us, need to be fully satisfied in God as the true King.

## INTRO

The first page of each session contains a brief overview of what to expect in the His Story section. This will include the Scripture passage(s), the main point, key figures, as well as a basic plot that sets the scene for the Bible study.

**HIS STORY**

**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 started from the Lord, and their rebellion provided the chance for Israel to request something they had been searching after for quite some time.

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 dependent on Him for everything. But the people were asking for something more than God to bring them security. The people had not trusted 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."

**1 Samuel 8:1-9**

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. His firstborn son's name was Joel and his second was Abiath. They were judges in Beth-sheba. However, his sons did not walk in his ways—they turned toward dishonest gain. They stole, and they perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not follow your example. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us, like all the other nations have." When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand sinful, so he prayed to the Lord. But the Lord said to him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they are rejecting Me as their king. They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to Me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning Me and worshipping other gods. Listen to them, but you must solemnly warn them and tell them about the rights of the king who will rule over them."

**SAMUEL WARNS THEM OF PUTTING THEIR SECURITY IN A HUMAN KING**

Samuel didn't hold back when he forecast the consequences of Israel's demand for a king: "The dominion 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 story here is twofold. The Israelites looked to a king to guarantee prosperity and security. What they would receive instead were kings who would take these 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!

- 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?

**1 Samuel 8:10-18**

Samuel told all the Lord's words to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "These are the rights of the king who will rule over you. He will take your sons and put them to his use as commanders of thousands or commanders of fifties, to plow his ground and to harvest, or to make his weapons of war or the equipment for his chariots. He can take your daughters to become oven-burners, cooks, and bakers. He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his officials and servants. He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best young men, and your donkeys and use them for his work. He can take a tenth of your flocks, and your oxen can become his servants. When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you've chosen for yourselves. But the Lord will answer you on that day."

**Authority of Scripture**

Over the years, a manuscript titled 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, including us on how to live (to well) in 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.

**99% ESSENTIAL**

**DEMAND FOR A KING**  
The people demand a human king to rule over them.

**SAMUEL'S DOWNFALL**  
Samuel's sons are corrupt and dishonest.

**THE ANOINTING OF DAVID**  
The commission of the king.

**DAVID AND JONATHAN**  
The friendship between David and Jonathan.

**10** (Session 1) **11** (The Gospel Project for Students)

## HIS STORY

Intended for group and personal use, the His Story section follows the storyline of the Bible, focusing on what God has done in redemptive history throughout the pages of Scripture. These pages also feature questions to engage with, Essential Doctrines to learn, and a visually helpful timeline to follow throughout the study. In addition, there is a Christ Connection section at the end, helping you to connect the dots between Jesus and the biblical storyline for each session.

# THIS STUDY

**1 Samuel 8:19-22**  
The people refused to listen to Samuel, "but" they said, "We must have a king over us. Then we'll be like all the other nations; our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles." Samuel listened to all the people's words and then answered them to the Lord, "I have to them," the Lord told Samuel. "Accept a king for them." Then Samuel told the men of Israel, "Each of you go back to your city."

**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.

Even though Israel had been warned that a king would abuse his power, they still demanded one. They wanted someone they could visibly see who would "fight their battles." They were forsaking the very thing that set them apart from every other nation. God is not like a human king, who will abuse his power and selfishly 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.

**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.

**THE DAVIDIC COVENANT**  
God's promise to the covenant with David and his descendants.

**DAVID AND BATHSHEBA**  
(David) left behind an amount of inheritance.

**YOUR STORY**

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?
- ▶ What are some examples of things in life that "promise" to give us something but instead "take" from us?
- ▶ Why do we often turn to these "lesser kings" in our lives instead of turning to the only true and loving King?
- ▶ How has flirtation with or submission to these "lesser kings" compromised our personal holiness?

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

## YOUR STORY

Intended for group and/or personal use, the Your Story section is designed to connect what God has done in the past to the present. As you discuss and answer these questions, you'll begin to realize that what God was doing in the lives of these biblical characters easily connects with life today.

## YOUR MISSION

Also intended for group and/or personal use, 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 this day forward. It is intended to show that every session goes beyond mere Bible study to a calling to be on mission with God in this world.

**YOUR MISSION**

**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 for you learn the hard way that your motivation was wrong. In Romans 1:26, Paul says, "Therefore God delivered them over in the craving of their hearts." 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?
- Share of a time where you think you may have been protected by God's mercy when He did not allow a prayer to be answered.

**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, "But in the past, when you didn't know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are our 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?
- How do these "lesser kings" fail to deliver on their promises?

**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?
- How does standing out in this way help us in witnessing to others?

14 Session 1

# FROM THE EDITOR



**Andy McLean**

Editor

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*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.

# UNIT 1

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## God the King

1-2 SAMUEL

## MEMORY VERSE

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.”

**1 SAMUEL 15:22-23**



# 01

## SESSION 1

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# The People Demand a King

### SCRIPTURE

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1 Samuel 8:1-22

### THE POINT

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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.

# HIS STORY

## 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.

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."

### 1 Samuel 8:1-9

*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."*

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.*



#### DEMAND FOR A KING

*The people desire to be like the surrounding nations.*



**SAUL'S  
DOWNFALL**  
*Israel's first king  
fails to obey God.*

# 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.

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!

- **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?**
- 
- 

## 1 Samuel 8:10-18

*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."*



### THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

*The characteristics of a true king.*



### DAVID AND JONATHAN

*The gift of true friendship.*

### 1 Samuel 8:19-22

*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 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."*

## 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.

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.

## 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.



### THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*



### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

*David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **What are some examples of things in life that "promise" to give us something but instead "take" from us?**
- ▶ **Why do we often turn to these "lesser kings" in our lives instead of turning to the only true and loving King?**
- ▶ **How has flirtation with or submission to these "lesser kings" compromised our personal holiness?**

## HIS STORY

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

## YOUR STORY

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## 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?
- Share of a time where you think you may have been protected by God's mercy when He did not allow a prayer to be answered.

## 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?
- How do these "lesser kings" fail to deliver on their promises?

## 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?
- How does standing out in this way help us in witnessing to others?

# 02

## SESSION 2

---

# The Downfall of Saul

### SCRIPTURE

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1 Samuel 15:10-29

### 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.

# HIS STORY

## 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.

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.”

### 1 Samuel 15:10-15

*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.”*

- 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?

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**SAUL'S DOWNFALL**  
Israel's first king fails to obey God.



**THE ANOINTING OF DAVID**  
The characteristics of a true king.



## SAUL TRIES TO JUSTIFY HIS DISOBEDIENCE

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?

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.

### 1 Samuel 15:16-21

*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.”*



**DAVID AND JONATHAN**  
*The gift of true friendship.*



### THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*

## 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.

## 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.*

### 1 Samuel 15:22-31

*nd 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.*



#### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

*David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*



#### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **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?**
- ▶ **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?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you when it comes to obeying God's will for your life?**

## HIS STORY

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

## YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## HEAD

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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?
- How can we lovingly help each other see through these silly excuses?



## HEART

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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 rather 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?
- How will this truth challenge the way you think through situations?



## HANDS

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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?
- How has this session challenged you to respond to current sin struggles in your life?

# 03

## SESSION 3

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# The Anointing of David

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## 1 Samuel 16:10-13

*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."*

## 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.

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!

- **Out of all of Jesse's sons, why do you think God chose David to be the next king?**



### THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

*The characteristics of a true king.*



### DAVID AND JONATHAN

*The gift of true friendship.*

## 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.

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.

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.

### 1 Samuel 17:20-26

*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?"*



#### THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*



#### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

*David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*

## 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.*

## 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.

### 1 Samuel 17:45-51

*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.*



#### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*



#### THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

*Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.*



# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **What are some snap judgments we tend to make about others based on their appearance? How does this account warn us against misjudging others?**
- ▶ **How is the truth that "God looks at the heart" both bad news and good news for you?**
- ▶ **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?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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.
- What are some ways we can encourage others to boldly live out their faith in such difficult moments?

## HEART

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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?
- What does it look like for you to faithfully trust God through that experience?

## HANDS

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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?
- What are some ways you can make much of Jesus this week?

# 04

## SESSION 4

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# The Faithfulness of a Friend

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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God's people need godly friendships.

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## JONATHAN WAS COMMITTED TO DAVID

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.

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.

- **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?**
- **What does it mean to love someone as much as you love yourself? How would your relationships look different if you lived this way?**

### 1 Samuel 18:1-3

*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.*



**DAVID AND JONATHAN**  
*The gift of true=friendship.*



**THE DAVIDIC COVENANT**  
*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*

## 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.

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.

### 1 Samuel 19:1-7

*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.*

## 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 AND BATHSHEBA

*David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*



### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*

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.

### 1 Samuel 23:15-18

*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.*

## 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.*

## 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.



### 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.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**
  
- ▶ **When have you shown intentional and consistent kindness to someone, like Jonathan to David?**
  
- ▶ **The gospel is the greatest act of friendship in history. How does the gospel provide the best model for true friendship?**
  
- ▶ **How has this story affected your view of friendship? What are some ways you intend to become a better friend to those around you?**

## **HIS STORY**

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

## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## HEAD

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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?
- How can you tell that someone genuinely and selflessly cares about you?



## HEART

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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?
- Why is it necessary to be transparent with our friends in order to have a genuine connection with them?



## HANDS

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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?
- How can we be more intentional in strengthening a friend's faith in God?



# 05

## SESSION 5

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# The Covenant is Reestablished

### SCRIPTURE

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2 Samuel 7:8-26

### THE POINT

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God doesn't need us—we need Him!

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## 2 Samuel 7:8-11a

*“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.’”*

## 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.

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?**

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### THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*



### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

*David’s fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*

## 2 Samuel 7:11b-16

*“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.”*”

## 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.

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.



### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*



### THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

*Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.*

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.

## 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.

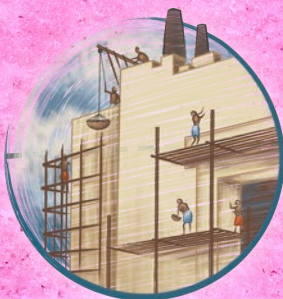
Christianity is not about you living a good life and then giving your record to God, but Jesus living the perfect life and then giving His record to you, as a gift. He lived the life we were supposed to live and died the death we should have died. His life is ours, but only if we receive it.

## 2 Samuel 7:18-26

*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.*

### 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.*



#### 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.*

# YOUR STORY

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 mindset that you have to repay God for the grace and mercy He has shown you? Why do you think people often feel this way?**

▶ **Why do you think the promise of rest was important to God's people? Why should that be important to us as well?**

▶ **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?**

▶ **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?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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 mind-set that God needs us?
- Why might humility of mind come easier to the person who recognizes that God doesn’t need him or her?

## HEART

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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?
- How can this gratitude can lead you to make much of Jesus as a result?

## HANDS

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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?
- In what ways do you dream of sharing the gospel in your area?

# 06

## SESSION 6

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# David's Story of Sin and Repentance

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## DAVID FALLS INTO SIN

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?**

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?

## 2 Samuel 11:1-5

*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."*



### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

*David's fall into sin and prayer of forgiveness.*



### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*



- 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?

## 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.

## DAVID CONFESSES AND REPENTS OF HIS SIN

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.

### 2 Samuel 11:6-17,26-27

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.



**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.

# 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.

## Psalm 51:1-13

*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 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.*

## 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).

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.



### SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

*Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.*



### THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

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

# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **How can we avoid putting ourselves in those places?**
- ▶ **When have you had to cover up your own wrongdoing? How did events spiral out of control?**
- ▶ **What parts of David's confession stand out to you? What parts can you easily identify with?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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?
- How should the truth that sin affects those around us help us in our fight against it?

## HEART

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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?
- How will focusing more on God and loving Him more give us a better chance at fighting the sin in our lives?

## HANDS

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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?
- How has this session challenged you in your fight against sin?

# UNIT 2

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## **God All Wise**

1 KINGS, JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES



MEMORY VERSE

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

**1 CORINTHIANS 1:30**

# 07

## SESSION 7

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# Solomon Asks for Wisdom

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### SCRIPTURE

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

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### THE POINT

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

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### 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

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### 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.

# HIS STORY

## 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?**
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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.

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?**
- **What can we learn about prayer requests from Solomon’s choice and God’s response?**

### 1 Kings 3:5-12

*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.*



#### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

*Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.*



#### THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

*Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.*



## 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.

### 1 Kings 3:16-28

*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.*

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.



### 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.*

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### God is Truthful

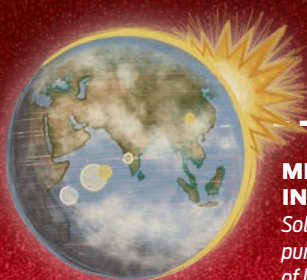
*The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter 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).*

## 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 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.



### 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.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**

▶ **What are some situations in your life (relationships or otherwise) for which you most need God's wisdom right now?**

▶ **Share about a time when you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision.**

▶ **How has this session challenged you when it comes to seeking wisdom in your own life?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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?
- What are some ways you can begin to think about the needs of others before your own?

## HEART

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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?
- How will humility within us serve others?

## HANDS

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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?
- Solomon’s wisdom pointed people to the greatness of God. How might your own life and actions do the same?

# 08

## SESSION 8

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# The Wisdom of Proverbs

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## 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.

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.

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Omniscient

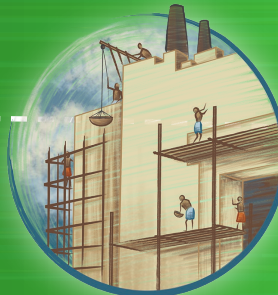
*Scripture teaches that God is all knowing. He is the One who “is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all 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.*

### Proverbs 1:1-7

*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.*



**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.

# 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.

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?

## Proverbs 3:1-8

*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.*

- 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?

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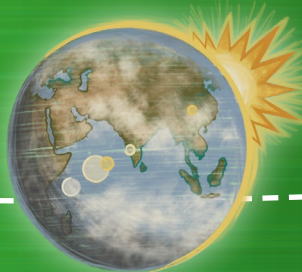
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### SOLOMON'S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

*Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.*



### MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

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

## 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.

- Record one phrase that captures the main theme of each of these proverbs from Solomon:
  - V. 1:
  - V. 2:
  - V. 3:
  - V. 4:
  - V. 5:
  - V. 6:
  - V. 7:
  - V. 8:
  - V. 9:
  - V. 10:

### Proverbs 22:1-10

*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.*

## 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.



### 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.*



# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **How will a Christian's receiving of instruction differ from an unbeliever?**
- ▶ **Who are some people in your life who display biblical wisdom consistently in their actions? What are some characteristics you admire about them?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you when it comes to pursuing biblical wisdom in your own life?**

## HIS STORY

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

## YOUR STORY

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## HEAD

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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?
- Do you consider yourself wise? If not, where should you begin your pursuit of wisdom?



## HEART

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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?
- What are some ways your life demonstrates God's wisdom working through you?



## HANDS

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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?
- What are some ways you can seek to share God's wisdom with others?

# 09

## SESSION 9

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# Solomon Builds the Temple

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### SCRIPTURE

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

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### THE POINT

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

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### 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

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### 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.

# HIS STORY

## SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

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.

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.

- **In what ways do you see people try to honor God's name today? How do you try to honor God's name?**
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### 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 my 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.'"*



#### 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.*

## 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.

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.

- **How has God been seen as dwelling among His people in the following passages?**
  - **Gen. 1-3:**
  - **Ex. 29:42-46:**
  - **Ezek. 10:18:**
  - **Matt. 1:23:**
  - **Rev. 21:3:**

### 1 Kings 8:10-14

*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.*

## 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).*



### 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.*

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

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).

- **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?**

### 1 Kings 8:54-61

*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 Peter 2:4-5

*“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.”*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

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.



### WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

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



### ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

*God makes it known that He alone is God.*

# YOUR STORY

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.**
  
- ▶ **What was it about that time that convinced you it was the Spirit working?**
  
- ▶ **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?**
  
- ▶ **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?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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?
- What are some "God-sized" goals and ambitions you have? How will those serve to make much of Jesus in your life?

## HEART

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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?
- How can you seek God's glory in all of those things?

## HANDS

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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 though you.

- What is your greatest fear when it comes to living on mission for the Gospel?
- How does God's heart for the world help you overcome these fears?



# 10

## SESSION 10

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# The Foolishness of a Once-Wise King

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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?

# HIS STORY

## 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.

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.

- **How is your focus sometimes divided between God and other people or your possessions?**

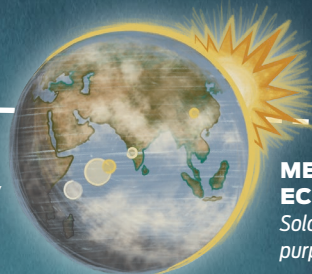
### 1 Kings 11:1-8

*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.*



### 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'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.

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.

### 1 Kings 11:9-13

*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."*

## 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.*



#### 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.*

### Luke 11:31

*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.*

## 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.

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 everyday.



### ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL\*

*God makes it known  
that He alone is God.*

*\*Beginning Fall 2016*



### ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

*Elijah flees in the  
midst of persecution.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**
- ▶ **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?**
- ▶ **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?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you personally?**

## HIS STORY

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

## YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## HEAD

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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?
- How have you been negatively affected by someone else’s foolish choices?



## HEART

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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?
- What tends to divide your heart from devotion to God?



## HANDS

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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?
- How has this challenged you to live differently this week?

# 11

## SESSION 11

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# Solomon Reflects on the Meaning of Life

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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Because God exists, life has meaning and purpose.

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## LIFE AND MEANING

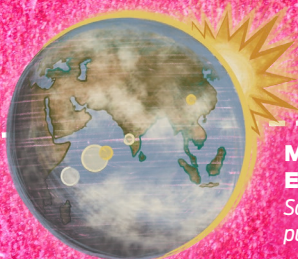
The opening verses of Ecclesiastes introduce us to the question: Does life have meaning? While Solomon's response initially seems to be quite gloomy and sorrowful, it is important to realize that Solomon is presenting two very different pictures to his readers—a life without God and a life with God.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

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?**

## Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

*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.*



### 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.*



## 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.

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).

### **Ecclesiastes 3:16-17**

*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.*

## 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.

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).



### **WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS**

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



### **ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL\***

*God makes it known that He alone is God.*

*\*Beginning Fall 2016*

## 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.

Jesus really is better. He speaks a better word. He tells a better story. He offers a better answer to why we are here. Let us give our lives to helping the world know and trust this God who made us for Himself, and who alone provides the answer to why we are here!

## 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).*



**ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION**  
Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.



**THE HEALING OF NAAMAN**  
Naaman is healed from his leprosy.

# YOUR STORY

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?**
  
- ▶ **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?**
  
- ▶ **What are some different answers the world will give to the question "What are we on earth for?"**
  
- ▶ **In what unique ways does Jesus provide a better answer than the world to life's deepest questions?**

## **HIS STORY**

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

## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION



## HEAD

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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?
- In what ways do people often try to create their own path to joy and meaning?



## HEART

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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?
- How do you draw comfort from the fact that God will act on our behalf?



## HANDS

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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?
- How would you answer questions about meaning and purpose if asked by someone struggling to believe in God’s existence?

# 12

## SESSION 12

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# Job and the Dilemma of Suffering

### SCRIPTURE

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

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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- **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

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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.

# HIS STORY

## JOB AND HIS STORY OF SUFFERING

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?

### Job 1:20-22

*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 1:6-12

*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.*



### 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.*

## Job 16:1-5,18-22

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.

## 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.

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.

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?**



### ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL\*

God makes it known that He alone is God.

\*Beginning Fall 2016



### ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.

## Job 40:1-5

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."

## 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.

## 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).*



**THE HEALING OF NAAMAN**  
Naaman is healed from his leprosy.



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



# YOUR STORY

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?**
  
- ▶ **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?**
  
- ▶ **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?**
  
- ▶ **How has the story of Job connected with you on a personal level?**

## **HIS STORY**

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


## **YOUR STORY**

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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?
- How encouraging is it to know that God is near and present even when your feelings deceive you into thinking He is not?

## HEART

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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?
- What are some gifts from God you have idolized and placed before God Himself?

## HANDS

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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.
- Discuss some of the ways your friends have encouraged you during a difficult time.

# 13

## SESSION 13

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# Praises of God's People

### SCRIPTURE

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Psalms 1; 100; 110

### THE POINT

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

### CHARACTERS

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

### PLOT

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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.

# HIS STORY

## 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.

Psalms 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?**
- **What tools do you use to increase your focus on God's Word and fellowship with Him through prayer?**

### Psalm 1

*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 way of the wicked will perish.*



#### WORSHIP IN THE PSALMS

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



#### ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL\*

*God makes it known that He alone is God.*

*\*Beginning Fall 2016*

## 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.

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.

### Psalm 110

*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.*

### Psalm 100

*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.*

## 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.

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.



### ELIJAH'S PERSECUTION

*Elijah flees in the midst of persecution.*



### THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

*Naaman is healed from his leprosy.*

# 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.*

## 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.



### ISAIAH'S ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

*Isaiah encounters God and is forever changed.*



### ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

*Isaiah prophesies about the Suffering Servant.*

# YOUR STORY

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?**
  
- ▶ **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?**
  
- ▶ **In what ways do the psalms help form our prayers so that our hearts' desires align with God's heart?**
  
- ▶ **What was your impression of the psalms before this session? How has this session confirmed/challenged that perception?**

## HIS STORY

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


## YOUR STORY

*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

## HEAD

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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?
- 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?

## HEART

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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?
- Why is it important that obedience to God be motivated out of a love and delight in Him?

## HANDS

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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.<sup>1</sup>

- Which one(s) of these suggestions have you done before? Which one(s) do you agree to practice this upcoming week?
- What role does our worship play in our witness to the gospel?