

**2 CHRONICLES  
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."* **1 John 2:5,6**

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

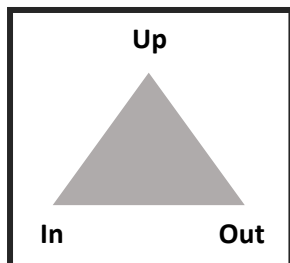
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES

The writer of this incredible book is not named and remains unknown, though Ezra has been thought a possible candidate. History shows us that 2 Chronicles was originally joined with 1 Chronicles. They were separated into two books around 200 BC when the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, was translated. The second book of Chronicles covers the time from Solomon's ascension to the throne (971 BC) until the southern kingdom of Judah was finally carried into exile to Babylon (586 BC).

The focus of 2 Chronicles is Judah. The writer was more concerned with telling the story of David's descendants than telling the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. The book opens with Solomon establishing his throne over a unified nation and building the magnificent temple of God using the plans God gave to his father, David. Six of the nine chapters devoted to King Solomon focus on the temple construction. I love this.

The writer of Chronicles uses the history of Judah to demonstrate that God blesses His people when they remain faithful and joyfully worship Him, but even when they fail, He never does. I love how the book finishes with the promise that the line of David will yet again take Zion's throne and the kingdom of God will be established over all the earth. Stunning stuff. This history is actually HIS-story!

So, here we go again. Grab a pen, journal, Bible, and a fresh cuppa – you will need it!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

## Live

Solomon made a great start to his reign as king and God blessed it. He had been left with every possible advantage by his father, David. His kingdom was strong. God offered Solomon whatever he wanted. This wasn't only because Solomon sacrificed 1,000 animals; it was because his heart was surrendered to God. God wanted to work something in Solomon through this offer and his response. When we read of how God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, our natural reaction is to wish we had such a promise. GOOD NEWS! We DO have such a promise. Jesus said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you"* (John 15:7). And John recorded, *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us"* (1 John 5:14).

The issue for many Christians is not whether they will receive anything when they ask, but whether they will ask at all. What you wish for reveals much about your spiritual state. If you think of things in the material realm, like a big bank account, a bigger house (when you don't really need one), or expensive luxuries, it reveals that your values are in carnal, temporal things. If your wish is to be more like Jesus, or have a more consistent prayer life, or be a better witness for Christ, that is a revelation that your values stand in things that are eternal and enduring. Our prayers are a great reflection of where our true values are set. James wrote, *"You ask and receive not because you are asking for the wrong kind of things. You are asking for things that you might consume on your own lusts."*

## Pray

Father, one of the lessons in today's reading (and there are loads) is that I don't require of You, my Father, half enough. So today I ask You for the wisdom of Solomon to require of You those things that will make You visible in my life. May my existence be an exposure of Jesus to my community. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

When Solomon ascended to the throne of Israel, he knew he had to complete the work begun by his father, David. David had conquered Jerusalem and made it the royal capital. He then set out to furnish the city with buildings worthy of a great nation. David built for himself a palace, a beautiful house of cedar and gold, silver and fine linens, the best craftsmanship the king could assemble. David also wanted to build a temple, a centre of worship to which the people could come and offer sacrifices and praise. David's heart was set on constructing a magnificent worship centre but God told him that he would not build the temple; this work would be left for his son.

Solomon set his heart and his mind to this task, a temple for the living God, a centre of worship worthy of the God of their fathers and the Lord of their victories. It would have to be a great house indeed. Nothing small, nothing cheap, nothing halfway. We might think the greatest thing about Solomon was his wisdom or his riches or his writings, but for the Chronicler, the greatest thing about Solomon was the temple he built. Years later, the temple was vital to a community of returning exiles who struggled to build a new temple and to make a place for Israel among the nations again.

It is interesting to note that Solomon appealed to Hiram based on his prior good relationship with his father, David. David did not regard every neighbour nation as an enemy. He wisely built friendships with neighbouring nations, and the benefit of this came to Solomon. We can't know if Hiram was a godly man, but he certainly respected the God of Israel. This was no doubt due to David's godly influence. Influence is such a powerful thing, reaching from generation to generation. How's your influence at present?

**Pray**

Father, today I am reminded that what I am building will last beyond me. When I'm dead and gone, my influence, good or bad, will live on. Though decades have passed from the prime days of people like Adolf Hitler and Billy Graham, images still flash into my mind of the legacy they left behind. I desperately want to be more like You and to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

The place where Solomon started to build was significant. It is previously identified as the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Here, it is located as Mount Moriah. This is where Abraham went to offer Isaac (Genesis 22:2). Special attention was given to the “Holy of Holies” or “Most Holy Place”. This was a 10-metre cube completely overlaid with gold. It had two large sculptures of cherubim (5 metres in height), also overlaid with gold. There was gold everywhere in the temple, especially in the Most Holy Place. The walls were covered with it (1 Kings 6:20-22), and the floor (1 Kings 6:30), and gold was hammered into the carvings on the doors (1 Kings 6:32).

I have been pulled powerfully into a study of what is inside the temple – gold everywhere. Here are a few thoughts... Such was the inside of Christ. Paul records in Colossians 2:9, *“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily”*. In His outside appearance there was no desirable beauty, according to Isaiah 53:2, but inside Him all the fullness of God dwelt. I love this so much. It follows that the Church’s glory is inward, in the hidden person of the heart. I love the imagery in 1 Peter 3:4 *“But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in God’s sight very precious.”*

Solomon informs Hiram of the particular services to be performed in the temple. He is not ashamed of his God in any way. Likewise, we should not be afraid or ashamed to embrace every opportunity to speak of God and to impress others with a deep sense of the importance of His favour and love. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, the neighbouring nations were willing to be taught by them in the true religion.

## Pray

Father, in the words of the songwriter, *“You are beautiful beyond description, too marvellous for words, too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard. Who can grasp Your infinite wisdom? Who can fathom the depths of Your love? You are beautiful beyond description, Majesty enthroned above. And I stand, I stand in awe of You.”* In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

The idea behind the Hebrew word for 'altar' is 'God's table', a sacred place for sacrifices and gifts offered up to God. Our word 'altar' comes from the Latin 'altārium', meaning 'high', and is also related to the Latin 'adolere', 'to ritually burn or sacrifice', suggestive of its early purpose as detailed in the Bible. We also have an altar. Our place is the cross where Jesus died for our sins. We follow this act by dying unto self and living for Jesus.

The altar was the first main object to be met as one entered the sanctuary court. It demonstrates that God may be approached only through sacrifices. There is no God like our God, and there is no God but God. There are only wannabe-gods, empty nothings, broken cisterns. He is the holy God – eternal and glorious. And the amazing thing is that He loves us more than we can possibly imagine.

The way in which Solomon's temple was built brings before us the excellent order of service. The temple was characterised by strength (the two pillars) and by character (the timber and the gold). Our work for Christ should have nothing feeble about it. It should be good, solid, durable work that will resist the disintegrating forces about us, work that may be tried by fire and still endure (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). The strong pillars were ornamented with wreaths and pomegranates; they were beautiful as well as having strength. There was incredible attention to detail. Everything mattered. Nothing was too small or trivial to be made with the best material. I love the absolute purity, made with not any old gold but pure gold. All our thoughts, feelings, and energy refined of selfishness and earthliness should be brought to the service of the King of kings. Nothing but the best for Him!

**Pray**

Father, having given Jesus to be the Lamb of God on my behalf, You raised and installed Him as the Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus has the heart of every other king in His hands. He rules over, and in, all things for my good and His glory. Nothing and no one can alter or resist His lordship, for He is making all things new. How can I not bow and serve such a One? In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Solomon began this ambitious project shortly after he came to the throne and now it was finished, much to his satisfaction. I get goosebumps reading this chapter, especially verses 13 and 14. This was the cloud of glory seen often in Old and New Testaments, sometimes called the Shekinah glory. It is hard to define the glory of God. We could call it the radiant outshining of His character and presence. Here, it is manifested in a cloud. It is worthy of note that this great outpouring of the glory of God came in the context of intense and dedicated praise. God pours out His glory when His people praise Him. Here's what Spurgeon has to say: *"We can never expect to have God in this house, or in our own houses, or in our own hearts, until we begin to praise him. Unless as a people we unanimously, with one heart, though with many tongues, extol the King of kings, farewell to the hope that he will give us his presence in the future."*

The ark of the covenant represents the Word of God. They had accumulated and brought into the temple very great earthly treasure, but God's Word is the greater, incalculable treasure. It's far more valuable than anything else, greater than the sum of everything combined. This is the first time in a very long time that the ark and the tabernacle (or now, temple) would be together as originally intended. The ark had not been in the Holy of Holies since it was wrongly taken into battle with the Philistines and temporarily lost.

Think about the progression of these four things: They committed all their treasures to God in the form of depositing them in the completed temple. They prepared themselves for God's service and presence by observing the Day of Atonement. They restored the Word of God as the centrepiece of their service and worship. They experienced God's glory, His very presence.

**Pray**

Father, first and foremost, I need more of Your grace. As I meditate through these Scriptures, Your beauty exposes my pride, stubbornness, and selfishness. I want more of Your grace to reveal Your beauty and mercy, wherever I am and wherever You send me. I want to worship You in the absolute beauty of Your holiness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Solomon recognised that the temple was the fulfilment of God's plan, not David's or his own. David and Solomon were human instruments; the work was God's. It's really interesting how verse 4 says, *"Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who with **His hands** has fulfilled what He promised with His mouth to my father David."* Solomon recognises God as the maker and keeper of promises. As the psalmist declares in 127:1 *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain."*

Solomon begins his prayer with recognition of God's promise to his father that there would never lack a man to sit upon the throne of Israel. This theme of kingship runs throughout the Old Testament. When we read about the kings, we ought to remember that this reflects a truth taught in the New Testament – God has called us as believers to rule and reign in life through Christ. It is helpful to think of yourself as being given a kingdom over which you are to reign, namely the kingdom of your own life and all that comes into it. We are, in a sense, to be in charge of these matters. We can't dictate everything that happens, but we can react to everything that happens.

I love verse 30 where Solomon prays for the people and calls on God to *"forgive and deal with every man according to all that he does since You know his heart, for You alone know the heart of man."* When all is said and done, only God knows us intimately. He knows us better than we know ourselves and therefore we should entrust our all into His masterful and merciful hands. Solomon acknowledges in verse 36 that there is no one who does not sin, but his prayer is that when repentance is asked for, God would hear and forgive. Now that's our God!

### Pray

Father, forgive me when I allow other builders into my life besides You. You are my chief Architect, master Designer, and best Builder/Putter-together. Why I would ever trust another I'm not sure. Give me more of the power of Your Spirit to love well – to love holiness, people, and my community. Give me Your heart, tears, and compassion for the broken people and broken places in my world. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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### Live

This is one of the instances in the Old Testament of God sending fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice. It is a dramatic and visible proof of God's approval. God has always used fire to identify His presence and purify His people. With Moses, God spoke through a burning bush, saying the place where he stood was holy ground. With Elijah, God consumed the altar with fire from heaven, proclaiming, among other things, that this was a holy man. With the first believers in Jerusalem, God visited in a violent sound like wind and what looked like tongues of fire, announcing that these were a holy people. With Solomon and the worshippers at the temple, God came as a fire from heaven, stating that this was a holy place. You would think that consuming fire from heaven might make Solomon and the people more aware of the power and judgment of God, yet it seems to have made them more aware of the goodness and mercy of God. I love how they said/sang: *"He is good; His love endures forever."*

What will it take for us to be set on fire? We must find a way to create a kind of spiritual reaction that creates both heat and light. God gives us the formula for starting a fire in our hearts. It is found in verse 14 *"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."* This wonderful promise is in the context of God's promise to answer prayer from the temple that He chose to hallow with His presence. God promises to hear the prayer of His humble, prayerful, seeking, repentant people. He will bring forgiveness to His people and healing to their land. He hasn't changed!

### Pray

Father, I will seek to listen to Your beckoning, liberating, soul-satisfying voice. All I need in life is Your unfailing love for me in Jesus, plus whatever You sovereignly decree. I praise, bless, and adore You for the everlasting covenant You established between Yourself and Your people. The gospel is true. The gospel is good. The gospel is everything. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

It took Solomon seven years to build the temple and thirteen years to build his palace. At the end of these twenty years his kingdom was secure, stable, and blessed. Things begin to change in verse 11 which records the first of Solomon's many unwise marriages (also recorded in 1 Kings 11:1-3). This marriage to a princess of Egypt was the start of the spiritual downfall of Solomon. It is really unbelievable that Solomon knew he was marrying someone who did not worship the true God, and still did it. Listen to the way John Trapp, a commentator from the 1600's, puts it: *"Solomon had, against the law of God, married this and other strange wives, for politic ends no doubt, and as hoping that by his wisdom he could reclaim them, or at least rule them... Howbeit afterwards, overcome by the importunities of his strange wives, he yielded to them shamefully. Watch, therefore, and beware."*

It requires as much, and maybe even more, wisdom to govern one's family in the fear of God than to govern a kingdom. The difficulty is increased when our close relationships become a hinderance instead of a help. Solomon kept up the holy sacrifices, according to the Law of Moses, but it would seem all his good efforts and works were set at naught with his behaviour. Our worship begins in the private place, in our homes with our loved ones. Solomon, with all his gold, wealth and so-called wisdom, was making some huge choices which would shape his future in a bad way.

May we, as the children of God, lay up our treasure in heaven, knowing that where our treasure is, our hearts will be also. The enemy seeks, through even our passions, to destroy all we do for God and for His glory. May God help us recognise his snarly schemes and prowling ways and to know for sure that our greatest peace, confidence, and hope in the battle is the Lord, Him alone.

**Pray**

Father, I choose to dress myself with garments of Your grace right now. You don't just *give* me armour, You *are* my armour – my righteousness, my holiness, and my redemption. In You, there is no condemnation or fear. In You, I have everything I need – not just to survive but to thrive in life, for You and with You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Sheba was located in modern-day Yemen. Geography tells us that this was a wealthy kingdom with much gold, spices, and precious woods. This was a long trip, up to around 1,500 miles. The Queen of Sheba probably came as part of a trade delegation (see 1 Kings 10:2-5), but was also highly motivated to see Solomon. She had heard wonderful things about this king and his kingdom, but upon seeing it with her own eyes realised it was far greater than she had heard. Jesus used this queen as an example of a seeker in Matthew 12:42 *“The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed, a greater than Solomon is here.”*

The queen was no doubt prompted partly by curiosity to see the magnificence of Solomon, but what largely persuaded her to take that long, expensive journey was her desire to learn what the wise man could teach her. She desired *“to talk with him of all that was on her mind”* (verse 1). She perhaps learned for the first time the fundamental truths of religion and of Solomon’s God, the one true God. It is most likely she went back to her own country mentally, and even spiritually, enriched far beyond her highest expectations. As she crossed the desert a second time, she must have felt that she had been repaid a thousand times for all her travels.

Wisdom is always worth our time and effort, whatever it may take to get it. It is well worthwhile to sell all that we have in order to possess *“the pearl of great price”*, according to Jesus’ words in Matthew 13:46. Of course He was referring to heavenly wisdom and eternal life. If the Queen of Sheba sought Solomon and the splendour of his kingdom so diligently, how much more should people today seek Jesus and the glory of His Kingdom?

### Pray

Father, thank You for redeeming my life from sin and death; from un-righteousness and self-righteousness; from acknowledged guilt and un-owned pride; from hopelessness and arrogance; from self-loathing and self-worship; from a deserved hell and a presumed heaven. The cost wasn’t silver and gold but the life of Your lovely Son. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Rehoboam was the only son of Solomon that we know by name. Solomon had 1,000 wives and concubines, yet we read of only one son to bear up his name, and he was a fool. Rehoboam had three great leadership books to glean from: the life of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon. It would seem he hadn't bothered to read any of them nor learn anything from their mistakes. Before Rehoboam even consulted with the younger men, he rejected the advice of the elders. This is a common phenomenon today, what some call 'advice shopping'. The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counsellors whom you will listen to, even when they tell you what you don't want to hear.

Before we point the finger at Rehoboam, we need to realise that he inherited a number of problems beyond his control. Although his grandfather, David, was a godly man in many ways, he never dealt with his weakness for women. David multiplied wives for himself and as if all his beautiful wives were not enough, he committed adultery with Bathsheba. Although God forgave David when he repented, He did not remove the disastrous consequences. David's sin wreaked havoc in the lives of his adult children. Rehoboam's father, Solomon, multiplied wives more than David had ever dreamed of (300 wives and 700 concubines!). Rehoboam's mother was a foreigner, an Ammonitess. Solomon's foreign wives led him into idolatry. As a result, God told Solomon that He would tear the kingdom from him and give it to his servant. But on account of David, God promised not to do it in Solomon's lifetime, tearing the kingdom from his son instead. Be careful of your legacy, its crucial!

**Pray**

Father, I'm so glad You are God and I am not. Foolishly, I think I can fix things and people. Rather than telling You what to do, I'm going to gaze on Your beauty and bounty in the place I find You the fullest. The more often I see You and the more I see of You, the less I stress and fear. I worship You not to get anything else but more of You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

We read of Jeroboam's rebellion against the house of David. King Rehoboam intended to use force to reunite Israel to Judah, but the Lord warned him that if he continued, the battle in front of him was not going to be against men but against God Himself because the splitting of the kingdom was His will. Wisely, Rehoboam listened, and a disaster was prevented. In the story of a ruler who was not seeking the Lord, we find a refreshing and interesting statement: *"But the word of the LORD came..."*. This is another example of God being faithful to man in the face of man's unfaithfulness to Him.

How awful the sight of the armies of Judah arrayed against the armies of Israel; the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob seeking one another's life, shedding one another's blood! The people of God were turning their weapons against each other, weakening the forces of righteousness, helping to extinguish the light that was in the world. Well might the prophetic word be uttered in verse 4, *"You shall not fight"*. Our God has, since then, looked down on many a sad and shameful war in which father and son, brother and brother have met in deadly contest on the battlefield, wars in which the hearts of those united by the strongest bonds have been inflamed against one another. Surely negotiation and concession should be carried to the very last conceivable point before men go up and fight against their brethren.

As we read this chapter, we see how Rehoboam sought to strengthen his kingdom, and he succeeded to some extent. And yet, he neglected the spiritual things necessary. Oh, how we all fall in this area. Spiritually speaking, Israel was struck twice – by the ungodly religion of Jeroboam and by the departure of the godly and faithful. There were few godly people left in the northern kingdom. I have to remind myself continually to do as Matthew 6:33 endorses: *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"*.

### Pray

Father, thank You for adopting me through the finished work of Jesus. Thank You for freeing me from my slavery to sin and my orphan-like ways. Thank You for giving me the Spirit of sonship, a secure place in Your family, and an inheritance that can never spoil or fade. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This chapter finishes the history of Rehoboam. Along with the two preceding chapters, it is one of the masterpieces of Scripture biography. We are shown the true character of the man. Roughly speaking, this chapter stretches over the last twelve of the seventeen years of Rehoboam's reign. The first verse is sad: *"After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD."* Rehoboam trusted in God as long as he felt he needed Him, but when he was strong and secure, he grew independent of God instead of more dependent on Him. The worst part about Rehoboam's sin was that it led the entire kingdom into sin.

I love Spurgeon's notes on this chapter: *"You see how readily Rehoboam went, first towards God, then towards idols, and then back again, towards God; he was always ready to shift and change, he wrought no great reforms in the land, we do not read that; he held a great Passover, as Hezekiah did, or that the high places were taken away; but, as soon as Shishak was gone, he felt perfectly content. There was not anything real and permanent in his religion; it did not hold him. He held it sometimes, but it never held him."*

When we believe ourselves to have enough resources so that we can afford to be independent of the Lord's provision, when we think we have surrounded ourselves with all needful sources of earthly joy, that is one dangerous place to be. It is so near-sighted that it is blind. Life can turn on a penny. I thank God for the people I know whom God has blessed with wealth and they have yielded it to the Master's hand and use. My dad used to say, "It takes a steady hand to hold a full cup." He was right.

**Pray**

Father, my heart is filled with a fresh awareness of Your mercy. You don't give me what I deserve, but instead You give me grace upon grace upon grace. You incessantly speak words of encouragement, hope, and kindness to me. Even when You have to correct me, You give life-giving rebukes not shameful stares or guilt-ridden words. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Today we see how Abijah becomes king but reigns for only three years. The career of Abijah begins and ends with this chapter, twenty-one verses of which are paralleled by the first eight verses in 1 Kings 15. Verse 3 of 1 Kings 15 records that Abijah committed many sins, so he was a very evil king. I love that the Chronicler writes what little good he did; in doing so, the writer is showing us that even the wicked kings were under the covenant of God made to David. The difference between the parallel passages is that the writer of 1 Kings only mentions that there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam; the writer of 2 Chronicles, besides giving particulars of the war, rehearses the splendid, dramatic appeal of Abijah on Mount Zemaraim to the people of the ten tribes. The idea of Abijah in this religious speech addressed to the kingdom of the ten tribes is good and the heralding of it is definitely spirited. The problem is that while he preaches well to others, there are gaps in his life that he has blinded himself to, huge failures of practice in his own wicked heart, disobedience to the God he speaks of.

In this war between the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, there was a clear numerical advantage for the northern kingdom. I love what F.B. Meyer has to say on this battle: *“The point to remember is that our enemies may shut us in on all sides, preventing reinforcements from north, south, east, and west; but no earthly power can ever shut off God from above us. The way upwards is always kept clear; the ladder which links the beleaguered soul with God and heaven can never be blocked, except by transgression and sin.”* This is a great lesson to hold onto in seasons of difficulty. Always remember that according to Isaiah 43, God can make a way where there is no way, a stream in the desert.

**Pray**

Father, let me feel the grasp of grace right now. You are always guiding me, even in and through the valley of the shadow of death, and You will bring glory to Yourself even in the most heart-wrecking of stories. Who do we have in heaven, or on earth, but You? Being with You is what we need more than anything else. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This great-grandson of Solomon took the throne of Judah at the end of Jeroboam's reign in Israel, after his father's brief reign. As a king, Asa was more like his ancestor David than his own father. Faithful to the covenant, Asa hated sin and loved righteousness; therefore, he brought about a great spiritual reformation in the life of God's people. Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord. He set out to destroy idolatry in Judah. He removed the foreign altars and high places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles. As king, he commanded Judah to seek the Lord and obey His laws, which the priests were to teach the people. Notice, when revival comes, people return to the Word of God to hear and do what it says and be blessed by pleasing God. God was pleased with Asa's reforms, and the land enjoyed peace and prosperity for many years. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. When we come under God's rule, we will enjoy God's peace and joy.

The Lord tested Asa's faith when Zerah the Cushite came with his million-man army and three hundred chariots. Asa faced him in battle in the valley of Zephathah with only half a million soldiers and no chariots. It was humanly impossible, but with God, all things are possible. If the infinite, almighty God is for us and with us, who can be against us? So, Asa prayed, *"Lord, there is no one like You to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You."* The Lord fought against Zerah's huge army and utterly defeated them. Our God defeats our enemies and saves those who seek Him with their whole heart.

**Pray**

Father, from the beginning, You created humanity for a life of revealing Your goodness, truth, and beauty. That calling hasn't changed but my context has. I now live in a fallen world; I am one of many broken people. But You are a God who is rich in mercy and abounding in grace, and through the gospel, You've forgiven all my sins and declared me righteous in Christ. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

King Asa and the kingdom of Judah had just enjoyed a significant victory over a mighty army. It would be easy to think that they had a permanent claim to God's favour and blessing. Speaking through the prophet Azariah, God wanted Asa to know the importance of abiding in the Lord. This is an important principle repeated many times in the Bible. The idea is that when we draw near to God, He reveals Himself to us. God does not hide Himself from the seeking heart. God was pleased with Asa's reliance on Him when his faith was tested. Like Abraham, by grace, Asa passed this first test. Asa had prayed for and received divine help. He could say with the psalmist in Psalm 46 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging... The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."*

God sent the prophet Azariah to encourage Asa on his return from battle. Azariah's message was one of comfort; yet, at the same time, it was also a warning: *"The LORD is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."* It's heartening and life-giving to know that God doesn't abandon us when we're weak, but He helps us in our weakness, faithfully praying inside us with wordless groans (as Paul reminds us in Romans 8). Let's draw near to God today, knowing that when we do, He will then draw near to us.

### Pray

Father, I love the fact that You search my heart and You know the mind of the Spirit. No one knows my heart better than You – the good and bad, broken and beautiful. You search my heart to save me, not to shame me; to deliver me, not to destroy me; to change me, not to scold me. You know my dignity and my depravity, my fears and my longings, my struggles with sin and my standing in Christ. You have called me to life in Christ and You will complete Your purpose in me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Around five years before Asa's death, God brought another test of faith. A minor enemy, Baasha king of Israel, began to fortify Ramah in the north to keep his people from going to Judah. Asa was provoked by Baasha's actions but this time he refused to rely on God or seek His counsel. He did not cry out, "O God, help us as You did when we faced the million-man army of Zerah the Cushite." He forgot about God. It would seem he removed God from his thinking. Asa became an unbeliever and he trusted in money, not in the covenant Lord who had fought and given him victory against the Cushite. Asa had learned nothing from history. He chose to lean on his money and his own understanding. He needed God twenty years earlier when he was weak and without resources, but now he had money, he had his palace, and he had his children. Everything was going right and he did not need God.

This situation between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah was part of a continued struggle for dominance. Baasha gained the upper hand in the days of Asa because he effectively blocked a main route into Judah at the city of Ramah. He hoped this military and economic pressure on Judah would force Asa into significant concessions.

The closing chapters of the life of King Asa are discouraging. Here was a man involved in a notable period of trust in God, great victory, and the renewal of God's covenant with His people. Asa was a good man who didn't finish well. The last years of his life are marked by unbelief, hardness against God, oppression against his people, and disease. Age and time do not necessarily make us better; they only do if we continue to follow God in faith.

**Pray**

Father, I'm so very thankful for Your ability to do immeasurably more than all I ask and imagine. But today my prayer list doesn't contain things beyond the stretch of my imagination. I ask You to lift the heaviness of my heart the way You lifted the guilt of my sin. I ask You to help me see the legions of angels You've positioned all around difficult stories and broken people. I ask You to bring great glory to Yourself in Your Church for all to see, now and forevermore. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

The quality of Jehoshaphat's spiritual walk is likened to David's earlier days before his sins with Bathsheba, standing in stark contrast with King Ahab who embraced Baal worship. As a result of his personal commitment, *"the LORD established the kingdom in his control"*. Jehoshaphat's personal strength did not elevate him; God elevated him as a result of his commitment to Him. He focused on honouring God, and in turn, God honoured him. As his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord, the Lord gave him the desires of his heart (Psalm 37:4). Jehoshaphat's commitment to personal and public godliness meant that God exalted his kingdom above the neighbouring nations.

I love how everyone began coming together – officials who taught the laws of Jehoshaphat's kingdom, Levites who instructed the people in everything pertaining to temple service and the ritual laws of God's Word, and priests who taught the design and doctrine of their religion based on God's Word. They tied all these aspects together into a cohesive representation of God's Word which instructed the people in their duty to God, the king, and each other. The people would have seen no separation between church and state. Everyone, from top to bottom, king to slave, followed something higher – God's Word. Jehoshaphat began his reign as someone wholly committed to God's truth. We see this as he joins everyone together through a commitment to not just the knowledge, but the truth of God's Word.

Spurgeon says of Amasiah (verse 16), *"Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this – he 'willingly offered himself unto the Lord.' There must have been a turning-point in his career, a time when first he knew the grace of God, which wrought such a change in him. There must have been a waking up to the feeling that God deserved his love and his life."*

**Pray**

Father, this is my hope, peace, and joy – You are able to keep me from falling away and bring me home safely. I'm already blameless in Jesus who is my righteousness, and You have given me everything I need for the rest of my journey. All glory to You, blessed and loving Father. I will seek to serve You and willingly offer myself unto You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This manner of linking kingdoms by the bond of marriage was common in the ancient world, yet it was an unwise policy for Jehoshaphat. The wisest strategy for the protection of his kingdom was obedience rather than compromise with the ungodly King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel. Listen to the wise words of F.B. Meyer. *“Ahab was greatly influenced towards wickedness by his Phoenician wife Jezebel. He was a weak man, the tool of a crafty, unscrupulous, and cruel woman: and some of the worst crimes that have ever been committed have been wrought by weak men, at the instigation of worse – but stronger – spirits than themselves.”*

Although Jehoshaphat had been faithful to the Lord and initiated reforms in the establishment of God’s Word, he made a serious mistake which did not conform to God’s Word, most likely because he thought the bonds of a family connection could overcome the issues that God’s Word warned against. This mistake would be felt not only in his lifetime but in generations to come.

False alliances begin with the reasonable sounding premise that because we’re united on a particular cause, all other differences don’t matter. They are often worded, “It’s time to stop being divided, to put ‘petty’ differences aside.” False alliances are cleverly disguised with spiritual-sounding rhetoric. Those people emphasise what appeals to you so they will get what they really want (usually more money and power). When we join with others because we have something in common, we are also providing approval of things we would never normally approve of. When a good person takes the same platform as a heretic, or someone who is immoral, the good person is implicitly endorsing that person’s ministry and allowing themselves to be identified with them.

**Pray**

Father, invariably, we will go through different seasons in friendship. My prayer is to ask You to keep me from compromise and from compromising people who would seek to influence me. Help me to seek You first and Your right ways, knowing all things will be added on. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Jehu was a brave prophet who exposed the sin of divided love in Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat professed to love God, but he also demonstrated love towards those who hated the Lord. He should never have entered into personal and military alliances with Ahab and the kingdom of Israel. When you ride in their chariot, when you make alliances with false believers, you're going to get confused with them and make yourself a target. Nothing short of God's intervention will save you. If, at the outset, Jehoshaphat had measured the whole of Ahab's doctrines, practices, and activities, he would have concluded that although a few of them aligned with his own, the rest overwhelmingly defined Ahab as one who hated the Lord. Then Jehoshaphat would never have entered into an alliance with Ahab, one that led to such a close connection, no one could tell one apart from the other.

God was not condemning every kind of working relationship with other groups of people, even outright heathen; rather, He had in mind those associations in which God's people make no effort to keep their *spiritual* distance. Listen again to Jehoshaphat's words from chapter 18 *"I am as you are, and my people as your people"*. During the time when Elijah, at the risk of his life, was working to stem the rising tide of Baalism, Jehoshaphat undercut Elijah's testimony by marrying off his son to Ahab's daughter. It was as if he was saying, "We may have our differences, but they're not all that important. What's a little Baal worship between brothers?"

God knew that Jehoshaphat did not approve of all evil, so He encouraged the king in the places where he refused compromise. I love the fact that not only did he seek God, he also prepared his heart to do so. This demonstrates the high priority Jehoshaphat placed on seeking God. This king is a great example for us to follow – take rebuke when it comes from the proper source.

**Pray**

Father, help me to fix my eyes on You and You alone. Forgive me for the times I allow man to sway my decisions and shift my focus from You. Fear of man is a powerful thing and I ask that You empower me to stand up for You against any odds. You are my King and I love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

This vast army was a significant threat for Jehoshaphat whose last experience on the battlefield was a narrow escape from death. The third verse tells us that he was afraid. This was partly from human frailty and partly from remembrance of his own guilt and the wrath of God against him, recorded just one chapter back. Jehoshaphat set an example by his own devotion. He resolved to seek the Lord himself. He would not call upon the people of Judah to seek the Lord in a way that he did not. Prayer is the greatest weapon we have as God's children. It is the powerful key that gives us victory against every oppression. When facing overwhelming odds, when you may not feel like praying, there is only one thing to do – keep on praying!

Jehoshaphat enquired of the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout the land. The people responded in unison. Verses 14 and 15 tell us that the prophet Jahaziel, under the anointing of God's Spirit, began to prophesy over the situation. He encouraged the people to take up their battle positions and face the enemy without fear. As the people of Judah began to praise God and fall down in worship before Him, God began a mighty work. When the army went out for battle the following morning, Jehoshaphat sent the worship team out in front not the battle-hardened soldiers who were placed at the head of the army! As the worship team began to sing and praise God, reflecting on His unfailing love, the Lord brought confusion to the enemy's camp. The enemy armies began to annihilate each other and an amazing victory unfolded.

As you stand against overwhelming odds, will you too reflect on God's unfailing love which endures forever? He will come through for you, often in unexpected ways! His love never fails!!

### Pray

Father, thank You that I can pray with Jehoshaphat today... *“Lord, the God of our ancestors, are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You... We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”* My eyes are fixed on You, O Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Despite Jehoshaphat's wise policy of scattering his sons, Jehoram made it a point to murder all his brothers so they would not pose any kind of threat against his reign. One of the worst things Jehoshaphat ever did was arrange the marriage of his son Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of the evil King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel (2 Kings 8:16-18; 8:26). The influence of this household was one of jealousy, rage, and power. Any claimant to the throne was killed. Jehoshaphat was a godly man who had a bad habit of making compromising associations. The worst fruit of this sinful tendency was not evident until after his death. This is such a powerful lesson in legacy. Remember, our influence and legacy will long outlast us.

Verse 20 is awful. Here was a man *"whose death nobody regretted"*. His name was King Jehoram of Judah. What a horrible way to be remembered! It's amazing what the power of sin can do to a man or woman who yields to it, even a man with a godly heritage like Jehoram. As Christians, let's realise that sin can bind us too if we are not careful of temptations that come against us. The consequences of sin are always painful, seen in the life of King Jehoram and also in the fall of many Christian leaders. Jehoram received three warnings. Firstly, verse 9 speaks of how God saved Jehoram from what seemed like certain death after he and his chariot commanders were surrounded by the Edomite army. This could be seen as a warning given by God for him to repent. Secondly, verse 12 mentions that Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet. This letter warned him of the severe consequences of his evil ways. Thirdly, Jehoram would have been aware of God's warning about marrying someone involved in idolatrous practices. Never ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit!

**Pray**

Father, today I am inspired to be a master builder as I sow into those coming behind me. My future and destiny are so important. I don't want to always be looking to fill my cup. Help me to be diligent in finding those coming behind me into whom I can empty my cup. Keep me from making alliances with the world. And, most of all, save me from myself. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

We see the power of influence again today. Ahaziah's mother was the wicked Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was given in marriage to Jehoram, king of Judah. Athaliah brought her influence to bear upon her son and made him more a son of Ahab and Jezebel than a son of David and his godly descendants. Read Adam Clarke's commentary on the outcome of this chapter: *"Nothing but the miraculous intervention of the divine providence could have saved the line of David at this time, and preserved the prophecy relative to the Messiah. The whole truth of that prophecy, and the salvation of the world, appeared to be now suspended on the brittle thread of the life of an infant of a one year old (see 2 Chronicles 24:1), to destroy whom was the interest of the reigning power! But God can save by few as well as by many. He had purposed, and vain were the counter-exertions of earth and hell."* Always remember that God is never outwitted. He is always in full control.

I love this woman Jehoshabeath who decides to hide the baby boy Joash. She hid him *"in the house of the sanctuary of God"* for six years. Athaliah had no access to this place; therefore, Joash lay concealed, him and his affectionate aunt-nurse. I am reminded today of Joshua chapter 5. When Joshua is confronted by a heavenly visitor, he asks the question, *"Are You for us or against us?"* It would seem, on a study of biblical history, that before a mighty move of God's hand, one is forced to ask Him, *"Are You for us or against us?"*

I love how God moves in the bleakest times when it seems all is lost and the enemy has won. It is in these times our God specialises and the reason is this: He knows the end from the beginning. There is not a moment of time nor an inch of space that God cannot say, *"I am there"* and *"This is Mine."*

**Pray**

Father, today's passage is one where we read and wonder where You are, and then we see You at work in a little baby. I am reminded to not despise the day of small things. Reading about Jesus being born in Bethlehem is more than enough to convince me of this. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Jehoiada was a godly man concerned with restoring the throne of David to the line of David and taking it away from this daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. He was also the husband of Jehoshabeath, the woman who hid the young boy Joash, protecting him from Athaliah's massacre. This chapter is a great story of how the boy king had been hidden for six years and then brought out and crowned. I love how commentator G. Campbell Morgan writes on Queen Athaliah: *"Her own treason against the true and abiding King of the nation was defeated. Thus, sooner or later, and in ways equally dramatic, the moment arrives when those who plot and plan against Heaven and righteousness, find themselves looking at the evidences of the triumph of God and of goodness over all their wickedness."* This chapter just proves, like all others, that truth and God always win.

As Joash grew to manhood, he had to be impressed by the fact that the hand of God was on his life in a unique way. Why were his brothers slaughtered and he alone was spared? He was only a year old at the time, so he certainly had nothing to do with it. And why was he saved by his godly aunt and uncle who raised him in the ways of the Lord?

There is a powerful statement in verse 14 about Athaliah, *"When she looked, there was the king"*. For the controlling queen mother, this was a horrifying sight. For six years she ruled because she believed there were no legitimate claimants to the throne of David. Now she sees that one son of Ahaziah, Joash, her own grandson, escaped her murderous intent. We read, *"All the people of the land were rejoicing"*. Is it any wonder! They were obviously weary of the wicked reign of Athaliah. They shouted *"Treason!"* and Athaliah was at last executed. Jesus said in the Garden at His arrest, *"If you live by the sword you shall die by the sword."* That is seen to be true here.

**Pray**

Father, reading through the gospels, I never encounter a busy, frustrated, irritated, rushed spirit in Jesus. He always spent time with You, Father, and He always accomplished Your will. May it be the same for me. This chapter is more proof that You are ALWAYS in control. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This was a long and mostly blessed reign. Joash advanced the cause of God in the kingdom of Judah. I love the little phrase in verse 4, *“Sometime later Joash decided to restore the temple of the Lord.”* This indicates the godly concern Joash had regarding the condition of the temple. He knew that a prosperous and secure kingdom mattered little if the things of God were neglected. He also knew that the condition of the temple was a valid measurement of the heart of the people of God for the things of God. The temple was not God, but neglect and despising of it reflected neglect and despising of God. I feel the same about the church today. We can say we love God, but I say it is reflected in our love for the Word, His people, and His house. Verse 5 tells us that, for some reason, the Levites did not share the same passion as King Joash for the condition of the temple. Perhaps they felt that the people of the outer towns would not embrace and support this work. Nevertheless, Joash held them to account and got the work moving.

We read in verse 2, *“Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”* But Jehoiada finally died and then Joash was faced with a spiritual test. This was a hinge-point in his life and Joash failed the test. Our enemy, the devil, is neither stupid nor impulsive. He is waiting in the wings, biding his time for the right moment to attack. The officials of Judah did not approach Joash while Jehoiada was alive; the time was not right. But as soon as he was dead and Joash was vulnerable, they hit and he fell. Disobedience brings its own bitter reward. What God’s people sow they always, in some way or another, reap. It’s an established law and divine principle. Take note!

**Pray**

Father, since You are pleased when we exercise faith, I set my gaze on Jesus, for Jesus is the author and perfecter of my faith. When I see Jesus, I have no problem believing You created the seen world out of unseen stuff. When I see Jesus, I am led to trust You for the things that don’t seem likely or even possible at this point. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Amaziah's reign began in an attitude of humble submission to God. At first, he was careful to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. Amaziah was the son of King Joash, another king who also started out well but sadly grew to harden his heart. As soon as Amaziah's rule over the kingdom of Judah was established, he put to death the servants who had murdered his father. Sadly, it wasn't long before the evidence of pride began to show itself.

Amaziah faithfully continued the policies of Joash, yet some of those policies allowed compromises, such as allowing sacrifices and incense offerings on the high places. Compared with David, the greatest human king to reign over the people of God, Amaziah did not match up at all. Because of his foolish attack against Israel, Amaziah lost the treasure of the people of God. It wasn't just a loss of personal wealth (the treasuries of the king's house), but also of the gold and silver of God's people.

Pride thoroughly took over Amaziah. He began to believe he was wiser than the revealed Word of God and stronger than obedience to God. He began to step increasingly outside the boundaries God had set for him. He so hardened his heart, he would no longer hear God's warnings. And so, God removed His hand from him and allowed him to spiral into destruction. Amaziah didn't have the wisdom to see how losing this battle would hurt others as well as himself. His foolish mistake of pride lost him any confidence from his people. He tried to hide but was unable to escape the conspirators. He was assassinated, just like his father was. At the end of our days, may it only be said that we *"did what was right in the sight of the Lord"*. May no one have to add the sad words, *"but not wholeheartedly"*.

**Pray**

Father, disobedience pays harsh rewards. Help me to steward my vulnerability and weakness well. Help me to resist evil and the empty promises of quick relief. Help me to run to Your throne of grace regularly. There are some things I simply cannot handle myself. I praise and adore You for being my near and grace-full God. You are here and You are in control. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Uzziah came to the throne in a difficult era. Following the tragic events that brought King Amaziah's reign to an end, Jerusalem was in a mess. A major section of its protective wall was destroyed, its temple and palace were emptied of their treasures, and some of the inhabitants were taken hostage to Israel. Uzziah was a remarkable king who had a broad interest in the improvement of his kingdom. Because of his many achievements, his fame spread among other nations. He reigned a remarkable 52 years over Judah.

Almost right away, Uzziah began to show himself to be a great leader. We're told in verse two that he built Elath and restored it to Judah. Elath was a strategic port city within the region of the Edomites. It became evident to all that the blessing of God was upon his reign. As verse five says, *"as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper."*

However, Uzziah is a prominent example of a man who handled adversity better than success. I love F.B. Meyer on this, *"God cannot trust some of us with prosperity and success, because our nature could not stand them. We must tug at the oar, instead of spreading the sail, because we have not enough ballast."* Under the blessing of God, Uzziah was well on his way to being established as one of the greatest kings in the history of Judah. Then, at the very height of his prosperity, at a time when the blessing of God seemed most upon him, his downfall came. He overstepped his boundaries with his God and as a result, this great king's life turned into one of the most pitiable of all the stories of the kings. Eighty-one priests urged him to stop what he was doing and leave the temple sanctuary, warning him that he would have no honour from God. We cannot play with the things of God!

### Pray

Father, King David captures the desire of my heart, which is to love, praise, and bless You with everything I have and am. If You never gave me anything, You would still be worthy of my whole worship. But, in fact, You have been outrageously generous. It is such a pity that other kings didn't pursue You like David did. Uzziah makes me realise that staying close to You in good times is sometimes harder than in bad times. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

There's no record in Jotham's story of any of the regrettable negatives we find in stories of the other kings. No great act of disobedience, no period of rebellion, no foolish display of arrogance or pride. It is good to see a king who finished well. Jotham was another king of Judah who was generally good, standing in strong contrast with the evil done by the contemporary kings of Israel.

Jotham's father, Uzziah, misunderstood the link between the royal house and the house of God, and demanded priestly authority. Jotham understood that he was a king and not a priest, yet he wanted a good, open link between the palace and the temple. What a great lesson for us as we consider the link between our home and our place of worship. How vital it is for us to realise that we can never divorce our private life from worship. There is no point in going to the house of prayer and then coming home to hide secret sins.

We're told in verse 6, *"So Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God."* Literally, he carefully prepared his ways 'before the face' of Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God of Israel, who truly is God and more than able to preserve and protect those who stay true to Him. Walking before the face of Yahweh means that Jotham kept no secrets from the God who sees and knows all things. He sought to live in full view of the God before whom he must give an account. This insight in verse 6 also emphasises that Jotham didn't depend on human wisdom to order his steps. As a king of Judah, Jotham would have been well-taught in the Scriptures, and he sought to prepare his way in keeping with the revealed commands and instructions of God. What a beautiful truth for us to grasp today.

**Pray**

Father, it's impossible to be too zealous for the Spirit's fruit. One cannot go overboard with wanting to be like Jesus. You began this work in my life, and You will bring it to completion. Show me what living by the Spirit looks like – how to surrender, how to trust, how to hope. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This chapter briefly describes the reign of perhaps the worst king of Judah. Whereas many previous kings fell short in one area or another, of Ahaz it is simply said, *“he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD.”* Ahaz had plenty of good examples, both recently in his father, Jotham, and historically in his ancestor David. Ahaz rejected these godly examples and walked in his own way. I like Morgan’s commentary: *“Ahaz was evil by choice, persistent in evil in spite of calamity, blasphemously rebellious notwithstanding the direct warnings of the prophet of God. This attitude of the king made the darkness all the denser.”*

Our decisions and destiny are so intertwined. Ahaz didn’t begin his reign by closing the doors of the temple and replacing the worship of God with the worship of idols. It came to that in verse 24, but he didn’t start there. He started by adding idol worship to the worship of the Lord. The parallel account in 2 Kings 16 tells of how Ahaz went up to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser who had defeated the Syrians and the northern kingdom of Israel on Ahaz’s behalf. There he saw a magnificent altar that he liked so much he sent the plans for it to his priest so that it was waiting for him when he returned. Ahaz offered on this pagan altar the sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses. As for the bronze altar prescribed by Moses, he kept it but moved it aside, offering all his sacrifices on the pagan altar of his preference.

I am reminded of the beautiful verse in Philippians 3:20 *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Herein lies our peace and joy, freedom and hope. Our truest, most defining and binding citizenship is in heaven. May we have strength for the days when that obedience will be necessary and costly.

**Pray**

Father, Jesus’ kingdom has already arrived through His resurrection and one day it will come in fullness. We eagerly await His return. On that day, defeated evil will be eradicated evil, everything sad will come untrue, and all things broken will become all things new. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah at the end of the Kingdom of Israel. Three years after the start of his reign, the Assyrians set siege to Samaria. Three years after that, the northern kingdom was conquered. Morgan's commentary says: *"His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah, probably the person mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 8:2 as a 'faithful witness.' This possible friendship of his mother for the prophet, combined with the certainty that up to this time he had been under the influence of Isaiah's ministry, may account for Hezekiah's action on coming to the throne."*

Hezekiah is sandwiched between his father, Ahaz, Judah's worst king up to that point, and his son, Manasseh, who also followed evil ways. Yet there is no doubt that God is the focus of Hezekiah's life. As Morgan's commentary has pointed out, Isaiah the prophet influences his life in a positive manner. Hezekiah wastes no time in bringing forth spiritual reform to the nation, beginning with the reopening of the house of worship, the temple. He begins immediately to cleanse, repair, and restore it to usher in an era of spiritual revival. Under his father, the temple had become a place to store junk. Hezekiah is ready to de-clutter it.

Hezekiah recognised that Judah's calamities were due to their disobedience. It takes a wise and godly person to admit this and act appropriately. Is God calling you to make some changes? Maybe in your place of work or study? Or dealing with the clutter in your own heart? As we read this chapter today, we see an illustration of how in true spiritual revival, the first thing that needs to happen is getting things out of our lives that don't belong there, so we, as the spiritual temple of God through Jesus Christ, may be a fit dwelling place. True worship can only happen when we are in right relationship with God!

### Pray

Father, I'm so thankful for the righteousness that will be manifest on earth when You send Jesus back. The kingdom has already come and we live in the tension of the 'now' and 'not yet'. I thank You that it is coming in fullness. I love the name of Jesus, my King. In His strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Even though Passover was one of the three feasts that deserved special emphasis, it had not been celebrated for a long time. Hezekiah was dedicated to righting this wrong. He sent out a letter inviting all to come. I love this. The letter of invitation promised two things if the remnant of Israel would return to the Lord and obediently celebrate this Passover in Jerusalem. First, under God's blessing it would go well with those already taken captive by the Assyrians. Second, God would restore the northern kingdom and allow them to come back to this land. It is stressed that the Feast was to be kept with great gladness to the accompaniment of joyful music by the instrumentalists among the Levites, whilst King Hezekiah himself, together with the leaders of the people, provided the necessary offerings and sacrifices. It was a time of great joy for all.

I love how Hezekiah encourages the priests not to be negligent (verse 11). The reason the priests and Levites were ashamed was probably because they had not been in a fit state (as they should have been) to kill the Passover lamb at the appropriate time. They now set about sanctifying themselves and as a consequence were able to bring burnt offerings into the temple again.

Things were getting back to normal after the apostasy in the time of Ahaz. Jerusalem was filled with joy because of what had occurred. Nothing like it had happened in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon. The great days were here again and God's promises would be restored based on an eternal principle of God's character – He will not turn His face from us if we return to Him. God promises to draw near to those who draw near to Him. This would be a great thing to do today. Thank God that when we draw near to Him, there is a declaration that He will draw near to us. Actually, He declares that anyone who is thirsty may come to Him, and anyone who believes in Him may come and drink!

**Pray**

Father, I hear Your beckoning, welcoming, gladdening cry, and by faith I come running to You. Fill me to overflowing with the water You alone can give. Quench this relentless thirst of mine. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

At this point in the story, the people of Judah and some God-fearing people of the northern tribes had just experienced a tremendous spiritual high. They had gathered together in Jerusalem and celebrated a Passover for the first time in years. What a Passover it was! We're told at the end of chapter 30 that there had not been anything like it in Jerusalem since the glorious days of King Solomon. The people repented, and prayed, and worshipped God with a sincerity and fervency they had never before experienced.

What exciting times these were! But what then? What happens in revival after the wonderful spiritual feelings are over? This chapter tells us about how this great revival didn't just rest on the power of feelings that would soon fade; it was taken to another level, to practical actions and lifestyle reforms that made a permanent change in the daily lives of the people.

After the glorious double-length Passover celebration, the people renounced idolatry in the strongest terms possible. Hezekiah's previous emphasis on removing the junk of idol worship now became a popular movement. Hezekiah was so committed to the restoration of proper priestly service that he personally supported their work with a portion of his possessions. Hezekiah put faithful men in positions of responsibility over these tithes. He knew that faithful administration is promoted when people are accountable as overseers. Good planning and implementation of supporting structures provide a framework in which wholehearted worship can take place. Hezekiah prepared storerooms to receive the gifts, and various officials were appointed to collect and distribute them. When you honour God with your finance, He will always honour you in return. He is incessantly faithful. One of the great lessons for us today is the truth that true revival comes not from telling revival stories but from holiness within God's people.

**Pray**

Father, no eye has seen, ear heard, or mind imagined the things You guarantee me through the finished work of Jesus. I can never outgive You, Father, whether in love, adoration or money. You are eternally faithful. I thank You for the finished work of Calvary. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

It is worthy of note that attack came after Hezekiah had done so faithfully well. Our tendency is to think that when we are faithful to God, we will be immune from attack. The experience of Hezekiah and countless other men and women of God tells us otherwise. Satan does not like it when we decide to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, so he comes in all sorts of ways to seduce us, trying to bring us down. The retribution of Sennacherib is a metaphor for the devil and all his continuing temptations against God's people.

The Assyrians came against Jerusalem in force. They cut off their water supply and then, quite strategically, engaged in psychological warfare. The enemy of our souls has an amazing way of discouraging us to despair and then encouraging us to disobedience. If Hezekiah was not careful, this Assyrian argument would start to make sense when really it was demonic logic. When Hezekiah and Isaiah went into the House of the Lord and prayed humbly and passionately, God heard from heaven. He sent an angel to wreak havoc on the Assyrians. What an incredible victory God brings when we pray.

At the end of the chapter, we have Hezekiah's distress about his sickness and his pending demise. We read in the corresponding passage, 2 Kings 20, that the announcement filled Hezekiah with deep grief. He turned his face to the wall, prayed earnestly to God, and wept sore. The speed of God's answer is incredible, especially to those of us who have waited years for an answer to prayer. Scarcely had the prayer left Hezekiah's lips than the answer was communicated to Isaiah. The prophet had not yet left the palace, he was still within its grounds when word came to return to Hezekiah and assure him of recovery. God, as always, was waiting to be gracious. The answer was given; Hezekiah was healed and given fifteen more years.

**Pray**

Father, if this passage does not encourage me to pray, there is definitely something wrong. What amazing victories are won when Your people pray. And, alas, what awful droughts are endured when Your people forget to call on Your name. Train my hands to war today and my fingers to fight, to set at naught the works of the enemy. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Manasseh was born in the fifteen extra years that God gave to Hezekiah. Spurgeon's commentary puts it like this: *"Had this good king been able to foresee the wickedness of his unworthy son, he would doubtless have no desire to recover from his sickness. Better by far die childless than beget a son such as Manasseh proved to be. He was a son of David, but he was the very reverse of that king, who was always faithful in his loyalty to the one only God of Israel. David's blood was in his veins, but David's ways were not in his heart. He was a wild, degenerate shoot of a noble vine."*

Verse 12 tells us, *"In his distress [Manasseh] sought the favour of the Lord his God."* Manasseh was not the first (nor the last) to turn back to God after a severe season of affliction. C.S. Lewis said that God whispers to us in our pleasures but shouts to us in our pain. Manasseh finally listened to God's shouting through his affliction.

You would think that all the godly people in the land after Hezekiah's revival would have opposed Manasseh and forced him from the throne, but people tend to be followers. As God's people, we need to be careful not to be influenced to tolerate evil by ungodly leaders, whether politically or in the church. It is easy to be swayed by a man of power or wealth. It makes you feel important to know some famous person, whether a politician or well-known Christian. I find that Christians are just as enamoured by famous people as the world is. But even though an entertainer, sports figure, politician, or author professes to be a Christian, it doesn't mean that they are in line with God's Word. We need to evaluate everything a leader says by God's Word of truth and have the courage to stand against evil, no matter who is promoting it.

**Pray**

Father, whether it's the cancelling of a flight or the loss of a favourite thing, the holiday that didn't happen or the car breakdown that costs a fortune, the cancer that has come back or the prodigal that hasn't yet... You are still God, still in control, and I have more than sufficient reason to have hope, even overflowing hope. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight after the assassination of his father. I love what it says in verses 2 and 3, *“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young [16 years old], he began to seek the God of his father David.”* Oh how we need to pray that the generation rising up become filled and fueled by the Holy Spirit.

We read in this chapter of Huldah the prophetess. We know little of this woman other than this mention and a similar account in 2 Kings 22:14. With the apparent approval of King Josiah, Hilkiah the priest consulted this woman for spiritual guidance – not because of her own wisdom, but because she was recognised as a prophetess and could reveal the heart and mind of God.

We are told Josiah walked in the ways of his ancestor David. The phrase “walk in the ways” refers to lifestyle. In other words, his pursuit of God wasn’t an on-off thing; it wasn’t expressed only when he went to worship on the weekend. Josiah wove specific habits into the rhythms of his days that kept him on a path of holiness and tuned his heart to the Lord. The ways of David are easy to discern from his writings: devotion to the Word of God, prayer, fasting, regular worship. These are the frequent themes of David’s writings and the regular practices of Josiah. That his private life was strengthened by these holy habits is seen when a copy of Deuteronomy was found during the repair of the temple. Josiah’s grandfather had all but wiped out every copy of God’s Word, but when this copy was brought to Josiah, he immediately responded to the Lord with fresh renewal and called all of Judah to hear it read aloud. This is so good!

**Pray**

Father, oh how I long for the day when Your perfect, full, and glorious reign will come on earth, when the old order will be completely gone and all things will be wondrously, eternally new. I give thanks today for the people You have placed in my life who have encouraged me and spoken Your words into my soul. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

I love that this chapter starts with encouragement. Josiah understood that it would take an enormous amount of planning and work to properly conduct this Passover. The priests needed to be encouraged for this. Josiah was so passionate about making this Passover happen that he provided thirty thousand lambs or goats for the Passover sacrifice as well as three thousand cattle. He made it such an incredible event. There had never been anything quite like it before. He even instructed singing at it which wasn't in the law of Moses.

After all of this, Josiah forgets to hear from God and loses his life to an archer. How careful we must be to continue to hear from the Lord when things are good. Why did Josiah go out against Necho? We can't be sure, but given the zeal he demonstrated throughout his life for the cause of God, I speculate that he was concerned that Necho's actions would increase his power and make him a threat to the people of Judah. After all, Necho was going north to come to the aid of the Assyrians who had long been a troubler of the people of Judah. I even speculate that, in doing this, Josiah was hoping to stave off the set purpose of God to bring judgment upon His own people.

Whatever Josiah's motivation, the fact that Necho, a pagan king, spoke a message from God should have been enough of a jolt to stop him in his tracks. God was sending Necho up north to his own destruction, and He had determined to bring punishment upon the people of Judah for their idolatry. Josiah was told to stand down! He may have been innocent in going out to Necho at first, but to continue to stand against him was to oppose the revealed will of God. It is so important to heed the voice of God.

**Pray**

Father, You give and You take away. Blessed be Your name. You do all things well, all the time. It's providence and not chance or coincidence that rules. You exalt me and You humble me. You are the Lord of my laughter and my tears. All things are in Your hand, and in Your heart resides unparalleled joy, generosity, and immeasurable love for Your children. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

The usual pattern of succession to the throne of Judah ceased with Josiah. Jehoahaz was not the eldest son of the late king (Johanan and Jehoiakim were older). Jehoahaz was made king by popular choice; he was the preference of the multitude not the appointment of God. The reforms of King Josiah were wonderful, but they were not a long-lasting revival. His son Jehoahaz did not follow in his godly ways. Then came Jehoiakim who, like his brother Jehoahaz, did not follow the godly example of his father, Josiah.

In this chapter, we have a list of ungodly kings leading Jerusalem into collapse. In Zedekiah's reign, Judah bottomed out spiritually. He refused to humble himself before either God or Nebuchadnezzar, even though God repeatedly sent messengers urging him to do so. Hardness of heart characterised this Davidic king as it had characterised the pharaoh of the Exodus, and God humbled him as He had previously humbled that pharaoh.

The last verses of this section are sad, the writer giving reasons for the conquest of Jerusalem. The burning of the temple symbolised the end of God's glory and presence among His people in the land that He had given them. The real tragedy of the exile was not the removal of the people nor even the destruction of the city and the temple; it was the departure of God from their midst.

The book closes with seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Oh how the mighty have fallen. However, the last two verses leave us with a hope. God was in control of the Persian king, just as He had controlled the kings of Babylon, Egypt, and Israel. God had promised Israel a future as a nation. His people would experience this future under the rule of a perfect Son of David, Jesus. They would rise again under His rule and reign.

**Pray**

Father, please give me rest even before my to-do list becomes a now-done list. Lead me through this stretch of life at the pace of grace. Help me to do whatever I do today with wisdom and kindness, and for Your glory. Help me to stay ever connected to You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

