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Seeing Jesus
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

.....
A 10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

The Son of David

*Seeing Jesus in
the Historical Books*

LEADER'S GUIDE

nancy guthrie

The Son of David

Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books

Leader's Guide

(for use with the book only or the
book combined with video study)

nancy guthrie

"The Son of David: Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books" Leader's Guide

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An Introduction to *The Son of David* for Leaders

The Son of David: Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books is an in-depth study of Joshua through Esther in the Old Testament, with the goal of understanding them in the way that Jesus himself taught the disciples to read and understand the Old Testament: with him at the center. This guide will equip you to plan and lead a study of *The Son of David* using either the book alone, or the book along with the video series. Teaching experience or gifting is not required to lead this study—just a willingness to organize, oversee, and facilitate a meaningful discussion time, as well as personal enthusiasm for knowing Christ more deeply through the study of his Word.

Determining Your Schedule for Studying *The Son of David*

This study has been put together in a way that offers flexibility in how you use it and flexibility in how you schedule your time for working through it. Everything is provided in the book that is needed by participants. Each week's lesson includes:

1. Personal Bible Study
2. Teaching Chapter (with a "Looking Forward" addendum at the end of each chapter)
3. Discussion Guide

It is divided into ten weeks of study. But you may want to carefully consider dividing the material in a way that would extend the study over twenty weeks, giving your participants more time to think through and talk through the truths presented. Expanding the study may also be beneficial when you have only one hour or less to meet together each week and also want to incorporate time for worship, prayer, or per-

sonal sharing into your small group time. Following are outlines for how the study would work for different schedules.

A 10-Week Book Study—Participants would need to have books in advance of the first week you meet, with instructions to read the chapter in Week 1, "The Kingdom of God," before they arrive the first week. There is no Personal Bible Study portion of the lesson for Week 1. When you get together that first week, you can spend some time getting to know each other, communicating the format you will use, and discussing the chapter you've all read, using the Discussion Guide for Week 1. From then on, participants will be asked to come to the group time having completed the Personal Bible Study section and having read the Teaching Chapter of that week's lesson (unless your group's style will be to read the chapter aloud as a group, which some groups elect to do). You may want to suggest to participants that they put a star beside questions in the Personal Bible Study that they want to be sure to bring up in the discussion, and underline key passages in the chapter that are meaningful or that raise questions for them that they'd like to discuss. During your time together each week you will discuss the big ideas of the lesson using the Discussion Guide, bringing in content from the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter as you see fit.

Sample Weekly Schedule for a 1-Hour Study:

- 7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing
- 7:10 Open discussion using the "Getting Started" question found in the Discussion Guide, working your way through the Discussion Guide

questions, bringing in comments and questions from the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter as desired.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray

7:59 Close

A 11- or 12-Week Book Study—You may prefer to meet the first week and distribute the books at that point, using that first week solely to get to know each other and get organized. Assign the group to read the chapter in Week 1 for discussion the following week and then proceed as outlined in the ten-week book study. If you want to extend the study to twelve weeks, you might set a week following the last lesson to come back together, asking each member to plan to share the truths and take-aways from the study that have been most meaningful, or perhaps to talk through any lingering questions from the study.

A 20-Week Book Study—There is a great deal of material here and you may want to take your time with it, giving more time to discuss its foundational truths, and allowing it to sink in. To expand the study over twenty weeks, you would break each week into two parts. You would spend one week on the Personal Bible Study section—either doing it on your own and discussing your answers when you meet, or actually working through the questions together when you meet (which would lessen the amount of time required outside of the group time and perhaps diminish barriers to participation for those who struggle with working through the questions on their own). Then, you would ask group members to read the Teaching Chapter on their own before the next meeting, and use the Discussion Guide to discuss the big ideas of the lesson the following week. If you meet once for Week 1 (since there is no Personal Bible Study section for the first week), and meet for a final week to share big-picture truths taken away from the study, it will add up to twenty weeks.

Sample Weekly Schedule for a 1-Hour Study

Week A (Personal Bible Study):

7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing

7:10 Work your way through the questions in the Personal Bible Study, looking up the answers together and allowing various members to share what they are putting down.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray

7:59 Close

Week B (Teaching Chapter):

7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing

7:10 Open discussion using the “Getting Started” question found in the Discussion Guide, working your way through the Discussion Guide questions, bringing in comments and quotes from Teaching Chapter and reading the “Looking Forward” section together.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray

7:59 Close

A 10-week Book Study Using the Video—

If you’re using the book in combination with the video series, group members will be asked to complete the Personal Bible Study section of each week’s lesson in the book before they come. On the videos, Nancy presents virtually the same content as the Teaching Chapters minus the “Looking Forward” addendum found at the end of each chapter. So if you are using the video series, participants have the option to:

1. Read the chapter in advance as a preview of what will be presented on the video.
2. Just listen to Nancy teach the content of the chapter on the video and read only the “Looking Forward” as part of the group discussion time or on their own.
3. Go back and read the chapter after watching the video, if needed or desired, to seal in or clarify what was presented in the video.

When group members miss a particular week, you may want to encourage them to go to the website, www.SeeingJesusintheOldTestament.com,

where they can download the video they missed, or they can simply read the chapter in the book.

It is a good idea to encourage participants to take notes during the video even though the content of the video is in the book. For each video presentation, reproducible note-taking pages that you may copy for your group members are included at the end of this Leader's Guide. Note-taking during the video is a good idea because something transpires when we process words and ideas through a pen or pencil onto paper, which aids us in processing and retaining the words and ideas. But those taking notes may also rest easy if they miss something significant, because the complete content is also in the book.

*Sample Schedule for 2-Hour Study
Incorporating the Video*

- 9:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing
- 9:10 Watch video teaching session
- 9:50 Respond to video with various women praying as they feel led in response to what they've heard (not general prayers, but responding to what was presented). Because the lessons end each week in some poignant ways, it will be helpful to be able to be quiet and also respond to what was presented before rushing off to hallway conversation and small group discussion.
- 10:00 Break to go to small groups
- 10:05 Welcome, connecting and checking in with each other time
- 10:10 Start discussion using the Discussion Guide and bringing in Personal Bible Study questions group members want to discuss as well as points made in the video.
- 10:50 Take prayer requests and pray (be sure that the prayer time is not only about personal needs but also praying through the truths presented in the passage you're studying. This will likely need to be modeled by the leader and/or assigned to one of the people praying).
- 10:59 Close

Making the Most of the Personal Bible Study

The question is often asked, "How long should it take to complete the Personal Bible Study questions?" The answer is: there is no set time frame. We all approach this differently. Some participants love to luxuriate, think through, look up, and write out. Others have the approach of simply looking for the answers and making short notations rather than writing long answers to questions. So how should you answer the question, "How much time should it take?" I suggest you say that it takes as much time as a person chooses to invest in it. Certainly some weeks they may have more time than others, and we all know that we get more out of a study the more we put into it. The depth of thinking through the lesson is not necessarily reflected in the length of answers written on the page or the time spent according to the clock. What is most important is not how much time it takes, but planning a time to work through the Personal Bible Study and keeping that appointment. In fact, in the first week, you might ask each group member to share with the group when she intends to work on the Personal Bible Study in the coming week. This will help everyone to think about her own schedule and set a time. One person's strategy may serve to be helpful to someone else who has not been successful in the past in carving out time for personal study. You might ask those who have done similar studies if they prefer to do it in one sitting or to break it up over several days. Also suggest they consider using Sunday, a day set aside for God, to study God's Word.

Included in the following pages of this Leader's Guide is a copy of each week's Personal Bible Study that includes possible answers to the questions. This is provided for you as the leader to assist you in dealing with difficult questions, but it should not be provided to group members. I also encourage you to avoid having this Leader's Guide open as you work on the Personal

Bible Study yourself just as your group members are doing. We all know that it is a challenge to resist looking for the answers to a crossword puzzle in the back of the book while we're working on it. And likewise, as the leader, it may be a challenge for you to resist working through the questions with this resource at your fingertips. After completing the Personal Bible Study yourself, you may want to look over the suggested answers in this Leader's Guide and add notes to your own answers as desired in preparation for the group discussion rather than having this guide in hand during your group time, which cannot help but imply that these are the "right" answers. You will find what I hope will be some helpful suggestions for encouraging your group members in regard to completing the Personal Bible Study in the "Dealing with Common Challenges" section of this Leader's Guide.

Incorporating the "Looking Forward" Section

I grew up in church and have spent most of my life in the evangelical culture with lots of sound Bible teaching for which I am so grateful. But for most of my life I have had a very limited, and less than fully biblical, understanding of heaven and eternity. I thought of heaven primarily being a place away from here where our spirits go to be with God forever after we die. Honestly, I think I never really thought through what the difference would be in that existence when what we repeatedly read about in the New Testament in terms of the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4) comes about at the return of Christ. Additionally, I always thought of God's purposes of redemption being really only about people. I did not have an understanding of God's intentions to redeem all of creation, including this earth, making it the place where we will live forever in our resurrected bodies with Christ. But this is clearly the future hope that all of the Bible is directed toward. The purposes

of God are not merely about Christians going to heaven when we die, but about his intentions to restore all things, about heaven coming down to earth, and living forever with God in its perfection and beauty like Adam and Eve once did in the Garden—except even better.

I assume there are a lot of other people who have had a similar experience to mine, and that is why I have made the consummation a part of every chapter in this study. To truly understand what God is doing in the smaller bits of Scripture we study, we have to have a sense of the big picture of the purposes of God. We must see every aspect of Scripture in context of the Bible's larger story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. To reorient how we've understood heaven and eternity, we've got to see it not just in a handful of passages that we think of as telling us about the return of Christ and "end times," but rather throughout the whole of scripture and in fact every part of Scripture. When we see it from all of the various angles as we work our way through Scripture, it completes the picture and solidifies our grasp on what is revealed about what is yet to come. That is one reason I've included it in the "Looking Forward" section of each chapter. But another reason I have done so is because this is the essence of our Christian hope. Growing in our grasp of future realities in Christ helps us to face present difficulties with confidence in Christ.

If this understanding of what is ahead for us as believers is new to you like it was to me only a few years ago, or if you feel you need a firmer grasp on it, a few resources you might find helpful are:

The Restoration of All Things (A Gospel Coalition Booklet) by Sam Storms (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

From Creation to New Creation: Making Sense of the Whole Bible Story by Tim Chester (Good Book Company, 2011).

How should you incorporate the "Looking Forward" section in your group time? The "best"

way is going to be whatever works best for your group. You may do it differently on different weeks. It may be more of a time issue than anything else. And it may depend on if your group is reading the chapters in the book or watching the video presentation of the Teaching Chapter. The video presentation is the content of the Teaching Chapter minus the “Looking Forward.” So if you are using the video, you may be more inclined to want to include reading and/or discussing the “Looking Forward” section in your discussion time, perhaps working it in with the final question in the Discussion Guide each week (which is always about how the particular passage being studied fits in with the larger story of the Bible). Or, since every person attending the video study will have a copy of the book, you might simply suggest that participants read that section of the chapter on their own sometime after watching the video before they go on to the next lesson. In this way they can really think it through and take it in, bringing together all that they learned in that week’s lesson.

Using the Discussion Guide

Oftentimes in Bible studies in which we’re given a series of questions to work through on our own, our group discussions consist primarily of sharing the answers we found to the questions. But this study is different. While each week you will want to ask participants if they have any lingering questions from the Personal Bible Study section, or aspects of it they would like to talk about, the Discussion Guide for *The Son of David* is designed to facilitate a discussion about the broader themes from the passages being studied. In this way we will be seeking not just more information but to develop deeper understanding. As the leader, you should make it your goal to draw out the members of your group, creating an environment that is safe for personal struggle, difficult questions, discovery, and even ambiguity.

Because the discussion questions don’t always lend themselves to simple answers, but provide for more interaction with the themes and challenges of the passages being studied, as the leader you may want to spend some time working your way through the questions in the Discussion Guide prior to the group time to anticipate where the discussion will be headed. You will find each week’s Discussion Guide in the pages that follow in this Leader’s Guide, along with a few notes from me. Since these questions are designed to bring out various perspectives, there are not “suggested answers” as I provide in the Personal Bible Study. However, where appropriate, I’ve made notes about issues that might come up in the discussion or goals for particular questions where clarity might be helpful.

You can use the Discussion Guide as a script to lead you through the discussion time. Or you can use it simply as a resource, picking and choosing the questions you think will be most effective with your group. You may also want to plan each week to invite participants to share something that was significant or meaningful to them from the Personal Bible Study, determining ahead of time at what point in the discussion you will invite those comments. On some weeks, you will find that a question is already included in the Discussion Guide, connecting back to the Personal Bible Study that week.

Each week the discussion begins with a question called “Getting the Discussion Going” which is designed to make people comfortable with talking and sharing personally from their lives. If someone does not have enough confidence in their understanding of the Bible to want to talk much on the more biblical questions, this is a question you may want to use to invite that person’s participation. If discussion comes to your group quite easily, or if you’ve just watched the video presentation of the teaching and sense the group is ready to dive directly into the heart of the lesson, you may want to skip this ques-

tion. Admittedly, many of them are very lightweight, but are offered for the purpose of giving those who may be hesitant to talk about the biblical material an opportunity to talk in the group setting. Feel free to skip it, if you'd like, and instead head directly to the heart of the matter. Depending on the amount of time you have, you may want to work through each of the "Getting to the Heart of It" questions, or you may want to select only a few of these questions to save time for the final two key questions.

While the bulk of the discussion questions center around the biblical storyline and the theology presented in the passage at hand, each week there is also a "Getting Personal" question. This is where you will want to be especially sensitive to encourage a number of people to answer and not allow the discussion to simply follow the flow of the initial comments. Be sure to go back to the original question at some point, asking other participants to share their thoughts and experiences that may be different from those shared first.

The Discussion Guide presents a final question each week that will help participants to grow in their grasp of the larger story of the Bible and how the passage at hand fits into that larger story. If your experience is like mine, this is the part of Bible study that has been lacking for most of my life. Often in studies we have jumped quickly to personal application to the

life of faith, and we haven't stepped back to develop our understanding of the implications of the particular passage we are studying in light of the larger story of God's redemption of all things through Christ. But as we develop our understanding of how God has worked and is working to bring about his plans, we find that it actually helps us to understand and apply parts of Scripture that otherwise would be difficult to grasp. If you want to develop more of your own understanding of the larger story of the Bible, you may want to supplement your study with one of the following books that I have found helpful:

According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible by Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry by Michael Lawrence (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption by Michael Williams (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005).

God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible by Vaughan Roberts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010).

The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative by Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

Ideas and Resources for Discussion Group Facilitators

Thank you for your willingness to lead a group through this study of these four important books in the Old Testament. I always find that when I lead, I learn far more than I do when I'm just a member of the group, because I know I must invest more effort to truly "own" the material. I hope that the extra investment in this study of these books of the Bible will be a blessing to you as you seek to effectively lead your group.

Leading Your Discussion Group Well

What is your goal or role as a discussion leader? I suggest you make it your goal to guide your group through a time of open and authentic discussion of the biblical truths presented in the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter or video, seeking to clarify challenging concepts, solidify the group's grasp of the truths presented, and apply those truths to real life. Sometimes we have anxiety about leading or are reluctant to lead because we know we don't have all the answers, and we're afraid someone will come up with a question we can't answer or will take the discussion in a direction we can't handle. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by the false expectation that if you step up to facilitate the discussion you must have all of the "right" answers. Too many times in our discussions of the Bible, someone in the group (and oftentimes it is the leader) feels he or she must sum up every part of the discussion with the "right" answer. But as you lead your group, I encourage you to avoid the compulsion to come quickly to the "right" answer to every question. Don't be afraid to let some questions hang for a while or to allow members to struggle with the issues involved

in the series of questions. Keep asking for the input of other participants. Also, there's nothing wrong with admitting, as the leader, that you don't know something or don't fully understand something and need to do some more study on it or want to invite someone on the pastoral staff to help answer the question. Determine to lead your group as a fellow-learner and not as an expert who knows all. Expect God to use his Word not only in the lives of your group members but in your life as well!

Also be careful, as the leader, that you are a facilitator and not a dominator. Our goal as a facilitator is to encourage other people to talk and discuss, and sometimes, because we are so enthusiastic, we, as leaders, can tend to dominate the discussion. For some of us, it requires significant effort to limit our own input in the discussion so that others will be encouraged to talk.

While you do not want to dominate the group, you do want to lead effectively and efficiently. I assure you that you will have group members who will want you to lead with strength to create an environment that fosters meaningful discussion. As the leader, you set the tone for authenticity and openness. You set an example of giving short answers so that others can talk, and of being a good, responsive listener. Being an effective leader also means that it is up to you to bring reluctant talkers into the conversation and to redirect the conversation when it has gone off-track. Few people want to be part of a group that is inflexible, restrictive, or rules-oriented, but they do want to be part of a group that is organized and purposeful, in

which expectations are unapologetically communicated and stated guidelines are respected.

Using Your Time Effectively

As the leader, you have the responsibility for directing how to use the time for group discussion. While some participants may be very casual about how the time is used, others in your group are very aware of the time and become frustrated when they feel their valuable time is being wasted. There are several issues, I've found, that have a significant impact on using the time allotted for small-group discussion effectively:

Getting Started

So often we run out of time because we are slow to get started. We are waiting for latecomers, or chatting, or enjoying some food together and simply let valuable discussion time get away from us. All groups develop a culture, and members learn whether the group will really start on time or not, and they adjust their sense of urgency in regard to arrival time accordingly. Certainly you need to allow some time for participants to greet each other and to share their lives with each other, but you will want to determine how long that will last and give the group a firm start time for the discussion. If you set a culture of starting on time regardless of whether or not everyone in the group has arrived, and not allowing latecomers to interrupt your discussion when they arrive, you may likely find that group members become more punctual. On the first day you meet, be sure to ask members to join the group and enter into the already-commenced discussion as unobtrusively as possible when they arrive after the discussion on the lesson has started. When we stop the discussion while everyone greets the late arriver, perhaps hearing the story of what caused the lateness, it can be challenging to get started again. You as the leader will need to manage this area with a blend of appropriate firmness and grace.

Prayer Requests

Many times, we want our small-group discussion times to include a time of sharing prayer requests, which is a meaningful way of sharing our lives together and exercising our trust and relationship with God. But we also know that sometimes sharing requests can turn into telling long stories and lengthy discussions as other members offer advice or input. One way to handle this, if the use of time for prayer requests is a concern for your group, is to provide notecards for people to write down their requests and share them at the end or simply have members swap cards with someone else. Or you may simply want to determine a time to bring your discussion to a close that will allow time at the end for sharing requests, praying together over those requests, and praying through the truths presented in the lesson.

Getting Stuck along the Way

So often we give too much time to earlier questions and simply don't have time to work our way through all that we want to cover. I strongly suggest you look over the Discussion Guide before your group time to determine how you will use the time. Mark the key questions you must get to. Make a note beside each question you want to be sure to include, indicating an estimate of how much time you want to give for discussing that question, and then watch the clock along the way to keep on track.

Keeping the Focus on God's Word

People come to a Bible study for many reasons, from many situations and struggles, and with varying levels of knowledge of and interest in the Bible. Sometimes our groups can easily slip from being a Bible study group into becoming more of a personal support group. Finding that right balance between biblical study and personal support is a significant challenge for every small-group leader.

I've sometimes heard group leaders say that

when a group member arrives with a significant struggle or sorrow, the leader feels she must set the study aside to listen and give input to that hurting person. Perhaps there are situations where this is the best thing to do, but we must also remember that the Word of God speaks into every need and situation in our lives. It heals, it gives perspective, it instructs, convicts, restores, and renews. Be sure that you do not assume that the advice and input of group members has more power than your discussion of the truths of God's Word to help that hurting person.

Keep in mind that while some participants may come more for the fellowship and sharing of their lives with each other, many other participants are hungry to feast on biblical teaching and discussion of God's Word. If, over time, these participants find that the Word is often set aside or given short shrift, they may look for another forum in which to study God's Word with others.

Ending On Time

Because participants have plans after the study, people to meet, children to pick up from child-care, etc., it is important that you end on time so that participants will not be slipping out one-by-one, or be unable to focus on the discussion because of the distraction of needing to be somewhere else.

Dealing with Common Challenges

Sharing of Opinion without Regard to God's Word

It is only natural that group members will often begin their input in the discussion with the words, "Well, I think . . ." And in fact, you will notice that many questions are phrased in a "what do you think" manner. This is purposeful not only to get people thinking, but also to emphasize that there isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer and that varying perspectives may be helpful. But we also want to cultivate a

sense of the authority of Scripture in our discussions. Though it is not a welcome perspective in our culture, every opinion does not have equal value or weight with every other opinion. The revealed truth of God's Word is what must carry the greatest weight in our discussions. While you don't want to embarrass someone in the group setting who states something that is clearly unscriptural, it may be a good idea to gently challenge a questionable opinion with something like, "That's interesting. I wonder how you would support that from Scripture?" Or you might want to find a time outside the group setting to discuss the issue, using biblical support to gently challenge error.

The Discussion Gets Lively but Off-Track

Sometimes one person answers, and then another person answers, and the discussion can quickly get away from the original question and onto an interesting but perhaps not directly related issue. When this happens, it may be wise to state the obvious and then turn the focus back to the content at hand by saying something like, "We could certainly talk a long time about X, but we have so much important material to discuss in our lesson this week, let's get back to that." If you haven't gotten to some of the key truth involved in the question, go back and state the original question again, asking perhaps, "Did anyone see it differently or have another idea?"

Group Members Are Quiet and Slow to Respond

It is important as a leader to become comfortable with silence, especially at first. Sometimes people are just slow to get going in the discussion and don't want to appear to be a know-it-all or a dominator of the discussion time. Some people fear having the "wrong" answer or revealing their biblical illiteracy, especially if they are surrounded by people they perceive to have more biblical knowledge than they do. One way

to deal with an awkward silence is to make a joke about the silence without coming across as chiding your group. Humor is always a great way to diffuse discomfort. I have a friend who sometimes says, "I can wait you out!" Don't be afraid to call on people to answer questions. You probably don't want to do that with every question, but some people simply don't like to answer a question unless they're invited to do so. Often these people have very thoughtful answers that will benefit the group. You might want to turn to the reluctant participant and say, "What do you think about that, Joan?" or, "Is that how you see it, Katie?"

You will also want to develop the habit of affirming the answers and willingness of those who share in your group. Set the example of being a responsive and attentive listener and commenting on their input as insightful, something you've never thought of before, or as personally helpful to you. Make sure you are focusing on the person who is sharing rather than on how you will ask your next question. Resist the temptation to sum up or add to every answer given, though it may be helpful to restate some answers if you can help to clarify something that someone may be struggling to articulate. You can also help to generate genuine give-and-take by asking a follow-up to someone's statement or by asking that person to tell you more about what she has said.

One Person Dominates the Discussion

If you have someone who tends to answer every question or dominates the discussion, you might begin the next question with the statement, "I'd love to hear from someone who has not shared yet today; what do you think?" Or you might direct your next question specifically to another group member. Sometimes, when a participant is speaking too long, you do a service to the group and the discussion to discreetly interrupt, perhaps saying something

like, "What you're saying is helpful, and I'd love to hear someone else's thoughts," or summarize what they've said in a concise statement and use it as a transition to the next question. Another method is to interrupt with a question such as, "What verse or phrase helped you to see that?" Remember, the other group members want and need you to take charge in this situation to lead effectively. You might also want to pull that person aside at some point and tell her that you really want to create an atmosphere in the group in which everyone is sharing. Ask her if she would be willing to pick two or three of the questions that she really wants to share and to refrain from answering questions less important to her, so that others in the group might become more willing to take part in the discussion.

Participants Habitually Do Not Complete the Personal Bible Study

Everyone has weeks when her schedule or a sick child makes it difficult to complete the lesson. But when group members are habitually not completing the Personal Bible Study, it is a problem. If you are using the video study, the content of the lectures assumes participants have a great deal of familiarity with the passages as there is not enough time to read all of the applicable Scripture; therefore, participants will not be prepared for what is being presented without having completed the Personal Bible Study. If you are using only the book for your study, there will be little foundation for group discussion if the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter have not been read prior to the group time. Be sure to emphasize the importance of completing the assignments. Do this at the beginning of your time together on the first week and again the second week you meet. Without being rigid or lacking in grace, you want to call participants to follow through on their commitment to the study, rather than give them an easy out every time. As

humans we all need accountability, and sometimes in Bible study groups we are so afraid of offending or embarrassing participants that we do not fulfill our role as leaders by encouraging faithfulness, punctuality, and full participation. If someone repeatedly struggles to get the lessons done, you might:

- ≈ Suggest that instead of hoping to find some time during the week, she should make an appointment for a specific time on her calendar to complete the lesson during the week and then commit to keeping the appointment, as she would for a lunch date with a friend or for a doctor's appointment. Maybe you can even ask if she would like for you to check in with her to see if she kept her appointment prior to next week's meeting.
- ≈ Explore the possibility of her setting a time during the week to get together personally or by phone with another group member to work through the questions together. Or offer to do this with her.
- ≈ Consider expanding the study to twenty weeks so that the group does the Personal Bible Study together every other week.

If a group member continues to be unable to complete the work, don't worry about it if it does not adversely affect the rest of the group or the discussion time. We cannot always fully grasp what another person's life is like, and if the best she can do is get there, you might decide that is enough. If it does adversely affect the group's morale, attitude, or discussion time, you might ask her if it would be better to withdraw and participate in a study requiring this level of commitment and preparation at a later time when she can devote herself to it more fully.

Disagreement with What Is Being Taught

Sometimes seeing things a little differently can be very productive in a group discussion. We learn from each other as we discover and discuss the differences or nuances in how we see things. There are many matters in this study that allow for a breadth of perspectives, and there are some matters that challenge what may be dearly held perspectives. What is not welcome in the group is a repeatedly argumentative spirit or combative approach to what is being presented. If areas of disagreement come up that cannot be productively resolved in the group, you may want to say something like, "I appreciate your perspective on that. We need to move on in our discussion, but let's get together, just the two of us, or with Pastor _____, and talk this through some more. I'm sure we both can learn more about this."

Because we are humans dealing with other humans, we will likely have areas of disagreement, different experiences, and different preferences. But that never means that we cannot have unity as we seek to submit ourselves to God's Word. This and every other aspect is a matter of prayer as you prepare to lead your group. God always equips us to do what he calls us to do. Ask God to give you the wisdom to work through whatever may come up in your small group. Ask him for insight into the personalities of the people in your group and the backgrounds that have made them who they are and shaped their perspectives about the Scriptures. Ask God to fill your heart with a burden to love your group members as you lead them through this study of his Word.

Week 1

The Kingdom of God

Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Throughout history and in literature and the movies there are plenty of kings and kingdoms. What are some of the good things and some of the bad things we've picked up from world history, great literature, and modern films about how kings and kingdoms work?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Perhaps you've never thought of the garden of Eden as a kingdom. What can we learn about how our King interacts with and what he expects from his kingdom subjects from what we know about the experience of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden?

God, as king, takes great pleasure in and wants to bless his kingdom subjects. He has authority over them while also granting them certain authority and responsibility. In his kingdom there is judgment for sin and also grace for sinners.

3. Nancy went through a list of what we'll get to observe in this study and how we'll see Jesus in the Old Testament historical books, Joshua through Esther. What did you hear that was new or intriguing to you, or perhaps different from how you've studied these books in the past?

4. The Gospel writers tell us that Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was "at hand." If Jesus said the kingdom was "at hand," why did he teach his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come?

While the kingdom was at hand because the King (Jesus) had come and was demonstrating his authority over

every realm through his teaching and his miracles, his kingdom has not yet come in full as it will in the consummation. To pray for the kingdom to come is to pray for the righteousness and wholeness of Christ to pervade and overcome the evil and brokenness of this world. At this point in time, that is happening like a mustard seed growing or yeast working its way through the dough (Matt. 13:31-33). When Christ returns it will come to consummation.

5. When Jesus announced that the kingdom was at hand, he called people to "repent and believe in the gospel." What does it mean to repent? And what does it mean to "believe in the gospel?"

You may want to turn to the page in the Teaching Chapter under the heading "The Kingdom at Hand" and read the definition given.

6. How does participating in a Bible study about the historical books, in which we're seeking to discover how they point us toward Christ, honor our King?

It demonstrates that we believe he is worthy of being known in all of his glorious splendor, which we see in unique ways through these Old Testament pictures of his kingship.

Getting Personal

7. In regard to our submission to the King, one approach is to listen to his Word and then evaluate whether we agree with it before we choose to obey. Another approach is to say yes even before we know what it is because we are confident his commands are always for our good. What difference do you think it would make in your life if you were to have a "yes" posture to God's Word rather than a posture of "wait and see"?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Several times we heard Graeme Goldsworthy's formula for the kingdom of God: God's people in God's place under God's rule, though these things look slightly different in different eras or ages of the kingdom. See if together you can identify who God's people were in creation, then in Old Testament history, and then who they are in our current age and in the age to come. Try to do the same thing for God's place and God's rule.

	At Creation	OT History	Our Current Age	The Age to Come
God's People	<i>Adam and Eve</i>	<i>Abraham's descendants / Israelites</i>	<i>All of those joined to Christ by faith</i>	<i>People from every tribe, nation, tongue</i>
God's Place	<i>Garden of Eden</i>	<i>Canaan / Promised Land / Temple</i>	<i>Believers in whom Christ dwells / the church</i>	<i>New heaven, new earth / the whole world</i>
God's Rule	<i>God's Word / instruction to Adam</i>	<i>The old covenant / Law given at Sinai</i>	<i>The new covenant</i>	<i>The Lamb on the throne / God's will done</i>

Week 2

Joshua

Personal Bible Study

The Bible is all about God's promise of an inheritance in the kingdom of God. The book of Joshua is the story of how Joshua led the people of Israel to take possession of their inheritance in the earthly kingdom of God, Canaan. And as we study the book of Joshua in light of the New Testament, this book helps us understand how our greater Joshua, Jesus, leads us to take possession of all we stand to inherit in the heavenly kingdom of God, the new heaven and the new earth. Since we are spending only one week on this book, we won't be able to take in all of its rich detail, but we will seek to grasp how it fits in God's story of the outworking of his plan to redeem all things through Christ. (Because we are covering the entire book in one week, there are quite a few questions, but your answers do not need to be lengthy. In most cases, they can be a phrase or a sentence or two.)

Entering the Land

1. Before starting Joshua, go back to Deuteronomy 34:4. On what basis are the Israelites intending to inhabit the land of Canaan? Or, what has led them to this place of camping on the east side of the Jordan River?

God's promise to give this land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their offspring.

2. Perhaps it bothers you a bit that it appears that God is going to give land that seemingly belongs to the Canaanite tribes to the people of Israel. But who does the land really belong to, according to Psalm 24:1 and Leviticus 25:23?

The earth is the Lord's and even the Israelites will just be tenants.

3. Read Joshua 1:1–9, noting what God promises and what God commands.

God's promise to Joshua:

v. 2 *I am giving the land to the people of Israel.*

v. 5 *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life.*

Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

I will not leave you or forsake you.

v. 9 *The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

God's command to Joshua:

v. 6 *Be strong and courageous.*

v. 7 *Be careful to do according to all the law Moses commanded you.*

v. 8 *Meditate on the law day and night so that you will be careful to do all that is written in it.*

v. 9 *Do not be frightened, do not be dismayed.*

4. Read Joshua 2:1–14. What does Rahab, a prostitute among pagans, know about the land, the Israelites, and God, and what does she want?

The Canaanites know that the Lord has given the land to the Israelites. They have heard about the crossing of the Red Sea and the battles won against two Amorite kings. While most have heard this and still refuse to repent, Rahab believes Israel's God is "God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (v. 11) and asks to become a part of the people of God.

5. Read Joshua 2:24. What have the spies who went to Jericho become convinced of after their interaction with Rahab, something they may or may not have been convinced of before?

The inhabitants of Jericho are afraid of Israel and confident that Israel's God is going to give the land to Israel. The spies come back assured of victory.

6. Read Joshua 3. In this chapter the Israelites experience a repeat of something their parents experienced forty years before. What is it?

Just as God miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea so they could walk across it, God miraculously cut off the waters of the Jordan River so that the people could pass over on dry ground.

7. The ark of the covenant was the gold box that held the Ten Commandments. It was usually in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. What message do you think the ark of the covenant leading the procession communicated to the people crossing the dry river bed into Canaan?

It was God who was delivering them and bringing them out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land.

Conquering the Land

8. Read Joshua 5:1–9. Abraham’s descendants were about to enter into the land that had been promised to Abraham, but they had not taken upon themselves the sign of the covenant with Abraham’s God, the sign of circumcision. What impact do you think this nationwide circumcision would have had on the people?

They would have considered what this circumcision meant—how it distinguished them as people who believed in and inherited the promises God made to Abraham to make him a nation, to give him the land, and to make him a blessing to the whole world. It spoke of both anticipating the covenant blessings as well as submitting to its stipulations. It was a sign of the cleansing, purifying, and identifying relationship between God and his people, as well as a sign of promised judgment for those who rejected God’s covenant.

9. Read Joshua 5:10–12. Think through the significance of Passover (look back at Exodus 12, if necessary). What would this celebration have impressed upon them as they prepared to inherit the land?

They would have been reminded that salvation is through the blood of an innocent substitute, their salvation always comes through judgment, God is the one who

brought them out of Egypt, and he will surely bring them into Canaan.

10. Read Joshua 5:13–15. What clues do you find in this passage to the identity of the commander of the army of the Lord?

Since Joshua worshiped him, he had to be a manifestation of God and not an ordinary angel. Because his presence made the ground holy, he must have been divine—perhaps the pre-incarnate Christ.

11. What does the appearance of the commander of the army of the Lord with his sword drawn say about who is going to ensure victory in the battles ahead?

This heavenly army, and not the earthly Israelites, was going to accomplish the victory over the Canaanites.

12. Read Joshua 6:1–16. This is a very unusual battle strategy. What do you think this would have communicated to Israel and to the other tribes in Canaan about what could be expected in the future?

Clearly this battle wasn’t going to be about military strategy or might, but about divine power exercised on behalf of God’s people. The Israelites would have been even more confident going into battle and the Canaanites even more afraid.

13. Read Joshua 6:17–21, 24 along with Deuteronomy 20:16–18. How does the passage in Deuteronomy help us to understand the instructions of Joshua and the actions of Israel in the Joshua passage?

God instructed Israel to devote the cities and people in Canaan to complete destruction so that the Canaanites would not corrupt the Israelites with their sinful practices and idol worship.

14. Read Joshua 11:16–23. What accomplishment do these verses summarize?

After a lengthy time of war, Joshua has led Israel to take all of the land that had been promised to them, and the warring was over.

Inheriting the Land

15. Skim the headings of chapters 13–21. What process do these chapters describe in detail?

The distribution of the land of Canaan to all of the various tribes and clans and giving specific territories to each.

16. A pattern emerges in chapters 13–17 that hints at trouble ahead. What is it? (See 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13.)

The people were not driving out the various Canaanite tribes as God commanded them to do. They were making peace with the Canaanites and making homes among them, which will lead to the adoption of the Canaanites' pagan ways and worship of their pagan gods.

Keeping the Land

17. Two great gatherings of God's people bring Joshua's life, this book, and this crucial period of conquest to a close. List three specific commands Joshua gave to Israel in chapter 23:1–13.

Keep all that is written in the Book of the law of Moses (v.6).

Do not mix with the remaining nations or serve/bow down to their gods (v. 7).

Love the Lord your God (v. 11).

18. What sobering warning does Joshua give in 23:14–16?

Just as God has been faithful to give you his promised blessings, he will also be faithful to follow through on his promised curses if you transgress the covenant by serving/bowing down to other gods. This will result in being evicted from the land of promise.

19. In Joshua himself and throughout the book of Joshua, we see shadows of the greater Joshua who will come in the person of Jesus, the greater battle he will win, and the greater inheritance he will provide for his people. For each of the statements about Joshua in the first column below, write a corresponding statement about Jesus. Use the New Testament references for help and follow the examples provided.

Joshua	Jesus
Moses gave Joshua his name, which means "Yahweh saves." (Num. 13:16)	Matt. 1:21 <i>God instructed Joseph to give his son the name Jesus because, "he will save his people from their sins."</i>
God, to whom the whole earth belongs, charged Joshua to lead his people into Canaan to reclaim it for God, promising to be with him. (Josh. 1:2, 5)	Matt. 28:18–20 <i>Jesus, to whom all authority has been given in heaven and on earth, charged his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, reclaiming people for God, promising to be with them.</i>
Joshua led the Israelites into physical battle against the people living in great wickedness in Canaan. (Deut. 18:10–14)	Eph. 2:2–3; 6:11–13 <i>Jesus leads us into spiritual battle against the world, the flesh and the Devil, against spiritual forces of evil.</i>
The ark going before the people signified that God himself was establishing his presence in the land among his purified people. (Josh. 3:3, 5)	John 14:2–3; Heb. 9:24 <i>Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place in heaven for his purified people.</i>
Joshua, led by the commander of the Lord's army, brought destruction against the enemies of God. (Josh. 5:13–15)	Rev. 19:14–15 <i>Jesus, the commander of the Lord's army, will, at the end of the age, bring final destruction upon the enemies of God.</i>

Joshua	Jesus
Joshua brought divine judgment upon the Canaanites who persisted in wickedness and salvation to those who cried out for mercy. (Joshua 6)	Acts 2:21; 2 Pet. 3:9–10 <i>Jesus will return to bring divine judgment upon those who refused to repent, while those who cried out for mercy will be saved.</i>
Under Joshua, the Gibeonites, one small tribe of Gentiles, became part of the nation of Israel through faith in God's power and promise. (Joshua 9)	Rev. 5:9–10 <i>Under Jesus, Jews and Gentiles from every tribe, language, and nation are made part of the people of God through faith in God's power and promise.</i>
The day came when the kings in Canaan became a footstool for the Israelites' feet, signifying complete defeat. (Josh. 10:24)	1 Cor. 15:25–28 <i>The day will come when all of the enemies of God will become a footstool underneath Jesus's feet signifying complete defeat.</i>
Joshua impaled the bodies of the Canaanite kings on poles to demonstrate that they were under God's curse. (Deut. 21:22–23; Josh. 10:26)	Gal. 3:13 <i>Jesus hung on a tree, demonstrating that he was under God's curse.</i>
Joshua had the king's bodies taken down from the trees and put into caves and covered the openings with large stones that "remain to this very day." (Josh. 10:27)	Mark 16:4 <i>The body of Jesus was taken down from the tree, put into a tomb, and covered with a large stone that was rolled away when he rose from the dead, signifying that he fully paid the penalty of the curse.</i>
Under Joshua, even after the Israelites entered into the land, perseverance in battle was required to take possession of all that God had given to them. (Josh. 11:18; 13:1)	Phil. 3:12–14 <i>In Christ, even after we enter into the rest of salvation, perseverance is required to truly possess all that God has given to us.</i>
Joshua gave to each tribe the promised inheritance of land in the Promised Land of Canaan that they had been waiting for. (Joshua 13–21)	1 Pet. 1:3–5; 2 Pet. 3:13 <i>Jesus will give to us our promised inheritance in the new heaven and new earth that we have been waiting for.</i>
Joshua brought the people to a place of rest. (Josh. 21:44)	Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:8–9 <i>Jesus promises rest to all who will come to him, the rest of salvation we experience only in part now and fully when we cross over into the presence of God.</i>
Joshua called the people of God to loyalty to the Mosaic covenant so that they would not forfeit their promised inheritance of the land of Canaan. (Josh. 23:6–13)	Heb. 9:15 <i>Jesus calls us to embrace a new covenant, which is based not on our obedience, but on his. Because of this, our promised eternal inheritance is secure.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Imagine that you were one of the Israelites standing on the shores of the Jordan River at the beginning of the book of Joshua. You have been living in a tent in the wilderness ever since you were a child hearing about the land of milk and honey, and now you are getting ready to go into the land you will call home. But, of course, there is that business of first doing battle with the people who live there now. What do you think you might be looking forward to and what might you dread?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Three times in Joshua 1:6–9, Joshua is told by God to be strong and courageous. Why do you think he needed to hear this repeated command, and what was the basis for his strength and courage?

3. Think through the events found in Joshua 5–6 (circumcision of all the males, celebrating Passover, Joshua meeting the Commander of the army of the Lord, marching around and then taking Jericho). How is this battle preparation, battle leadership, and battle strategy different from typical battle, and why is it so different?

4. What does the story of the complete destruction of Jericho, except Rahab and her family, tell us about God's judgment as well as God's mercy?

God follows through on his promised judgment, but he always shows mercy to those who call out to him in faith, saving them from judgment.

5. In our day, as the people of God, we do not take up arms to subdue our enemies. But we do have an enemy to fight. According to Ephesians 6:10–18 and 1 Peter 5:8–9, who is our enemy, and how do we fight?

6. Just as the Israelites inherited territory, we as believers have an inheritance awaiting us. What

is our inheritance, according to the following verses, and how can we be sure we will inherit it? Matthew 25:34; Romans 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Ephesians 1:11–14; Colossians 1:11–13; 1 Peter 1:3–5.

7. Understanding that Joshua and Jesus are the same name, one in Hebrew and one in Aramaic, how do you think it would affect the way we read, understand, and teach the book of Joshua and the stories within Joshua if we were to call the book “Jesus” instead?

As we read the book of Joshua, we would see how it pictures the way Jesus will lead the people of God into the Promised Land of rest—the rest of salvation experienced in this life as well as the ultimate rest of heaven.

Getting Personal

8. The essence of the Christian life is knowing and trusting in the promises of God. It is desiring the inheritance that is being kept for us in heaven so that we don't expect so much from this world. Do you cherish the inheritance that is being kept for you in heaven? If so, what nurtures that, and if not, why do you think that might be?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. The book of Joshua tells us how God brings his people into the kingdom of God. It is written about the earthly kingdom of God to help us understand how we enter into the heavenly kingdom of God. Work your way through the following statements as a group. How does each of the following statements about the experience of the Israelites tell us about our own experience of coming into the kingdom of God?

☞ The Israelites had to follow their leader, Joshua.

We must follow our leader, Jesus.

☞ The Israelites had to believe the promise that God was giving them the land.

We must believe the promise that God has prepared and will give to us an inheritance.

☞ The Israelites were miraculously transferred across the river into Canaan.

At death we will be miraculously transferred into the presence of God.

☞ Though God gave them the land, they had to fight many battles against their enemies to take possession of it.

We have many battles to fight against our flesh and the Devil to enjoy all that God has promised to us.

☞ The day came when they possessed the land and had rest from all of their enemies.

The day will come when we will rest in the Promised Land of the new heaven and new earth where nothing evil will ever enter.

Week 3

Judges

Personal Bible Study

The book of Joshua is a record of victory and conquest and rest. But in the book of Judges, things change radically for the Israelites. This book records Israel's failure and deterioration and distress. But they should not really be so surprised that they are in such difficulty. Joshua had given them clear instruction before his death about what they needed to do and what would happen if they did not do it.

1. Read Joshua 23:11–16 and briefly summarize Joshua's instruction and warning.

Be careful to love the Lord (v. 11). If you let the remnant of the Canaanites stay and intermarry, they will be a snare and a trap until you have to leave the land (vv. 12–13). If you transgress the covenant and serve other gods, the Lord will be angry and you will be forced away from the land (v. 16).

2. Read Judges 1:18–36 and 3:5. What is the problem after Joshua died, and what did it lead to?

They did not drive out and destroy the Canaanites completely but lived among them. They intermarried with the Canaanites and served their gods.

3. Read Judges 2:1–5. What is God's response to this problem?

God will not drive them out but will allow them to become "thorns in your sides" and their gods will be "a snare" to the Israelites.

4. Read Judges 2:10–15, which sets the scene for the rest of the book of Judges. What does each verse tell you about Israel during this time?

v. 10 *They did not know the Lord or the work he had done for Israel.*

v. 11 *They did what was evil and served the Baals.*

v. 12 *They abandoned the Lord and went after other gods.*

v. 14 *The Lord gave them over to plunderers/their enemies.*

v. 15 *They were in terrible distress.*

5. Read Judges 2:16–23. What happened next in this repeated cycle, according to the following verses?

v. 16 *The Lord raised up judges who saved them.*

v. 17 *They did not listen to judges and whored after other gods.*

v. 19 *Whenever the judges died, the people became more corrupt than before.*

6. According to Judges 3:1–6, what good purposes did God have in this difficult period of Israel's history?

The oppression of the Israelites by these nations presented the opportunity for God's people to learn how to wage war and to experience God's saving power. Through testing, Israel would learn how insidious sin is and that knowing the commandments doesn't impart the power to obey them. They would come to see how much they needed to live under the authority of a king after God's own heart.

Before the period of the Judges, Israel was united under the strong central leadership of Moses or Joshua, but during the time of the judges, the tribes of Israel operated as a kind of confederation, with each tribe seeking to maintain its sovereignty. None of these judges ruled over the entire nation of Israel but over particular tribes and territories.

Rather than reading Judges as a chronological story, we have to read it as a series of snapshots taken over a period of two hundred to three hundred years in various geographical areas of Israel. From Judges 3:7 through the end of chapter 16, this book tells the stories of twelve judges that God sent to rescue his people when they sinned and then called out to him to save them. Some of the judges seem to have good character and hearts to serve God, but others of them seem to exhibit little character or love for God. You may want to read or skim chapters 3 through 16 to get the full picture of what these judges were like and what they did. Or you can read the verses indicated to glean the repeated pattern of what happened during this period.

7. Othniel

What is the problem? (3:7)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

How did God respond? (3:8)

He sold them into the hand of the king of Mesopotamia who enslaved them.

What happened? (3:9)

They cried out to the Lord who raised up a deliverer for them, Othniel, who saved them.

How did Othniel accomplish their deliverance? (3:10)

The Spirit of the Lord was upon him and he warred against Mesopotamia and won.

How did this period end? (3:11)

The land had rest for forty years, and then Othniel died.

8. Ehud

What is the problem? (3:12)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

How did God respond? (3:12)

The Lord strengthened the king of Moab against them and he enslaved them.

What happened? (3:15)

The people cried out to the Lord and the Lord raised up a deliverer, Ehud, to save them.

How did Ehud accomplish their deliverance? (3:16–29)

He assassinated Eglon, the king of Moab and then led the people of Israel in battle against the Moabites.

How did this period end? (3:30)

The land had rest for eighty years.

9. Deborah and Barak

What is the problem? (4:1)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

How did God respond? (4:2–3)

The Lord sold them into the hand of the king of Canaan and he oppressed the people cruelly for twenty years.

What did Israel do? (4:3)

The people cried out to the Lord for help.

How did Deborah accomplish their deliverance? (4:4–24, esp. vv. 6 and 15)

Deborah instructed Barak to lead ten thousand men against the king of Canaan's army. The Lord routed the Canaanite army before Barak.

How did this period end? (5:31)

The land had rest for forty years.

10. Gideon

What is the problem? (6:1)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

How did God respond? (6:1–5)

The Lord gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. The Midianites would descend on their crops and livestock like locusts and lay waste to it.

What happened? (6:6–7)

The people cried out to the Lord for help, and the Lord sent an unnamed prophet to remind them of his grace (brought you out of Egypt), blessing (gave you the land), command, and their disobedience to the Lord's command.

How did Gideon accomplish their deliverance? (7:19–25)

He took three hundred men who blew trumpets and smashed jars, and the Midianite army ran.

How did this period end? (8:28–32)

The land had rest for forty years, and Gideon died.

11. Jephthah

What is the problem? (10:6)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashteroth, the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. They forsook the Lord and did not serve him.

How did God respond? (10:7–8)

The Lord was angry and sold them into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites who crushed and oppressed them for eighteen years.

What did Israel do? (10:10)

The people cried out to the Lord saying, "We have sinned against you."

How did Jephthah accomplish their deliverance? (11:29–33)

The Spirit of the Lord was upon him and he fought against the Ammonites and the Lord gave them into his hand.

How did this period end? (12:7)

Jephthah died.

12. Samson

What is the problem? (13:1)

The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

How did God respond? (13:1)

The Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

What did Samson do? (16:28)

Samson called to the Lord for strength. (As a flawed deliverer, even this cry for help is flawed as it is seemingly more about personal revenge than for the deliverance of God's people. Yet God, in mercy, responded to Samson's cry, which demonstrated a measure of faith.)

How did Samson accomplish their deliverance? (16:25–31)

Samson pushed down the pillars of the house killing three thousand Philistines and also himself.

How did this period end? (16:31)

Samson died.

13. The last four chapters of Judges, chapters 17–21, form an appendix. They provide further examples of the corruption of the time and contain some of the most distasteful parts of the Bible. The book ends with Israel's having descended into a civil war. The writer of Judges states the problem and hints at the solution several times in these chapters. What is the problem, according to Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25?

There was no king in Israel and therefore every man did what was right in his own eyes.

14. What is the implied solution suggested in 21:25?

If there were a king, he would rule over them and guide them in doing what is right in God's eyes.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. We didn't really spend time in the Personal Bible Study or Teaching Chapter on the colorful stories of some of the judges in Israel. What are some of your observations about these judges from reading this week or from hearing their stories in the past?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. We've often heard some of these judges held up as heroes and have been encouraged to follow their examples. What do you think about that approach to the stories in the Old Testament, and specifically in Judges, at this point?

3. Read Hebrews 11:32. Knowing how flawed these judges were, how do you think they could be listed in this chapter of people who lived by faith? Does this offer us any insight or encouragement?

What mattered was the object of their faith, not the amount or quality of their faith. They were very flawed people through whom God chose to work.

4. The big cause of the people's problem during the days of the judges was their peaceful coexistence with sin shown in their unwillingness to obey God's clear instructions to devote the Canaanites to destruction. Read each of the following verses aloud in your group: Matthew 18:8–9; Romans 8:12–13; and Colossians 3:5. What do these verses say about how we are to deal with evil?

5. Over and over again in Judges, we witness the people of Israel crying out to the Lord in their distress. Do you think their crying out to God was genuine repentance? Why or why not?

6. The last verse of Judges explains the reason there was so much evil in Israel during this time: everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Instead of obeying God's law and seeking to do

what was right in God's eyes, they determined for themselves what was right and what was wrong, influenced significantly by the Canaanite culture around them. What do you think it takes to develop a desire for and to have the ability to do what is right in God's eyes?

7. Judges is a hard and dark book of the Bible. Did you find any hope in it? Did you see any glimmers of grace?

Despite their inadequate repentance, repeated rebellion, and ongoing idolatry, God did not forsake his people but instead continually saved them from their enemies. God repeatedly used flawed people to accomplish his purposes, making them trophies of his grace.

Getting Personal

8. While the judges God raised up had the power to save Israel from her political oppressors, they had no power to save the people from the oppression of their incomplete obedience, their ignorance of God, their idolatrous ways, or their inner corruption. While the judges brought about a temporary change in people's circumstances, they were never able to bring about a change in people's hearts. As we worked our way through the various things we need to be saved from, was there one that struck a particular chord with you?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. Judges is a bridge book in between the leadership of Moses and Joshua over Israel and the establishment of the monarchy under Saul and then David. Throughout Judges God sends deliverers and saviors who deliver but are tremendously flawed. And the salvation they accomplish doesn't last. How do you think the book of Judges points readers toward Christ?

All of the savior-deliverers God raised up among his people reveal the grace of God in shadow form pointing to the greater Savior-Deliverer God would send in his own Son. The book of Judges reveals our desperate need of Christ for a Savior and the superiority of his saving work.

Week 4

Ruth

Personal Bible Study

1. In Ruth 1:1 we discover the setting for the story that makes up this short book. The events recounted took place “in the days when the judges ruled.” What were those days like, according to last week’s lesson?

There was no king, so there was a lot of chaos and civil war. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes, meaning that people were not inclined to obey God or to care about pleasing him. Therefore, there was great lawlessness and cruelty and idolatry. God repeatedly used Israel’s enemies to make her miserable so that she would cry out to him.

2. Read Ruth 1:1–4 and summarize in a sentence or two what has taken place.

Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, have left Israel to live in Moab to escape the famine. Elimelech and both of their sons died there leaving Naomi childless and alone except for two Moabite daughters-in-law.

3. According to Ruth 1:6, what has happened that offers hope in what seems a hopeless situation for Naomi?

God has visited his people back in Israel and the famine is over.

4. Read Ruth 1:7–18. Note the difference in what the two daughters-in-law did along with what you think motivated each to do what they did.

Orpah returned to her family and her family’s gods, because in Moab she had the best chances of getting married again, having children, and being accepted. Ruth determined to go with Naomi even though she likely would not get married again or have children or be accepted, because she wanted to be a part of the people of God and a partaker in the promises of God.

5. Read Ruth 1:19–21. How would you describe Naomi and her assumptions about her circumstances?

She sees herself as empty, made empty by an act of God, who has brought calamity on her. Perhaps she sees her circumstances as God’s just judgment on her family’s choice to leave the Promised Land, or perhaps she is bitter because she sees this as undeserved.

6. Most of us have heard Ruth’s words before, often used in the context of a wedding service. But something more significant than family commitment is taking place here. What is it?

Ruth is committing herself not only to the people of God, but to God himself. She is renouncing the false gods of the Moabites and entrusting herself to the God of Israel.

7. Read Ruth 2:1–16. What was it that Ruth expected and found when she went out to the fields (vv. 2, 10, 13)? List several examples of what she experienced.

Ruth went out expecting to find favor (or grace) and that is what she experienced from Boaz.

She “happened” to glean in the field of Boaz (v. 3). Boaz took notice of her (v. 5). Boaz took responsibility for her rather than rejecting her as a foreigner (v. 8). Boaz gave instructions to his men that provided protection and refreshment for her (v. 9). Boaz asked the Lord to bless her with a “full reward” (v. 12). Boaz comforted and spoke kindly to her (v. 13). Boaz shared his own food with her and let her take the extra home (v. 14). Boaz let her glean among the sheaves and from what others had gleaned rather than just pick up the morsels left behind on the edges (v. 15–16).

8. Read Ruth 2:17–20. What does Naomi realize about the field where Ruth has gleaned?

It is owned by Boaz, who is a close relative and therefore qualified to be a redeemer.

9. What is the role of a family redeemer, according to the following verses from the law of Moses?

Deuteronomy 25:5–6: To marry the widow of a close family member who has died with no heirs, so that the dead man's name will not be "blotted out" of Israel.

Leviticus 25:23–28: To purchase the property of a close family member who has become poor and has had to sell the family land.

10. Read Ruth 2:23–3:9. When Ruth goes to Boaz informing him that he is a redeemer, what is she asking of him, according to the Deuteronomy and Leviticus passages above?

She is asking him to marry her to produce an heir for Elimelech so that his name will not be blotted out of Israel and to buy back his land so that he will continue to have an inheritance in the Promised Land.

11. Read Ruth 3:10–17. What was Boaz's response to Ruth's request?

He assured her that he would do what was necessary to redeem her, but that he would have to offer to let the closer relative redeem her if he was willing. He sent her home with a load of barley to confirm to her and Naomi his intention to take care of their needs.

12. Read Ruth 4:1–13. How did Boaz follow through on his stated intentions?

He went to the city gate and spoke to the other possible redeemer who was interested in owning the land, but not in marrying Ruth and producing an heir who would then own the land. So Boaz purchased the land and married Ruth, and they had a son, an heir for Elimelech.

13. Read Ruth 4:16–22. How do these final verses provide the primary reason for which the Bible tells us this story of one family living during the time of the judges?

A descendant of Boaz and Ruth will be David, the great king of Israel. At a time of chaos when it might have appeared God was not at work among his people, he was, in fact, bringing about the fulfillment of his plans for Israel by providing a king, David, and his plans for the entire world by providing David's greater Son, King Jesus, who will open up the doors for many more foreigners to partake in the promises of God.

14. Read Matthew 1:1–6, which provides the genealogy of Jesus. Mostly this genealogy is a list of fathers. But there are three mothers included in this section. Who are they and what do they have in common?

Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. All three women were not members of the people of God by birth and were strangers and foreigners to the promises of God and were made a part of the people of God by grace through faith.

15. In the person and work of Boaz, we see shadows of the greater redeemer who will come in the person of Jesus, the greater price he will pay, and the greater redemption he will accomplish. For each of the statements about Boaz in the first column below, write a corresponding statement about Jesus, helped by the New Testament references provided, if needed.

Boaz as Redeemer	Jesus as Redeemer
Boaz was a relative of those in need of redemption. (Ruth 2:1)	John 1:14, Heb. 2:17 <i>Jesus was made a flesh and blood brother to those in need of redemption.</i>
Boaz was a worthy (or wealthy) man who shared his wealth with those he redeemed. (Ruth 2:1)	2 Cor. 8:9 <i>Jesus was a worthy, or wealthy, man who left those riches to become poor so that we might become rich.</i>
Boaz came from Bethlehem. (Ruth 2:4)	Matt. 2:1 <i>Jesus was born in Bethlehem.</i>
Boaz commended the faith of a foreigner. (Ruth 2:11)	Matt. 15:21–28 <i>Jesus commended the faith of a Canaanite woman.</i>
Boaz invited a foreigner to eat with him at his table. (Ruth 2:14)	Luke 14:15–24 <i>Jesus told a parable about a banquet at which those from the outside will be invited in to eat at the king's table.</i>
Boaz fed Ruth until she was satisfied with some left over. (Ruth 2:14)	Luke 9:17 <i>Jesus fed five thousand until they were satisfied with twelve baskets left over.</i>
Boaz was determined to redeem, and would not rest until it was accomplished. (Ruth 3:11, 13)	John 4:34; 19:30 <i>Jesus was determined to do the work of redemption and did not rest until it was accomplished.</i>
Boaz paid the price of redemption outside the city gate. (Ruth 4:1)	Heb. 13:12 <i>Jesus paid the price of redemption outside the city gate.</i>
Boaz paid the cost to accomplish redemption. (Ruth 4:9–10)	1 Pet. 1:18–19 <i>Jesus paid the cost with his own blood to accomplish redemption.</i>
Boaz's redemption made it possible for Ruth, a foreigner, to be included in God's people by grace through faith. (Ruth 4:11)	Gal. 3:13–14 <i>Christ's redemption made it possible for Gentiles to be included as God's people by grace through faith.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Try to put yourself in the sandals of Naomi as she comes back into Bethlehem after being gone for ten years, and people hardly recognize her because of the toll her losses have taken. She doesn't want them to call her by her name, which means "sweetness." Instead, she wants them to call her a name that reflects the circumstances of her life and the state of her heart: bitter. What do you think about Naomi's bitterness? Can you relate to it? Is it justified? What assumptions about life and God have left her so bitter?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Two themes that run throughout the book of Ruth are those of emptiness and fullness. Where do you see them in these four chapters, and what do you think the author of the book was trying to communicate through these themes?

Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?" (1:11)

"I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty." (1:21)

"The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. (2:12, 14)

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. (2:17)

"These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" (3:17)

Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the

house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem." (4:11)

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." (4:13-15)

The author is demonstrating how God's redemption fills up our emptiness.

3. In the Gospels we find these same themes of emptiness and fullness. John writes of the redeemer Jesus: "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). What examples can you think of in the Gospels of Jesus filling what was empty? (You'll find some hints, if needed, in Luke 5:4-6 and in John 2:6-11; 6:12; and 21:8.)

4. A key word in this book is favor, which is the Old Testament word for "grace." Since we recognize that Boaz is a type or shadow of Christ in this story, what does the favor Boaz showed to Ruth reveal to us about the favor or grace Christ shows to those who come to him asking to be redeemed?

Boaz took Ruth under his care and protection, providing for her hunger. Boaz was qualified to redeem and willing to redeem. He did all that was legally necessary to redeem paying the price of redemption.

5. Someone read aloud Ephesians 2:11-22. What key words or phrases jump out to you that describe Ruth and her experience? How does her experience help us to understand what our lives are like outside of Christ and what it means to be united to him?

6. Boaz said to Ruth, "The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" (Ruth 2:12). Jesus

said, “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:29). How were Boaz’s prayer and Jesus’s promise borne out in Ruth’s experience?

Ruth left her family and people in Moab to take hold of the promises and people of God and was rewarded with acceptance and provision in the people of God, even becoming a part of the lineage of Christ.

Getting Personal

7. The women around Naomi in Bethlehem told her that having Ruth as a daughter-in-law was better than having seven sons. “Seven sons” (Ruth 4:15) was another way of saying, “the perfect family.” So they said to Naomi that what God was doing in her life through emptying her of her plans for her perfect family and perfect life was better than she could have ever put together for herself. God was doing something in her family that was much bigger than just redeeming her little family. Through her family would come not only the great King David but also the

King of kings, the great Redeemer who offers redemption to all the families of the earth. Few of us have what we could call “the perfect family.” Have you struggled with bitterness or disappointment in regard to your less-than-perfect family as Naomi did? Can you see ways that God is doing something good in your life or the lives of others through your less-than-perfect family? What would it mean for your sense of disappointment if you were to take hold of this hope?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. God’s promise to Abraham was that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. How would this story of Ruth have informed Old Testament believers about how that was going to happen and what role a greater redeemer would play?

This story would demonstrate that those who are not descendants of Abraham by birth could get in on the promised blessings of God by faith in Yahweh. It also taught, in shadow form, about the redemption that would be accomplished by a greater redeemer than Boaz, one who would be worthy and willing to redeem.

Week 5

1 Samuel

Personal Bible Study

1. In the book of Judges we read that there was no king in Israel. And the book of Ruth was all about God preserving a faithful remnant in idolatrous Israel, from whom a king would one day come. How do the following verses add to the expectation that there will be a king over Israel?

Genesis 17:6: *God promised Abraham that kings would come from him.*

Genesis 49:10: *Jacob prophesied that the scepter would not depart from the tribe of Judah.*

Deuteronomy 17:14–20: *Moses provided instructions for the kind of king Israel should have.*

After having a series of judges who ruled over various segments of Israel for brief periods of crisis, God raised up the final judge, Samuel. Samuel ruled over Israel for many years, calling them back to the Lord, and speaking God's Word to them as a prophet, and offering sacrifices on their behalf as a priest.

2. Read 1 Samuel 8:1–22. What two motivations do the Israelites have for wanting a king?

To be like other nations and to have someone to fight their battles.

3. This request feels to Samuel like a rejection of his leadership, but what does the Lord say it really is?

They are rejecting having God as their king (v. 7).

4. Read 1 Samuel 10:17–27. What about Saul made an impression on the people when they found him hiding with the baggage?

He was taller than any of the people.

5. 1 Samuel 10:25 says that Samuel told the people the rights and duties of kingship and wrote them in a book. These rights and duties are found in Deuteronomy 17:14–20, a passage we read earlier. Summarize the rights and duties you find in each of the following verses:

v. 15 *He must be chosen by the Lord.*

v. 15 *He must be an Israelite and not a foreigner.*

v. 16 *He must not acquire many horses (military strength).*

v. 17 *He must not acquire many wives or excessive silver and gold.*

v. 18 *He shall write for himself a copy of the law approved by the priests.*

v. 19 *He shall read the law all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord by keeping all the words of this law.*

6. Read 1 Samuel 13:1–14 and describe in two or three sentences what Saul did and the consequences of his actions.

Saul gathered troops to fight the Philistines and grew impatient waiting for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice before going into battle and so he offered it himself. Because of his assumption of priestly duty and disobedience, the Lord rejected Saul as king and determined to replace him with a man after God's own heart.

7. Read 1 Samuel 16:1–13. How was Eliab similar to Saul?

He was tall and evidently looked "kingly."

8. What impression do we get about David from these verses?

He is not impressive but just a young shepherd boy, insignificant even in his own family. But he is ruddy and handsome, and evidently his heart is like the Lord's heart.

9. Read 1 Samuel 17. The Israelites had wanted a king who would go out into battle for them. How is that working out for them?

Goliath has asked for forty days for a man from Israel to come out and fight him and Saul seems to have no intention of doing so.

10. What is at stake in this battle, according to Goliath's proposal in verses 8 and 9?

If the Israelite wins, the Philistines will serve the Israelites, and if Goliath wins, the Israelites will become slaves to the Philistines.

11. According to verse 26, what bothers David about Goliath's challenge?

It is a disgrace to Israel that they are cowering and afraid of someone who does not have the covenant Lord on his side and is foolish enough to defy the armies of the living God.

12. On what basis was David confident that he could defeat Goliath?

He has experienced being empowered by God and delivered by God when facing the lesser enemies of a lion or bear, and he is confident that God will also empower him and deliver him against this enemy.

13. David went out confident in his God, and Goliath cursed David by his gods (v. 43). What does this reveal about the true meaning of this battle?

This is really a battle between the God of Israel and Dagon, the false god of the Philistines.

14. In fact, this is really just another battle in the war between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the Serpent that has been raging since Eden. Trace this battle and its participants and tactics throughout the Bible by identifying the enemy, the champion, and the method of victory in each of the following passages:

	Gen. 3:15	1 Samuel 17	Heb. 2:14; 12:2	Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9-11
The defeated enemy of God	<i>The offspring of the Serpent</i>	<i>Goliath</i>	<i>The Devil</i>	<i>That ancient serpent, Satan</i>
The victorious champion of God	<i>The offspring of the woman</i>	<i>David</i>	<i>Jesus</i>	<i>Christ</i>
How the victory was accomplished	<i>By the bruising of the heel of the offspring of the woman while crushing the head of the offspring of the Serpent</i>	<i>David crushed the head of Goliath with a stone.</i>	<i>Jesus endured the cross.</i>	<i>By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony of believers</i>

15. When we begin to see this battle between David and Goliath as part of the greater battle that spans the history of redemption, we recognize that David reveals many things to us about his greater son, Jesus. Work your way through the following statements about David from 1 Samuel 16 and 17 and write a corresponding statement about Jesus.

David	Jesus
David was born in Bethlehem. (1 Sam. 16:4)	Matt. 2:1 <i>Jesus was born in Bethlehem.</i>
David was a shepherd. (1 Sam. 16:11)	John 10:11 <i>Jesus is the good shepherd.</i>
David did not seem to be great—even to his own family. (1 Sam. 16:11)	Matt. 13:55–56; John 1:46 <i>Jesus did not appear to be great—especially to his own family.</i>
David was anointed among his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him. (1 Sam. 16:13)	Matt. 3:16; Acts 10:38 <i>Jesus was anointed among his brothers at his baptism as the Spirit of the Lord descended upon him.</i>
David was sent by his father to his brothers. (1 Sam. 17:17)	John 8:42 <i>Jesus was sent by his father to his brothers.</i>
David was rejected and mocked and accused of having evil motives. (1 Sam. 17:28)	John 1:11; Matt. 27:12, 41–42 <i>Jesus was rejected and mocked and accused of having evil motives by his brothers.</i>
David was confident of God’s victory as he faced Goliath (1 Sam. 17:37)	Matt. 20:17–19 <i>Jesus was confident of God’s victory over death as he faced the cross.</i>
David went out to face Goliath alone but with the presence of God. (1 Sam. 17:40, 45)	John 16:32 <i>Jesus faced the cross alone but with the presence of God.</i>
The sword that Goliath intended to use to slay David was used to destroy Goliath. (1 Sam. 17:50–51)	Col. 2:15 <i>The cross that Satan intended to use to destroy Jesus was used by Jesus to destroy Satan’s power of death.</i>
By destroying Goliath, David delivered the Israelites from being subject to lifelong slavery to the Philistines. (1 Sam. 17:9, 52)	Heb. 2:14–15 <i>By dying and rising again, Jesus delivered the people of God from lifelong slavery to the fear of death.</i>
All of Israel shared in the victory over the Philistines, achieved by David as their representative. (1 Sam. 17:52)	1 Cor. 15:55–57 <i>All of those in Christ share in the victory over death, achieved by Christ as our representative.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Imagine that you were a witness to the scene day after day in the Valley of Elah as Goliath came out to taunt the Israelites with his offer to fight a single foe, and that you were there watching David walk out to face him. What do you think it sounded like? And how did it feel to be there? What might you have observed on both sides of the battle lines?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Goliath came out every day for forty days challenging and taunting the Israelites. Our enemy mocks and taunts us every day, too. What are some things our enemy, the Devil, says to intimidate us? How can we experience victory in this daily battle?

Our enemy, the Devil, lies to us about the goodness of God and his worthiness of being trusted. He accuses us and reminds us of sins that have been forgiven. He tempts us to find our satisfaction and security in many things other than God alone. We experience victory in this daily battle as we recognize the voice of the enemy and respond with the truths of God's Word, exposing and defeating the power of his lies.

3. Some of us have been taught this story all of our lives with a moral of something like, "If you will trust God, he will give you the courage to face whatever bad things come." But what difference does it make if we see ourselves in the place of Israel's army instead of as David in this story? How does that change what we are to take away from the story?

Instead of trying to work up faith and courage like David had, we realize that what we must do is put all of our faith in our representative, our champion, Jesus. Joined to him by faith, his victory becomes our victory. We take away from this story that he has defeated the enemy of our souls so that we do not have to be enslaved to him but are free to love and obey Christ.

4. Through the narratives of 1 Samuel, there is a constant clash between worldly strength and

godly strength, between worldly desires and godly desires. What are some of the contrasts you see between David and Saul and between David and Goliath in this regard?

Saul looks royal or kingly and evidently David doesn't. But while Saul is concerned with his own honor and doing things his way, David is concerned for God's honor and pleasing him.

Goliath has heavy armor and superhuman strength. He taunts and intimidates. David is armed with confidence in God's promise to deliver his people—even through a weak shepherd boy.

5. Someone read aloud 1 Corinthians 1:22–29. How does this passage capture what happened with David and Goliath? And how does this passage both instruct and encourage you about being used by God to make a gospel impact in your world?

God used something weak and foolish in the world's terms—an inexperienced shepherd boy—to accomplish his saving purposes demonstrating that the "weakness of God is stronger than men." This passage fills us with confidence that God uses weak and foolish things and people to accomplish his purposes in the world. What matters is that we are "in Christ Jesus" (v. 30). Our gospel impact in the world is not based on our own strength or intelligence, but on being connected to Christ who has become to us wisdom from God.

6. This story reminds us that as we take the word of Christ to an unbelieving world, we go to do battle. As modern Christians we tend to see ourselves as selling a product, not fighting a battle. We are marketers, not soldiers. We face potential customers, not an enemy. But the New Testament often describes what we are to be about in battle terms (Eph. 6:10–20). What difference does it make to understand that we are in a battle, a battle that is the Lord's battle?

This battle for the souls of men and women can't be won by worldly means—human power or cleverness. The victory in this battle is accomplished by the Spirit of God through the proclaimed Word of God. We are not fighting against people but for people and against

“strongholds.” We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–6). Because it is a battle, we should anticipate suffering as part of it. Second Corinthians 6:4–8 instructs: “But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true.”

7. Look back at the Personal Bible Study where you explored some of the ways David points to Christ. What were some that were especially interesting or meaningful to you?

8. Once we recognize that David, the Lord’s anointed (which means “messiah” or “Christ”), is meant to point us toward Jesus, the Lord’s anointed, we realize that Goliath is meant to point us toward the Lord’s enemy, Satan. What are some of the ways we see Satan himself in Goliath?

He is evil and determined to enslave the people of God by defeating their representative, the Anointed One, the Christ. He resembles the serpent from the garden of Eden. He mocks and taunts and threatens God’s people. The tool that he thought would bring him victory, his sword, was used to cut off his head just as the tool Satan thought would bring him victory, the death of Christ, accomplished Satan’s destruction.

Getting Personal

9. When you consider “the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7), do you find that comforting or discomfoting? Why?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

10. Perhaps we’ve always seen this story of David’s battle with Goliath as its own little Bible story, but in this lesson we’ve discovered that it is actually part of a much larger story. What is this battle really about, and where do you see it surface throughout Scripture?

In the garden of Eden between the Serpent and Adam and Eve, in Cain’s murder of Abel, in Pharaoh’s genocide of Hebrew babies, in Balak’s curse on Israel, in Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews in Esther, in Herod’s killing of baby boys in Bethlehem, in the Devil’s tempting of Jesus in the wilderness, in Judas’s betrayal of Jesus. Acts 4:27–28: “For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

Still today, those who reject and set themselves against the gospel of Christ are the seed of the Serpent seeking to silence the seed of the woman. In Revelation 12, we see the battle between the great dragon and the offspring of the woman continuing throughout the age of the church until “the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

Week 6

2 Samuel

Personal Bible Study

In 1 Samuel we read about Samuel anointing David to be king over Israel and about David's emergence on the scene by slaying Goliath. But Saul is still king. The second half of 1 Samuel focuses on Saul's demise as king and his relentless pursuit to kill David, while David, who became a commander in Saul's army, refused to harm Saul or take the throne by his own power. Second Samuel covers the remainder of David's life. It begins with David hearing about the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1) and David being anointed king—but he is not yet king over all of Israel. In 2 Samuel 2 David is anointed king over just the powerful southern tribe of Judah and sets up his headquarters in Hebron, where he will rule for seven and a half years. Abner, the commander of Saul's army, makes Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's sons, king over the northern tribes of Israel. Then we read at the beginning of chapter 3, "There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker" (v. 1). The war ended when two of Ish-bosheth's own captains killed him (2 Samuel 4).

1. Read 2 Samuel 5:1–5. What three reasons did the people of the tribes of Israel give for wanting David to be their king?

1. *We are your bone and flesh—we are family.*
2. *In the past, even when Saul was king, you are the one who led us in battle.*
3. *We are aware that the Lord has declared that you would be shepherd/prince over Israel. (A truth they have evidently been ignoring and denying.)*

2. Read 2 Samuel 5:6–12 along with Exodus 3:8 and Deuteronomy 7:1. What did David accomplish that God had intended since he first came to Moses and gave him instructions to bring his people out of Egypt?

To possess the land of the Jebusites, namely Jebus, or Jerusalem.

3. What happened in this city previously, according to the following verses?

Genesis 14:18: Abraham brought tribute to the king there, Melchizedek, who was a priest-king of Yahweh in the city hundreds of years before David became king there.

Genesis 22:2: Abraham took Isaac to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem to offer him as a sacrifice.

4. Jerusalem was to be not only the political capital and military headquarters but also the center of Israel's worship of God. How does 2 Samuel 6 reveal that David intended to be not only lead warrior of Israel but also lead worshiper?

He took thirty thousand chosen men to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. He offered significant sacrifices as it was brought up to Jerusalem. David danced before the Lord "with all his might" (v. 14) and with shouting and celebration. His heart was full of genuine joy to have the blessing of God's presence at the heart of his kingdom.

5. Read 2 Samuel 7:1–3. What is the problem, as David sees it?

David is living in a luxurious, comfortable house while the earthly dwelling place of God is in a shabby tent.

6. Initially Nathan told David, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you," perhaps relying only on instinct or common sense; but that night the word of the Lord came to him with

a message to give to David. How would you summarize the intent of God’s initial questions in 7:5–7?

You think you’re going to build a house for me? Have I ever even said I want to dwell in a house?

7. Identify the key aspects of God’s covenant with David in the following verses:

v. 8 *I am the initiator, David, not you. I took you from following sheep to being a prince over my people.*

v. 9 *I have been with you and I will make your name great.*

v. 10 *I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and plant them where they will not be disturbed or afflicted.*

v. 11 *I will give you rest from all your enemies. I will make you a house.*

v. 12 *After you die, I will raise up one of your descendants and establish his kingdom.*

v. 13 *Your descendant will build a house for my name and I will establish his kingdom forever.*

v. 14 *I will be a father to him; I will discipline him.*

v. 15 *My steadfast love will not depart from him.*

v. 16 *Your house and your kingdom will be secure before me. Your throne will be established forever.*

8. There is a bit of a play on words here, as “house” is used to refer to three different things. Describe what is meant by “house” in each of these verses:

7:1 a home

7:5 a temple

7:11 a dynasty

9. Oftentimes, to understand biblical prophecies and promises, we have to see them like a distant mountain range. From far away, we can’t differentiate between different mountains. We can’t see that some mountains are closer and some are farther away. They seem like one long mountain. But the closer we get, or the more we bring them into view through a telescope, the clearer we can see that some of the individual mountains are closer than others. That’s what we see in God’s covenant promise to David, found in 2 Samuel 7. Some aspects of his promise were fulfilled in David’s lifetime and some in the years immediately following his lifetime, when Solomon and other descendants sat on this throne as king over Israel. But those were just initial or partial fulfillments. They served as a preview of how God would fulfill his promises to David in a much greater way to David’s greater descendant. The promises that God made to David find greater fulfillment in David’s greater son, Jesus, in both his first coming and in his second. Work your way through the various aspects of God’s promise to David in the following chart and note from the references provided how each aspect of the promise was fulfilled in David’s day, in Solomon’s day, in the days of Jesus’s first coming, in his current heavenly reign, and/or when Jesus comes again.

Promise	Fulfillment
I will make for you a great name. (2 Sam. 7:9)	2 Sam. 5:10 <i>God made David greater and greater.</i> Phil. 2:10 <i>At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.</i>

Promise	Fulfillment
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. (2 Sam. 7:10)	<p>John 14:1-3 <i>Jesus is preparing a place for his people.</i></p> <p>Rev. 21:1-14 <i>The bride of Christ will dwell in the new heaven and new earth where they will be disturbed and afflicted no more.</i></p>
I will give you rest from all your enemies. (2 Sam. 7:11)	<p>2 Sam. 7:1 <i>The Lord gave David rest from all his enemies.</i></p> <p>1 Kings 5:4 <i>The Lord gave Solomon rest from all his enemies.</i></p> <p>1 Cor. 15:23-28 <i>Jesus will reign until all of his enemies are under his feet.</i></p>
The LORD will make you a house. (2 Sam. 7:11)	<p>1 Kings 11:43 <i>David's descendants became a dynasty that sat on the throne until Judah's deportation to Babylon.</i></p> <p>Heb. 3:6 <i>God is making a house, the church, for Jesus, the son of David.</i></p>
I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (2 Sam. 7:12)	<p>1 Kings 1:46 <i>Solomon, David's son, became king after David.</i></p> <p>Acts 2:29-36 <i>In his resurrection, God raised up Jesus, a physical descendant of David, to sit on the throne established by David.</i></p>
He shall build a house for my name. (2 Sam. 7:13)	<p>1 Kings 8:15-20 <i>David's son, Solomon built the temple, a house for God's presence among his people.</i></p> <p>John 2:19-22 <i>Jesus raised up the temple, his body, when he was resurrected.</i></p>
I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Sam. 7:14)	<p>Ps. 2:6-7 <i>David and his sons who sat on the throne had a special father-son relationship with God.</i></p> <p>Rom. 1:3-4 <i>Jesus was uniquely the Son of David and the Son of God.</i></p>
When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. (2 Sam. 7:14)	<p>1 Kings 11:9-14 <i>Because of Solomon's sin, the kingdom was divided and the Lord raised up adversaries against him.</i></p> <p>Isa. 53:5 <i>Jesus was punished for the iniquities of God's people, not his own.</i></p>
My steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul. (2 Sam. 7:15)	<p>2 Kings 8:19 <i>God preserved a faithful remnant in Judah in keeping with his promise to David.</i></p>

Promise	Fulfillment
Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. (2 Sam. 7:16)	Luke 1:33 <i>The angel told Mary that her baby would reign over a kingdom that will not end.</i> 1 Pet. 2:4–5 <i>Believers are being built up into a spiritual house in Zion.</i>
Your throne shall be established forever. (2 Sam. 7:16)	Rev. 4:1–11; 22:16 <i>Jesus reigns on the throne in heaven forever and ever.</i>

10. Just as the levitical priesthood anticipated the superior priesthood of Jesus, and just as Old Testament prophets anticipated Jesus, the prophet par excellence, so David and his throne anticipated the reign of the coming King, Jesus. Read each statement below about the reign and kingdom of King David and write a corresponding or contrasting statement in the second column in regard to the reign and kingdom of King Jesus.

David's Reign	Jesus's Reign
David was the shepherd of God's people and prince over them. (2 Sam. 5:2)	Matt. 2:6; John 10:14, 16 <i>Jesus was a ruler who shepherded God's people.</i>
David sat on the throne as king in Jerusalem, the earthly city of God. (2 Sam. 5:6–7)	Rev. 21:1–7 <i>Jesus will sit on his throne as king of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God.</i>
Sinners who touched the presence of God in the ark died. (2 Sam. 6:6–7)	Matt. 9:20–22; 1 John 1:1 <i>Sinners who touched the presence of God in the flesh lived.</i>
God raised David up from shepherding to sit on the throne of Israel. (2 Sam. 7:8)	Acts 2:24–25 <i>God raised Jesus up from death to sit on the throne in heaven.</i>
David's son sat on his throne. (1 Kings 1:47)	Luke 22:30; Rev. 3:21 <i>Jesus will invite believers to sit with him on his throne.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. As humans, we are bound by time. It is hard for us to wrap our minds around “forever.” But as you think about what this lesson reveals about the kind of forever God has in mind for us, what does that make you think, and how does that make you feel?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. When the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, they acknowledged the truth that long ago God had said that David would be the shepherd and prince over Israel. Yet for many years they had been resisting David’s kingship. How is this a picture of the way many people respond to King Jesus? (See Rom. 1:18–21.)

They resisted the truth they knew: that God had made David a king and shepherd over them, just as people today resist the truth they know, that God has made Jesus a king and shepherd over them. Though they knew that David was their king, they did not honor him as king, just as people now do not honor Jesus as king.

3. 2 Samuel 5:12 says, “And David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.” What difference do you think this knowledge made in how David ruled?

This knowledge must have filled David with a sense of stewardship of what was entrusted to him by God. It must have made him aware that he was not king to exploit his people or the land, but to bless them as a representative of God himself and to demonstrate the way in which God wants to bless his people.

4. What do you think about David’s desire and Nathan’s initial response in 2 Samuel 7:1–3? What was the basis for them? What was problematic with them?

David’s desire was good. He wanted to honor God. But his plans to build a house for God were made independently of God and God’s expressed desires. They assumed

that God was needy of his people’s care rather than reflecting the reality that God is the one who takes care of his people.

5. Read together David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18–29, which was offered in response to the promises God had made to him. What are some things that stand out to you in this prayer? What evidence do you see that David truly is a man after God’s heart, the kind of king God wants to have on the throne over his people?

6. Look back at the chart you filled out in the Personal Bible Study in regard to the promises God made to David and how they were fulfilled or will be fulfilled. Which one did you find especially interesting or meaningful?

Getting Personal

7. As you think about what it means that King Jesus is on the throne now until all of his enemies are put under his feet and that he will be on the throne of the universe into eternity with all of his enemies gone forever, what comfort does it bring you? What challenge does it present to you?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. When we trace God’s promise of blessing from the garden of Eden to the promise to bless Abraham and on to God’s promise to David, how does it help us to understand why the New Testament begins by giving us the genealogy that demonstrates that Jesus was a descendant of David?

We see that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God’s promises to bless in the Old Testament. All of the blessings God has promised come to us in and through Jesus Christ.

Week 7

1 Kings

Personal Bible Study

1. In 1 Kings 2:1–4 we read the instructions David gave to Solomon for ruling as king over Israel as well as a description of the blessings Solomon would enjoy if he ruled in this way. What are the key things David told Solomon to do, and what could he expect if he did these things?

Obey what God has commanded and walk in his ways, walk before God in faithfulness with all of his heart and soul. If he does, Solomon will prosper and one of his sons will always be on the throne in Israel.

2. Read 1 Kings 3:1–3. We can see right away that the writer of 1 Kings is not going to whitewash Solomon's story. Here at the outset we see that Solomon is a mix of good and bad (just as we are). What do you see here that bodes well for the future of his reign as king, and what causes concern? (See Deut. 12:2–5 and 17:16 for assistance.)

Solomon went to Egypt to procure both security and a wife from Pharaoh. The Israelites were not supposed to return to Egypt, and Israelites were not supposed to marry pagan wives. Solomon loved the Lord and walked with God similar to the way his father, David did. But he tolerated sacrifices being made at the high places that should have been destroyed and apparently joined in this false worship.

3. Read 1 Kings 3:4–9. What do you see about how Solomon sees himself and what he desires?

Solomon sees himself as a partaker and inheritor of the covenant promises of God made to Abraham and his father, David. He recognizes that he has a great need for God's help to govern God's people well. So he asks for an understanding mind that will enable him to discern between good and evil.

4. Read 1 Kings 3:10–15. How did God respond to Solomon's request?

He was pleased with it, and gave him not only understanding to discern what is right, but also riches and honor. And like David had done, God gave him a promise of lengthened days if Solomon will walk in his way and keep his commandments.

5. Read 1 Kings 3:16–29. How does this story of the two prostitutes who came before Solomon illustrate that God has indeed given Solomon what he asked for?

Solomon had the ability to discern between good and evil in these women, which enabled him to do justice.

6. Read 1 Kings 4:20–25. Solomon had expressed concern that he did not have the ability to govern God's people. But what are the signs that God has given him the wisdom to do so?

They are growing in population. They have plenty to eat and are enjoying life. They have not only peace with the countries around them, but they also have respect and tribute to their king from these countries. Their borders are as extensive as they have ever been and everyone living within them is enjoying abundance.

7. Read 1 Kings 4:29–34. In addition to wisdom for governing, in what other matters was Solomon given wisdom?

He had great intellectual curiosity and an understanding of human nature and the ways of the world as reflected in the proverbs he wrote. He had wisdom in matters of the heart and soul expressed in songs. He had great knowledge of the natural world of plants and animals.

8. As Solomon procured the materials and began to build a house for the Lord, once again the word of the Lord came to him with a command and a

promise, which is recorded in 1 Kings 6:11–13. What was the command and the blessing promised for obedience to the command?

Solomon needed to walk in God's statutes and keep God's commandments as his people's covenant representative. God's dwelling with his people would be on the same basis as it had been before: the people's obedience to the law (Lev. 26:11–12).

9. Remember that Adam and Eve had been ejected from the garden of Eden because of their disobedience, and that God, in redemption history, is working out his plan to bring his people back into his land where he will dwell with them. Read the description in 1 Kings 6:14–38 of the temple Solomon built. What do you see in the details of the design of the temple that are reminiscent of Eden?

There were carvings of cherubim, which were reminders of the cherubim that guarded the entrance to the garden; palm trees, which were a reminder of the tree of life in the garden; and open flowers, which were a reminder of the beauty and abundance of the Garden.

10. The most wonderful thing about the temple is told in 1 Kings 8:10–11. What is it?

The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

11. Solomon responded to the Lord's filling of the temple with his glory by blessing the Lord, praying a beautiful prayer of dedication, and giving the people a charge, which is recorded in 1 Kings 8:12–61. Read or skim this blessing, prayer, and charge and note two or three things that stand out to you.

12. Read 1 Kings 10:1–13. The queen of Sheba came to test Solomon with hard questions. Use your imagination for a minute and list three or four questions you think she might have asked him.

13. The queen of Sheba was breathless and amazed by the wisdom of Solomon as well as by the temple he had built, the government he had organized, the food he served, and the way he worshiped. What did she do in response, according to verses 9–10?

She blessed the God of Solomon and gave extravagant gifts to Solomon.

14. As wise as Solomon was, there continued to be signs of problems. We saw earlier that he went back to Egypt and took a foreign wife and accommodated worship in the high places. In 1 Kings 10 and 11, we find evidence of further disobedience. Compare the commandment for Israel's king, given in Deuteronomy 17, with what Solomon did, recorded in the following verses.

Requirements for Israel's kings	Solomon's disobedience as king
[He shall not] acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. (Deut. 17:17)	1 Kings 10:14–21 <i>"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold" (v. 14).</i>
He must not acquire many horses for himself. (Deut. 17:16)	1 Kings 10:26 <i>"And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen."</i>
He shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away. (Deut. 17:17)	1 Kings 11:3 <i>"He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines."</i>

15. Read 1 Kings 3:3 and compare it to 1 Kings 11:1–4. What has happened?

Solomon loved the Lord, but now he loved many foreign women who turned his heart away from whole-hearted love for God and toward other gods.

16. According to 1 Kings 11:5–8, how was Solomon's change in heart evidenced in what he did?

He "went after" the false gods of his wives, building them altars and making offerings and sacrifices to them.

17. Read 1 Kings 11:9–14, 23, and 26. What was God's response to Solomon's heart turning away from him and toward other gods?

He pledged to tear the kingdom away from him and then raised up adversaries who worked to subvert his rule.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Think back on the descriptions of Solomon and the life his people enjoyed in his kingdom. What are some of the things they enjoyed that they never had before?

No sending their sons off to war, wealth, abundance in their crops, the admiration of the world around them, not living in fear of being attacked, the beautiful temple in which God dwelled, unity under a great king.

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Solomon is the only man in the entire Bible of whom it is said that he loved the Lord. Think about that. David wasn't described that way. Daniel wasn't described that way. John the Baptist wasn't described that way. Why do you think this is said of Solomon?

3. First Kings makes it clear that Solomon was the wisest man in the world and the richest man in the world and had more honor than any king in the world in his day. And Jesus announced that "something greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42). How would you explain what he meant?

Jesus was a greater King worthy of greater honor bringing a kingdom even more peaceful, glorious, joyful, vast, secure, and enduring than the kingdom Solomon ruled over. While Solomon was given the gift of wisdom by God, Jesus is the wisdom of God incarnate.

4. In the Personal Bible Study questions, you were asked to note several things that stood out to you in Solomon's blessing, dedication prayer, and charge to the people after the Lord filled the temple with his glory (1 Kings 8). What was significant to you?

5. While the writer of 1 Kings tells us that Solomon loved the Lord, and we get to read his beautiful prayer, there is no record of him ever reading and studying the commandments of the Lord in the law of Moses, which he was instructed to follow. How might that have made

a difference, and what does this teach us if we want to avoid having our hearts turned away from God toward other loves?

6. Read Matthew 12:42 in light of the account in 1 Kings 10 of the queen of Sheba's response to Solomon and his God. What was Jesus saying in regard to why the queen of Sheba will "rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it"?

The queen of Sheba, an outsider to the promises and Word of God, searched out and took hold of Yahweh. But the scribes and Pharisees, who had the promises and Word of God rejected Yahweh by rejecting his Son.

7. We are horrified when we picture in our minds what Solomon must have done when he went after other gods. But certainly there are things we do in going after our idols that should shock us. Work your way through the following idols of our age and suggest some ways we "go after" these gods.

- ≈ the idol of financial security
- ≈ the idol of physical beauty and eternal youth
- ≈ the idol of fame and reputation
- ≈ the idol of the perfect family
- ≈ the idol of power in business or politics or even in the church

Getting Personal

8. The writer seems to be indicating an exception to Solomon's love for the Lord and walking in the statutes of David in 1 Kings 3:3 when he adds: only or except that he offered sacrifices at the "high places." Solomon loved the Lord, except . . . What is it that might fill in the "only" or "except" clause in the account of your life? Or could it be said of you that you loved the Lord with no exceptions?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. Throughout this study we're seeking to discover how each part of Israel's history fits into the bigger story. How would you connect this

history of the kingdom of Israel under Solomon to each of the following: the way things were in the garden of Eden, the promises made to Abraham, the first coming of Christ, and the second coming of Christ?

Solomon's kingdom was like the garden of Eden in that God's people lived in a kingdom marked by abundance and security with a wise and loving king in their midst. Solomon's kingdom was a partial fulfillment of the promises to Abraham as they were a great nation living in the land God promised he would give them and they

were a blessing to all of the families of the earth with the beauty of their kingdom and the wisdom of their king. Solomon's kingdom was a shadow cast back in history of the first coming of Jesus as Jesus was the wisdom of God incarnate, teaching and judging among God's people. His coming was a breaking in of the greater kingdom to come. Solomon's kingdom more fully shadowed the second coming of Christ when God's people will be at peace in the new heavens and new earth, enjoying the abundance of God's good gifts and the wise rule of the King of Kings in a kingdom that will never be vulnerable to deterioration or attack but will last forever.

Week 8

2 Kings

Personal Bible Study

In the centuries leading up to the era of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, God had repeatedly warned his people about what would happen if they disobeyed him and turned to other gods. The covenant God made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai was an “if you do this, then I will do this” kind of agreement.

1. Work your way through the following passages, noting what is said about what God will do based on what the Israelites and their kings do. (This does not need to be exhaustive. Just note several key words or phrases for each.)

a. God speaking to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses (Lev. 26:1–13)

If you will . . .

walk in my statutes and observe my commandments

Then I will . . .

give you rains, land will yield increase, trees yield fruit, dwell in your land securely, peace, remove harmful beasts, enemies fall by the sword, make you fruitful, multiply you, make my dwelling among you, be your God, and you shall be my people.

b. God speaking to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses (Lev. 26:14–20)

If you will . . .

not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, break my covenant

Then I will . . .

visit you with panic, wasting disease and fever, enemies eat your seed, set my face against you, strike you down

before your enemies, those who hate you will rule over you, earth and tree will not yield fruit

c. God speaking to Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 4:25–28)

If you will . . .

make a carved image

Then I will . . .

cause you to utterly perish from the land, be utterly destroyed, and scatter you among the peoples

d. God speaking to Israel as they as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 4:29–31)

If you will . . .

seek the Lord, return to the Lord, obey his voice

Then I will . . .

cause you to find me, will not leave you or destroy you

e. God speaking to Israel as they as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 28:1–14)

If you will . . .

faithfully obey, do all his commandments, not go after other gods to serve them

Then I will . . .

set you high above all the nations of the earth, you will be blessed, enemies will be defeated before you, establish you as a people holy to myself, all will see you are called by the name of the Lord, they will be afraid of you, prosperity, fruitfulness, rain, bless your work, and you will lead

f. God speaking to Israel as they as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 28:15–65; focus on vv. 15–25 and 63–65)

If you will . . .

not obey

Then I will . . .

bring curses, confusion, frustration, pestilence, disease, defeat; pluck you off the land, scatter you to the ends of the earth, and give you no rest

g. Joshua speaking to Israel before his death (Josh. 24:20)

If Israel will . . .

forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods

Then God will . . .

turn and do you harm and consume you after having done you good

h. The Lord speaking to Solomon (1 Kings 9:4–5)

If Solomon will . . .

walk before God with integrity of heart and uprightness, do as God has commanded

Then God will . . .

establish his royal throne over Israel forever so that Israel will not lack a man on the throne of Israel

i. The Lord speaking to Solomon (1 Kings 9:6–9)

If Solomon will . . .

turn aside from following God, if he or his children do not keep God's commandments or statutes, but serve other gods

Then God will . . .

cut off Israel from the land, and the temple will be a heap of ruins

The twelve tribes of Israel were united under one king during the respective reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. But after the death of King Solomon, the united kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms—the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. This means

that when we read about “Israel” in the books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings, this does not refer to the entire nation as it has to this point, but only to the kingdom of the northern ten tribes. The northern kingdom of Israel lasted just over two hundred years, led by nineteen kings before they were conquered and taken away into exile by the Assyrian Empire. They never returned to the land and were assimilated into other people groups.

The southern kingdom of Judah lasted slightly over three hundred years, led by nineteen kings, who were all descendants of David, before they too were conquered and taken into exile by the Babylonians. Unlike the northern kingdom, however, a remnant of the southern kingdom was preserved and allowed to return and resettle Jerusalem seventy years later.

2. In 1 Kings 12 we read about Solomon's son Rehoboam, who ascended to the throne after Solomon and determined to increase the already heavy tax burden on the people. This pushed the ten northern tribes to revolt and choose Jeroboam, who was “the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite” (1 Kings 11:26) to be their king. Read 1 Kings 12:16–20. Why is this choice a problem? *God promised that the throne of the son of David would endure forever. So in separating themselves from Davidic kingdom, they are in essence separating themselves from the covenant promises of God.*

3. Thirty-two times in the books of 1 and 2 Kings we read that a king was “evil in the sight of the LORD.” Below are just a few of those kings. Note a few phrases for each, indicating what made these kings and therefore their kingdoms evil.

Jeroboam, king in Israel (1 Kings 12:25–33):

created an alternate religion for the northern tribes with golden calves, its own temples, priests, feasts, and sacrifices

Rehoboam, king in Judah (1 Kings 14:22–23):

built high places and Asherim, male cult prostitutes, did the same abominations the nations driven out had done

Ahab, king in Israel (1 Kings 16:29–33):

served Baal, rebuilt Jericho

Ahaz, king in Judah (2 Kings 16:2–4):

burned his son as an offering to gods of Canaanites, sacrificed and made offerings on high places

Manasseh, king in Judah (2 Kings 21:1–9):

rebuilt high places, erected altars for Baal, made an Asherah, built altars to other gods in the Temple (!), burned his son as an offering to false god, used fortunetelling and omens, dealt with mediums and necromancers

4. If so many kings were so evil, even in the southern kingdom of Judah, why, according to 2 Kings 8:18–19, did God not just destroy them?

To fulfill his promise to David to establish his throne forever

5. Eight times we read in 1 Kings 12—2 Kings 22 that a king was “right in the sight of the LORD.” What made these kings right? Note also, for each, what failure or exception is mentioned, lest we think this human king was all that God had promised he would one day set on David’s throne.

Asa (1 Kings 15:9–15):

put away male cult prostitutes, removed idols, cut down Asherah, his heart was wholly true all his days, but the high places were not taken away

Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41–46):

walked in ways of his father, Asa, exterminated remnant of male cult prostitutes

Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1–8; 20:12–19):

removed high places, broke down Asherah, broke bronze serpent, trusted in the Lord, held fast to the Lord, kept commandments, but he proudly showed off his wealth to Babylon and seemed uncaring about how this would impact future generations

Josiah (2 Kings 22:1–23:30):

repaired the temple, found the book of the law, responded in repentance to God’s Word, burned vessels made for

Baal, Asherah, deposed priests who made offerings at high places, broke down houses of male prostitutes, defiled high places, restored Passover, put away mediums and necromancers, but still his righteousness wasn’t enough to keep the Lord from turning away his wrath after he died

6. At one point in the history of the divided kingdom, a king from the line of David in the south, Jehoram, married the daughter of a king of Israel in the north named Athaliah (2 Kings 8:16–27), and their son Ahaziah later took the throne in Jerusalem. When Ahaziah died, his mother, Athaliah, sought to kill all the descendants of David who might take the throne, and she took the throne herself. This was the only time someone who was not a descendant of David sat on the throne over Judah during this period. But how, according to 2 Kings 11, did God sovereignly protect the royal line of King David?

Joash (later called Jehoash), a baby at the time, was hidden away in the temple for seven years until Jehoiada, the chief priest, and the royal guards brought him to the royal palace and crowned him king, and then put Athaliah to death.

7. Read 2 Kings 17:6–18. Why do you think the writer of 2 Kings began his analysis of the fall of the northern kingdom by reminding the reader that the Lord had brought his people out of slavery in Egypt (v. 7)?

It is a reminder of his grace toward them, a grace they have spurned by their disobedience and idolatry. It is a reminder of why they should have been faithful to him—because he had been so faithful to them.

8. According to 2 Kings 17:6–18, list at least ten reasons God allowed the northern kingdom to be destroyed and its people exiled.

- ≈ Feared other gods
- ≈ Walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out
- ≈ Did secretly against the Lord things that were not right
- ≈ Built high places in all their towns

- ≈ Set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill
- ≈ Made offerings on all the high places
- ≈ Did wicked things
- ≈ Served idols
- ≈ Ignored warnings
- ≈ Despised his statutes and his covenant
- ≈ Worshipped false idols
- ≈ Burned sons and daughter as offerings
- ≈ Used divination and omens
- ≈ Sold themselves to do evil

9. According to 2 Kings 17:13, how had the Lord demonstrated mercy to Israel (and Judah) for centuries?

The Lord had warned them by sending prophets.

10. And how had the Israelites responded according to 2 Kings 17:14–18?

They would not listen. They were stubborn. They despised the Lords' statues and covenant he made with their fathers and the warnings he gave them.

11. Joel was a prophet who likely prophesied to Israel before its fall to the Assyrians. Read Joel 2:12–14. What does the prophet say might have

happened to Israel had they heeded his warning and repented and returned to the Lord?

God would perhaps turn and relent, bless instead of curse.

12. Briefly summarize what happened to the southern kingdom in 2 Kings 24:10–17.

During Jehoiachin's reign, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and took the king and his family prisoner, carried off the treasures of the temple, and the leaders and craftsmen of the people to Babylon. He made Jehoiachin's uncle king.

13. Briefly summarize what happened in 2 Kings 25:8–12.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon burned down the temple, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and carried the rest of the people into exile.

14. What happened thirty-seven years later according to 2 Kings 25:27–30, and why does this matter?

Jehoiachin, king of Judah, was released from prison. He was cared for rather than having his line cut off. This matters because of God's promise that a son of David will reign on David's throne forever.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Can you relate to Nancy's wishing that she had not come up with some threatened punishments for her son? Or can you think of some warnings you have received that either you are very glad you heeded or you wish you had listened to?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. When we work our way through the warnings recorded in Leviticus and Deuteronomy and elsewhere that led up to the time of the divided kingdom, it seems clear to us what they should and should not have done. Why do you think they did not heed the warnings?

3. Nancy admitted that tracing the history of Israel from the kingdom united under David and Solomon to the divided kingdom, exile, and return from exile has always been fuzzy for her. Can someone or several people summarize this history to help us tighten our grasp of it?

The nation of Israel was a loose confederation of tribes under Joshua and during period of the judges. Saul was made king over the twelve tribes, followed by David, followed by Solomon. After Solomon, the nation split into two kingdoms—the northern ten tribes known as Israel or Samaria (their capital), and the southern two tribes known as Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel lasted just over two hundred years, led by nineteen kings before they were conquered and taken away into exile by the Assyrian empire. They never returned, and were assimilated into other people groups. The southern kingdom of Judah lasted slightly over three hundred years, led by nineteen kings who were all descendants of David, before they too were conquered and taken into exile by the Babylonians. Unlike the northern kingdom however, a remnant of the southern kingdom was preserved and allowed to return and resettle Jerusalem seventy years later.

4. Looking back at the Personal Bible Study questions regarding what was evil in the sight of the Lord and what was right in the sight of the Lord, what is offensive to God and what pleases him?

5. Under the old covenant, Israel's experience of blessing came under a conditional "If you will, then I will" arrangement. How is our relationship with God different as partakers of the new covenant?

Jesus has fulfilled the "if you will" part of the agreement perfectly in our place. Our experience of God's "I will" is based on Jesus's obedience, not ours. We seek to obey the covenant commands of God out of love for him, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, not in order to earn his blessings.

6. Understanding that Jesus came as the second Adam who obeyed instead of disobeying, and as the true Israel who was faithful to God instead of unfaithful, how did Jesus experience and fulfill even their experience of exile?

Jesus was exiled from the place of blessing when he experienced alienation from God on the cross as he bore our sin.

7. This lesson is really sobering to us as we consider the reality of those who refuse to obey God being exiled from him forever. Why should we study this?

This pictures for us the eternal exile away from the presence and blessing of God that all of those who refuse to repent and believe in Christ will experience. It should make us not only more grateful for the promised security we have because of our union with Christ, but also more determined to warn those who are not joined to Christ about the coming eternal exile away from God's blessing, enduring his eternal curse.

Getting Personal

8. As you think about the fact that your obedience is not the way you earn a place in God's kingdom but the evidence that you are a citizen of God's kingdom, how do you see the Spirit of God at work in your life, giving you a new desire to do what is "right in God's eyes" and an increasing distaste for what is "evil in the sight of the LORD"? Is there an area or experience you would be willing to share with the group, not in

a desire to show off your goodness but to testify to the power of God's grace?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. In all the detail of these kings and kingdoms, we see that while there are some kings who do right, none of them always do right, and none of them last on the throne. We might see this as a failure of the monarchy that God established in Israel, but is it? For what purposes might God

have sovereignly intended both the establishment and subsequent failure of the kingdom and throne over Israel and Judah?

Throughout the Old Testament in the failure of God's people to obey the covenant, failure of the priesthood, failure of God's people to listen to the prophets, failure of human kings, God is demonstrating the need for a better covenant, a better priest, a better prophet, a wiser and greater king and kingdom. All of these failures and needs point to and prepare his people to recognize, worship, and embrace Jesus.

Week 9

Ezra and Nehemiah

When we left the story of the people of God in the last lesson, the ten northern tribes had been carried off into exile by the Assyrians and been absorbed in a variety of countries and cultures. The southern tribe of Judah had been carried off into exile into Babylon.

1. Just as the Babylonian invasions began, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied about the coming exile to Babylon. What else did he say would happen, according to Jeremiah 25:1–14 and 29:10?

The land will become a ruin and a waste. The nation will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then God will punish the king of Babylon. God will bring Israel back to the land.

2. About seventy years after the first exiles were taken to Babylon, King Cyrus of Persia overthrew the Babylonian king. The Jews living in Babylon then became servants to the king of Persia, who had a very different approach to conquered peoples than Babylon. According to Ezra 1:1–4, what did King Cyrus send the people of God living in his kingdom to do?

To rebuild the temple at Jerusalem

3. Read Ezra 1:5–11. Why do you think the writer of Ezra provides this detail about what the people took back with them to Jerusalem? What does it say about the true aim of the return and rebuilding?

The detailed catalog testifies to God's faithfulness in preserving not only a remnant of the people but also the materials they would need to reinstate temple worship in Jerusalem. The true aim is to restore temple worship, sacrifices, and intercession.

4. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book. They tell the story of three waves of exiles returning to Jerusalem over about a one-hundred-year period of time led by three different leaders with three distinct purposes. The first of these leaders is introduced in Ezra 3. Who is he, what special skill does he employ for what task, and what did he accomplish upon arrival in Jerusalem and then in the second year there?

Zerubbabel returned to Jerusalem with a group of priests and seems to be a capable building project manager. Upon arrival he built an altar at which the priests instituted the offerings and sacrifices. He began collecting materials for the rebuilding of the temple and then initiated the rebuilding process.

5. A problem arises in Ezra 4:1–6. What is it?

The Samaritans pretended to want to help them build, but when Zerubbabel declined their offer, they discouraged and threatened the people of Judah and frustrated their purposes.

6. After the work stopped for over twenty years and then started again with encouragement from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra 6:16 says that “the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.” Then what happened for the first time in centuries?

They kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

7. In Ezra 7:1–10, we are introduced to the second leader in these books who returned to Jerusalem about sixty years after Zerubbabel with a

second wave of returnees from Babylon. Who is it, what role or position did he hold, and what did he set his heart to accomplish?

As a descendant of Aaron, Ezra, was a priest, "a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (v. 6). He went to Jerusalem with his heart set to "study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (v. 10).

8. Upon arrival, Ezra discovered and confronted a significant problem in Jerusalem. What was it, according to Ezra 9:1–5?

The people of God had intermarried with idolatrous peoples.

9. Look back at Ezra 6:21. How does Ezra's description of the makeup of God's people at this point demonstrate that this is not a racial issue but a religious issue? Who were the people of God, according to this verse?

The people of God were the Israelites who had returned from exile as well as non-Israelites who had joined them and separated themselves from idolatrous worship to worship the Lord.

10. Can you think of at least two individuals we've discussed so far in this study of the historical books that are examples of non-Israelites who separated themselves from their people and gods to worship the Lord?

Rahab and Ruth.

11. In Ezra 9:6–15 how does Ezra refer to the people who are in Jerusalem, and how does he explain their existence?

They are a remnant of the people of God who are being revived so that they might set up the house of God and repair its ruins.

12. In chapters 9 and 10 we witness Ezra grieving over Israel's sin and calling the people to repentance. Describe the scene depicted in Ezra 10:9–14.

All of the people of the Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem and sat in the open square before the temple

trembling because of the weightiness of the problem and because it was raining. Ezra stood up and told them to make confession to God and separate themselves from their foreign wives, and they answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said."

13. Thirteen years after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, the third leader featured in these two books came to Jerusalem. According to Nehemiah 1:1–2:8, who was he, what was his role or position, and what did he go to Jerusalem to accomplish?

Nehemiah was a civil servant in a pagan country, a cup-bearer to the king, a position of great access and trust. He went to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city, which were in ruins, leaving the people vulnerable to attack.

14. What was Nehemiah's invitation to the people of God in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:11–20), and how was it received?

"Come let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer suffer derision," Nehemiah said. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." But immediately the enemies of God opposed the work.

15. Read the taunts of the enemies of God and his people in Nehemiah 4:1–3. How do they remind you of the taunts of another enemy of God's people, Goliath, and how does Nehemiah's response in 4:20 remind you of David's confidence?

The enemies point out how ruined the city is and how weak the people are. Nehemiah prepares for battle just as David collected five smooth stones. Their confidence is that God will accomplish the victory.

16. What is Nehemiah's response when the enemies suggest that he come down from the wall so they can meet (Neh. 6:1–9)?

"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down! Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" (v. 3).

17. Once the wall was completed, the people gathered in the square, and Ezra read from the Book of the Law of Moses (probably from Deuteronomy). How did they respond, according to Nehemiah 8:5–6?

They stood in honor of it, answered “amen” to it lifting up their hands, and bowed with their faces to the ground in response to it.

18. The people wept when they heard God’s Word, overcome with a sense of their sinfulness. But Nehemiah did not want them to only weep. What did he invite them to do, in Nehemiah 8:9–12, and why?

To have God’s Word taught to them means that they are hearing not only about God’s expectations of them, but also about God’s goodness to them. They serve a God who has mercy on sinners, saving and defending his people. This is worth celebrating.

19. What did the people do in response to reading the law, according to Nehemiah 8:13–18, and how did they feel about it?

They celebrated the Feast of Booths, which hadn’t been done since the days of Joshua, and it made them rejoice to obey God in this way.

20. What did they do in response to the reading of the Book of the Law, according to Nehemiah 9:1–5?

They fasted and mourned over their sin. They separated themselves from all foreigners and confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers. They read the Book of the Law for three hours. For three more hours they confessed and worshipped.

21. Nehemiah 9:6–38 is a prayer of confession that also serves as a summary of the complete Old Testament history of Israel. Read through this prayer and note five or six statements that describe the goodness of God to Israel throughout its history.

“You have kept your promise, for you are righteous.” (v. 8)

“You . . . spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments.” (v. 13)

“But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger.” (v. 17)

“You gave them kingdoms and people and allotted to them every corner.” (v. 22)

“When they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies.” (v. 28)

“You bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets.” (v. 30)

“You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.” (v. 33)

22. According to Ephesians 4:11–13, the people of God are still in the midst of a building project. What is the method and the goal of this building project?

We are using our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ to attain unity of faith, understanding of the gospel of Christ, and living out the full expression of Christ’s divine and human perfection.

23. According to 1 Peter 2:4–8, God is also still in the midst of a building project. What is he building, and what materials is he using?

God is building a spiritual house—the church—made of living stones—believers—who have been rejected by men as rubble, but are chosen and precious in the sight of God. The foundation stone or cornerstone of the church is the rejected stone, Jesus Christ.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Interestingly, the three key leaders in Ezra and Nehemiah—Zerubbabel, who led in the rebuilding of the temple; Ezra, who taught the Word; and Nehemiah, who rebuilt the wall—are not the typical prophets, priests, kings, patriarchs, or judges we see throughout the Old Testament. They are a building project manager, a lay teacher, and a civil servant. Can you think of some people you know who are not pastors or church staff members whom you have seen God use in incredible ways to build up his church?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Try to put yourselves in the place of the exiles living in Babylon. In what ways or for what reasons would you be tempted to just adapt and assimilate? What hopes or promises would encourage you to persevere in holiness?

3. In Ezra we read that “everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go” (1:5) went back to Jerusalem to build the temple. God stirred them, and what was their part? How is this a picture of God’s part and our part in returning to him?

Their part was to pack up and go. This is a picture of how we must respond to the gospel. While God is the one who gives faith to respond, we must respond in faith.

4. What does it say about these returning exiles, that the first thing they gave themselves to was rebuilding the temple? What do you think they would have looked forward to in having the rebuilt temple?

They longed to worship God, live again with God in their midst, have the priests carry their concerns into God’s presence, offer sacrifices, and hear the priests pronounce their sins forgiven.

5. The entire chapter of Nehemiah 9 is a confession of sin. Why is confession of sin a good thing? Should it be public or private? First John

says to confess our sins to each other. What good does that do?

6. Throughout our study of the Old Testament we’ve seen God’s repeated displeasure over his people intermarrying with those around them. Does this make God a racist? Why or why not? And does this have any significance for us today? (See 2 Cor. 6:14–18.)

God’s concern is religious, not racial. His prohibition of intermarriage is so that the marriage partners who worship other gods will not turn the hearts of his people to other gods. It has nothing to do with race. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians reveals that God still prohibits intermarriage with those who do not worship God alone.

7. Oftentimes when we hear the book of Nehemiah taught, it is all about looking at Nehemiah as an example of sound leadership. And he was an effective leader. But Jesus said that the whole of the Old Testament is about Jesus himself. On the road to Emmaus, when Jesus started at the beginning of the Old Testament and explained “to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27), what do you think he might have said about the books of Ezra and Nehemiah? In what ways are these books about him?

Ezra and Nehemiah reveal how God preserved a faithful remnant for himself in order that his promise might be fulfilled—that all the families of the earth would be blessed through a descendant of Abraham. They reveal the continuing need for something greater—a more secure city, a more glorious temple, and the True Israel who will obey instead of constantly slipping into disobedience.

Getting Personal

8. Perhaps some of us have had the experience Nancy described of finding herself very far away from God and wondering if she would be welcomed back in. Have you? And if so, how did a return to worship, hearing God’s Word, and responding to God’s Word in repentance and fresh obedience play a role in your coming home?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. This is another one of those stories in the Old Testament that we want to end with a happily-ever-after ending, and it doesn't. Nehemiah was gone for a while, and the people went back to their sinful disobedience. How does this actually point us to and prepare us for Christ?

It reveals that just coming back to the land and rebuilding the temple and reinstating sacrifices in the temple was

not enough for God's people to be all that he intended. The Old Covenant was not enough because the people did not have the hearts to obey. Something better than simply being God's people in the land was needed—that if all of God's promises to his people throughout the Old Testament, especially through the prophets, were going to be fulfilled, it would require the coming of a greater king, a greater prophet, a greater priest, a better covenant, a better sacrifice, a better temple, a better city.

Week 10

Esther

Personal Bible Study

While the book of Esther falls in the Bible after the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the story related in the book takes place right in the middle of the events described in Ezra and Nehemiah. It takes place between the first wave of Jews making their way back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and Ezra's leading the second return of a group of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem. The first king over the Persian Empire, Cyrus, had released Jews to go back to Jerusalem. When Darius ascended to the throne of Persia, he affirmed the earlier decree of Cyrus and encouraged the continuation of the work. The story of Esther takes place during the reign of the next king, Xerxes (also called Ahasuerus), and before Artaxerxes, the king to whom Nehemiah was a cupbearer.

1. Read Esther 1, which introduces us to the human king ruling over God's people in those days. What sense do you get about this king in regard to what is important to him and how he uses his authority?

Ahasuerus has a huge kingdom and evidently uses the wealth of his kingdom to throw an impressively lavish party. His show of power extends to what his guests drink. Rather than love his wife he wants to use her to impress. And when his authority was thwarted by Vashti's refusal, he issues an edict that effectively publicized his lack of authority in his own household.

2. Read Esther 2:1–7, which introduces us to Mordecai and Esther. List some details we learn in these verses about each of them.

Mordecai is a descendant of Kish who was the father of King Saul. He was caring for his cousin, Esther.

Esther (who has a Hebrew name, Hadassah) was an orphan taken in by her cousin and was very beautiful.

3. Read Esther 2:8–18 and think through the realities of what is happening here. Each of these young women is going to spend one night with the king, and those whom he doesn't choose to be his queen will spend the rest of their lives living in the harem, never having a family but kept in comfort. The text doesn't overtly reveal how Esther feels about this, whether she sees it as a great loss of her plans for her life or as a great opportunity. We do see her responding to the test of serving a foreign king very differently from how another young Jew did. Read Daniel 1:1–21 and 3:8–18 and note similarities and differences between Daniel's experience in the pagan king's palace and Esther's experience in the pagan king's palace.

Similarities:

They were both brought to the palace by force.

They were both given the best food to eat.

They both found favor with the King's eunuchs.

Daniel was provided a great education; Esther was provided fabulous beauty treatments.

Daniel was found to be better than all of the other advisors in the kingdom; Esther was found to be more beautiful and desirable than all of the other women in the harem.

The lives of both were put into jeopardy due to a rash decree of the king intended to target the Jews in the kingdom.

Differences:

Whereas Daniel refused to eat the king's food, Esther ate the king's food.

Whereas Daniel refused to worship the king's gods, perhaps Esther was willing to do so to keep her identity hidden. At least she must not have practiced the cleanliness rituals, Sabbath-keeping, and feasts of God's people.

4. Read Esther 2:19–23 and summarize in a sentence or two what happened.

Mordecai discovered a plot against the king. He told Esther, who told the king.

5. In chapter 3 we are introduced to the king's right-hand man, Haman, and told that he is "the Agagite" (v. 1). This doesn't mean much to us, but it would have to the Jews living in Susa who knew their Jewish history. Read Exodus 17:8–16; 1 Samuel 15:1–33; and Esther 3:1–6. How might the history shown here explain what motivates both Mordecai and Haman's attitudes and actions? (Remember from 2:5 that Mordecai, like King Saul, was a descendant of Kish.)

Haman was a descendant of Agag, the ancient tribal enemy of the Jews. God had declared there would be a lasting enmity between the Amalekites and the Jews and committed himself to blotting out the memory of Amalek. It was a battle with Agag the Amalekite that caused Mordecai's ancestor, King Saul, to lose the throne over Israel. Of course Mordecai would not want to bow to a descendant of the Amalekites.

6. Describe in a sentence or two what happens in Esther 3:7–15.

Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to sign a decree that the Jews were to be destroyed and the decree was issued throughout the entire kingdom.

7. Read Esther 4. What does Mordecai want Esther to do, and how does he seek to motivate her to do it (vv. 12–14)?

He wants her to plead with the king on behalf of her people. He reminds her that if she does not speak up and plead for her people, when God delivers them through

some other means, she and her family will face the consequences for failing to do her part.

8. Read Esther 5:1–8. What does Esther now have the king on record as saying, as she works up to asking that her life and that of her people be spared?

"What is your wish? It shall be granted you. . . . even to the half of my kingdom." (v. 6)

9. Read Esther 5:9–14. Note the advice given to Haman by his wife and friends.

Build a gallows and have Mordecai hanged on it.

10. Read Esther 6. Esther is one of those books that never mentions God. But how do you see God at work in hidden ways in this chapter?

God evidently caused the king to be unable to sleep and for him to choose to read from the book of memorable deeds to try to get back to sleep. He is providentially bringing about the timing of this sleepless night, Haman's building of the gallows, and Haman's readiness to describe how he wants to be honored to bring about Haman's humiliation and destruction.

11. Describe in a sentence or two what happens in Esther 7.

Esther asked that her life, and the lives of her people, be spared by the king. She revealed Haman as the one who has plotted against them. The king hanged Haman on the gallows prepared for Mordecai.

12. Haman is dead, but that does not deal with the edict broadcast throughout the kingdom that the Jews are to be killed, an edict that cannot be revoked or retracted. What plan did Mordecai come up with to deal with this edict, and how did it work out, according to Esther 8:9–9:7?

Another edict was sent out saying that the king allowed the Jews to defend their lives, to destroy, kill and annihilate any force that attacked them on the day the earlier edict had set. On that day, the Jews defeated all of their enemies.

Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. The writer of the book of Esther seems content to be ambiguous about Esther's faith and piety and morality. What are your impressions about why Esther does what she does?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Esther is a book of the Bible in which God is not even mentioned. But certainly he is assumed and active. How do you see God at work in this story?

God works in Esther, and even in our lives most of the time, not through his visible, miraculous hand, but through his invisible hand of providence. It was no accident when Esther won that beauty contest at the book's beginning, nor was it by chance that Ahasuerus, unable to sleep one fateful night, began to search the archives and thereby discovered the name of Mordecai. It was hardly fortuitous that Haman fell on Esther's bed just as the king walked in, nor was it mere happenstance that that unwitting scoundrel had already prepared a gallows for his own neck. The book demonstrates God's active presence with and preservation of his people—the people through whom the Promised One, the Christ, will come.

3. The book of Esther encourages us to contrast the kingdom of the world under King Ahasuerus with the kingdom of God under King Jesus. Think through some of the actions and attitudes of King Ahasuerus. In what ways is it far better to live in the kingdom of God under King Jesus?

4. The goal of the kingdom of Persia in Esther's day was assimilation. Do you think the kingdom of the world in our day demands assimilation? In what ways do you see it?

5. Romans 12:2 instructs, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." What do you think that means, and what do you think it requires?

6. Someone read aloud John 15:18–25 and John 16:32–33. How is this truth demonstrated in history, especially in the book of Esther, and what does it tell us about what we can expect in the future?

7. Haman is one in a long line of enemies of the people of God who are really skills of the ancient Serpent. Who are some of the other characters or powers throughout Old Testament history that fall into this category? And how was each of them defeated?

Pharaoh sought to destroy the Hebrews through overwork and killing the baby boys, but God hurled the Pharaoh and his army into the sea. Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse the Israelites, but God put only words of blessing in Balaam's mouth. Goliath threatened the Israelites with lifelong slavery, but God enabled a shepherd boy to kill Goliath with a stone and a sling shot.

Getting Personal

8. Can you relate to Nancy's fear and reluctance to go public with identifying herself with Christ as the only way of knowing God? Have you experienced opposition directly related to your stand for Christ? If not, why do you think that is?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. When Jesus walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27), what do you think he might have said about how the book of Esther was about him?

Perhaps Jesus would have pointed out how different he, as a king, and his kingdom is from King Ahasuerus and his kingdom. Perhaps he would have showed how he was a superior mediator to Esther since he gladly and willingly interceded for his people, taking upon himself the wrath of God, interceding not at the risk of his life but at the cost of his life. Perhaps he would have said that God was at work in the book of Esther preserving his people so that he would one day be born of them.

Video Study Note-Taking Pages for Duplication

The process of taking notes is, for many of us, less about having the notes to refer to later than it is about the increased concentration and comprehension that comes to us as we hear something and process it through our pen onto paper. Certainly your members should each have a copy of the companion book, *The Son of David*, and all of the content from the videos is included in the book. Still, it may be helpful for some mem-

bers to take notes with an outline to help them track along with the teaching presentation on the video. Others may choose to take notes on their own blank page, and some may choose not to take notes at all. Following are reproducible note pages for each week, with the major headings as presented on the videos. You are free to make as many copies of these note-taking pages as needed for your group members.

Notes on Week 1

Your Kingdom Come

The Kingdom as It Once Was

The Kingdom at Hand

The Kingdom as It Is Now

The Kingdom as It Will Be

Notes on Week 2: Joshua

There's No Place like Home

Eden: God's Land Established

Canaan: God's Land Promised

Canaan: God's Land Delivered

Canaan: God's Land Cleansed

The Whole World: God's Land Expanded

Notes on Week 3: Judges

Holding Out for a Hero

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Incomplete Obedience

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Ignorance

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Idolatry

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Enemies

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Increasing Corruption

We Need a Hero to Save Us from Our Inadequate Repentance

We Need a King to Save Us by Ruling over Us

We Need a King to Make Us Right in God's Eyes

Notes on Week 4: Ruth

Fields of Grace

A Gracious Intention

A Gracious Visitation

A Gracious Provision

A Gracious Redemption

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. *But now* in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . . So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (Eph. 2:12–13, 19)

Week 5: 1 Samuel

We Won

Anticipated King

Rejected King

Unexpected King

Anointed King

Embattled King

Victorious King

That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb. 2:14–15)

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:57)

Notes for Week 6: 2 Samuel

Forever

The King's City

The King's Joy

The King's House

The King's Throne

Notes for Week 7: 1 Kings

Something Greater

Solomon's Wisdom

Solomon's Wealth

Solomon's Worship

Solomon's Wives

Solomon's Greater Son

Notes for Week 8: 2 Kings

You Were Warned

They Were Warned

They Were Disobedient

They Were Exiled

He Was Obedient

He Was Exiled

We've Been Warned

Notes for Week 9: Ezra and Nehemiah

So Far Away from God

He Will Bring His People Home

He Will Call His People to Worship

He Will Build His City

He Will Speak to His People through His Word

He Will Set His People Apart from the World

Notes for Week 10: Esther

Tale of Two Kingdoms

Celebration in the Kingdom of the World

Assimilation in the Kingdom of the World

Opposition to the Kingdom of God

Identification with the Kingdom of God

Salvation in the Kingdom of God