

## TALK...

MAY 30 - JUNE 5

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 122:1-9

Ask God to give the community of believers peace instead of arguments and divisions, and to give his chosen people Israel peace with God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What passage most surprised you?

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Why were the consequences for David's census so severe?

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Why was God so pleased with Solomon's request in 1 Kings 3:7-9?

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What aspects of the early Christian communities in Acts stood out to you?

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What did you find confusing or have questions about?

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**TALKING POINTS**

**OLD TESTAMENT (2 SAMUEL 20:14—1 KINGS 6:38)**

David sins by taking a census (2 SAM 24)

David makes Solomon king (1 KGS 1:28-53)

Solomon executes Adonijah and Joab for spreading dissent (1 KGS 2:13-34)

“Give me an understanding heart.” (1 KGS 3:9)

Solomon builds the Temple (1 KGS 5-6)

**NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 1:1-7:29)**

Jesus ascends into heaven (ACTS 1:9-11)

“And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages.” (ACTS 2:4)

Peter and John arrested for preaching in the Temple (ACTS 4:1-21)

“All the believers were united in heart and mind.” (ACTS 4:32)

The apostles suffer interrogation, imprisonment, and flogging for their faith (ACTS 5:17-42)



*“You certainly remember all the wicked things you did to my father, David. May the LORD now bring that evil on your own head.”*

1 KINGS 2:44

**REFLECT ON 1 KINGS 2:13-25, 36-46**

Both Adonijah and Shimei were troublemakers trying to overthrow the king, but Solomon showed them both mercy with strict conditions. Both of them agreed, yet both rebelled against the terms of their agreement.

By asking to marry David’s concubine Abishag, Adonijah was looking to make a claim to the throne—he was still plotting to become king. Shimei, for his part, was a member of Saul’s tribe and had previously cursed David—he, too, was a rebel against the king. Solomon confined him to Jerusalem to keep him from going to his tribesmen and stirring up trouble.

Solomon was a wise leader who understood when it was appropriate to extend mercy and when to exercise judgment. When Adonijah and Shimei violated Solomon’s terms, Solomon had them both executed.

Like Adonijah and Shimei, we strive over and over to usurp God’s rightful place as King. We try to sit on the throne and reign over our own lives. Yet God shows us mercy over and over. He doesn’t execute us like rebels. Instead, Jesus is counted among us rebels and stands in our place (Luke 22:37) so that we can become right-standing citizens in God’s Kingdom.

**REFLECTION THOUGHT**

**GOD SHOWS US MERCY OVER AND OVER.**

**HOW DID EARLY CHURCH LEADERS HANDLE PROBLEMS FACING THEM?**

In Acts 6:1-15 the new Christian community faced a crisis of leadership. The Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem were upset because the needs of their widows were being overlooked “in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:1). This disruption threatened the development of the Church with “rumblings of discontent” (Acts 6:1) and had to be addressed. Wisely, the apostles recognized the problem and called for the selection of seven men to administer the food program. Many interpreters see the seven as the first deacons.

The apostles provided leadership that empowers by sensitively listening to genuine community needs. The people united with the leaders to respond. This wise handling of the issue resulted in spiritual growth and increased the number of believers. Different gifts were recognized in the Church and put to work for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11). A clear division of labor was agreed upon—the apostles attended to preaching and teaching, and other Spirit-filled leaders handled the material needs of the people.

God has given the Church its leaders, not to “lord it over” other people, but to serve the community (Matthew 20:25-28). The leaders of the Church do well when they recognize the needs of the community, as well as those whom God has prepared to meet those needs. Good leaders recognize gifted people and help them develop, empowering the members of the body to use their God-given gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12).

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## TALK...

JUNE 6-12

**PRAYING THE PSALMS PSALM 131:1-3**

Sit quietly before God, and thank him for all the ways he has taken care of you.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What passage most surprised you?

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Where did you see God at work?

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Why did the northern tribes of Israel rebel so easily against Rehoboam and against God?

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What was the significance of Peter's vision (Acts 10:10-17)?

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Do you know anyone who, like Saul, experienced an unusual or dramatic conversion?

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**TALKING POINTS****OLD TESTAMENT (1 KINGS 7–17)**

The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon (1 KGS 10:1-13)

Solomon erects shrines to pagan gods (1 KGS 11:1-13)

Israel splits into northern and southern kingdoms (1 KGS 12:1-20)

Ahab becomes king of Israel and marries the pagan Jezebel (1 KGS 16:29-34)

Elijah hides in the wilderness and is miraculously fed by ravens (1 KGS 17:1-7)

**NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 7:30–10:48)**

Stephen becomes the first martyr for Christ (ACTS 7)

Philip shares the Good News with an Ethiopian eunuch (ACTS 8:26-40)

“‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!’” (ACTS 9:5)

“‘God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.’” (ACTS 10:28)

Peter brings the gospel to the Gentiles (ACTS 10:34-48)



*“In this way, all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do.”*

1 KINGS 8:43

**REFLECT ON 1 KINGS 8:41-43**

God chose Israel to be a blessing to the whole world (Genesis 12:1-3). Israel was to become a light to the surrounding nations. Solomon prayed that non-Israelites would see Israel’s light, learn to fear the Lord, and live in relationship with him.

Sadly, Israel’s own sin and spiritual blindness prevented them from reaching out to the rest of the world with God’s love. But praise God! Jesus fulfilled Israel’s purpose and became God’s blessing. He was a descendant of Abraham and David (Galatians 3:8-9) and became the Messiah for all people, both Jews and non-Jews.

Reaching out to the world and being a blessing is still God’s purpose for his people today. Christians should seize every opportunity to spread God’s love to everyone.

**REFLECTION THOUGHT**

**REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD AND BEING A BLESSING IS STILL GOD’S PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE TODAY.**

**HOW IS GOD FAITHFUL TO HIS PEOPLE?**

After Solomon had finished dedicating the Temple, the Lord appeared to him and reminded him that if the people were unfaithful to his covenant, judgment would follow (1 Kings 9:6-9). On the other hand, if they were faithful, God would dwell among them and never forsake them (1 Kings 6:12-13).

God had called the nation Israel to be his covenant people. Despite their unique identity as God’s people, the people of Israel “sacrificed their offerings at local places of worship” (1 Kings 3:2). In other words, they continued to participate in pagan worship. Both the northern and southern kingdoms fell into this sin, but the people of the northern kingdom received particular denunciation. Separated from Judah—the southern kingdom—they soon followed their corrupt leaders into idolatry and apostate religious practices. They were covenant breakers. Despite God’s warnings, they were unfaithful, and God’s judgment was certain to follow. Still, God retained a faithful remnant among them and had plans for their future well-being.

God still has a people who are his own (1 Corinthians 1:2). God’s own people now make up God’s temple and are to live holy lives, “totally committed to doing good deeds” (Titus 2:14). Their assured hope is to live with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). They have God’s promise that he will never forsake them but will always be faithful to his promises to them (2 Timothy 2:13).

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**REFLECT**

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A WAY TO SEE



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## TALK...

JUNE 13-19

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 135:1-21

Meditate on the great things God has done that are recorded in this psalm and on the great things that he has done in your life and world.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What insights do we gain into God's character from 1 Kings 21:29?

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When have you had to listen for God's "gentle whisper"? What distracts us from that whisper?

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What was it about Paul's preaching in Acts 13:13-41 that elicited such a strong response?

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Why do you think people might have been spreading the false teaching mentioned in Acts 15?

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What did you find confusing or have questions about?

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**TALKING POINTS****OLD TESTAMENT (1 KINGS 18:1—2 KINGS 5:27)**

Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal (1 KGS 18)

"And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by." (1 KGS 19:11)

"Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." (2 KGS 2:9)

"Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 KGS 2:11)

Elisha heals Naaman's leprosy (2 KGS 5)

**NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 11:1–15:35)**

Barnabas joins Saul in Tarsus (ACTS 11:25-30)

An angel of the Lord frees Peter from prison (ACTS 12:6-19)

Saul becomes known as Paul and embarks on his first missionary journey (ACTS 13)

Paul and Barnabas mistaken for gods because of their miracles (ACTS 14:8-20)

Paul, Barnabas, and Peter refute false teachings within the community of believers (ACTS 15)





*But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.*

ACTS 12:5

**REFLECT ON ACTS 12:5-17**

Herod had Peter arrested during the Passover celebration. This was a strategic move, since more Jews were in the city than usual, and Herod could impress the most people. Undoubtedly Herod's plan was to execute Peter, but God's plan was to deliver Peter. The believers were praying for Peter's safety, but God was working for Peter's freedom. Rhoda and the other believers were stunned by God's answer to their prayers.

The prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of these events, and praying with other believers can significantly influence the events around you (James 5:13-18). God answers the earnest prayers of his people. In belief, we should pray often, pray fervently, and pray with confidence.

Find regular opportunities to pray together with other believers for each other, for the needs around you, and for God's bigger mission—it's bigger than you expect. Just as the early church devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42), make prayer a priority. Open the door, expecting to see God at work.

**REFLECTION THOUGHT**

**FIND REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO PRAY TOGETHER WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.**

**WHAT DO ANGELS DO IN THE WORLD?**

In the book of Acts we frequently encounter the ministry of angels. On several occasions, an angel of the Lord made possible miraculous escapes from prison. An angel offered a message of encouragement to Paul in the midst of a violent storm (Acts 27:23-24). An angel also directed Cornelius to seek the Good News from Peter (Acts 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13). On the other hand, we are told that an angel struck down Herod Agrippa "because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God" (Acts 12:23). Throughout Acts, God was guiding his people in their ministry and using angels to accomplish his purpose.

The ministry of angels is also prominent in the Gospels. Angels announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, and they ministered to Jesus after his temptation. Angels appeared at the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection.

Throughout the Bible, angels are God's heavenly agents who carry out his purpose and communicate God's will to humanity. Angels had a role in putting God's law into effect through Moses (Acts 7:38). They are "spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Angels dispense God's grace and sometimes administer his judgment (2 Kings 19:35). Angels were witnesses of Christ's life, and they are now witnesses of the lives of God's people (1 Timothy 3:16; 5:21). There are guardian angels who protect God's people (Acts 12:11). Angels will accompany Christ when he returns and will participate in the final judgment (Matthew 16:27; 25:31).

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## TALK...

JUNE 20-26

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 147:1-20

Ask God to heal brokenhearted people that you know and to help them to trust in him.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What passage most surprised you?

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What did you learn about God from his response to Israel's cycle of rebellion and repentance throughout 2 Kings?

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In the matter of John Mark (Acts 15:36-39), would you have agreed with Paul or Barnabas? Why?

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Was there anyone in Acts whose approach to faith was especially inspiring or impressive to you?

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Where did you catch a glimpse of Jesus?

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**TALKING POINTS****OLD TESTAMENT (2 KINGS 6:1–18:12)**

Elisha's miraculous defeat of the Arameans (2 KGS 6:8-23)

Jehu kills Jezebel (2 KGS 9:30-37)

Joash repairs the Temple (2 KGS 12:1-16)

"Because the LORD was very angry with Israel, he swept them away from his presence."  
(2 KGS 17:18)

"Hezekiah did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight."  
(2 KGS 18:3)

**NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 15:36–20:38)**

"Then [the jailer] and everyone in his household were immediately baptized." (ACTS 16:33)

Paul preaches the gospel in Athens (ACTS 17:16-34)

Paul befriends Priscilla and Aquila (ACTS 18)

Paul's unusual miracles (ACTS 19:11-12)

Paul meets with the Ephesian elders for the last time (ACTS 20:13-38)

*“This God, whom you worship without knowing,  
is the one I’m telling you about.”*

ACTS 17:23

JUNE 20-26



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

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**REFLECT ON ACTS 17:22-31**

Paul’s address is a good example of how to communicate the Good News clearly and relevantly to a specific audience. Paul did not begin by reciting Jewish history, as he usually did. This would have been meaningless to his Greek audience. Instead, he began by building a case for the one true God, using examples they understood. Paul’s opening statement to the men of Athens was about their unknown god. Paul was not endorsing this god but using the inscription as a point of entry for his testimony about the one true God. He established common ground by emphasizing what they agreed on about God. Finally, he moved his message to the person of Christ, centering on the resurrection of Jesus.

When you tell others about Jesus, Paul’s approach is a good one to follow. Figure out what beliefs you have in common, and start there. That might mean asking lots of questions first. Use examples that will connect to others’ experience, then testify about Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Explain to them what it means to turn away from sin and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**REFLECTION THOUGHT**

**FIGURE OUT WHAT BELIEFS YOU HAVE IN COMMON, AND START THERE.**

**WHAT SORT OF PICTURE DOES 1–2 KINGS PAINT OF ISRAEL’S FAITHFULNESS TO GOD?**

Many kings of Judah were commended for doing what was pleasing in the Lord’s sight. Joash was personally involved in repairing the Temple (2 Kings 12:6-12). Amaziah is praised for punishing his father Joash’s assassins in keeping with the law of Moses (2 Kings 14:5-6). His son Uzziah and his grandson Jotham followed in Amaziah’s footsteps (2 Kings 15:3, 34). Hezekiah’s trust in the Lord led to the removal of pagan shrines and idolatrous objects (2 Kings 18:3-6). Josiah is commended for having a heart like his ancestor David’s, for the many reforms that he instituted, and for his unqualified concern for the law of the Lord (2 Kings 23:25). Throughout the books of Kings, David’s heart for God is held up as the model for godly obedience to the Lord (1 Kings 14:8; 2 Kings 22:2).

Although those kings remained faithful to God’s laws, neither Solomon nor the people followed the Lord completely. In the northern kingdom, the kings after Jeroboam consistently sponsored apostate religion, incorporating the worship of Baal and other pagan deities (1 Kings 16:2, 19). The Lord judged and condemned such disobedience and infidelity throughout the history of the divided kingdom. In the northern kingdom, dynasty after dynasty fell, while the people suffered drought, famine, and war. They learned all too painfully that although spiritual obedience brings God’s blessings, disobedience will incur his severe judgment (Deuteronomy 28:1-68; 1 Samuel 15:13-23).

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