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1 Kings 1

“The Death of a King, The Rebellion of a Son”

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In this study, the first in Pastor Gary’s series from the book of 1 Kings, we’ll learn more about Adonijah, King David’s son, and the troubling experiences and tragic ending to his life, all of which were the result of not having a true father, true friends, or a true fear of God.

Historical Background

1. In Hebrew, 1 Kings and 2 Kings was originally one book.
2. The author is not known, but some scholars believe either Ezra or Ezekiel authored these books.
3. According to Jewish tradition, the Jewish Babylonian Talmud indicates that Jeremiah was most likely the author.
4. 1 Kings and 2 Kings cover a period of about 400 years.
 - a. The time from King Solomon (970BC) to King Zedekiah and the Babylonian captivity (586BC).

King David And Adonijah

5. 1 Kings picks up where 2 Samuel ends, which is the final year of David’s life.
 - a. We read of David’s death in 1 Kings 2, when David was 70 years old, and he had ruled Israel for 40 years.
6. As David neared death, his son, Adonijah, initiated a battle for his throne.

7. Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and the prophet Nathan, put forth Solomon (about 17 or 18 years old) to be the next king.
8. God wanted Solomon to be king.
 - a. **1 Chronicles 22:9-10** - *"[God said,] 'But you [David] will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest on every side. His name will be Solomon [Shlomoh, from shalom], and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.' "*
9. The plan of succession was with Solomon, but the plan of sedition was with Adonijah.
10. Adonijah is believed to have been David's oldest surviving son (approximately 30 to 35 years of age), so Adonijah and others thought he was the natural choice to be the next king.
11. Adonijah acted on the understanding that he was the heir apparent, by hosting a lavish party with an invitation that is basically understood as follows: "Hey, Dad's almost dead, so come and help me push him into his grave and watch me try on my new crown!"
12. Meanwhile, Nathan the prophet went to Bathsheba and told her to tell David what Adonijah was up to, because she and Solomon would be as good as dead if Adonijah succeeded in the coup!
13. In **1 Kings 1:32-40**, we read that when David heard Nathan and Bathsheba's account, he gave instructions to ensure Solomon would be the new king.
14. Solomon was put on David's mule and he was led to the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley of Jerusalem, where Zadok the priest anointed him with oil, the trumpet (shofar) sounded, and all the people shouted, *"Long live King Solomon!"*
15. Meanwhile, at Adonijah's party, everyone heard the sound of the celebration of Solomon's coronation, a sound that was said to have shaken the earth, and they wondered what all the commotion was about.
16. Adonijah and his guests received word that David had crowned Solomon king, and that all of the royal officials were congratulating David and Solomon.
 - a. **1 Kings 1:48** - *"... [David said] 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today.' "*

17. **1 Kings 1:49-51** - *“At this, all Adonijah’s guests rose in alarm and dispersed. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then Solomon was told, ‘Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’ ”*
18. After hearing the news, Adonijah ran to the Tabernacle and took hold of the horns of the altar, which was his appeal for mercy.
19. Solomon’s first act as king was to grant mercy to his half-brother, Adonijah, and he told him to go home, which was something like probation.
 - a. **1 Kings 1:52** - *“Solomon replied, ‘If he shows himself to be a worthy man, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die.’ ”*
20. **1 Kings 2:10-12** - *“Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. He had reigned forty years over Israel – seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.”*
21. Shortly after David died, Adonijah went to Bathsheba, asking her to speak to Solomon on his behalf, concerning his desire to marry Abishag, and, when she spoke to Solomon, he was furious! ¹
22. The reason Adonijah didn’t go to Solomon himself was because his request to get what belonged to his father, King David, would have been a sly, back-door attempt at wanting the people to see him as David’s successor.
23. Solomon extended grace to Adonijah once, but this request resulted in Adonijah’s death.
 - a. **1 Kings 2:23-25** - *“Then King Solomon swore by the Lord: ‘May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay with his life for this request! And now, as surely as the Lord lives – he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David and has founded a dynasty for me as he promised – Adonijah shall be put to death today!’ So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah and he died.”*
24. There was a rough transition from David to Solomon, and tragically, another of David’s rebellious sons was dead, and although we shouldn’t make excuses for

¹ Any member of David’s household or court would have been passed down to Solomon upon David’s death.

Adonijah, we can pity his life and learn about the things he lacked that contributed to his tragic ending.

Adonijah Lacked A True Father

25. **1 Kings 1:6a** - *“(His father had never interfered with him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’)”*
 - a. The KJV uses the word, *“displeased.”*
 - b. The Hebrew word is *atsab*, which means to shape, fashion, form or stretch, involving pain.
26. In other words, David never “pained” or stretched his son.
 - a. Adonijah was never confronted about his behavior.
 - b. Adonijah was never challenged about things.
 - c. Adonijah was never disciplined the way he should have been.
 - d. The result was that Adonijah thought he could get away with the attempted coup because he always got away with everything else he tried.
27. Dads and Moms need to stretch their children, even when it’s uncomfortable for the children and the parents.
28. The Lord is calling parents to mold, challenge, love, and shape their children, and they are to do so while their hearts and spirits are still malleable.
29. It’s true that a child’s spirit is like their skull, in that it gets harder with time!
30. Good fathers interfere and they ask the “Why?” questions!
 - a. Why are you acting like this?
 - b. Why are you talking like that?
 - c. Why are you listening to that?
 - d. Why are you watching that?
 - e. Why do you want to go there?
 - f. Why is he or she your friend?
 - g. Why did you get this grade?
 - h. Why did you stay out that late?
 - i. Why didn’t you take out the trash?
 - j. Why haven’t you cleaned your room?
 - k. Why don’t you like my questions?
31. **Proverbs 22:6** - *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*

32. **Proverbs 3:11-12** – *“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”*

Adonijah Lacked True Friends

33. Good friends aren’t afraid to ask the “Why?” questions!
34. **1 Kings 1:5** – *“Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king.’ So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him.”*
35. When Adonijah declared that he was going to be the king, not one of those 50 “friends” asked, “Why are you doing this, Adonijah?”
36. **1 Kings 1:7** – *“Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support.”*
a. Neither Joab the general, nor Abiathar, the priest, asked the “Why?” questions of Adonijah, they just joined in the foolishness of his plan, instead of confronting him about his behavior.
37. A true friend not only asks the “Why?” questions; they also, like a true friend, love enough to stick with a person because they want to be of help.

Adonijah Lacked A True Fear Of God

38. **1 Kings 1:50** – *“But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar.”*
39. Adonijah appealed to the mercy of Solomon, rather than appealing to the mercy of God.
40. In other words, Adonijah was more afraid of Solomon and pleasing Solomon, than he was about fearing God, which showed itself when Adonijah’s change was short-lived.
41. The fact is that the fear of people is only a short-term motivator, but true character and conduct is shaped by a healthy fear of God.
42. If Adonijah had healthy fear of God, he would have:
a. Respected authority

- b. Honored his father
 - c. Humbled himself instead of exalting himself
43. Pastor Gary offered the following counsel concerning the fear of God.
- a. If you want to excel at work, fear God more than you want to please your boss.
 - b. If you want to excel at your game, fear God more than you want to please your coach.
 - c. If you want to excel in your marriage, fear God more than you want to please your spouse.
44. To Fear God is a higher, purer, and longer-lasting motivator than just trying to make someone happy with your performance.
45. **Psalm 147:10-11** - *“His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.”*
46. **Proverbs 1:7** - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...”*
47. **Proverbs 9:10** - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”*
48. **Proverbs 10:27** - *“The fear of the Lord adds length to life...”*
49. **Proverbs 16:6** - *“... through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.”*
50. **Proverbs 22:4** - *“Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life.”*

The Conclusion

51. If you want to have wisdom, knowledge, be prosperous, live a long life, live an honorable life that avoids evil, then you need to fear God!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **1 Kings 1:1-21** to provide the foundation for this study.

3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they were “pained,” stretched, challenged, or disciplined by their father or mother.
4. How have these experiences shaped your character, personality, etc.?
5. As a parent, do you “interfere” with your kids or do you shy away from the uncomfortable feelings that both you and they have when it’s necessary to ask the tough questions?
6. Share examples of the ways the Lord has helped you mold, challenge, love, and shape your child(ren). (See #27 and #28 above)
7. Have you been able to learn and recover from your mistakes and failures as a parent?
8. Spend time talking about the examples of “Why?” questions Pastor Gary shared. (See #30 above)
9. Read and discuss [Proverbs 22:6](#) and [Proverbs 3:11-12](#).
10. Share examples of times when friends or family members challenged you with the “Why?” questions.
11. How did you react to their inquiries?
12. How has your “fear” of the Lord changed as you’ve walked with him?
13. Would you or others say you would best be described as a “God pleaser” or a “man pleaser”?
14. Do you have a respect for authority, honor your father, and humble yourself instead of exalting yourself?
15. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning the “*fear of the Lord*.” (See #44 through #49 above)
16. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that to have wisdom, knowledge, prosperity, a long life, and an honorable life that avoids evil, they need to fear God!

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).