



JUNE REFLECTION GUIDE

DAY 153-182

Day 153 - Song of Songs

There are many different interpretations of the book of Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon), Tara-Leigh lays out some thoughts:

"People have argued for centuries over whether it's a story about human love or if it's an allegory about God's love for His people. Personally, I tend to think it's both. But that's just my opinion. Most commentators believe the ancient Jews regarded it as love poetry that belonged in the wisdom literature of Scripture."

Tara Leigh goes on to talk about how this book shows God's good design for marriage and sex:

"This book flies in the face of two juxtaposed ideas: 1) That sex is dirty and bad and God is disgusted by it, and 2) That sex isn't a big deal. This book reminds me that, despite all the emotional and spiritual brokenness of a lot of the world's sexuality, our Creator had good things in mind when He invented relationships, marriage, and sex. He's not trying to steal joy from people by putting certain boundaries around those things. He invented them, and like any inventor, He wants us to know how to use what He made so that we don't break it or harm ourselves and others. He graciously tells us how these things He invented can function optimally"

- **After reading this book, what was your interpretation? Love poetry or an allegory about God's love for His people?**
- **What was your biggest takeaway from Song of Songs?**

Proverbs

Things to remember while reading Proverbs:

- Proverbs is wisdom literature compiled by multiple authors over time, though Solomon is the primary author. Wisdom literature has to be handled differently than other categories of books in Scripture.
 - It isn't God's laws, advice, prophecies or promises.
 - This wisdom has been accumulated by a variety of people who have observed the world closely and aimed to demonstrate the moral mindset of what it means to love God in every aspect of their lives.
 - They are general rules that have exceptions, they are NOT promises we can cling to.
 - Keep looking for what these things reveal to you about who God is.
- As we read through this book, there are three types of people you'll see represented over and over again. They are: the wise, the fool, and the simple.
 - The wise person is often described as walking in righteousness and the fear of God.
 - The fool often leans on their own understanding & doesn't seek God, or blatantly rebels against Him.
 - The simple person is easily led astray or doesn't really pay much attention to the deeper realities of life.

Day 154 - Proverbs 1-3

The first 9 books of Proverbs are filled with a father's advice to his son. Chapter 2 gives a long list of desirable things that come from being intentional.

Proverbs 2:6 says, *"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding"*

Tara Leigh says,

"The father implores his son to seek and value wisdom and be teachable. And since we see in 2:6 that wisdom is a gift from God, then we have Him to thank for the fact that we're wise enough to seek the wisdom we know we need! Things like wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and insight -- these things have to be pursued and sought out. Once you find them, they kind of act like bodyguards for your life. They're like muscles for your soul, empowered by God the Spirit."

- **What does it look like for us to intentionally pursue and seek out wisdom, knowledge, and insight? Share some practical examples.**

Chapter 3 focuses on trusting God with the details of our lives and walking in His ways.

Proverbs 3:1-2 says, *"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you."*

Tara Leigh asks,

"When you walk in obedience to God and honor Him, don't you have more peace than when you do your own thing?"

- **How would you answer that question? Share an example of a time you walked in obedience and felt His peace.**

She goes on to say:

"Sometimes it may even be a peace that doesn't even make sense, given your situation. Obedience adds peace to our lives where there would normally only be chaos."

Proverbs 3:5-7 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes."*

- **What does this verse mean to you?**

Day 155 - Proverbs 4-6

The pursuit of wisdom is a never ending journey ... Proverbs 4:7 says, *"The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom."*

Tara-Leigh shares that the journey to get wisdom is a cycle:

"to even recognize that you need wisdom is wise, then you pursue wisdom and you get wiser, and you realize how much more you still have to learn. I've heard a relationship with God described in much the same way, that "the closer you get to Him the further you realize you are from Him. Maybe you feel that. It's interesting how being closer to the light of God will illuminate the dark places in us all the more -- we feel conviction about sins that never bothered us before, we see positive changes in negative attitudes we used to prize -- He really does work

such a change in us that we can't access on our own and we can't engage using our own power. He does the doing. He is the source, supply, and goal. He initiates, sustains, and fulfills all of this wisdom business in us."

- **Can you relate to what Tara-Leigh shared about this quest for wisdom and what happen when we move closer to God's light?**

- **What have you seen in your own life as a result of pursuing His Wisdom?**

In the ESV, Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."*

Other Translations say... *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

Tara-Leigh points out that this verse is *"not about disengaging from your emotions or trying not to get your hopes up that things might work out with your love interest. When we look at the context of this verse we see that it's surrounded by verses about clinging to wisdom and about keeping your tongue from lies, your eyes from evil, and your feet from wicked paths. This verse about guarding our hearts seems to be more concerned with eradicating bitterness and malice from our hearts."*

- **What does this verse mean to you?**

Tara-Leigh talks about what the author unpacks in Proverbs 6:16-19, it lists 7 things that are an abomination to God, and 6 things He hates.

"Here they are: "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. So what does this list teach us about what God loves? He loves humility, honesty, innocence and justice, purity, righteousness, truth, peacemaking and unity. Those things are so beautiful, and they definitely demonstrate who we've seen Him to be as we've been reading through scripture. I want to be more like Him, like that list -- and less like me, the first list."

- **What do these lists show us about the character of God?**

Day 156 - Proverbs 7-9

In chapters, the father wants the son to heed his wisdom. Tara-Leigh says, *"He wants these words to be in his son's line of sight and on his hands and in his heart. All three of those areas -- eyes, hands, and heart -- are important aspects of walking in holiness and purity. If the son has this wisdom at the forefront of these places, he won't be drawn to the adulteress. Wisdom offers the son something lasting, and the adulteress (folly) takes something lasting from him."*

- **Can you think of times in your life when wisdom has offered you something lasting and/or when folly has taken something lasting from you? Share if you are comfortable.**

Day 157 - Proverbs 10-12

In this section, we move out of the father's advice to his son into just general wisdom.

Proverbs 10:8 says, *"The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin."*

Tara-Leigh points out that:

"The foolish think they know it all, so they not only don't receive correction, but they don't even listen to it to begin with — they just keep talking. I recently heard a man say it this way, "You never learn when you're talking."

- **How well do you take correction? Be honest, is your first instinct to take offense or is it to own your part & listen?**

- **Do you believe that "You never learn when you're talking"? Give some examples of why or why not.**

Proverbs 10:17 says, *"Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray."*

Tara-Leigh reminds us that:

"The way we live -- whether foolish or wise or even as a simple person -- impacts the other people in our lives. This is a universal truth -- it's not just true for Christ-followers. Think about it: don't many of your frustrations come from people who are either doing wicked things or just doing things without thinking about them? The foolish and the simple cause a lot of struggle through their actions and inaction."

- **How can we influence or impact others through our actions or our inactions?**

Chapter 10 talks alot about the power of our words. Here's a sampling of what we find in this chapter:

- "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life"
- "On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found,"
- "the mouth of a fool brings ruin near,"
- "whoever utters slander is a fool."
- When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.
- The tongue of the righteous is choice silver...
- The lips of the righteous feed many..."
- "The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
- The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.

- **What do we learn from these verses?**

Day 158- Proverbs 13-15

Here's a few key verses from this reading:

Proverbs 13:20 *"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."*

- This verse speaks to who we keep company with and points out the importance of who is in our circle of influence.

Proverbs 14:6 *"A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding."*

- Tara-Leigh points out *"The problem with scoffers is that they prefer questions to answers; answers are a threat, because they require something of us -- they require us to submit to the answers we find. If someone is truly seeking, they'll be delighted when you give them what they're actually after."*

Proverbs 14:12 *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."*

Proverbs 15:25 *"The Lord tears down the house of the proud, but maintains the widow's boundaries."*

- **Discuss these verses and what we learn from them.**

Day 159- Proverbs 16-18

Proverbs 16 is rich with wisdom about:

Our plans and His purpose:

Vs. 1-4 - *"The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble."*

Vs. 9 - *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

Pride

Vs. 5 - *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.*

Vs 18-19 - *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

- **What are situations that cause your pride to rear its ugly head?**
- **Share examples of when you have seen prideful behavior**

Our Words

Vs. 21 - *"The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.*

Vs. 23 - *"The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips."*

Vs. 24 - *"Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."*

- When do you find it difficult to use “sweet, kind” words?
- What is the benefit of “sweetening” our speech?

Day 160- Proverbs 19-21

Proverbs 19 has much to say about us forging ahead with our own plans without seeking the Lord.

Vs. 2 - “Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.”

- What does it mean to have “desire without knowledge”?
- Can you have an intimate relationship with someone if you don’t KNOW them?

Tara-Leigh reminds us that...*“If you were in a relationship with someone who said they loved you but didn’t want to know anything about you, wouldn’t that seem really off to you? Wouldn’t it make you really skeptical about their so-called love? It breaks my heart to see this kind of thing in the church -- where we have a relationship with God that is driven only by emotion and that has no actual knowledge of who God is.”*

- What does Proverbs 19:2 teach us about being in a hurry?

Vs. 20-21 - “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”

- What do we learn from this verse about holding tight to our plans?

This section of Proverbs also addresses the “quarrelsome” woman. Quarrelsome is not a word we use very often but some synonyms for quarrelsome are petty, argumentative, irritable, restless, confrontational. Here’s what these verses say:

In 19:13, it says, “A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife’s quarreling is a continual dripping of rain”

In 21:9, it says “It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.”

In 21:19, it says “It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.”

Tara-Leigh reminds us that *“Being quarrelsome or antagonistic or nit-picky -- those aren’t desirable traits in any relationship, much less the person you’re binding yourself to for life.”*

- What can we learn from these verses?

Day 161- Proverbs 22-24

Proverbs 22 addresses walking in wisdom to avoid sin. There are phrases like, “the prudent sees danger and hides himself”, “guard your soul”, “apply your heart”, “train up a child” and “thorns and snares are in the way”... Solomon is telling us to pay attention, be on watch for the things that our eyes and affections away from God.

- **What are things that steal your attention away from God?**
- **What traps, patterns or habits do you fall into?**
- **What could you put in place to help you avoid those pitfalls?**

Read Proverbs 22:24-25, 23:20-21, 24:21

- **What do these verses have to say about the importance of our friendships in our pursuit of wisdom?**

Proverbs 24:3-4, it says, “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

Proverbs talks alot about knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Tara-Leigh helps us dive into each of the three concepts a little deeper:

“Knowledge is having the facts. Understanding is the ability to discern what the facts mean and how things fit together in the big picture. Wisdom is knowing how to apply your knowledge and understanding -- how it all translates into the everyday life of a Christ-follower. The fact that you’re in the Word means you’re stacking up all three of these things. I love this quote from RC Sproul where he summarizes it all: “Our Lord calls for a continued application of the mind to His Word. A disciple does not dabble in learning. He makes the pursuit of an understanding of God’s Word a chief business of his life.”

- **As we approach the half-way point in this journey of reading through the Bible, do you feel like your knowledge and understanding is leading to more wisdom in your life?**

Day 162-163 - I Kings 5-7, II Chronicles 2-4

In these scriptures, we drop back into the narrative where Solomon is busy making preparations to build the Temple. [Here’s a short video that has a visual representation of Solomon’s Temple](#)

Here’s some of the things that Tara-Leigh pointed out:

- The temple was only 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Pretty small by modern standards.
- Temple construction takes them 7 years, and it’s all taking place roughly 500 years after the Israelites came out of bondage in Egypt. This has been a long time coming!
- It was made of the finest materials on earth: gold and cypress and precious stones.

- They prepare the Holy of Holies for the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant by hanging a huge curtain to separate it from the holy place -- to block off the area where God's earthly throne will dwell.
- Behind this curtain are two cherubim statues, carved out of olive wood. Cherubim serve as guards of holy places -- like the Garden of Eden and the Holy of Holies.

Tara-Leigh also reminds us of the location of the temple which is the site of Ornan's threshing floor where David offered sacrifices back in I Chronicles 21, but also:

"Today we saw that it was located on Mount Moriah. Do you remember what else happened on Mount Moriah? It's been a while, so here's a refresher: that's where Abraham went to offer Isaac in Genesis 22 (:2), before God stopped him and said He would provide the sacrifice. Many people believe the temple was built on that exact site, on the southern end of Mount Moriah. Something else happened on this mountain that we haven't read about yet -- it's where God did provide the sacrifice. On the northern end of this mountain, the highest point is called Mount Calvary, or Golgotha. And it marks the site of Christ's death. From the start of the story to the fulfillment of the story, this mountain top has been a focal point. He's not only been providing all along, but He's been foreshadowing His plan for ultimate provision all along as well. He's writing a beautiful story with this mountaintop as the heart of the action. He's sentimental like that."

➤ **What do we learn about God as we see the significance of this temple location?**

Day 164-165, 167 - I Kings 8-9, II Chronicles 5-8, Psalm 136

In these passages, we see Solomon putting the finishing touches on the temple. He brings the Ark of the Covenant into the temple using the Levites and the poles as God instructed unlike his father David. As the ark enters the temple, a cloud comes in and fills the space. This also happened in Exodus 40 with Moses and the tent of meeting. Once this is finished, we see Solomon offer a beautiful prayer and blessing over the temple and the people.

➤ **What stood out to you in Solomon's prayer in I Kings 8 and II Chronicles 6?**

As Solomon finishes this prayer, II Chronicles 7:1-3 tells us, *"As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

This leads us perfectly to Psalm 136 which feels like a collection of all we have read so far in scripture. Read this Psalm again out loud.

➤ **What does Psalm 136 show us about who God is?**

Day 166 - Psalm 134, 146-150

Psalm 134 reminds us that we worship the one "who made heaven and earth"

Psalm 146 reminds us "Put not your trust in princes" because "The Lord will reign forever"

Psalms 147 reminds us that “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.”

Psalms 148 reminds us that everything is to “praise the name of the Lord...For he commanded and they were created.”

Psalms 149 reminds us that, “the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.”

Psalms 150 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”

➤ **What did you takeaway from these Psalms?**

Day 168-169 - Proverbs 25-29

Proverbs 25 addresses the issue of having self-control by giving us phrases such as “Argue your case with your neighbor himself” “With patience a ruler may be persuaded”, and “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”

➤ **What does this chapter teach us about self-control?**

Tara-Leigh reminds us once again that Proverbs should not be read as a book of laws or commands... she says,

“In Proverbs 26 -- he describes the foolish man as being wasteful and worthless. In verses 4 and 5 we hit one of those sections that can be confusing because the two verses seem to contradict themselves. They say, “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” This is a good place to reiterate that Proverbs is not a book of Biblical laws -- it’s a book of general principles for wise living. Some situations call for one type of wisdom, and some for another type of wisdom. We should take them both together because they complement each other -- there will be times when a fool needs to be corrected, and there will be times when correcting a fool will be a waste of your time and breath, because he won’t receive it. You have to have discernment to know which situation applies. This is a good example of how knowledge and understanding work together with wisdom.”

➤ **Is it helpful as you read Proverbs to remember that it is NOT a book of laws, but of general tips for wise living?**

Proverbs 27 contains lots of nuggets of wisdom for our relationships.

We see phrases like...“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”Faithful are the wounds of a friend” “the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” “Do not forsake your friend” “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”

➤ **What do we learn about friendship from Proverbs 27?**

Day 170-171 - Ecclesiastes

The theme of Ecclesiastes revolves around this idea of “Hevel, Hevel, everything is utterly Hevel” Hevel can be translated as “vanity” “meaningless” “useless” or as a “vapor” This word is used 38 times in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The author of this book is trying to impart that everything in life is fleeting and is like a vapor that’s here and then gone. We chase after all these temporary things to give us meaning and purpose and they do not satisfy.

Ecclesiastes 3 comes the well-known "for everything there is a season" verses...

Tara-Leigh points this out about this passage of scripture:

"There are 14 pairs of seasons, and we usually prefer one of the things in each pair -- a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to mourn, and a time to dance -- but God has appointed both things in the pair. God is actively working in everything for a specific purpose -- namely, redemption -- and that He's given us a desire to grasp it all, but the inability to do so. God leaves some things as mysteries, even to the wise. It's a reminder that we aren't God, and it's also an incentive to trust Him with all the things we don't know. This is both comforting and humbling."

- **Have you heard these verses before? Did reading them in context within the Old Testament storyline change your perspective on them?**

The author talks about chasing and striving for a temporary fix through our work, wisdom, pleasure, experiences, wealth, control and relationships, yet all of this is "like a vapor".

Tara-Leigh says, *"Ecclesiastes 3:14, says, 'I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it.' The teacher starts out talking about all this striving we do to gain things that are fleeting, and how we exhaust ourselves over a vapor. And here we see that everything GOD sets in motion is immovable -- it lasts. We can't add to it or take from it. It's fixed forever. How very opposite His ways are from ours. How powerful He is and how weak we are. I love that about Him. I'm drawn to His strength and His permanence."*

- **Which of these do you find yourself chasing after to satisfy you? What would it take for you to lay down that pursuit to chase after God instead?**

Ecclesiastes 8:12 sums up the entire book... "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him."

- **Did reading Ecclesiastes bring you despair or hope?**

Day 172 - I Kings 10-11, II Chronicles 9

In this section of scripture, we begin to see Solomon's marriages to pagan women influence his decline into apostasy. We see him going in direct opposition to God's commands by amassing more gold and horses and eventually this all leads to the downfall of his kingdom.

Tara-Leigh says, *"God says his rebellion will cost him the kingdom. Despite Solomon's sin, God wants to keep His promise to his father David. He says that after Solomon dies, the majority of Israel will be torn away from his son during his reign. God effectively punishes Solomon's blatant disobedience while maintaining His promises to David and Israel."*

- **What does this tell us about the character of God?**

In I Kings 11, we see one of Solomon's servants Jeroboam receive a prophecy saying that he will receive 10 of tribes from Solomon's line of descendants. Solomon finds out that Jeroboam is after the kingdom, so he tries to kill him, but Jeroboam flees to Egypt, and stays there until Solomon dies. In the meantime, Solomon's son Rehoboam takes over the throne.

Day 173 - Proverbs 30-31

Proverbs 31 is famous for its section (vs. 10-31) on "The Woman Who Fears the Lord" This list of "the ideal woman" is often talked about in women's bible studies as a woman to emulate.

- **How do you feel when you read about this woman?**

Tara-Leigh points out that,

"Interestingly, it was written for a man as his mother's advice on what kind of woman he should be on the lookout for. This passage on the Proverbs 31 woman often makes women feel inadequate, because we can't really live up to this ideal -- but be encouraged that this person is almost certainly imaginary. His mom is just putting together a prototype for him. And as we imagine what this woman's life must look like, we may wonder if she's a robot. The good news is that this list of things might have spanned her entire life, not a 24-hour period. She may not have been an entrepreneur while she was raising children. She may not have been feeding her family at the same time she was feeding the poor. If you're a woman, hopefully it will set you free to remember that this is wisdom literature, not law. The point of this chapter isn't that we should compare our lives to hers, but that we should take note of the wisdom in her heart and the things she values, which determines how she spends her time."

Verse 25 says, "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come." To live in fear of the LORD means we don't live in fear of tomorrow. **Verse 30** says, "a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

"If a woman fears the LORD -- she delights in God, trusts God, stands in awe of God and His ways -- then ultimately she's relying on God for everything that makes her the strong, dignified, praise-worthy woman we've seen described here. Everything praiseworthy about this woman is rooted in who God is to her, which means GOD is to be praised too! This woman is not the hero -- this woman points to the Hero. This woman finds her strength in the Hero. She's granted her wisdom and dignity by the Hero. This woman is great, for sure, but she's not the pinnacle. She points us to someone else far greater."

- **Does reframing these verses from Tara-Leigh's perspective help you think about how to apply this section of scripture to your own life?**
- **What things does this woman value?**
- **What is your biggest takeaway from these verses?**

Day 174-175 - I Kings 12-14, II Chronicles 10-12

We jump back into the narrative as Solomon's son Rehoboam has taken the throne and Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, has been hiding out in Egypt. Once Solomon dies, Jeroboam confronts Rehoboam on his mistreatment of the workers. This leads to a split in the kingdom that will have ripple effects for years to come.

Ten of the tribes become the Northern Kingdom, also now known as "Israel", and two of the tribes -- Judah and Benjamin -- become the Southern Kingdom, and they're often collectively referred to as "Judah".

Tara-Leigh gives us some tips on how to keep all this straight:

"Here's how I remember which is which: Israel starts with an 'I' and they're the northern tribes, Judah starts with a 'J' and they're the southern tribes. If you're looking from top to bottom, they're laid out in alphabetical order -- 'I' comes before 'J'. One important thing to remember is that during this time of division, when we read the word 'Israel', it's now referring to only those 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom, not all 12 tribes. King Rey (Rehoboam) remains king, but only over the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and then the Northern Kingdom of Israel makes Jerry (Jeroboam) their king. And again, if it helps, 'J' comes before 'R', so if you're looking top to bottom, the kings are laid out in alphabetical order too."

[Here's a map of the kingdoms so you can have a visual.](#)

- **King Jeroboam - Northern Kingdom - Israel**
- **King Rehoboam - Southern Kingdom - Judah**

In the North (Israel), Jeroboam was afraid that people would still want to go to Judah (where Jerusalem was in the South) to make sacrifices at the temple. In order to keep them from going there, he sets up two altars for sacrifices and two golden calves, one in Bethel (which was the religious capital before Jerusalem) and one in Dan. He appoints his own (non-Levite) priests and establishes his own feasts. We see fear drive his decisions away from the Lord. Meanwhile in the South, Rehoboam is not doing much better as he is beginning to set up high places for idol worship and making decisions based on fear that lead him away from God too.

- **Have you ever let fear drive your decisions away from the Lord? If you are willing share that with your group?**
- **We continue to see Jeroboam & Rehoboam make fear based decisions that lead them down the wrong path throughout this reading. What are some other examples you saw?**

Day 176 - I Kings 15, II Chronicles 13-16

As we begin to get into all the Kings that reign in the Northern and Southern Kingdom in the next month or so, [this CHART of Israel/Judah's Kings and Prophets](#) might be helpful to keep on hand.

NORTH/ISRAEL - Jeroboam is still king of Israel. He doesn't get along with Abijam/Abijah and sends an attack on the South, but the South kills over half his men and gains some land. When Jeroboam dies, his son Nadab takes the throne for 2 years. He and his family are killed by Baasha who takes over the throne. This fulfilled a prophecy from I Kings 14.

SOUTH/JUDAH - Rehoboam dies and his son Abijam (Abijah) takes the throne. Abijah does not follow God, just like his dad. After he dies, his son Asa takes the throne and is a God-fearing king. He begins to destroy the idols, but leaves the high places for idol worship. He wasn't perfect but his heart was aligned with the Lord.

➤ **What do we learn from Asa about aligning our hearts with the One True God?**

➤ **What do we learn about God in these passages?**

Day 177-178 - I Kings 16-19, II Chronicles 17

NORTH/ISRAEL - The prophet Jehu speaks out against King Baasha saying his family will be wiped out. Baasha dies and his son Elah takes the throne for 2 years. After 2 years, Elah's captain, Zimri kills him which fulfills Jehu's prophecy, but worries they are coming after him and kills himself by burning down the house around him, so Israel appoints Omri as king. When Omri dies, his son Ahab takes over the throne and although all these kings are wicked, Ahab will be more wicked than those before him. During Ahab's reign, they begin to build back Jericho (which was cursed in Joshua 6:26) and Ahab's sons suffer the consequences of this rebellion.

SOUTH/JUDAH - Asa dies and his son Jehoshaphat takes the throne. He, like his father and David before him, was a man who sought the Lord. He tore down the high places, sent people out to teach about the Lord, and turned his enemies into allies. II Chronicles 17:10 says, "the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat."

Tara-Leigh points out that:

"The Southern Kingdom of Judah as a whole is honoring God while the Northern Kingdom of Israel is not. This will continue to be a theme. During the entirety of the divided kingdom, the only righteous kings are in the Southern Kingdom of Judah."

➤ **Why do you think the only righteous kings were in the South (Judah)?**

NORTH/ISRAEL - Elijah - We see the prophet Elijah today tell King Ahab of Israel that God is sending a drought. Once he delivers this news, he gets out of town and God provides food for him. While Elijah is away, he encounters a widow's son who is sick and he heals her son. After a few years, he returns and Ahab blames him for this drought. Elijah reminds him that the drought is because of Ahab's wickedness and asks Ahab to call up his prophets of Baal and bring all his people to meet on the mountain. Elijah sets out to prove to them why Yahweh the One True God is superior to all the others. As Ahab and prophets of Baal beg and plead with their gods, nothing happens, when Elijah calls out after pouring water on the altar, God sends down fire from heaven. Ahab's wife Jezebel is out to kill Elijah after this, so he goes back into hiding and the Lord tells him to appoint his successor Elisha and begin to mentor him.

- **Elijah got away with the Lord before and after this miraculous show of power. What do we learn from Elijah's times away?**
- **What do we learn about the character of God in the story of Elijah?**

Day 179-180 - I Kings 20-22, II Chronicles 18

NORTH/ISRAEL - Ahab is still king in the North and Ben-hadad, the King of Syria comes in with 32 other kings to take their wealth and women. Ahab agrees, but Syrian army still invades. Israel wins, because God is faithful even when Ahab was not, but the prophets warn Ahab to be ready because Syria will return. When they return, the Syrians say, "*Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.*" Our God reigns over the hills and valleys, and He proved it by allowing Israel the victory. Ahab was supposed to kill Ben-hadad, but he didn't and so God sends a prophet to call him out on that sin. In his anger, Ahab wants more land and goes to Naboth to buy his vineyard. Naboth refuses and Jezebel has him killed.

SOUTH/JUDAH - Jehoshaphat is still king in the South. We see him make an alliance with King Ahab to recapture Ramoth-gilead. Ahab doesn't seek the Lord, but Jehoshaphat did. Ahab tried to use trickery to get Jehoshaphat killed and it backfired on him and he was killed by a "random" arrow instead.

- **What do we learn about God and his perfect sovereign plan today?**

Day 181 - II Chronicles 19-23

NORTH/ISRAEL - Ahab's son, Ahaziah became king, followed by his brother Joram and later captain Jehu.

SOUTH/JUDAH - Jehu is prophesying against Jehoshaphat (King of Judah) because of the alliance he made with King Ahab (King of Israel). Jehoshaphat repents and begins to get back on track with honoring the Lord. He prays a beautiful prayer that includes II Chronicles 20:11 says, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." and continues with verse 15 with "*Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.*" Unfortunately Jehoshaphat didn't learn his lesson and he made another alliance with a wicked king of Israel. After Jehoshaphat dies, his oldest son Jehoram takes over the throne. His first act was to kill his 6 brothers and others in his dad's court. Jehoram follows more in the steps of his father in law (Ahab) than he does his father (Jehoshaphat). Then an army comes and kills his entire family except for one son, who also goes by the name Ahaziah and he takes the throne. Slowly after that, he dies and his mom Athaliah becomes the "queen of Judah" She kills everyone that could threaten her throne except for one young son hidden away named Joash who is 7 years old. Joash has been raised by the priest Jehoiada who taught him to love the Lord.

- **What do we learn from Jehoshaphat's life and his beautiful prayer?**

Day 182 - Obadiah, Psalm 82-83

Today we reached the halfway point of our year together!

Here's what Tara-Leigh says about Obadiah:

"In Obadiah, we see some enemies come in to take over Jerusalem, which is the capital city in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And Obadiah the prophet rebukes the people of Edom for it. Why? Let's refresh our memory on Edom: Edom is the name of the people descended from Esau, and Esau is the twin brother of Jacob-Israel, the father of the 12 tribes. So these are the closest relatives of all the 12 tribes. Years later, the brothers make amends and begin to act amicably toward each other, but there's always been a lingering tension between these two people groups. When Jerusalem is invaded, Edom is expected to come to their aid. Instead, they not only don't help, but they add to the oppression the enemy nations inflict on Judah. God says it's because Edom is prideful that they didn't help Judah."

➤ **What did you take away from reading Obadiah?**

Psalms 82 is a psalm of justice. Verse 3-4 say "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Verse 8 says, "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!"

Psalms 83 speaks to God enacting justice. Verse 1 says, "O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God! Verses 17-18 say, "Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, that they may know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth."

➤ **What did you learn about the character of God in these psalms?**

Additional Resources available at www.graceclarksville.com/womenintheword

Books:

- *30 Days to Understanding Your Bible* by Max Anders

Videos:

- [Proverbs Overview Video](#)
- [Song of Songs Overview Video](#)
- [Ecclesiastes Overview Video](#)
- [Psalm Overview Video](#)
- [I & II Chronicles Overview Video](#)
- [I & II Kings Overview Video](#)
- [Obadiah Overview Video](#)

Websites for further studies:

- <https://bibleproject.com/> - Great overview videos by theme, book of the Bible and topic
- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/> - Choose a version of the Bible and click TOOLS next to the verse