



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
LEWISVILLE

Session 4

God's Path for Success

Summary and Goal

The transition of power in Israel from King David to his son Solomon was not without its challenges. God established Solomon as the new leader, but to maintain that position, Solomon would need to do some difficult things, fight temptation, and devote himself to spiritual obedience and practical wisdom.

Main Passages

1 Kings 2:1-46

Session Outline

1. Last Words (1 Kings 2:1-4)
2. Threats and Promise (1 Kings 2:5-12)
3. Deal with It (1 Kings 2:13-46)

Theological Theme

God equips and enables leaders who have a heart for Him.

Christ Connection

Jesus taught that when we seek God's kingdom first, He will take care of the rest.
(See Matt. 6:33.)

Missional Application

No one who lives for the kingdom of this world will participate in God's heavenly kingdom that is being established.

Historical Context of 1 Kings

Purpose

The theological perspective of 1 and 2 Kings is expressed in a number of themes: (1) the sinfulness of the kings and the nation; (2) the conflict between the demands of practical politics and the demands of faith; (3) the glory that God gave to the obedient covenant kings; (4) God's harshness in judgment on some occasions and leniency on others; and (5) the conflict between the worship of the Lord and the worship of other gods.

Author

Scholars cannot identify the authors of any portions of these books. Traditional guesses such as Samuel and Jeremiah lack evidence, although a prominent worshiper of the Lord like Jeremiah would have been influential in the circles that produced these books. Since the books clearly incorporated many earlier documents, the complete authorship would include all writers who contributed to the source documents of this work. At some point, the Holy Spirit worked in the human authors to authenticate the inspired, inerrant books of 1 and 2 Kings. The final stage of composition or compilation had to come after the release of Jehoiachin from Babylonian imprisonment (ca 562 BC). That edition may have added only a postscript to a work completed years earlier, or it may have involved significant additions.

Setting

The history recorded in 1 and 2 Kings covers approximately 410 years. First Kings begins around 970 BC with the death of King David, and 2 Kings ends around 560 BC with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison. During this time, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms (930 BC), and both kingdoms went into exile (Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 587 BC).

Special Features

The titles of these books are certainly descriptive of their contents: the history of the kings and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. First and Second Kings are part of the twelve Historical Books (Joshua-Esther) of the Old Testament. Originally, these two books were just one, but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament; aka LXX).

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Condensed Leader Guide

God's Path for Success

? For Further Discussion

Why do we sometimes struggle with believing God wants us to be successful?

Introduction

- ? If you could be successful in any area of life, what area would you want it to be?
- ? Who would you consider successful? What made that person successful?
- ? How do we typically determine whether a person is successful or not?

Success can be defined in many different ways. We don't always think of success in a spiritual or biblical sense, but God does want us to be successful. His way for us to be successful is to walk before Him in faithfulness with all our heart and all our soul. The way to do that is to read His Word and do what it says.

1. Last Words (1 Kings 2:1-4)

These are King David's final words to his son Solomon, who would succeed him as king. Any father's last words to his children are significant, especially when divinely given power and authority are involved.

- ? What did David tell his son about how to be a man?
- ? What results would come if Solomon did as his father said?
- ? In your own words, how does David's final instruction to Solomon echo God's heart for First Baptist Church Lewisville in this time of transition? What promises are there for us if we follow His instructions going forward?
- ? Why is it important for us to each have our own relationship with God?
- ? As it relates to transitions of leadership in church life, why is it important for us each to have our own relationship with God? What danger is there for us if, instead of pursuing God's path for ourselves, we rely on the faith of a certain leader?

2. Threats and Promise (1 Kings 2:5-12)

David gave his son advice on dealing with known friends and enemies. He was leaving Solomon with some unfinished business—both Joab and Shimei had acted rebelliously, but David had spared their lives. Still, if justice was not given, those same men would certainly turn on Solomon as well. David’s advice to Solomon was to confront his enemies and show kindness to his friends.

- ❓ How would you summarize the immediate challenges Solomon would face?
- ❓ What danger would there be for Solomon and Israel if Solomon did not address his challenges?
- ❓ How does verse 12 encourage you in light of the challenges or opposition you’re facing?

❓ For Further Discussion

What immediate challenges are we facing as a church? What danger is there for us if we do not confront those challenges?

3. Deal with It (1 Kings 2:13-46)

The succession of Solomon to the throne was not automatic. Significant parts of the kingdom had desired another king. But by the end of this chapter, all of those enemies had been dealt with.

- ❓ Why couldn’t Solomon ignore the evil men who remained in the kingdom?
- ❓ From the last sentence in chapter 2, what was the result of Solomon’s commitment to deal with sin and evil in the kingdom?
- ❓ Obviously, dealing with sin and evil in the church looks different for us than it did for King Solomon. Practically speaking, what is the lesson in this passage for us?
- ❓ What happens when evil people and plans are allowed to continue in the church unchecked?

Conclusion

- ❓ What do you do, or what can you do, to make sure you “keep your obligation to the LORD your God to walk in his ways and to keep his statutes” (2:3)?
- ❓ For those of us who really struggle to believe God wants us to succeed, how can we change our mindset from “God is out to get me” to “God wants me to succeed”?
- ❓ Are there any instructions from God that you are not currently following? What needs to change?



Expanded Leader Guide

God's Path for Success

Introduction


- ❓ If you could be successful in any area of life, what area would you want it to be?
- ❓ Who would you consider successful? What made that person successful?
- ❓ How do we typically determine whether a person is successful or not?

Success can be defined in many different ways. We don't always think of success in a spiritual or biblical sense, but God does want us to be successful. His way for us to be successful is to walk before Him in faithfulness with all our heart and all our soul. The way to do that is to read His Word and do what it says.


- ❓ Why do we sometimes struggle with believing God wants us to be successful?

1. Last Words (1 Kings 2:1-4)

These are King David's final words to his son Solomon, who would succeed him as king. Any father's last words to his children are significant, especially when divinely given power and authority are involved.


 What did David tell his son about how to be a man?


In essence, David told Solomon to “be a man.” And in case that sentiment might get twisted into something David didn’t mean, he explained further. Biblical manliness equates to godliness, and godliness comes by ordering our lives according to the ways and Word of God.


 What results would come if Solomon did as his father said?

Every parent wants the very best for their children, and most seek to pave the way of success for their children in various ways. We instruct, offer advice, and point our children in the right direction when more direct help is needed. At some point though, children must choose for themselves the path they will take.



God is our Father, and He wants His children to be successful. So He gives us His Word to direct our paths. But the choice to take that path is ours. When we choose to walk in the path that He has set before us, He gives us success. For Solomon, that success would be realized, in part, through personal and national prosperity. More importantly, it would ultimately be realized by an everlasting dynasty, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God’s Messiah from the line of David.

 In your own words, how does David’s final instruction to Solomon echo God’s heart for First Baptist Church Lewisville in this time of transition? What promises are there for us if we follow His instructions going forward?



 Why is it important for us to each have our own relationship with God?

 As it relates to transitions of leadership in church life, why is it important for us each to have our own relationship with God? What danger is there for us if, instead of pursuing God’s path for ourselves, we rely on the faith of a certain leader?

2. Threats and Promise (1 Kings 2:5-12)

-  How would you summarize the immediate challenges Solomon would face?
-  What danger would there be for Solomon and Israel if Solomon did not address his challenges?

David gave his son advice on dealing with known friends and enemies. He was leaving Solomon with some unfinished business—both Joab and Shimei had acted rebelliously, but David had spared their lives. Still, if justice was not given, those same men would certainly turn on Solomon as well. David's advice to Solomon was to confront his enemies and show kindness to his friends.

-  What immediate challenges are we facing as a church? What danger is there for us if we do not confront those challenges?
-  How does verse 12 encourage you in light of the challenges or opposition you're facing?

David was a man who followed after God's heart and served God like no other king, but his death is recorded with simplicity. Instead, the focus of this passage is God's promise and Solomon's responsibility in the fulfillment of that promise. God firmly established Solomon's rule, and it would be maintained as Solomon and his sons followed the Lord.

3. Deal with It (1 Kings 2:13-46)

The succession of Solomon to the throne was not automatic. Significant parts of the kingdom had desired another king. But by the end of this chapter, all of those enemies had been dealt with.



Why couldn't Solomon ignore the evil men who remained in the kingdom?

The first immediate threat to Solomon was not one of the men David had named, but Adonijah, Solomon's brother. His long-standing ambition to be king was only fueled by David's death, and his true colors quickly appeared. He hatched a plan to ask for Abishag, David's concubine, as a wife. In that culture, that marriage would have given Adonijah a claim to the throne and an opportunity to remove and replace Solomon. But Solomon saw through the request and dealt quickly and decisively with Adonijah. Perhaps this event gave Solomon the courage to continue dealing with the evil that remained. He removed the co-conspirator Abiathar as priest, and then separately tracked down Joab and Shimei to administer justice as David had advised.



From the last sentence in chapter 2, what was the result of Solomon's commitment to deal with sin and evil in the kingdom?



Obviously, dealing with sin and evil in the church looks different for us than it did for King Solomon. Practically speaking, what is the lesson in this passage for us?

There was a cost to dealing with the evil that had remained. Three lives were lost, and certainly Solomon grieved his part in that. A leader is required to do some difficult things but he must fight the temptation to indulge his dark side.



What happens when evil people and plans are allowed to continue in the church unchecked?

Knowing God has a sovereign purpose does not mean we can wait passively for it to unfold. God's people are called to decisive actions to further his purposes. We must not quietly contain sin and evil; we must deal with it appropriately.

Conclusion

- ❓ What do you do, or what can you do, to make sure you “keep your obligation to the LORD your God to walk in his ways and to keep his statutes” (2:3)?
- ❓ For those of us who really struggle to believe God wants us to succeed, how can we change our mindset from “God is out to get me” to “God wants me to succeed”?
- ❓ Are there any instructions from God that you are not currently following? What needs to change?

Prayer of Response

Thank God that He desires for us to be successful. Pray that we would understand how much He has given us in His Word and that we would make time to spend in the Bible on a daily basis. Pray that as we read God’s instructions, we would do what He says.

Family Discussion

Family Discussion Questions For Children

- *David gave his son, Solomon, advice that would help him be successful. Is there some advice you need to deal with a difficult situation in your life?*
- *Besides the advice you receive from adults, what does God’s Word teach you about how to deal with that situation? If you don’t already know what God’s Word teaches you about that situation, how can you find out?*

Family Discussion Questions For Teens

- *What does the beginning of Solomon’s reign teach you about how you need to start out any new pursuit in life? How does establishing a regular practice of reading the Bible now help you in the transitions you face later on?*
- *How does it make you feel to know that God wants you to be successful in life? What steps can you take to align yourself with His definition of success instead of the world’s?*
- *We live in a culture that excuses and ignores evil and sin. Is there a sin in your life that you’re tempted to “let slide”? Why do you need to deal with it? How do you need to deal with it?*

For Next Week

Session Title

- The Succession of Leadership

Main Scripture

- 2 Kings 2

Session Outline

1. A Journey of Change (2 Kings 2:1-8)
2. The Departure of a Mentor (2 Kings 2:9-14)
3. The Test of Transition (2 Kings 2:15-25)

Memorize

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

— 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Extended Commentary

1 Kings 2:1-46

2:1-4. It was common for God's great leaders to pass the torch to their successors (Jacob, Gen. 48-49; Moses, Deut. 32; Joshua, Josh. 23-24). Therefore, as death drew near, David gave Solomon a personal charge and some political advice.

David was a soldier, so he began his charge with words that have the ring of a battlefield charge (see 1 Sam. 4:9): Be strong, show yourself a man. What followed was of special importance: Solomon would be strong and manly only as he ordered his life by God's commands. The priority of his personal life and of his royal administration must be a commitment to God's will. The king of Israel was not like the pagan kings, a law to himself. He was a man under orders. Therefore, he must walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands... as written in the Law of Moses. These various terms reinforce one idea: The king's greatest responsibility was to honor the ways and word of God (see Deut. 17:18-20).

There would be consequences to such a lifestyle. First, Solomon would have personal success: You may prosper in all you do. "Prosper" contains the idea of acting with skill and insight, with the result of success. Royal and national prosperity would be the by-product of a life of obedience, a theme revealed in the chapters that follow. Second, such obedience would bring about dynastic continuity: You will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel. This focuses on an important part of the Lord's promise made to David in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:11-16). The Lord's unconditional promise was of an everlasting dynasty for David, a promise that ultimately points to the Lord Jesus, God's Messiah from the line of David. This throne would be an eternal throne, based on God's sovereign promise, not David's descendants' appropriate performance.

But within the unconditional covenant was a condition: when any of David's descendants did wrong, "I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul" (2 Sam. 7:14-15). The promise that there would always be someone eligible to sit on the throne did not mean that every generation would experience God's blessing. There was a condition for personal blessing of which David reminded Solomon: If your descendants... walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul. Blessing was not automatic, and judgment was a possibility.

Faithfulness meant not only a life conformed to God's standards but also a heart committed to God. This condition is central to the theology of 1 Kings, and it is a theme to which the Lord himself directed Solomon over and over (see 1 Kgs. 3:14; 6:12; 9:4-9; 11:11). The throne of David was established on the unconditional covenant promise of God. The prosperity of each king and his kingdom was linked inseparably to that king's faithfulness to the Lord. 2:5-9 . The throne would be maintained only by spiritual obedience. But David also was a realist who knew that Solomon's hold on the throne was fragile and needed to be protected by shrewd actions. Suddenly we are in the cold, hard world of politics in a culture that had

its brutal side. David was dying and had unfinished business: Joab and Shimei. There had been compelling reasons why he himself could not act against these men; nevertheless, he knew they posed a danger to his son.

Joab was both a relative and a longtime military ally of David. But he was also a ruthless, self-serving man who could pose a great danger to the inexperienced Solomon. Twice he had taken the lives of fellow Israelites who were a threat to him (Abner, 2 Sam. 2-3; Amasa, 2 Sam. 20:9-10). He had also sided with Adonijah in the recent succession struggle. He was a man stained with blood before God, but David had not dealt properly with his sins. The dying king advised his son that this must be corrected and that he must see to it that Joab paid the price for his sins. Leaving this mess for his son surely doesn't represent David at his best!

In the same way, David warned his son about Shimei, a Benjamite and clansman of the former king, Saul. Resentful that David had displaced the old royal family, Shimei had publicly cursed and mocked David as the king fled before the rebellion of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5-13). When events turned with the death of Absalom, Shimei had come to David with a thousand of his fellow Benjamites, begging for mercy, aware that his mockery had been a capital crime. In the euphoria of the moment, David had spared his life, but he knew that Shimei's bitterness had not vanished. As an influential and opportunistic adversary, he posed a continuing danger to the new king. So David advised his son to find an appropriate way to remove the danger and to execute justice by bringing his gray head down to the grave in blood.

But the third person mentioned in these verses was different. During Absalom's rebellion, when it looked as if David would be overthrown, Barzillai had shown loyalty by bringing him food (2 Sam. 17:27-29). Solomon was to repay Barzillai's kindness by allowing his family to be among those who eat at your table, the equivalent of a royal pension.

2:10-12 . The passing of David was the passing of one of God's giants, but it is recorded with great simplicity. The writer's main concern was the fulfillment of God's promise as Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established. This last phrase is the theme of the rest of the chapter, repeated in 2:24,45-46. But that throne would remain secure only as Solomon and his sons followed the Lord (see 2:2-4).

2:13-25. The first person to represent a danger to Solomon had not been mentioned by David, but he soon showed his true colors. Adonijah had been given a good conduct reprieve by Solomon in 1:53. But his ambition to succeed to the throne had not abated. Perhaps he thought his true motives would not be detected. But his request for Abishag, David's concubine (1:2-4), was not the innocent appeal of a man for the hand of the woman he loved. Because he knew that Bathsheba, as the queen mother, had access to the king, he went to her with his request: ask King Solomon... to give me Abishag... as my wife. In the culture of the time, possession of the former king's harem was linked to a claim on the throne (see 2 Sam. 3:8; 16:20-22). Adonijah clung to the idea that he was the rightful king (All Israel looked to me as their king), and almost certainly this was the opening move for another attempt to displace Solomon.

It is likely that Bathsheba recognized his intent, but she agreed to present the request to her son. Solomon detected immediately what was involved. He was confident that he was on the throne by the will of God. So Adonijah's request represented defiance against God as well as a violation of his good-conduct reprieve. Solomon ordered Adonijah's execution, which Benaiah, as head of his military guard, carried out.

2:26-27 . Determined to deal with the Adonijah threat, Solomon next moved against Abiathar, the priest who had been part of the conspiracy. But because of his sacred role and his longtime association with David, Solomon chose not to execute him but to sentence him to house arrest. Abiathar was removed from the office of high priest, a fulfillment of God's prophecy through his prophet in 1 Samuel 2:27-36. This introduces another important theme of 1 Kings: the fulfillment of prophecy.

2:28-35. Joab , astute as always, knew that the execution of Adonijah, with whom he had sided (1:7, 41), meant that he was next. He fled to the altar for refuge, perhaps hoping to receive the same good-conduct reprieve as Adonijah had (1:49-53). But the altar was only a place of refuge for the innocent (Exod. 21:12-14). Joab bore the guilt of innocent blood. Therefore, Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute him, probably after he had dragged him away from the altar. David's advice to Solomon about Joab had been carried out, precipitated by Joab's own actions.

2:36-46 . The last piece of unfinished business was Shimei. Solomon commanded him not to cross the Kidron Valley (the path to his home area) or to go anywhere else. He was confined to Jerusalem. The restrictions must have been onerous, but for three years Shimei complied. But then two of his slaves escaped and were captured in the Philistine city of Gath. Foolishly, Shimei went to recover his slaves without asking Solomon's permission. Hearing the news, Solomon reminded Shimei of their agreement and of all the wrong you did to my father David. He then ordered Benaiah to wield the executioner's sword for the third time (vv. 25, 34).

All the unfinished business had been dealt with. The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands. It had not been without cost. But only three people had lost their lives, and there is no record of other bloodshed during Solomon's reign.

