

Introduction To Quiet Time/Personal Devotion

What Is Quiet Time/Personal Devotion: Quiet Time or Personal Devotion is more than just reading the Bible, it's a time of fellowship and dating with God. It's a time to get to know God and His will more as well as to enjoy His presence. Since personal devotion is a process of communication, it involves both "listening" (Reading His Word, Meditating, and Reflecting) and "talking" (Praying, Responding, and Devoting) to Him.

Time and Place: Choose a quiet place and a set time. If possible, morning is most ideal. If you must choose another time, choose a time when you can be most serene and alert. Also make sure that you do your devotion before you spend time on the computer, TV, internet, or games so that your mind will not be filled with distractions that prevent you from meditating on God's words.

Focus: Ask God to quiet your heart and to open your eyes so that you can understand God's words. You can also praise God or sing a short hymn to Him.

Read & Reread: Read the Scripture carefully and meditate on what God is telling you. Usually, you may not be able to understand the meaning and essence of a passage when you first read it; only through repetition and meditation can one gain meaningful insights.

Using the Devotional Booklet: ①Please follow the steps in this booklet to first calm your heart with a short prayer and praise, then read and reread the given passage, and answer the questions accordingly. Then read the contributor's insights and see how you could apply what you have learned in your life. Finally, end your Quiet Time with prayer and ask God to help you live out His words. ②Besides the reflection questions, notes, and applications, this booklet also asks the reader to fill in the date and time of each daily devotion so that the reader can evaluate his/her devotional life more precisely. ③The Scriptures quoted in this booklet are from NIV (1984). We would encourage you not to use the Bible Apps in your cell phone to read the Scriptures lest you will be distracted by the notifications or incoming calls. ④This Devotion booklet is contributed by various staff of the Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church and is first written in either Chinese or English, and translated by other brothers and sisters. The contribution of the staff as well as of the translators is deeply appreciated. At times, some devotions are written in both languages by the contributor. ⑤Memory verses may be quoted for meditation and memorization depending on the context and as needed; thus, it may not be provided daily.

BOOK OF 1 KINGS

- **Author:** Unknown, possibly Jeremiah or a group of prophets.
- **Background:** Israel, once flourishing nation, now facing division. The division was not only territorial, but also spiritual.
- **Key verses:** "As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'" (1 Kings 9:4-5)
- **Main characters:** David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel
- **Theme:** Solomon's wisdom, power, and achievement brought honor to God and the people of Israel. God commanded all the kings of Israel and Judah to obey Him, and to rule the nation According to His law. However, they wanted to abandon God's command and had the tendency to worship false gods. They turned religion and politics into a tool to fulfill their personal desires. They faltered because they ignored God's law. Wisdom, power, and achievement are all from God. No matter how we lead, rule, or govern, we will not leave a good impact if we ignore God's principles.

After many years of worshiping idols, the Israelites started to take on the traits of idol worshipers. They were influenced by the rituals performed and they became cruel, thirsty for power and dissolute. We all have the tendency to be like the idol we worship. Unless we serve the true God, otherwise we will be enslaved by the substitute of God, be it a person or a thing.

The duty of the prophet was to confront and correct any deviation from the law of God. Elijah was a prophet who bravely judged Israel. His message and the miracles he performed served as warnings to the rebellious and evil kings and people.

Anyone who alerts us to the fact that we are not being obedient to the Word of God is our mentor and good friend. Changing ourselves in order to obey God often needs painful discipline and arduous work.

- **Outline of the Book of I Kings:**

- I. The unified kingdom (1:1 - 11:43)
 1. Solomon coronate king
 2. The wisdom of Solomon
 3. Building of the temple by Solomon
 4. The greatness and downfall of Solomon

- II. The divided kingdom (12:1 - 22:53)
 1. Revolt of the ten northern tribes
 2. Judah and the kings of Israel
 3. Elijah's career

- **Comparison of North and South Kingdoms*:**

	Southern Kingdom	Northern Kingdom
1	Two tribes (Judah, Benjamin)	Ten tribes
2	Capital Jerusalem	Capital Samaria
3	Less populated	Heavily populated (3 times the Southern Kingdom)
4	Barren land	Vast and fertile land (5 times the Southern Kingdom)
5	Where the temple is located	Two of the cities had golden calves (Dan and Bethel)
6	Unified Kingdom (Kingdom of David)	Have had nine dynasties
7	Lasted 346 years (931-586 B.C.)	Lasted 210 years (931-722 B.C.)
8	20 Kings (19 Kings and 1 Queen)	20 Kings
9	Mixed good with evil (8 good, 12 evil)	Did all evil in the eyes of the Lord
10	Conquered by Babylon	Conquered by Assyria

* Rev. Denny Y. C. Ma, Th. D, Old Testament Survey.

King Solomon Enthroned

Passage: 1 Kings 1

July 1

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 1, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: Adonijah: The fourth son of King David. In his mind, he is the rightful heir to the throne, probably because all three of his older brothers, Amnon, Kileab, and Absalom were dead.

Solomon: means "Peace", is the son of David and Bathsheba. He succeeded to become the third king of Israel after the death of David in about 970 BC.

The horns of the altar: The altar has four outward horns. When making sacrifices, the priests bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar. Exodus 21:13-14 talks about the concept of cities of refuge, vaguely overlapping the role of the altar with the cities of refuge. Perhaps that was the reason why people at that time thought that the altar could protect lives.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read the chapter again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. David was a man after God's own heart, this chapter describes the latter part of David's life and something is there to alert us, what is it?

2. This chapter tells us the reasons why Adonijah was not chosen by God to be king of Israel, what are they? What is there to remind us?

The book of Kings starts with the phrase, "When King David was very old." In fact, David was only about seventy years old at that time; compared to others like Moses and Caleb, he was still young. Why does the Bible describe him as "very old"? On the one hand, David went through many hardships when he was young, fought at wars for many years, leading to physical and mental fatigue and premature aging. On the other hand, his health is not unrelated to his spiritual downfall and slack in governance. David did not specify the heir to the throne when he was aging, indicating that he had no method of governing his kingdom. He did not fulfill a father's responsibility, such that Adonijah became so reckless, created a lot of harm to himself and others. After the lesson in the case of Amnon and Absalom, he still had not learned to become more alert, and that became David's regret in his life. Christians should discipline their sons and daughters when they are young, so that they may grow up and become people who fear and obey God.

Now Adonijah was the oldest among his brothers, but only by the order of birth that he put himself forward and said, "I will be king!", his arrogance eventually brought him to death. The role of picking next king is God's sovereignty and grace, and the chosen person must be humble and obedient. People can never go beyond God's plan and succeed. When Adonijah knew that his plan had failed, he fled to the altar, hoping for God's mercy and forgiveness. Except that he went to the altar only after his heart of usurpation was exposed. Had he sought the will of God first, such disaster would not have come upon him. Before we act, we must first seek for God's guidance. Do not let yourself fall to the point that you cannot get away and only then begin to seek God's help.

APPLICATION: Please self-examine, which aspects in your life might you be too relaxed on your spiritual discipline resulting damages in the body, work, family, ministry or interpersonal relationships? Write down your struggles, ask the Lord to help you seek more of God's guidance and strive to obey His will.

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Passage: I Kings 3:4-15

July 2

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read I Kings 3:4-15, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "a little child" means "a very young little child." Since Solomon was about 20 years old at that time, therefore it should mean Solomon recognized his own limitations and inexperience.

The original text for "Wisdom" is "Shama"; so a more appropriate translation would be "a discerning heart" which means to understand, to discern right and wrong.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read I Kings 3:4-15 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Why did Solomon ask for wisdom? Try to analyze his mindset at that time.
2. Why was the Lord pleased with what Solomon asked for? What do you usually ask for when you pray?
3. What is true wisdom?

Tremendous amounts of responsibilities and stress awaited Solomon as he began his reign as King. God gave him an opportunity to ask for anything he wanted. First, Solomon praised God for His faithfulness, thanked God for His kindness shown toward his father David, and the continued kindness shown by allowing him to be King. Then Solomon humbly admitted that he lacked the wisdom to carry out the duties. He then asked God to grant him wisdom — a discerning heart to know what’s right and wrong, in order to fulfill the job that God had given him. Note that Solomon did not ask God to do the job for him. God fulfills His work through people. We should ask God for wisdom and courage to complete His work.

Solomon asked God for wisdom, not wealth; but God also gave him wealth and a long life. Although God does not promise wealth to those who rely on Him; but if we seek first His Kingdom and Righteousness, He will give us what we need (Matthew 6:31-33). Those whose lifelong goal is to gain wealth would be disappointed because they would keep on wanting more. Only when we put God and His Work as our priority, then God will provide all that we need.

True wisdom means to fear God, to know God, and to obey His word.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). Let us be humble and obedient as we rely on His wisdom to complete His work.

APPLICATION: In which areas of your life or in serving God are you lacking wisdom? Try to list some specific areas. Ask God to grant you more wisdom. Draw close to God every day and gain wisdom from His Word.

MEMORY VERSE: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”
James 1:5

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Wisdom In Life

Passage: 1 Kings 4:29-34; Proverbs 4:20-27

July 3

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 4:29-34; Proverbs 4:20-27, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: Most of the contents of the Book of Proverbs came from King Solomon. Proverbs contains concise and forcefully expressive sayings. It uses analogies and comparisons to illuminate truth in life. These phrases are independent of one another. Included topics are: wisdom, righteousness, fear of God, knowledge, morality, chastity, motivation, discipline, trust in God, tithing, financial stewardship, caring for the poor, prudent in speech, loving your enemy, choosing your friends, avoiding the adulteress, honoring a noble wife, teaching your children, work ethic, honesty, avoiding idleness and laziness, justice, mutual help, contentment, joy, godliness, knowledge in life, etc.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 4:29-34 and Proverbs 4:20-27 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What has Solomon achieved in through his wisdom? What did that achievement bring him?

2. In Proverbs 4:20-27, what teachings did Solomon offer to his son in order to keep him on the righteous path? How does that inspire us?

Solomon sought wisdom, “God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore” (1 Kings 4:29). His intellect surpassed everyone and was renowned everywhere. He was not only an outstanding politician, but also a learned scientist – he described plant life and taught animal life. He was a poet, educator and preacher. Kings of the world desired to hear him impart wisdom. During Solomon’s reign, Israel was strong and advanced greatly its economic and trade.

Nevertheless, the wisdom of Proverbs was not written to show off to the world, but to hope that future generations can be as wise as him. In the fourth chapter of Proverbs, Solomon earnestly taught them to love wisdom, gain wisdom and esteem wisdom, also to guard their hearts, words, eyes and steps. By keeping these senses on unswerving path, the whole body can be on the right path to receive healing and regain vitality. Solomon emphasized the importance of guarding one’s heart: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Heart refers to "mind", it can also represent emotions or will. Heart dictates one’s thoughts, desires and pursuits. As children of God, we need to dedicate our minds to stay on the right path, live saintly, and wait upon Christ Jesus as we walk on the path of eternal life.

APPLICATION: Please contemplate on how you can guard your heart, words, eyes, steps, and keep them on the right path. Try to organize your schedule so that you can routinely quiet down to pray and to meditate. Let the Holy Spirit shine upon you and make you see clearly your spiritual circumstances.

MEMORY VERSE: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”
Hebrews 12:1-2a

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

The Source Of All Blessings

Passage: Psalms 127

July 4

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read Psalms 127, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

Note: "Court" refers to the square outside of the city gate, often the location for litigation. There, wise and able children could litigate on behalf of their aging parents to spare them from disgrace.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read Psalms 127 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. People generally pursued the same things throughout human history — a comfortable life and prosperity. This seemingly simple pursuit is in reality not so simple. Why is that?

2. Children are an inheritance of God. They are blessings, as are they responsibilities. How should we manage this inheritance?

Solomon composed 3000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs. In addition to the songs in Song of Solomon, he also wrote Psalms 72 and 127.

Cities and houses represent the environment in which people work and live, and a stable living environment is the prerequisite to a comfortable life of prosperity. Yet, over thousands of years, the human history was filled with natural disasters, human tragedies, wars and all kinds of unrest, that a comfortable life was in fact a luxury. Amid the turbulence, we must realize that safety, good living, and prosperity can only come from God's guidance and blessings. Whether it is constructing a home, guarding a city, or just normal daily life, He is the source of every blessing.

"Rise early" means getting up earlier than others to start working, "stay up late" is working longer than others before resting, while "toiling for food to eat" refers to a long hard day of work. It's true that man must work hard, but unless God blesses the work, any extra effort is work in vain. Without God's presence, everything is but toil and trouble, and man will not have true peace and joy.

A prosperous family is built by God, watched over by God, and blessed by God. Therefore, we must depend on His grace as we build and cultivate God-centered families. We need to be good stewards of His blessings, rejoice always, give thanks, pray often, and glorify His name with the wisdom, grace, and abilities granted by Him.

APPLICATION: Observe your work, your family, and your children. Ponder the fact that we cannot accomplish anything without walking with God. As we feel prideful about our own accomplishments, learn to be humble and give all glory to the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: "In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves."

Psalms 127:2

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Solomon Built The Temple

Passage: 1 King 6

July 5

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 King 6 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: It is generally believed that Solomon's Temple was dedicated in 966 BC. "Ziv" is the second month in the Jewish calendar, or between April and May in the western calendar. "Cubits" is an ancient measure of length, approximately equal to the length between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger, or around 18 inches.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 King 6 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What are the distinguishing characteristics of the temple construction process? What do these characteristics teach us about our own church development?

2. The temple is the house of God. What are the prerequisites for God to dwell within the temple?

Solomon's construction of God's temple took seven years. The construction plans were given to Solomon by David, who received them through the Holy Spirit (2 Chron. 28:11-12). The temple's outer appearance resembled the tabernacle, but doubled in length and width, and tripled in height. The original tabernacle was built in strict accordance with the instructions received by Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9, 40). From Moses to David to Solomon, God's dwelling place was designed by God Himself, and built by the one chosen by Him. Present-day church building share these characteristics.

Every aspect of the temple's design was specific, precise, and perfect. Only stones that were already chiseled at the quarry were used, and the offset design required nothing to be inserted into the walls. The construction was harmonious and solemn, as "no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built" (1 King 6:7). Church building later on bore this similarity, such that "in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesian 2:21).

The roof, pillars, and interior walls were all made with cedar, which was hard, resistant to rot, and aromatic, resembling how God also builds us with "the aroma of the knowledge of him". The whole temple was overlaid with pure gold, highlighting the glory of God's house! God asks us to use the finest materials for His house. Similarly, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so we must live a holy life to give glory to the Lord.

APPLICATION: What can you do to build up your "temple of the Holy Spirit"? Likewise, what can you do to build up and glorify God's temple that is our church?

MEMORY VERSE: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"

1 Corinthians 3:16

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Solomon's Prayer Of Dedication

Passage: 1 Kings 8:22-53

July 6

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 8:22-53, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 8:22-53 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Which areas of focus did Solomon include in his prayer? Which areas do you lack in your prayer? Why?

2. What is Solomon's concept of God? What have you not noticed before? Why?

It is recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew that when Jesus entered the temple, He saw those who were buying and selling there. Jesus was angry and drove them out because these people did business with dishonesty. "It is written," He said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.'" (Matthew 21:13) Ever since Solomon built the temple, it has been a house of prayer.

The Content of Solomon's Prayer:

- A God who listens to prayers (22-30): Solomon's prayer began with God's promises. The fulfillment of the promises indicates that God listens to prayers. How could our omniscient God dwell in a man-made temple? Nevertheless, God does live with us because He listens to our prayer.
- A prayer of confession (31-36): It is no easy task to admit you are wrong against man or God, but it is what we need to pray for. Even though we are reluctant to admit our sins, God is righteous and He will always judge accordingly. Therefore, why wait until the Lord disciplines you?
- A prayer for all nations (41-43): There's no separation between ethnic races and rank in prayer. As long as you have faith in God, He will listen to your prayer. In this sense, a believer's prayer is not "less powerful" than that of a pastor's.
- A prayer of repentance (44-53): It would be the best to admit our sins as soon as possible, but due to our sinful nature, we tend not to do so. However, as long as we are willing to repent, God will hear our cry and deliver us.

APPLICATION: Paul said, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone." (1 Timothy 2:1) Try to cultivate a heart that embraces the world. Pray for our country, communities, mission work, church, and people around you. Make a list of prayer requests and pray for them during this week.

MEMORY VERSE: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."
James 5:16

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Beginning Of The Kingdom's Decline

Passage: 1 Kings 11

July 7

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 11 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: Ashtoreth — goddess of the Sidonians, a symbol of fertility, legend says that she is the spouse of Baal, the false god.

Molek — detestable god of the Ammonites, detestable because children are killed as sacrifices when they worship Molek.

Chemosh — god of Moab

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read the above passages again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for Solomon's abandonment of God? How can we make it a warning for ourselves?

2. After Solomon deviated from God, how did God take away the kingdom from his son? What lessons can we learn from it?

As Solomon's kingdom grew stronger, nations around started competing to ally with him, many "political" marriages were included. However, Solomon's "love" of these pagan princesses did not only violate what God had forbidden, intermarriages with the Gentiles, he also ignored the warning that the Lord's anger would burn

against him and would quickly destroy him (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). As Solomon grew old, he even lost his foothold and yielded to temptation; he built altars for his concubines. It is hard to imagine that Solomon used his talent of building the temple for building high places for the detestable gods in the mountains opposite Jerusalem!

Solomon is the author of the Song of Songs, well versed in the taste of love, but his love was endlessly abused. It is difficult to imagine that he married a thousand wives and concubines, and said that he "loved" all of them. He married Pharaoh's daughter as his wife. All 700 wives he married were princesses. With all these political, diplomatic and other factors doping in, naturally the quality of love changed. More seriously, Solomon's love for God was also changed. He no longer worshipped the only true God alone, nor listened to God's advice.

When Solomon sinned and departed from God, his kingdom got weak and God also raised up enemies against him. Troubles from the outside included Hadad the Edomite from the south, Rezon the leader from Aram from the north. Trouble from within was the rise of Jeroboam, who would be the heir to rule the ten tribes in the north as allowed by God. When Solomon's relationship with God had a problem, his relationship with man was also problematic. No matter how strong Solomon was, once the wrath of God come, all these would come to past.

APPLICATION: In today's society where absolute standards are lacking, how do you hold on to pure faith? Especially when you are in contact with non-believers, how can you be "in the world but not of the world," and to maintain the appropriate boundaries?

MEMORY VERSE: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

A Divided Kingdom

Passage: 1 Kings 12

July 8

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 12, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: The Israeli kingdom lasted 120 years: Saul ruled 40 years (Acts 13:21), David ruled 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4), Solomon ruled 40 years (1 Kings 11:42). The kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon: 10 tribes formed the Northern kingdom which was named Israel. It lasted for a little over 200 years until it was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the Southern kingdom which was named Judah. It lasted for over 300 years until the Babylonians conquered them in 586 B.C.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 12 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What can you learn from how Rehoboam and Jeroboam acted?
2. Why did God send Shemaiah to prevent Rehoboam from regaining power for the kingdom? Did God favor a divided kingdom?

Rehoboam reigned after the death of his father, Solomon. He inherited the most powerful kingdom. It would have been a great opportunity for Rehoboam to use his God-given abilities to govern; but instead he was a self-willed and arrogant King. He did not seek wisdom from God and the elders. He lost control of his kingdom

because the Israelites rebelled against him and wanted Jeroboam to be their king instead. Furthermore, God sent a prophet to prevent Rehoboam from using military force to regain the Northern territory. Thus the once powerful Kingdom of Israel was now divided into two.

God chose Jeroboam and granted him 10 tribes to form the Northern Kingdom. If he was grateful and did what was right, God would establish the country. Instead he kept his people from going up to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem by making golden calves for them to worship. He built shrines, appointed priests from all kinds of people, and instituted festivals. It was a self-defeating effort. As a result, his family suffered and the Northern Kingdom turned away from God. Throughout the 209 years many lives were lost from disaster after disaster. Finally, the Northern Kingdom was abolished by the Assyrians.

From this disheartening period of history, we witness God's sovereignty. At the beginning God foretold the division of the kingdom. God is in control of all that happens. We also witness God's grace. He remembered David and the temple in Jerusalem. He did not destroy Solomon. He did not allow the ten tribes to split into factions. The split was led by the sins Solomon committed and the harsh tyranny under Rehoboam's reign. God gave them over to their sinful desires although He did not approve of their acts. God intercepted by preventing civil wars and allowing the division of the kingdom. God wanted to teach His people and display His righteousness through the divided Kingdom.

APPLICATION: Rehoboam and Jeroboam were different in their own ways, but they both turned away from God and acted according to their sinful desires. What are you planning to accomplish? What problems are you facing? Meditate and write them down. Come before the Lord and listen to Him speak. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. Trust and obey God's guidance.

MEMORY VERSE: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."
John 15:5

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Asa and Baasha

Passage: 1 Kings 15:16-34

July 9

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 15:16-34, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Ramah" was a fortress erected near the main road between the north and the south situated 8 kilometers from Jerusalem. Baasha fortified Ramah with the obvious intention of preventing anyone from entering or leaving the Northern territory (King of Aram, who supported Judah, lived in the north).

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 15:16-34 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. The kingdom of Israel was divided into two countries and rife with conflicts and self-destructions. What was the reason for the tragedy?

2. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. However, since Baasha king of Israel was his enemy, he decided to take all the treasures left in the temple and palace, sending them to King of Aram to form their alliance. Was this the best way to solve problems?

Ever since Israel was divided, skirmishes were constant between the North and the South. Nadab, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel and he reigned for only two years because he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin,

which he had caused Israel to commit. Baasha killed Nadab While he and all Israel were besieging a Philistine town. As soon as Baasha became king, he killed Jeroboam's whole family. This fulfilled the warning that God gave Jeroboam. However, Baasha also did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Actually, all the kings of the Northern Kingdom turned away from God and worshipped idols. They went through incessant killing, the rise and fall of kings, and constant war with the Southern Kingdom. Such tragedies stemmed from man's rebellion against God and their desire to pursue worldly values. May this be a reminder for us!

During this time Asa became king of Judah and he feared the Lord. Although his father Abijah committed sins against God, Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He followed the example from his ancestor David by serving the Lord faithfully and getting rid of all the idols. Nevertheless, he could not avoid the numerous wars against Israel. The wars put a heavy toll on the country. Asa decided to take all the gold and silver that was left in the temple to give to Ben-Hadad, King of Aram. By doing so Asa hoped to ask King of Aram to break off his treaty with Baasha. Upon receiving the gifts King of Aram agreed with King Asa and conquered numerous cities. Baasha withdrew; Judah recovered the lost land and expanded her territory. Asa's achievements showed his talents but his strategies could not resolve the conflicts between the two kingdoms. The constant civil wars weakened both kingdoms. In the end they were destroyed by enemies.

APPLICATION: When facing an urgent problem, have you ever compromise with the world instead of relying on God? Try listing the problems you are facing. Put them in God's hand and ask Him to guide you.

MEMORY VERSE: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty." Zechariah 4:6b

Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Presenting Prophet Elijah

Passage: 1 Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-7

July 10

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-7, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: Ahab was king for 22 years. Among all the kings, he was the worse for he married the Sidonian princess Jezebel. "Jezebel" literally means "praise Baal" or "I am willing to marry Baal". She was a Baal worshiper who built a temple of Baal at Samaria, and fed 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah; She killed prophets of the Lord, and stopped the worship of the LORD (1 Kings 18:13, 19). From then on, women who called themselves prophetess in order to lead the church in adultery and idolatry were call "Jezebels."

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-7 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Who had the power to put Israel in drought for three years? How does this relate to Ahab's worship of Baal?

2. What was unique of Elijah's work? Do you possess his determination and strength? Why?

In the history of the Northern Kingdom, there was not one king who was loyal to God; every king provoked the Lord and led the people in idol worship. Most of the Levi priests moved to the southern kingdom, leaving only a few behind. Since both the king and the

priests were not leading the nation in accordance to God's will, God sent forth prophets to call His people to come out of their spiritual and moral failures. Elijah was the first important prophet whom God had sent to Israel and Judah.

Elijah was a Tishbite living in Gilead, wearing a garment of hair and leather belt around his waist. His ministry was characterized by his unyielding loyalty to God alone. Worshipers of Baal believed that he is the god of rain and harvest; being filled by the Spirit, Elijah went to Ahab, the king who worshiped Baal, and declared that if he, Elijah, did not pray to God, there would not be any rain. Such bold declaration of God's sovereignty, and direct blow to the false god's core territory required tremendous faith and bravery.

Unsurprisingly, such challenge shocked and infuriated King Ahab. In response, God sent Elijah to hide in the Kerith Ravine, and ordered ravens to feed him bread and meat. All this demonstrated that God has planned and is in control of all things. Yet, the fact that Elijah was willing to take food delivered by ravens made clear his absolute obedience to God, for it is hard to imagine anyone who could comfortably dine on food from the paws of rats or other equally unappetizing "servers". Soon after, the words that Elijah received from the Lord came true, and the drought was getting worse by the day until the brook was completely dried up. To the end, Elijah's life and work remained in a reliance on God's provision and guidance.

APPLICATION: In your daily living, work, and ministry, what difficulties or challenges have you encountered that are against your faith and belief? List them out and reflect on practical ways to walk as Elijah did — to stand firm in a world that is against God, to boldly represent the truth of God.

MEMORY VERSE: “¹⁴So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.¹⁵Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.”
2 Peter 3:14-15

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Powerful And Effective Prayer

Passage: James 5:16-18

July 11

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read James 5:16-18, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read James 5:16-18 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of a person is a righteous man? Are you one? Is your prayer effective? Why?

2. How do you explain the statement that Elijah was a man just like us? How can we experience the power of prayer?

The Bible says, "We know that God does not listen to sinners" (John 9:31). Conversely, God not only listens to prayer of the righteous, but that their prayer would also be powerful and effective. This is not to say that only prayers of the pastor or elders are effective. Instead, it talks about a righteous man, a person who repents and becomes righteous by trusting in the Lord. Regardless of his or her capacity in ministry, a righteous person's prayer is effective.

Therefore, do not underestimate the privilege and effectiveness of your prayer and rely too much on asking others to pray for you. James cited the prayer of Elijah, a prophet from the Old Testament, to prove the greatness of the prayer of the righteous. James did not accredit the effectiveness of Elijah's prayer to him being an eminent servant of God. Instead, he said Elijah was a man just like us. Elijah was of the flesh, just like us. He also suffered from sinful nature and weaknesses. It is God's will to make His power known through prayer of faith. Since the power of God is infinite and ours is extremely limited, what can we depend on other than praying to God? What the prophet Elijah was capable of, so are we.

In this passage, James also stressed the importance of "confess[ing] your sins to each other and pray[ing] for each other". The righteous tend not to be self-righteous, but humble. A believer would not only repent and confess his sin before God, but also confess sins to each other as a necessary part of church life. Ask for forgiveness when you have sinned against your brothers or sisters; Confess in public if your sin affects the church; Ask for help from the church body if you are struggling in sin and cannot extricate yourself. The believers grow by prayers of intercession in order to sustain one another. By faith, may we experience the great power of God.

APPLICATION: Write down the needs of others or matters of prayer, set aside time during the week to pray.

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

The Supply Of The Widow

Passage: 1 Kings 17:6-24

July 12

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 17:6-24, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Zarephath" was a harbor about 13 miles away from Sidon. Sidon was the homeland of Jezebel, the center of worship for Baal.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 17:6-24 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What principle can be derived from Elijah's instruction to the widow — "first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son."? Have you ever practiced this principle?

2. What lesson did Elijah and the widow learn from the resurrection of the widow's son?

God commanded Elijah to go to Zarephath in the region of Sidon. Since food was scarce during the long drought, the widow whom God directed to supply the prophet with food was in great need herself; she was down to her "last meal." The prophet Elijah promised the widow that she will not run out of food. She believed him and gave their last meal to Elijah. What faith it was! The words of the prophet were truth, for as time went by, the prophet and her family ate, but the flour and the oil did not run out. All miracles,

whether big or small, begin with obedience. In a desperate time on the edge of all hopes, the widow grabbed on to God's promise, and then experienced the faithful supply of God. The lack of faith, then, can steer us away from experiences of God's miracles. It is when we are willing to take a leap of faith, that we can land in God's miraculous plan.

Yet, right when it seemed like it was smooth journey ahead, tragedy strike when the widow's only son became ill and died. Even though in those days, it was not uncommon to die at a young age, the sudden blow took away the widow's faith. She turned and blamed Elijah for the misfortune. Even Elijah could not make sense out of the tragedy. He asked God, "Are they not those who serve you? Why have they not received blessing, but only curse?" Yet his faith and love rose above his doubt, and he prayed three times over the boy for God to bring him back to life. Miraculously, life returned to the boy and once again Elijah and the widow experienced God's love and faithfulness. Faith in God is matured through accumulation of experiences. Those who rely on God often had the "Elijah and widow" experience; thus when we face difficulties, let us not stew in our doubts, but go forth in faith to experience the provision of the Lord who works all things for the good of those who love Him.

APPLICATION: Have you ever had the experience of failing God's test by grumbling against Him in hard times? Remember and reflect on what you have learn from that experience, and thank God for not only staying true to you through thick and thin, but also shaping you through different tests and trials.

MEMORY VERSE: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Contest On Mount Carmel

Passage: 1 Kings 18:16-40

July 13

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 18:16-40, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Mount Carmel" — a coastal mountain range in Northwestern Israel near Phenicia. It has an elevation of about 600 meters (1,724 ft.) and was the center of Baal worship.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 18:16-40 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Elijah rebuked the people because he wanted them to take a stand on believing in the true God and not false gods. Why do so many people have a hard time taking the stand?

2. God's prophet won the contest against the Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel. What are some of the things that stand out in the way Elijah served God? How can we follow his examples?

After 3 years of drought, King Ahab still did not repent. Instead he blamed Elijah by saying, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" 1 Kings 18:17

Without fear Elijah pointed out how Ahab turned away from the true God to worship the Baals. He challenged Ahab by having a contest against Baal's prophets in order to declare the Lord is God and to urge the Israelites to return to God. When Elijah asked the people which god they would follow, no one said anything. Why did they waver between the two choices? Perhaps some of them were deceived or threatened; but some might actually knew that the Lord is God. Nevertheless, they still wanted to follow Ahab to worship idols, and bask in the joy of sin. It is essential to declare that you believe the Lord. If we just go with the flow, our soul will be trapped by Satan's tricks, temptations and sinful desires. The result will be eternal punishment.

During the contest the Baal's prophets called on the name of Baal, shouted, and even slashed themselves with swords; but to no avail. Baal was just a statue. Elijah repaired the ruined altar and then poured water over the offering 3 times. The water ran down around the altar. This was not only a wholehearted offering by faith; it seemed to show that it was a true miracle. After Elijah prayed to God, fire fell from the sky. All the sacrifice was burned. It was then, the people cried, "The Lord — he is God! The Lord — he is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)

The victory of Elijah was the victory of the true God over false gods. It was also the victory of faith and courage. At times like these, when faith is deemed unimportant, let us ask God to grant His children faith as strong as Elijah's. Let us be bold when we share the Good News to those around us.

APPLICATION: In what areas could you live out your faith in God so that others will get to know Jesus Christ is Lord?

MEMORY VERSE: "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

1 John 5:4

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

The Sound Of The Heavy Rain

Passage: 1 Kings 18:41-46

July 14

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 18:41-46, and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 18:41-46 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of sound do you think it was when Elijah told Ahab he heard the "sound of heavy rain"? Why was it that only the prophet heard it?

2. How did Elijah pray for the rain to come? What can we learn from it?

After the victorious battle against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah told Ahab to go eat and drink because he had heard the sound of heavy rain. It might have been the sound of thunder that Elijah heard, but if it was, Ahab should have been able to hear it as well. Thus, what Elijah heard must have been God's promise. God's will to rain is not a "noise" that everyone can hear, only those who are spiritually sensitive can hear the voice of God.

God had promised that it will only rain when Elijah prays. Therefore, he once again went up to Mount Carmel, bent down on the ground and put his face between his knees to pray. At the same time, he sent his servant to go and look toward the sea. Yet, for six times the servant returned to report that the sun is out with no signs of rain. On the seventh time, however, the servant returned saying there is a small cloud. Elijah's sharp spiritual eye sight saw that God was about to send rain with His great might. Surely, the heavy rain came swiftly.

The spiritually matured believers have sensitive eyes and ears, able to distinguish God's voice and deed, not because they possess mysterious power; but when our minds are renewed, we are able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

APPLICATION: Are you able to see God in the small details and praise Him for His deeds? Meditate on how you can experience God in your surroundings. Write down these experiences and your insights, and wait with alertness to see how you can experience God's grace in the things that concern you.

Experience	Insights
i.e.: car accident/ sunrise	Life is unpredictable therefore I must live well for God / God's greatness and love

MEMORY VERSE: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Matthew 26:41

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Suicidal Prophet

Passage: 1 Kings 19:1-8

July 15

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:1-8 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Broom bush" — common plant in the wilderness, can reach up to 3 meters tall, thus creating shade in the sun.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:1-8 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What was the reason that caused Elijah to run and pray for death? Why would a servant of God have such experience?

2. How did God help Elijah go through his designated journey?

When Ahab told Queen Jezebel everything that had happened on Mount Carmel, she was furious and swore to kill Elijah. For Elijah not only killed the prophets of Baal, but had committed "blasphemy" against Jezebel's god. Elijah was exhausted after two major spiritual battles, and he was disheartened to see Ahab once again turned to Jezebel. He was afraid and he ran for his life; when he reached a broom bush to rest, it seemed that all hope has been lost so he prayed for relief in death.

God did not answer him directly because He knew that what Elijah needed the most was rest for his body and soul; so to lift him up for the rest of the journey, God first revitalized Elijah with food and rest. In the next miraculous forty days and nights, Elijah reached Mount Horeb, the holy place where God once called Moses and gave His Law to the people. God must have given Elijah special strength to enable him to travel the 320 mile journey without additional food. Just like Moses who was before him, and Jesus who was after him, Elijah fasted for forty days and nights. By the presence and power of God, all three were able to fulfill their God given mission. In this fast pace world with restless schedule, we need to learn to draw close to God in quietness. We need to pour out our concerns and burdens to God, so that His words can be food for our soul which will enable us to renew our strength and soar on wings like eagles.

APPLICATION: Reflect on your life rhythm. If possible, list out your weekly schedule for reference; reflection on whether you have a balanced life style, and make adjustments as needed.

MEMORY VERSE: “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Rejuvenate Yourself

Passage: 1 Kings 19:9-18

July 16

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:9-18 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:9-18 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. While Elijah was on Mount Horeb, how did God communicate with him? Do we have such close relationship with God? Why?
2. How did God rejuvenate His servant? Why did God talk to Elijah in "gentle whisper"?
3. In your spiritual journey, have you ever argued with God? How did it end up? What could be the equivalence of "powerful wind, earthquake, fire" that made you miss the "gentle whisper" of God?

After having traveled for forty days, Elijah reached the mountain of God to face Him alone. Originally, Elijah thought the Israelites would have returned to the Lord after having witnessed Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel; but not only did they not repent, they now wanted to

kill Elijah. He then realized that he was the only zealous one and no one else lifted a finger. The feeling of waging a war in solitude made the prophet greatly depressed. Therefore, Elijah poured out his grievances to God.

In this chapter, we read the unique way how God rejuvenated His servant. First, He fed him, without scolding and lecturing. Twice He touched him and patiently said “Get up and eat,” much like an understanding parent, no need for extra words. Elijah received help from God and that allowed him to regain his strength to travel for forty days and forty nights. Afterwards, God helped Elijah to settle down his emotions and clear his mind by asking him twice “What are you doing here?” The response from Elijah amounted to: “I tried my best, but what surrounds me is terrible and so will my ending be. I cannot go on, I need an escape, I want out, and that is why I am here.” Even so, God allowed Elijah to pour out his heart. Then, He told him to get out of his cave in order to be with God — do not hide in a cave that is filled with bad memories, hurt and frustration. God wanted to speak to him in person. God spoke with him, not in wind, earthquake or fire, but in a gentle whisper. God wanted Elijah to realize that He not only performed earth-shaking miracles but He also worked in whispers. That was what the Prophet had not noticed before. God gave Elijah a new vision — go anoint Hazael King over Aram, anoint Jehu King over Israel. God blessed Elijah with co-laborers so that he would not have to fight by himself. God arranged for Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet and arrange for another seven thousand spiritual partners whose knees have not bowed down to Baal! Thanks to God who knows how to change and equip us!

APPLICATION: Try to use five to ten minutes to wait upon the Lord quietly (not to talk, but to be silent), listen to the gentle whisper and write down your feelings. If situation allows, arrange to wait upon the Lord after each devotion during this week.

MEMORY VERSE: “Be still, and know that I am God!”

Psalm 46:10a

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

The Call Of Elisha

Passage: 1 Kings 19:19-21

July 17

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:19-21 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Twelve yoke of oxen" — indicates that Elisha is a wealthy man. In addition, "twelve" is also a special number for the Israelites. Therefore, it is particularly recorded.

"Threw his cloak around him" — Cannot be sure whether it was a well-known method to "pass on to a successor" in those days, but Elisha clearly knew it was a "call."

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 1 Kings 19:19-21 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. How did Elijah call Elisha? Have you ever felt the call of God?

2. How did Elisha respond to the call of God? What inspiration and reference are there for us?

God gave Elijah three new tasks, one of which was to anoint Elisha to be a prophet and become his successor. When Elijah saw him, Elisha was farming at home. We believe that the Spirit of God moved the heart of Elisha. It is by God's special election that a person is called by God, and that is grace. The person's duty is to respond and to follow. Elisha gives us a good example.

When Elijah put his cloak (A leather coat, which is the sign of a prophet) on him, Elisha clearly knew what the prophet meant. He was willing to leave a stable life to follow the prophet to serve God, he only asked first to say goodbye to his parents. Elisha killed an ox, showing that he was going to follow Elijah wholeheartedly. Now he had no cow, which meant that he could no longer go back to the rich farmer life again. He cooked the ox, not only make it a feast for the people, more importantly a thanksgiving sacrifice to God, for God had chosen him as His prophet.

When the call of God came, Elisha's response was without hesitation. Even though he was busy with the work of the world, but his heart was always there for God, he always listened to the voice of God, and followed the lead of God. His following has no reservations, he did not hesitate to put down the pursuit of the world, even parents, relatives and friends, and focused on serving Elijah from then on. He can be said to be a successor who exceeds his predecessor. God made him into a great prophet.

APPLICATION: Have you ever thought that the Lord will use you greatly? Please write down some of the services you can and are willing to take on (e.g. prayer, evangelism, writing work, caring, church facilities, computer, greeters, etc.)? Let God know what is in your heart, and ask God to use you. Also try to pay more attention to God's "call" in your daily life and work, and respond to Him with firm confidence and action.

MEMORY VERSE: "My Father will honor the one who serves me."
John 12:26b

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Righteous Judgment

Passage: 1 Kings 21

July 18

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD’S WORD: Read 1 Kings 21 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD’S WORD: Read 1 Kings 21 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What role did each of them play in the murder of Naboth: King Ahab, Jezebel, and the elders who lived in the same city with Naboth? Do you think they were all guilty? Why?

2. King Ahab did not realize that he was living in spiritual poverty, yet still wanted more after he has already attained great wealth. What reminder does this serve us?

Although King Ahab owned a majestic palace, he still wanted to take over the inheritance of Naboth’s ancestors. When Naboth refused to give up the vineyard, King Ahab went home feeling sullen and refused to eat. King Ahab, who worshipped the Baals, was a greedy and selfish king. His wife, Queen Jezebel scoffed at her husband’s behavior and decided to plot to kill Naboth. She used her

power to manipulate the elders and nobles so they became her accomplice. They could not get away from God's punishment.

There is nothing that cannot be made known in this world. Anything that is hidden will be revealed to God. When God told Elijah to proclaim Ahab's wrong doing and punishment, Ahab blamed Elijah for being against him. When we are blinded by jealousy and hatred, it is almost impossible to see our sin. God's judgment is horrific, but the cause of the punishment is sin. We can say that we reap what we sow. After Ahab heard the verdict, he became remorseful. However, it was too late. Even though God was gracious to Ahab by not punishing him in his life time, his descendants would bear the consequences.

God is righteous. He punishes those who commit wrongdoings. God is also gracious. He gives chances to everyone so they can be saved. Do we grab the opportunity to repent? When Ahab learned to be humble and repent, God reduced his punishment. All the riches in the world cannot satisfy our spiritual needs. Only when we turn back to God, then we can obtain real peace, joy and the hope for eternal life.

APPLICATION: Come before God and meditate. Ask God to grant you gentle and discerning heart. Are there any hidden sins in your life? Ask God to forgive you.

MEMORY VERSE: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"
Matthew 16:26

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

BOOK OF 2 KINGS

- **Author:** Unknown, possibly Jeremiah or a group of prophets.
- **Background:** The once united nation of Israel was divided into Israel and Judah for more than one hundred years
- **Key verses:** God admonishing Israel and Judah through the prophets and seers, saying, "The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: 'Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.' But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the Lord their God." (2 Kings 17:13-14)
- **Main characters:** Elijah, Elisha, Shunammite, Naaman, Jezebel, Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar
- **Theme:**
 1. God's patience — God told His people that if they obey Him, their life will be blessed; if not, there will be judgement and destruction. God sent many prophets to guide them, to give them sufficient warning about the pending destruction. God desires all to repent, but when the people are stiff-necked, God's discipline and judgement will come.
 2. God's Judgement — 209 years after Israel separated from Judah, the kingdom was conquered by Assyria; Judah survived for 345 years before it was taken over by Babylon. God will not leave unbelief and rebellion unpunished. Those who ignore God's command and words will face horrific consequences. The messages and miracles of the prophets were warnings to the evil and rebellious kings and people. It often requires the pain of discipline and toil of hard work to bring our lives into obedience to God.

- **Outline of 2 Kings** (Reference: "The Bible-CGST Study Edition"):

- I. The Nation Divided (1:1-17:41)

1. Ahaziah as king of Israel (1:1-18)
2. Elisha succeeded Elijah (2:1-25)
3. Jehoram as king of Israel, and attack Moab with Jehoshaphat (3:1-27)
4. Elisha's miracles (4:1-8:15)
5. Jehoram and Ahaziah as kings of Judah (8:16-29)
6. Jehu as king of Israel, and the end of the family of Ahab (9:1-10:36)
7. Athaliah ruled in Judah, Jehosheba helped Joash regain the throne (11:1-21)
8. Joash as king of Judah (12:1-21)
9. Jehoahaz and Joash as kings of Israel (13:1-25)
10. Amaziah as king of Judah (14:1-22)
11. Jeroboam as king of Israel (14:23-29)
12. Azariah as king of Judah (15:1-7)
13. Zechariah as king of Israel, Shallum usurp the throne (15:8-12)
14. Menahem, and Pekahiah as kings of Israel (15:13-26)
15. Peka as king of Israel, Hoshea usurp the throne (15:27-31)
16. Jotham, and Ahaz as kings of Judah (15:32-16:20)
17. Hoshea as king of Israel, the fall and exile of Israel (17:1-41)

- II. The Time of Judah (18:1-25:30)

1. Hezekiah as king of Judah (18:1-20:21)
2. Manasseh, and Amon as kings of Judah (21:1-26)
3. Josiah as king of Judah (22:1-23:30)
4. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin as kings of Judah (23:31-24:16)
5. Zedekiah as king of Judah, the fall and exile of Judah (24:17-25:21)
6. Gedaliah as governor (25:22-26)
7. Babylonian king honored Jehoiachin (25:27-30)

Elijah Taken Up To Heaven

Passage: 2 Kings 2:1-18

July 19

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read Judges 2 Kings 2:1-18 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "The disciples of the prophets" are like a school with disciples surrounding the famous prophet, like Elijah or Elisha. These prophet schools are located all over the country, starting from the time of Jeroboam's reign, trying to break away from the decadence of spirituality and morality. The disciples of the prophets at Bethel had witnessed Elisha inherited the holy work of a prophet from Elijah.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 2:1-18 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Elisha's request to Elijah was not for skill, nor for power, but he asked, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit." What kind of inspiration does this request give you?

2. Prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven without experiencing death, what kind of meaning would this be for his disciples?

Elisha, who was chosen by God as the "successor" of Elijah, inherited the work of the prophets in the Northern Kingdom as the voice of God. On the trips going to Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho, Elijah asked Elisha three times to stay and not to follow him, but Elisha

resolutely followed. At the last moment, Elijah asked Elisha and said, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you? Just ask." Unexpectedly Elisha boldly asked for a double portion of the spirit that was with Elijah. On the one hand, Elisha's request indicates that he admits that he is less than his teacher, so he requires a double portion of the spirit to move him. On the other hand, he is requesting to be the heir or successor of Elijah — to become the leader of the prophets, to continue the work of Elijah (according to the custom of the Israelites, the eldest son can receive double the inheritance from his father).

God granted Elisha's request because his motives was not to be better than Elijah but to do more for God. As long as our motives are pure, we can ask God for greater things; on the contrary, if we ask God for great power, we also need to review our motives, and remove selfishness.

Elijah was taken up to heaven without experiencing death. He is the second person who did not experience death in the Bible, Enoch was the first (Genesis 5: 21-24). There were other student prophets who might not have seen that God took Elijah to heaven; or even if they had seen it, they might not believe what they saw. That is why they persisted to look for Elijah (16-18). They could not find Elijah's body, more and more it proved what happened was true and their faith were strengthened.

APPLICATION: Try to learn from the attitude of Elisha, ask that the Spirit of God would touch your life even more than before (i.e. a double portion of the Spirit). Try to be more sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and be more dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit In your daily living and in your ministries.

MEMORY VERSE: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty." Zechariah 4:6

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Widow's Faith

Passage: 2 Kings 4:1-7

July 20

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 4:1-7 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: The Jewish tradition believed that this prophet's disciple was the "Obadiah" mentioned in 1 Kings 18. Ancient Jewish history records that this person borrows to feed the young prophets.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 4:1-7 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Try to go through the process of this miracle that Elisha performed (3-7). What is there for you to learn?

2. When you read about the widow's faith in God, what encouragement do you get?

Elisha is the prophet who succeeded Elijah. His ministry often responded to the ministry of his teacher Elijah. Therefore, the story of Elisha on how he helped the widow with oil jars is similar to Elijah's help to the widow at Zarephath — "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD

sends rain on the land” (1 Kings 17:14). Thus, like Elijah, Elisha helped the disadvantaged in society.

The widow was the wife of a prophet disciple, and the disciple died early and left his debt to his wife for repayment. She had no choice but to ask Elisha for help, then she did what Elisha told her to do. As a result, she gained a lot of oil. She then sold the oil and repaid her debt according to what Elisha told her to do. What a submissive woman she was! She did everything according to what Elisha told her to do. How many people are self-asserted? How many people think that they know it all but they actually know half? Because of that, so often that God's work is half done then stopped. Whenever you know the plan of God's work, it is a guarantee for success. A person who replaces the mind of God with his own will not be able to receive blessings from God.

The poor widow and her sons borrowed empty jars from their neighbors and poured oil from their own bottle into every empty vessel. How many empty jars they borrowed is an indication of how big a faith they had. How much of God's abundant supply they received was according to the size of their faith and the degree of their obedience; similarly, we should not doubt the blessing of God because of our lack of faith and obedience. He can do much more than what we ask for and what we can imagine.

APPLICATION: Elisha was a prophet who loved God and men, many miracles he performed typified the works of Jesus Christ. Try to humble yourself and let the Lord know your needs, put your faith in Him and start experiencing His richness.

MEMORY VERSE: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10b

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Shunammite Woman

Passage: 2 Kings 4:8-37

July 21

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 4:8-37 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: "Shunem" means "two resting places." It is a little village in the tribe of Issachar, about 20 miles from Mount Carmel.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 4:8-37 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of spiritual lessons can we learn from this Shunammite woman? How about in terms of her relationship with her family? Why? What kind of faith did she possess?

2. With what power did Elisha use to save the boy? Why did his servant Gehazi fail to do so? What does this tell us?

The Shunammite woman's family was wealthy. She could tell Elisha was a man of God, and for that reason she requested to prepare a room for him so he had a place to stay whenever he was in town. She made the arrangement with much attention to details, not out

of a desire for rewards but purely out of love, seeing that Elisha the prophet had a need for shelter. What a lesson in service we should all learn from her!

Nevertheless, her kindness was indeed rewarded, and in a way far more than what she could dream of. Elisha insisted on doing something for her upon seeing and enjoying the arrangement that had been provided. Learning that the woman had no children, and that her husband was old, he said to her, "about this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms." The woman indeed was pregnant and gave birth to a son just as promised.

Often times, the more calculative and stingy we are about giving, the more difficult it is to experience the rich outpour of blessings from God. The woman did not ask for anything because she did not expect to be repaid. Have we been calculative and stingy in our giving and offering? Do we wish to be asked to be repaid?

Upon the Shunammite woman's son's sudden death, she immediately set out to see Elisha, for she was certain that Elisha possessed the power and authority from God. Her composure and courage reflected her absolute faith in the Lord. Elisha first sent Gehazi to the boy, but Gehazi failed to revive him. It was not until Elisha arrived, prayed, and laid on top of the boy before he slowly came back from the dead. This clearly showed that the authority did not come from the staff, but from the prayer.

APPLICATION: Compare to the Shunammite woman, how is your own giving and offering? How do you treat, welcome, and serve others? Do you give willingly without hoping for rewards? What can you learn from the Shunammite woman? Please write down some practical actions that you can do.

MEMORY VERSE: "And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Naaman Was Healed

Passage: 2 Kings 5:1-18

July 22

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 5:1-18 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: Aram was a country to the northeast of Israel. In the time of David, Aram made tribute to Israel; but in the time of Elisha, Aram grew steadily in strength, and often robbed the Israelites causing political chaos. Leprosy was extremely contagious, incurable, and could be fatal. Many of the lepers were forced to live outside of the city wall.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 5:1-18 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. In the process of Naaman commander of the army of the king of Aram's healing, what role do the young girl from Israel, the king of Israel, and the prophet Elisha play in his life?

2. Not only did the enemy of Israel, Naaman, received healing; he was willing to serve the true God for the rest of his life. What new insight about God's salvation can you learn from this?

The young girl in the house of Naaman was a captive from Israel, taken away from her family. Yet, God had His good will for her life, and she was faithful to God. Not only did she rely on God

wholeheartedly, she was also a believer with a strong testimony. When she found out that her master contracted leprosy, she was sympathetic and led him to Elisha to receive God's healing.

The king of Israel lost his composure and became terrified when he received the letter of the king of Aram. Even though Israel was tempted by idols, they still knew the Lord; yet unfortunately, they did not seek for God's help at their time of need.

As Naaman came to Elisha's house after the long journey, Elisha did not give any special treatment to the visitor; instead, he commanded Naaman to go bathe in the Jordan River. His faith and words were full of authority because they stem from God. What Elisha did fully demonstrated his honor as a Servant of God, as well as God's mighty strength.

Even the courageous commander Naaman was unable to withstand the torture of leprosy. By the words of a young girl, he sincerely came to seek for the prophet. Even though Elisha did not pray for Naaman as he expected, at the end Naaman was willing to obey with humility to go down to the Jordan and finish washing seven times; as a result, he was completely healed. The best part is that not only did he receive physical healing, he went on to declare loyalty to the true God alone. God's magnificent salvation is unfathomable by the human mind.

APPLICATION: The simple words of a young girl ended in the healing and salvation of the commander of the army of Aram. Reflect on where God has placed you right now, do the people around you need the healing of God? Please write down their names and needs, and find the opportunity to tell them about God's power!

MEMORY VERSE: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"
Romans 10:15b

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Loss Outweighs The Gain

Passage: 2 Kings 5:19-27

July 23

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 5:19-27 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 5:19-27 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Why did Gehazi ask for money and clothing from Naaman?
What was wrong about it?

2. What was the consequence for Gehazi's action? Could he still serve Elisha?

Elisha had his reasons for not accepting the gifts from Naaman; whereas his servant, Gehazi, wanted them out of greed. He lied about why he wanted the gifts. What is even worse was that he proclaimed God's name in vain. Gehazi has been Elisha's servant for many years. He should have learned how to be committed in serving, but instead he was corrupted.

Greed and rebellion prevented Gehazi from receiving blessings from the prophet; what he got was leprosy! Leprosy was deemed unclean and so Gehazi could not serve Elisha anymore.

Let us take heart from Gehazi's actions. No matter how long we have been a Christian, if we only strive for gaining wealth, power and status, our spiritual life cannot grow. A servant cannot serve two masters. Jesus said, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). When we are committed to Jesus, we need to turn our eyes upon Him, follow Him, and strive toward the goal. Let us learn from Apostle Paul: "I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." (cf. Phil 3:8b)

APPLICATION: Gehazi's life went downhill because of his greed, lies, and rebellion against his master. Reflect on your life. What do you need to repent from?

MEMORY VERSE: "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Luke 16:13

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Open Our Eyes

Passage: 2 Kings 6:1-23

July 24

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 6:1-23 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 6:1-23 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Elisha made the borrowed iron float instead of giving the men new irons, or lifting them out of poverty all together so that they still need to work hard for a living. What does this show about God's provision?

2. How did Elisha help his servant open his eyes? In your life, what are the things that make you question or afraid, for which you need God to open your eyes to see the bigger vision so that you will know God and your surroundings deeper?

Elisha was a powerful prophet; he resurrected the dead, detoxified the poisoned, and turned little into much. The recording of the floating iron points to God's guidance and provision for those who trust in Him; God's detailed and consistent care for us reaches to even the trivial details of daily living. Yet, God does not want us to take things for granted. Paul exhorts believers to lead a quiet life, and work with our hands. He was a living example of this teaching.

Elisha was able to see through every strategy of the king of the Aram, and it led to him being surrounded by the army. Yet he was not frightened, but turned around to comfort the fearful servant: "Don't be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them." The horses and chariots of fire were the army of angels. Elisha prayed for his servant and his eyes were opened by God, so he could see what Elisha saw. When Elisha prayed for the second time to ask God to strike them with blindness, Elisha brought them into Samaria which led to peace between the two nations.

May the Lord open our spiritual eyes so that we can see through the things that we do not understand.

APPLICATION: Have you ever been afraid in the face of difficulties? Try to pray for these things in the coming week or beyond; pray that God will grant you spiritual eyesight to view these things as they truly are, and be victorious over them by the strength of the Holy Spirit!

MEMORY VERSE: "But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."

1 Corinthians 2:10

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Blessed, Again

Passage: 2 Kings 8:1-6

July 25

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 8:1-6 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 8:1-6 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What was the attitude of the Shunammite woman towards the prophet's instructions? If God asks you to give up all your possessions, what would you do?

2. Many consider miracles are nothing but coincidences. Do you agree with this view? What inspirations can you draw from this passage?

The Shunammite woman was wealthy. Yet, when Elisha instructed her to leave her homeland to flee from an impending famine, she was obedient. She returned seven years later to reclaim her lost properties. By this time, her husband as well as Elisha might have already passed, but God used the timely conversation between Elisha's servant and the king to allow her regaining of her possessions, showing God's magnificent arrangements.

The Shunammite woman did not have a son, but God rewarded her with one for her attentive care of Elisha. Consequently, she experienced the grief of losing the son. Then, again through Elisha, her son was recovered from the dead. These events led to another serendipitous event later on: Just as the king was asking Gehazi about Elisha, and Gehazi was describing how Elisha restored a boy from the dead, the boy's mother was appealing to the king for her lost possessions. The king asked the woman about the events and the woman told him. Not only did the king return all her possessions, he also gave her the income generated from her land from the day she left. Despite the famine, she was restored from this seemingly unrelated incident.

APPLICATION: Events that seem meaningless or random can easily be the means by which God exercises His will. Try asking God for heightened awareness so you can observe and understand both the big and little things that God is doing in your life.

MEMORY VERSE: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

The Passing Of Elisha

Passage: 2 Kings 13

July 26

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 13 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 13 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Why did God answered the prayer of Jehoahaz? Is God still mindful of evil men today?
2. Why was Jehoash unable to have the power to completely destroy Aram? What are the reasons that you cannot completely defeat sin in your life?
3. Elisha's bones were able to bring the dead back to life, what message does this tell us?

Jehoahaz did evil in the eyes of the Lord by worshiping the golden calf; he did not turn away from his idolatry, and caused the Israelites to be kept under the king of Aram by God. These descriptions point to the persistence of his sin; but when Jehoahaz sought the Lord's favor, the Lord listened to him and provided a deliverer for Israel. It is evident that when man repents, God will listen. The Old Testament is full of images foreshadowing the salvation from Jesus.

Elisha had already put his hands on king Jehoash, and explained that it was "the Lord's arrow of victory", but when Jehoash was supposed to strike the ground with the arrows, he only lightly struck it three times and stopped; this act of little faith led to the missed opportunity of completely destroying the enemy.

Elisha did not have the privilege of going up to heaven by chariots and horses of fire; instead he died suffering from illness like many others. However, the anointing power of his life was able to bring the dead back to life just by the touching of his dried up bones. Elisha's life was a whole offering to God without regrets and full of faith. His ministry helped the nation and countless people; even his bones contained the power to resurrect! The work of the prophet Elisha demonstrating God's miracles was a foreshadowing of Christ Jesus' salvation and power to bring eternal life for those who believe.

APPLICATION: The death of Elisha ended the great career of the prophet. He performed many miraculous actions, and his faithfulness won the respect of the whole nation. Even the incident after his death was a testament to his extraordinary power. What challenge and impact does his life have on you?

MEMORY VERSE: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."
Philippians 1:21

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Prepare To Meet Your God

Passage: 2 Kings 18

July 27

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 18 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

NOTE: In the 4th year of Hezekiah, Assyria laid siege to Samaria, then captured and deported Israel. In the 14th year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib threatened Judah so Hezekiah negotiated for settlement of silver and gold.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 18 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What was the result of Hezekiah's negotiation with Assyria? Have you ever yielded to corrupted force in anything?

2. In what ways did the field commander threaten the people of Judah? How is this similar to how Satan attacks us?

Hezekiah was a king of Judah who revered God. The Scripture described him as unprecedented for he completely destroyed idol worship, even removing items that belong to God but have become idols. He enjoyed peace and victory because God was with him.

After capturing Israel, the Northern Kingdom, Assyria attempted to move downward to take siege of Judah as well. Facing this enormous enemy, Hezekiah had no choice but to negotiate for settlement. The Assyrian king had bragging rights because since their establishment in the Mesopotamian plain, their army had not met any city that could withstand their attack. It is only natural for them to brush aside the small and weak country that had been relying on them for protection as a worthy opponent. Even though Judah had allies, it was still a battle between ants and elephant.

Not only was the Assyrian king boastful in his letter, his arrogance was also evident from the words of the field commander. It was not the Israelites whom he had insulted, but the living God. When we face our enemies' insult and intentional attack, we do not face it alone because God will be standing with us. For we are His people, and He will not abandon us in the face of our enemies' insults and attacks.

The threats of the field commander were out of his ignorance, for to a group of God relying Israelites, his blasphemy could not waver their faith.

APPLICATION: In your journey of faith, have you ever encounter provocative speech or attack like that of the field commander? How did you feel? Hezekiah did not have a quiet life; He had difficult challenges, even times when he could have lost his life or country. Yet, we can certainly learn from his example of bravery based on an unwavering faith in God. When facing any challenges, look toward God your Father and Savior, and rest assured in Him!

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" 1 Corinthians 1:31

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

God Gives Victory

Passage: 2 Kings 19

July 28

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 19 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 19 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. When Hezekiah ran into trouble, he asked Isaiah to pray. Did he pray to God himself? Whose prayer ended up to be more helpful (cf. v.20)? How does it serve as a good reminder?

2. What assurances had God given Hezekiah through Isaiah? How do those assurances help you today?

After hearing the insolent words from the field commander, Hezekiah turned to the LORD. "Tearing clothes and putting on sackcloth" signified fasting: it showed his earnestly looking forward to the instructions of God. The prophet Isaiah also recorded this incident (cf. Isaiah 36-39). We believe Hezekiah was not someone

who would come to God only when he had to. At that moment, he was convinced that only the LORD was the source of his strength. He went into the temple of the LORD to seek God and at the same time, he sent people to the prophet Isaiah. Only when one truly turns to God, can he receive peace in calamity. Isaiah conveyed the answer from God to Hezekiah that God knew and He would act. Hezekiah started to pray as the troops from the Assyrian king besieged the city. The king brought contempt to God and slandered Him. Hezekiah brought the letter from the king's messengers, spread it out before the LORD. He declared that he relied on the Creator, father of all nations, one who listened to prayers and the Almighty who delivered them.

Isaiah spoke for God and proclaimed God's greatness that He trampled all nations and all nations served as His tools. He promised peace upon Jerusalem and blessed them with provision. He is faithful and merciful. One who trusts Him would have no fear. Messengers from God annihilated the Assyrian army and the Israelites were only bystanders. They did not have to go through bloody fights to preserve their lives. How great God is.

APPLICATION: Read the prayer of Hezekiah in detail, analyze it and list out the content. What was the focus of his prayer? Learn from his prayer, write down your own prayer and pray.

MEMORY VERSE: "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" Psalm 91:2

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

God's Blessing

Passage: 2 Kings 20

July 29

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 20 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 20 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Imagine the emotional roller coaster that Hezekiah went through from becoming ill to the point of death, to recovered, to seeing the sign of God, to receiving the Babylonian messengers. How did this emotional ride lead him into the trap of pride?

2. Why would Hezekiah's showing off his wealth to the Babylonian messengers bring on such serious consequence? After receiving God's blessing, how are we supposed to act?

When the boils grew on Hezekiah's body, God sent Isaiah to give the message that he will die for sure. Yet, Hezekiah's sincere prayer and bitter tears moved God. God answered his prayer immediately — not only was his illness healed, God also granted him an additional 15 years of life, along with the promise of deliverance from the king of Assyria.

After receiving healing from God and defeating the Assyrian army, Hezekiah's reputation grew and the news spread to Merodach-Baladan the Babylonian king, who sent his messengers with a gift

to Hezekiah. It was most likely that an alliance relationship against Assyria was in discussion; but this time, Hezekiah failed the test and turned from trusting God to relying on men's military strength.

Which one is more impressive - God's healing of a dying illness and moving time backward, or the gold and silver in the treasury? Hezekiah missed the best opportunity to show off God's mighty work to the gentiles. Glory belongs to God alone, thus it should be given to God; when man takes credit for the glory, it not only put the safety of the nation in jeopardy, it also demonstrates the shallowness of the person (cf. 2 Chron. 32:24-25).

In the 29 years of Hezekiah's political life, he revitalized the worship of the LORD through his restless effort which is recorded in details by 2 Chronicles. Yet, a single mistake led to the destruction of the nation — it was a serious matter. Our life is one coherent unit, just like a marathon; a good and steady first half does not guarantee success nor the ability to finish the race. Likewise, a faithful walk in the first half of life does not mean we can let our guard of faithfulness down. I pray hard and long that we can persist in our trust and zeal for God, so that we will not be tripped over by even the smallest of sin and lose blessings from God.

APPLICATION: Past success, even spiritual growth or strength in service/experience, etc. can become vulnerable places where Satan will tempt us. Examine our hearts for pride, and be alert by writing down some "danger zones" that we need to be aware of. Pray for God's guidance over these vulnerabilities.

MEMORY VERSE: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."
Proverbs 16:18

PRAYER: Tell God what you have learned and how you would like to respond to Him. Pray for His empowerment to live out His will.

Renew The Covenant With The LORD

Passage: 2 Kings 23:1-27

July 30

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

PRAYER: Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

ADORATION: Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 23:1-27 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

RE-READING GOD'S WORD: Read 2 Kings 23:1-27 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. List the idols, places, things and people that were involved in the religious reform under Josiah. What did he do before starting the reform?

2. Though Josiah had started the reform, the wrath of the LORD persisted. Why? Do you think it was fair for the Israelites who were yet to come?

Under Josiah's rule, came a great religious renaissance. The society enjoyed years of peace and prosperity. The description of Josiah in v.25 has great similarities with the description of Hezekiah in chapter 18. These two kings were rare finds, thus deserved good reputation.

The covenant required children of God to serve Him with all their hearts and souls, and keep His commands, regulations and decrees. Since Israelites came out of Egypt, this covenant served

as an important foundation for the relationship between God and His people. It also served as a compass of Israelites' repeated revivals. We not only have to always remember God's words, but also let it renew our lives unfaithfully. Once God's words become dispirited rules and regulations to us, we will become insensitive to it, rather than being touched and transformed by it. Similarly, do not remain in your experience of being saved; instead, renew yourself spiritually. May our relationship with God be as refreshing as it is long lasting.

This cleansing effort wiped away all idol worshiping, especially the high places that Solomon built. The scope of the reform was even extended to the perished Northern Kingdom; such as the altar of Bethel which was also demolished, burned and ground into powder. It was evident that the reform was thorough and extensive. Removing all idols is an important step in a renewed life. Furthermore, Josiah led his nation to observe the Passover which was an important festival of the Israelites. The observation was mainly to remember the history of being freed from the plagues and Egypt. Josiah led the people to worship God in complete obedience.

The reform of Josiah was the most thorough of all the kings, but the sins of Manasseh finally brought destruction to Judah.

APPLICATION: The meaning of idols refers to everything that prevents you from approaching God. Examine your life to see what idols remain in your life. Put all idols before Christ Jesus, destroy them and pray to God for a renewed spirit.

MEMORY VERSE: "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.'" 2 Corinthians 6:16-17

PRAYER: Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

Monthly Reflection

Passage: Psalm 30:5

July 31

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

QUIET DOWN: Use one to two minutes to quiet down yourself, try not to think about anything. If light music (without lyrics) helps, you could play some light music to help you focus.

PRAYER AND MEDITATION: Ask God to calm your heart, then read aloud Psalm 30:5, slowly and repeatedly (you may repeat it three to five times or more, but avoid rushing through it). As you read, try to pay attention to specific words, moods or feelings, or any particular thoughts that speak to you between the lines. Use this Bible passage or your respective insight as a beginning prayer of today's reflection.

*“For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*

Psalm 30:5

YOUR FEELINGS:

REFLECTION: Please meditate quietly and answer the following questions and prompts.

1. Please count and write down the various situations that you experienced God's grace in your life in the past month.

2. List down areas that you need to improve on.

3. Other reflections:

PRAYER: Ask the Lord to grant you strength to live out what you have learned today.

Overall Insights In July

Write down the overall spiritual insights that you have learned in your daily devotion this month:

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