



WEEK OF FEBRUARY 4, 2024

(COVERS READINGS FROM FEBRUARY 4 -10)

Overview

The following information is provided as a basic orientation to reading the Bible. Feel free to add to it and use it in any way that is helpful for your group. Also, feel free to make copies of these pages for members of your group!

In 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22, we witness a dramatic encounter between David and King Saul. David, pursued by Saul's jealousy and seeking refuge in the wilderness, spares Saul's life when he has the opportunity to kill him. This narrative exemplifies themes of forgiveness, divine providence, and the complex relationship between earthly power and God's anointed.

In 2 Samuel 5-7 the author traces David's ascent to kingship and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. David's desire to build a permanent dwelling for God, countered by God's promise to establish an everlasting dynasty through him, highlights themes of divine sovereignty, covenant, and the tension between human ambition and God's divine plan.

2 Samuel 11-12:25 narrates the infamous account of David's affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, emphasizing themes of sin, repentance, and the consequences of wrongdoing. David's heartfelt repentance leads to God's forgiveness, illustrating the depth of God's mercy.

As King David's life draws to a close in 1 Kings 2-3:28, he imparts his final instructions to his son, Solomon, who becomes his successor. Solomon's early reign is marked by his request for wisdom from God, a divine gift that enables him to navigate complex situations with wisdom and discernment. Themes of succession, wisdom, and divine guidance emerge prominently.

In 1 Kings 8-9:9 we see the dedication of Solomon's magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, a central event in Solomon's reign. Solomon's prayer of dedication underscores themes of God's presence dwelling among His people and the importance of faithfulness to God's covenant. God's response affirms His commitment to the Temple but also warns of potential consequences for disobedience.

1 Kings 16:29-19:18 spans several reigns and events, including Ahab and Jezebel's rule, the prophet Elijah's dramatic confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and his subsequent

flight into the wilderness. It highlights themes of idolatry, God's supremacy, and the faithful remnant. Elijah's experiences illustrate the tension between divine calling and human weakness.

The final chapter of 2 Kings recounts the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, the destruction of Solomon's Temple, and the exile of Judah's inhabitants. This somber narrative concludes the saga of Israel's struggle with power and agency, underscoring the persistent themes of covenant faithfulness, genuine repentance, spiritual wisdom, divine providence, and the consequences of sin.

General Discussion Questions

Use any or all of the following questions, depending how much time you have:

- How familiar were you with this week's readings? Was there anything that surprised you?
- What do you learn about God from these readings? What do you learn about humanity, or about human nature? How did the authors of these writings understand their relationship with God?
- What passages or aspects of these readings give you comfort or assurance? What passages or aspects of these readings do you find difficult to accept?
- Are there any particular passages that you want to study in-depth?

This Week's Discussion Questions

1 Samuel 24 | In the encounter between David and King Saul, we see an example of forgiveness and the sparing of one's enemy. How does this story illuminate the concept of forgiveness and its importance in our personal relationships and communal living? What can we learn about reconciliation and extending mercy to those who have wronged us?

1 Kings 8:22-61 | The Temple's location is just as significant as the structure, being variously called Mount Moriah (Gen. 22), Mount Zion (1 Samuel 5), and Araunah's threshing floor (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21). Yet, notice that Solomon does not pray for God to take up residence but for the temple and its location to be an outward and visible sign of God's attentiveness, God's forgiveness, and God's covenant faithfulness – so that anyone who turns towards the temple remembers God and God remembers them. Name the spaces and places in your own life that hold this sacred power and promise for you. Are there other places within this community that need to be dedicated for or acknowledged as holding this sacred power and promise?

Closing Prayer

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover your peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.