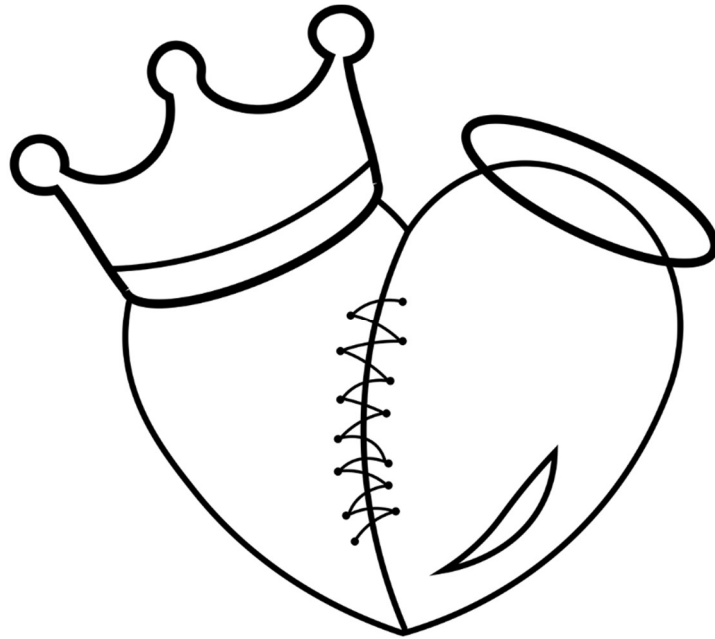


THE DIVIDED
KINGDOM
OF THE HEART



By Elizabeth Dempsey

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DEDICATION



To Jan who has been my constant cheerleader and consumer of my words for the past four years. Thank you for being vulnerable with your divided heart and not cruelly judging mine. Thank you for the late-night phone calls and holding buckets of my tears. Thank you for leading me, mentoring me, and pinning my feet to the ground when I want to run. You are truly a *Repairer of Broken Walls*. The kingdom of my heart is better with you in my life.



To Tanya for introducing me to the idea that idolatry is alive and well today. You're the first person I ever heard refer to themselves as a "former idolater." You are honest about your own idolatry, and it inspires others to tear down their own high places. You are a *Restorer of Streets with Dwellings*. After listening to your words year after year, my heart was inspired to speak words of my own.

To Andrea for saying, "To be fair, it really is good." You are too kind. You are one of my dearest friends. Thank you for helping me laugh; laugh at life, laugh at myself, and laugh through my trials. We all need a friend who sends a GIF of a toddler rolling over someone in her Hot Wheels Jeep with the words "ROLL ON." You help me find the courage to roll on.



To all the ladies who helped pilot the study online during the pandemic. Your sweet faces on my Zoom feed kept me writing the next word, sentence, chapter... Your voices responding to the call of the LORD propelled me forward.



To the ladies who showed up in-person to sit through my revisions, my D-group, you are my friends, and I am forever grateful for your support.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book is meant to be a companion to bible readings about the time when the Kingdom of Israel was divided. If you've ever read a chronological Bible, you know how frustrating the duplicate passages are. I have read all the passages from this period of time and have chosen, what I think, are the best ones to get a full picture of the story.

You cannot fully understand the story of the divided kingdom without reading it in the light of the New Covenant. I have included the New Testament reading in Romans. Paul wrote to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) living in Rome after Christ returned to heaven.

THIS IS A LOT OF MATERIAL, WHAT IF I GET BEHIND?

I included a complete bible reading list in the TABLE OF CONTENTS. If you get behind, don't try and wait to come to bible study group until you catch up. Fall back on your reading list and read the passages in the bible. You will be prepared for class having only read the scripture. I find audio bible helps me keep up when I am in a busy season. Keep a journal in your car and turn the audio bible on. When you reach your destination, take five minutes to jot down what you read and your thoughts.

THIS BOOK IS MEANT TO BE READ WITH A GROUP

I wrote this for women's bible study and many women have read along with me as I wrote. Tearing down idols can be something between you and God, but God put us in the church for a reason. If you don't have a bible study group, find a friend who is willing to meet with you to go over the material each week. We are more successful in a routine. Commit to meet at a specific day and time. Your heart will be blessed for the fellowship.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Summaries and key points can be found in the leader's guide. This will help your leader prepare for the LESSON/REVIEW at the end of each chapter. A complete answer key for the book will help your leader answer any questions that may arise.

CHARTING THE HEARTS OF THE KINGS

Throughout this study, use the chart below to take notes about the hearts of the kings as you are reading about their actions. Listed are key verses giving insight into the hearts of the kings of Judah and Israel. Summarize the condition of their hearts, their actions, and the LORD’s response to their actions. Include the actions of God whether in blessing or discipline.

"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." 2 Chronicles 16:9

ISRAEL

Chapter	Reign	King	Scripture	Condition of the heart, Actions of the King, and God’s Response
1	931-910	Jeroboam 1	1 Kg 14:8-9	
2	910- 909	Nadab	1 Kg 15:26	
2	909- 886	Baasha	1 Kg 15:34	
2	886- 885	Elah	1 Kg 16:16	
2	885	Zimri	1 Kg 16:19	
2	885-874	Omri	1 Kg 16:25-26	
3	874-853	Ahab	1 Kg 16:31	
4	853-852	Ahaziah	1 Kg 22:52	
5	852-841	Joram	2 Kg 3:2-3	

5	841- 814	Jehu (captain)	2 Kg 10:31	
6	814- 798	Jehoahaz	2 Kg 13:2	
6	798- 782	Jehoash	2 Kgs 13:11	
6	782- 753	Jeroboam 2	2 Kg 14:24	
6	753- 752	Zechariah	2 Kg 15:9	
6	752	Shallum	none	
7	752- 742	Menahem	2 Kg 15:18	
7	742-740	Pekahiah	2 Kg 15:24	
7	740-732	Pekah	2 Kg 15:28	
7	732-722	Hoshea	2 Kg 17:2	
Israel into Assyrian Captivity				

Continue to the next page for the kings of Judah

JUDAH

Chapter	Reign	King	Scripture	Condition of the heart, Actions of the King, and God's Response
1	231-913	Rehoboam	2 Chr 12:14 2 Chr 12:1	
			1 Kg 14:23,26	
1	913-911	Abijam (Abijah)	1 Kg 15:3-5	
			2 Chr 13:14-16	
1,2	911-870	Asa	2 Chron 14:2-3	
			2Chr 15:17	
			2Chr 15:2 2Chr14:11-12 2 Chr 16:7	
4, 5	870-848	Jehoshaphat	2 Chr 17:6	
			2Chr 20:32-33	
			2 Chr 20:3, 27, 29-30	
5	848-841	Jehoram	2 Chr 21:12-13	
			2 Chr21:14	
5	841	Ahaziah	2 Chr 22:3	
			2 Chr 22:8-9	

6	841-835	Athaliah (mother)	none	
6	834-796	Joash	2 Kg 12:2-3	
6	796-767	Amaziah	2 Chr 25:2 2 Kings 14:3	
6,7	767-740	Uzziah aka Azariah	2 Kg 15:3-4	
7	740-732	Jotham	2 Chr 27:2	
7	732-716	Ahaz	2Chr28:1-3	
8	716-687	Hezekiah	2Chr 31:21	
9	687-642	Manasseh	2 Kg 21:2	
9	642-640	Amon	2 Kg 21:20	
9	640-608	Josiah	2 Kgs 23:25	
9	608	Jehoahaz (Shallum)	2 Kg 23:32	
9	608-597	Jehoiakim (Eliakim)	2 Kg 23:27	
10	597	Jehoiachin	2 Kg 24:9	.
10	597-586	Zedekiah	2 Kg 24:19	
Judah into Babylonian Captivity				

MAP 1 THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL



HOW DID WE END UP WITH A DIVIDED KINGDOM?

The great nation of Israel was thriving. The beloved Judean king David had ruled a united kingdom of twelve strong tribes. David's son, Solomon inherited a stable nation with the best possible religious and political legacy. But there was a problem: the people were offering their sacrifices at the high places, unholy locations of Canaanite worship.

King David was grieved that the ark of the covenant was sitting in a tent, while the great city of a Jerusalem was erected. In his last days, he tasked Solomon with building a temple for the Lord. Solomon embarked on building the royal palace and the temple for the LORD. The altar to the LORD and the holy things were in Gibeon, housed in the tabernacle (a tent of sorts) that had traveled with Israel through the desert. They had not yet been brought to the holy city. Solomon wanted the temple to be magnificent and, indeed, it would be.

In this transitional time, Solomon had a choice to make, would he obey God or follow the people? The bible says, "Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places." (1 Kings 3:3)

We can take a lesson from King David and Solomon: when an altar to the lord has not been established, we are in danger of slipping into idol worship. The topic of idolatry may seem foreign to our western thinking. We do not build altars in our living rooms or backyards. We have not fabricated new religions, custom fit to our fears. In those days, the people believed the gods gave them military victory, brought rain from the sky to make the land fertile, and a plethora of other things. Canaan enjoyed a polytheistic culture where the pantheon of gods was sought. I believe the idol worship of this time and our culture are not very different.

**WHEN AN ALTAR TO THE LORD HAS NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED,
WE ARE IN DANGER OF SLIPPING INTO IDOL WORSHIP.**

Solomon had a pure heart to worship God, but he had seen the disastrous outcome when his father David had tried to move the ark. The articles of worship were spread over two cities. Rather than moving the tabernacle and the altar, he followed the people and went to the high place at Gibeon. Solomon was in the wrong place of worship, but he worshiped God by making sacrifices on an ancient, sacred altar built by Moses. Although Solomon did not know what do, he sought the Lord and worshiped him. He confessed that he did not know what to do. God saw Solomon's heart and met him in this place.

LORD appeared to Solomon and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon answered, "LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people..." (1 Kings3:5-7, 2 Chron. 1:10)

God gave Solomon wisdom, but he also gave him riches and honor. We may not know how to worship God. We may not know how to be in right relationship with God and others, but we can ask God for wisdom. When we don't know what to do, we can ask God for wisdom.

WHEN WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, ASK GOD FOR WISDOM

Solomon immediately moved in obedience and went the ark of the covenant and he offered sacrifices there. It would be years before the temple was built and the ark would find a permanent home, but worship of the Lord needed to continue. The temple Solomon built for the Lord was unparalleled in beauty. Taking seven years to complete, Solomon prioritized this construction over his own palace. Once the structure was complete, the sacred articles were brought to the temple with great pomp and ceremony. The glory of the Lord then filled the temple.

During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety and peace for forty years. Israel enjoyed forty years of peace with the surrounding nations. Then the prophet Ahijah arrives with bad news, the kingdom is about to experience a great divide. The twelve great tribes will be splintered and the united kingdom will be torn from Solomon's hands. For the sake of King David, two tribes will remain with Solomon's descendants, but the rest of the kingdom will go their own way. What happened? How did the great Solomon go from ruling all of Israel, as his father did, to having the kingdom ripped apart?

The bible says Solomon fell into idolatry. At one time, Solomon obeyed the LORD, but eventually worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Moloch the god of the Ammonites. He erected altars on the Mount of Corruption to these gods that remained until the end of Israel and Judah's political reign. This mountain was visible from Jerusalem.

It is easy to sit back and point fingers and judge, but I believe we all battle our flesh. We love the Lord and yet fall into sin. We worship him and we worship on another altar. I say that worry is worship. We may not sing songs and offer animal sacrifices, but we what we meditate on is what we worship. Worry is a consistent meditation of our heart. That is where the true worship happens: our heart. The kingdom of our heart is divided. Our hearts are deceitful and wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and yet the requirements of God's law are written on our hearts (Romans 2:15.)

The word "HEART" is used 925 times in the bible, almost twice as many times as the word "LAW;" more than the words: CHRIST, GLORY, PEACE, WISDOM, LOVE, or EVIL. It seems that God cares a good deal about our hearts, but strangely enough, many people only know one bible verse (Jeremiah 17:9) about the heart.

Most people focus on the wicked, sick, incurable, beyond cure part of this verse. I would agree, yes, our hearts are sick and in need of a Savior. No one has anything good enough in them to stand before a holy God in heaven and receive entry without Christ. Our hearts need a Savior for our daily walk, not just eternal salvation. God promised in Ezekiel 11:19 to remove our hearts of stone and heart of flesh. Are our hearts desperately wicked and without hope of restoration, "incurable" as the favored verse says? If so, what is the role of Christ in our hearts? Do we languish here in sin until we are called home OR does Christ transform our hearts?

Our hearts are divided. That is a fact. This not my opinion but based on the 925 verses in the bible. The heart is not incurable, Christ is the cure to the hopeless state of our divided hearts.

In book, we will study many of the 925 verses about the heart and parallel the condition of our hearts to the divided state of the kingdom of Israel.

Memory Verses: **Jeremiah 17:10 or 2 Chronicles 15:2**

DAY 1 SOLOMON OF THE UNITED KINGDOM (JUDAH AND ISRAEL)

READ 1 Kings 11:1-13

1. Toward the end of Solomon's reign, where was his heart? What changed his heart? 1 Kings 11:4

2. What action did Solomon take that followed this change of heart? 1 Kings 11:7-8

3. Why did the Lord become angry? 1 Kings 11:9

ACTIONS FOLLOW THE HEART

First, Solomon's heart turned from God and then his actions followed suit. He began to have affection in his heart for the false gods who his wives worshiped. Before long, he was building temples to foreign gods. The LORD was more concerned with the state of Solomon's heart, but his heart was revealed through his actions. We should allow the Lord to examine our hearts. It is unwise to allow the path of our heart to go unchecked and turn into action.

- ♥ Have you observed a situation when the heart turns away from God and then actions follow?
Give an example below:
-
-

READ 1 Kings 11:26-43

4. Was Jeroboam's rebellion prompted by man or by God? 1 Kings 11:31 _____

5. Why did God tear the kingdom apart? 1 Kings 11:33

6. Did anyone from Solomon's family remain on the throne? How many tribes remained with Solomon's descendants?

For reference, SEE MAP 1 on PG 7 when the kingdom was united.

Then SEE MAP 2 on PG 19 after the kingdom is divided.

THE DIVIDED STATE OF OUR HEARTS CAUSES CONFLICT

God tore the kingdom apart but allowed Solomon's family to keep the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The divided state of the kingdom caused internal conflict and made fighting enemies difficult. A united kingdom has the military and economic strength to defend against enemies. A divided kingdom finds themselves arguing about state borders and doesn't notice foreign enemies creeping in the national borders. Likewise, the divided state of our hearts causes conflict and makes fighting off the enemy of our souls difficult.

THE PANTHEON OF CANAANITE GODS

Solomon erected an altar to Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech on the “Mount of Corruption,” also known as, the Mount of Olives, which was not destroyed until the reign of Josiah (1 Kings 11:5-8.) You may be tempted to minimize Solomon’s worship of the foreign gods if you do not understand what their worship entails.

Read some information on the false gods below:

Ashtoreth aka Astarte—goddess associated with the fertility of the land, sexuality, and war. Sometimes the consort of Baal. Often associated with Chemosh, specifically in the account of Mesha the Moabite (2 Kings 3:27.) Much like Asherah, goddess worship included making cakes, drinking, and burning incense.

Chemosh—the national god of Moab, god of war associated with military victory. Like Moloch, Chemosh required human sacrifice.

Moloch—title for the god who is "king," associated with death and the underworld. He is known mainly from the Bible as the deity to whom child sacrifices were offered.

We can presume that the sacrifices offered on these altars were not simply animals. Solomon may not have sacrificed his own sons on these altars as his descendants Ahaz and Manasseh did, but he built the place of worship. He laid the foundation for his nation to sin. His people were given a platform to invoke the pleasures of the detestable gods. The people did not mourn this national shift, but rather, celebrated and welcomed it. The temple in Jerusalem still functioned at this time, but the people were also worshiping on this mountain.

- ♥ Are you broken over the detestable things in our culture? Have you found yourself diminishing the acts of our culture?

Jeremiah 5:31 “The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way.”

Isaiah 30:10-11 “They say to the seers, ‘See no more visions!’ and to the prophets, ‘Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!’”

Yes, the culture of Canaan had pervaded Israel, but the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah get down to the heart of the matter. The people wanted to be deceived. They knew that the gods were false, had no authority, and were feeding them lies. They did not want to be confronted with the truth, so they lapped up lies. We may also be guilty of self-deception.

- ♥ Have you been deceived?

If you have chosen deception over truth, confess it to God and allow him to transform your heart.

DAY 2 REHOBOAM OF JUDAH**READ 1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 11:5-17**

1. From whom did Rehoboam seek advice? Did he take the advice? Whose advice did he take? 1 Kings 12:6-8
-

2. Did Jeroboam seek advice? From whom? Was it from the Lord? 1 Kings 12:28
-

3. When Rehoboam marched out to put down the insurrection, why did he turn back? Was he accepting counsel from the Lord? 1 Kings 12:22-24
-
-

REMOVE THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED

When faced with losing the kingdom, Rehoboam did not listen wise counsel. Although it does not give us details, it appears that Jeroboam got some bad advice or did not heed wise counsel since his actions were to erect the two calves. To whom we are listening is very important.

- ♥ From whom are you getting advice? Is it from the Lord? Is the advice Godly counsel?
-
-

4. Who followed Rehoboam? What seems to have united those who followed Rehoboam? 2 Chronicles 11:14-17
-

5. What did it say about their hearts? 2 Chronicles 11:16
-

OUR WORSHIP OF THE LORD UNITES US WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

True fellowship is found when our hearts are united in seeking God. It strengthened Judah in Rehoboam's day and it strengthens the kingdom of God today.

READ 2 Chronicles 12:1-15

6. After Rehoboam's position as king became strong, what did he do? 2 Chronicles 12:1
-

7. When Shishak from Egypt marched out to subdue Judah, what did Rehoboam and the leaders do? 2 Chronicles 12:6-7
-

8. What damages were inflicted? 2 Chronicles 12:9
-

DO NOT ABANDON THE LORD WHEN YOUR POSITION IS SECURE

After Rehoboam's position on the throne of Judah was secure, he abandoned the law of the Lord. When we become comfortable, when our lives are peaceful, when we have our walls around us and our position is secure, we should not abandon the law of the Lord.

WHEN WE HUMBLE OURSELVES, THE LORD MAY SAVE US, BUT THERE WILL STILL BE DAMAGE

When Rehoboam sinned and saw the destruction headed his way, he humbled himself before the Lord. Even though they were not conquered completely, they lost precious articles from the temple. When we mess up, we should repent and humble ourselves. Although there may be some collateral damage, God may spare us and we will not be completely destroyed.

- ♥ 2 Chronicles 12:14 says "[Rehoboam] did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord." Have you set your heart on seeking the Lord?
-

EXAMINE YOUR HEART

Jeremiah 17:10 says "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."

Jeremiah 11:20 says "The LORD judges righteously and tests the heart and mind."

The word "judge" is uncomfortable for many people. Who wants to be judged? Be assured that the Lord is righteous AND loving. He wants to restore us into a right relationship with him and with the people in our lives. We are safe in allowing God to search and examine our hearts, because he can be trusted to restore us.

- ♥ Will you allow the Lord to search your heart and examine your mind? What does that look like?
-

DAY 3 REHOBOAM AND ABIJAH (ABIJAM) OF JUDAH**READ 2 Chronicles 11:18-23; 1 Kings 14:21-31**

1. Write the name of Rehoboam's favorite wife below: 2 Chronicles 11:21
-

2. What evil did the people of Judah commit under the rule of Rehoboam? 1 Kings 14:22-23
-

ASHERAH & EL

Rehoboam's wife Maacha maintained her power throughout the reign of her son Abijah (Abijam.) She worshiped Asherah, wife of El. Read some information on the false gods below:

El- the chief deity of Canaan, god of creation and the sky

Those who view the bible as a text containing mythology believe the Canaanite god El is the same god as the Hebrew God Yahweh. We see this confusion could be made in God's many names; Elohim, El Shaddai, and so on. Unlike the God of the bible, El fathered many lesser gods with his wife Asherah. He

ruled over the divine assembly of gods. El also rivaled his son Baal. Baal worship became prevalent in the time of king Ahab. Some interpret the conflict in this time period, as a battle between Baal and El. We know, in fact, any god, not just Baal can never hope to rival God. They are, merely, false perversions of the truth. This unscriptural view of God being one of many is seen in the disrespect of their acts of worship involving El's wife Asherah.

Asherah aka Athirat- Mother goddess of sexuality and fertility, wife of El, the mother of 70 gods. In the bible, Queen of Heaven. Asherah shares qualities with Ashtoreth, they were both associated with sexuality. Asherah, however, is not associated with war. Many scholars think they may have been mythological sisters.

ASHERAH worship involved:

- Worship within the household, led by the woman of the house- Jeremiah 44:19
- Entire families worshipping the goddess- Jeremiah 7:18
- Baking small cakes impressed with the goddess' image- Jeremiah 7:18, 44:19
- Burning incense in the high places- Jeremiah 44:16; Isaiah 17:8, 27:9; 2 Kings 16:3-4
- Pouring out drink offerings- Jeremiah 7:18
- Crafting and weaving objects for Asherah- 2 Kings 23:7
- Erecting Asherah poles- Judges 6:25; Isaiah 17:8, 27:9; 1 Kings 14:23
- Adultery and prostitution on high hills and under trees- Jeremiah 2:20, 3:6
- Adultery and prostitution in the temple overseen by female priestesses and priests who were young men dressed as women- 1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 23:7

ASHERAH POLES

If the Hebrews were deceived into believing the Lord, God was El, it explains why God commanded them to not set up a wooden Asherah pole beside the altar of God (Deuteronomy 16:21.) Judah desecrated the temple of the Lord by erecting an Asherah pole beside the altar of God. It was not removed until the reign of king Josiah. By placing it there, they were defaming the nature of Yahweh by saying he was El, a god among many gods.

Asherah poles were also erected in the high places and under trees. Many times carved in the feminine shape, Asherah poles indicated places of worship. Many kings of this time period removed Asherah poles, indicating their return to a monotheistic view and God, only to have the people erect Asherah poles in other places. Idol worship doesn't have to be in a specific place. It can be anywhere.

ASHERAH WORSHIP INVOLVED THE WHOLE FAMILY

Jeremiah 7:17-19 says "Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to arouse my anger. But am I the one they are provoking? declares the LORD. **Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame?"**

The grievous acts in the Bible pervaded the family. Men tried to blame the women for the persistent Asherah worship (Jeremiah 44:19,) but God held the whole family accountable. God says that idol worship ultimately harms the person. Blame may be thrown around, but ultimately the whole family is harmed.

- ♥ Has idol worship personally harmed you? Has it harmed your family?
-
-

READ 2 Chronicles 13; 1 Kings 15:1-8

3. When Rehoboam's son Abihah (Abijam) fought against Jeroboam, why did they have victory? 2 Chronicles 13:10-16
-

4. What city did Abijah take? 2 Chronicles 13:19
-

5. What trap did Abijah (Abijam) fall into? 1 Kings 15:3
-

1 Kings 15:3 says "[Abijah's] heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his forefather had been." 1 Samuel 13:14 calls David a man after God's own heart.

- ♥ Can your heart be fully devoted to God in this broken, sinful, fallen world?
-

DAY 4 ASA OF JUDAH

READ 1 Kings 15:9-15

1. What was Asa's first order of business? 1 Kings 15:11-13
-

2 Chron 14:4 says that Asa commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. Because they sought the LORD, he gave them rest on every side. Asa was the first king in Judah since Solomon to lead his people in seeking the Lord. The loyalties of the kingdom were split. Asa proved his loyalty to God by removing places of worship throughout the kingdom and destroying objects of worship.

TEAR DOWN THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

2 Chron 14:4 says that Asa commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. Because they sought the LORD, he gave them rest on every side. Asa was the first king in Judah since Solomon to lead his people in seeking the Lord. The loyalties of the kingdom were split. Asa proved his loyalty to God by removing places of worship throughout the kingdom and destroying objects of worship.

When the kingdom of your heart is divided, one of the first steps to unification is to tear down places of worship.

- ♥ What are the high places? What does it look like to tear down a place of false worship?
-

READ 2 Chronicles 15

2. When the prophet Azariah came to Asa, what advice did he give him? 2 Chronicles 15:2

3. As King Asa instituted reform, what did all of Judah enter into at this time? 2 Chronicles 15:1

4. What does the bible say about how the conditions of the hearts of the people? 2 Chronicles 15:15

5. Why did Asa depose his grandmother, Maacha? 2 Chronicles 15:16

6. Although Asa did not remove all the high places, why did God favor him? 2 Chronicles 15:17

TURNING TO GOD MAY MEAN TURNING FROM CERTAIN PEOPLE

King Asa removed his grandmother from power for her loyalty to a false god. The wholehearted devotion of the people was seen when their leader was fully committed to God. He went to the extreme in alienating family members. The painful reality of a heart turning from idolatry to God is we may alienate friends and family. God calls us to wholehearted devotion and that can strain and even end some relationships. We must follow God first.

- ♥ Has your devotion to God damaged a family relationship?
-

ASHERAH and sexual sin

Accounts of sexual sin associated with Asherah are throughout the bible. The fertility goddess welcomed worshipers to copulate at her feet. One of the most devastating acts of worship in our lives is sexual sin. This includes premarital sex, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, pornography among other sexual sins. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. The damage from sexual sin destroys marriages, families, the physical body, and emotional well-being. Sexual immorality promises freedom, but it delivers the chains of bondage.

Jeremiah 2:20 -22 says “Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, ‘I will not serve you!’ Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute. I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? Although you wash yourself with soap and use an abundance of cleansing powder, the stain of your guilt is still before me,” declares the Sovereign LORD.

The stain of sexual sin remains on your bed and your clothes. It walks around with you. It touches your family and trips you in the most secret place. My own life has been stained with sexual sin. I have worn the Scarlet Letter with pride and in shame. Believe me when I tell you that, if you have battled sexual sin, my heart is tender to you. When I read Jeremiah in preparation for this study, I wept aloud. “She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there.” Jeremiah 3:6 When we sin sexually, worship the false image of Asherah. Nothing but a gracious God can wash us clean.

In Isaiah 4:4-6, the Lord promises to wash away the filth of the women of Zion and cleanse away the bloodstains. His glory will be a canopy, a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. We can trust our faithful God to, not only cleanse us from sin, but be a refuge in the storm.

♥ Has your life been marred by sexual sin?

Dear friend, If you have trusted Christ, you have the power to conquer sin. If you continue to battle temptation, know that God wants you to be freed from the bondage of sin. Hang in there with me for a bit. I intend to give you some life-giving truth from the Word. The truth will set you free.

ASA'S HEART

While Asa's actions did not always honor God, his heart was in the right place. None of us can completely remove sin from our lives, but we can be committed to wholehearted devotion to God.

Day 5 NEW TESTAMENT READING

Read Romans 1

1. How did Paul serve the Lord? Romans 1:9

2. What was the result of man's heart being darkened? Romans 1:22-23

3. What happened when man exchanged the glory of God for an image, a false god? Romans 1:24-25

♥ Have you exchanged the truth of God for a lie or worshiped created things rather than a creator?

EXCHANGING THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE

Romans 1:26-32 lists many ways those who are believing lies behave. If something on this list brings about conviction in your heart, let it point you to the reality that you may believe lies. Don't let the enemy lie to you, friend. If you are in bondage to sin, repent and allow the Lord to reveal lies that have been written on your heart.

Read Romans 2:1-16

After listing the sins that entangle those who are objects of God's wrath, Paul immediately turns his attention to those who are nodding their head in judgement (Romans 2:1-4.) Some may listen and be glad that God will destroy the unfaithful. We should not rejoice in the sin of others. We should be grieved. Paul goes as far to say that those who judge are also guilty of sin. Your personal idolatry may not be listed here, but the bible assures us that no one is without sin. When confronted with truth, we should examine our own hearts.

4. What does God's kindness lead us toward? Romans 2:4

5. What are those with an unrepentant heart storing up for themselves? Romans 2:55

DO NOT SIMPLY HEAR THE LAW, OBEY IT

Romans 2:6-13 contrasts the behavior of those seeking the Lord with those who are self-seeking. He explains that it is not enough to simply hear the law, but we must obey it. It's not enough to read the bible and listen to sermons, we must be walking in obedience. This is the fruit of salvation. Many who have once repented and believed on Christ, wonder if their divided heart is an unrepentant heart. Let us be clear. Battling the flesh is not a sign of unrepentance. Those who are unrepentant do not struggle against the stain of sin on their hearts. They run to sin with no thought of God's kindness. If you feel convicted, stand firm in your faith and allow God to cleanse you of unrighteousness.

6. Paul reveals that even Gentiles who were not given the law, had consciences. What does he say was written on their hearts? Romans 2:15

7. Where was Judah's sin was engraved with an iron tool? Jeremiah 17:1

THE LAW IS WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS

The dichotomy of the heart is the mixed messages we receive from the law of the Lord and the law of sin. Because Adam sinned, we have sin engraved on our heart. Some call this original sin. God created the world which reflects his glory and man in his own image. We are without excuse, because the requirements of the law are written on our hearts. The author of Romans refers to this as our conscience. Our conscience tells us what to do and our flesh pulls us the other way. Our hearts are divided.

READ Romans 2:17-29

Paul turns his attention from addressing the unrepentant to addressing the self-righteous. He asks those who cherish the law and brag about their relationship with God, if they keep the law on every point. He says it's not enough to simply be a Jew, be circumcised, in order to escape God's wrath, you must keep every part of the law.

♥ Is it possible to perfectly keep every part of the law?

8. Where is true circumcision? Romans 2:29

Paul explains that the circumcision Jews had observed was merely a symbol of what needed to happen in the heart. Our divided hearts need to be circumcised.



Memory Verse for Chapter 1: 2 Chronicles 15:2

Like the _____ of Israel, the kingdoms of our _____ are _____.

THE DICHOTOMY OF THE HEART

- In 17:9, Jeremiah goes on to say, “The heart is _____ above all things and _____ . Who can understand it?”
- Romans 2:14-15 says, “Gentiles, who do not have the law, ... show that the requirements of the law are _____ on their _____, their consciences also bearing witness...”
- In Psalm 40:8, David said, “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is _____ my _____.”

How can the law be written on our hearts and yet be deceitful or wicked?

- ♥ Can your heart be fully devoted to God in this broken, sinful, fallen world? PG 15

OUR HEARTS ARE DIVIDED

Even some bible passages translate the word “deceitful,” “_____.”

- Hosea 10:2 NIV Their heart is _____, and now they must bear their guilt.
- Hosea 10:2 KJV Their heart is _____ now they shall be found guilty...

Let’s look at some other passages:

- Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them an _____ heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of _____.
- Psalm 86:11 Teach me your way O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an _____ heart that I may fear your name

WE ARE CREATED IN GOD’S IMAGE, WE EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF GOD FOR FALSE IMAGES

- Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

How can we be created in God’s image and yet exchanged the truth for a lie?

Romans 1:21-25 ²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

HOW DO WE BREAK THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY?

RESOLVE TO ALLOW THE LORD TO EXAMINE YOUR HEART

Jeremiah 17:10 says “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.”

2 Chronicles 12:14 says “[Rehoboam] did evil because **he had not set his heart** on seeking the Lord.”

1 Kings 15:3 says “[Abijah’s] **heart was not fully devoted** to the Lord his God as the heart of David his forefather had been.”

Jeremiah 11:20 says The LORD judges righteously and tests **the heart** and mind.

- ♥ Have you observed this pattern of the heart turning away from God and then actions follow?
Give an example PG 10
- ♥ Will you allow the Lord to search your heart and examine your mind? What does that look like?
PG 13

REMOVE THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED

- Who did Rehoboam seek advice from? Did he take the advice? Whose advice did he take? PG 11
1 Kings 12:6-8
- Did Jeroboam seek advice? From whom? Was it from the Lord? 1 Kings 12:28 PG 12
- ♥ From whom are you getting advice? Is it from the Lord? Is the advice Godly counsel? PG 12

TEAR DOWN THE ALTAR, THE HIGH PLACE

- What was Asa’s first order of business? 1 Kings 15:11-15 PG 12
- As King Asa instituted reform, what did all of Judah enter into at this time? 2 Chronicles 15:12
PG 15
- What does the bible say about how the conditions of the hearts of the people? 2 Chronicles
15:15 PG 15

When the kingdom of your heart is divided, one of the first orders of business is to tear down places of worship.

- ♥ What are the high places? What does it look like to tear down a place of false worship? PG 16