as he sought the Lord, God gave him success” (26:5). Over time, he won battles and grew strong and famous. “But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (26:16). His unfaithfulness may not have seemed as blatant or evil. He did not turn to the Baals, but he did overstep his God-given boundaries and desire to do and be what he was not. His pride cost him spiritually, socially, and physically.

 When Jotham became king, he heeded the lessons of his father and followed Yahweh without pride. Ahaz, however, walked in the ways of evil and, in his time of trouble, “became even more unfaithful to the Lord” (28:22). To his credit, he was consistent, but he was consistently wrong. To right the wrong, King Hezekiah reopened and purified the Temple (30:1-36).

 Pray for humility and consistency to be able to run faithfully the race with endurance.

Saturday, September 9, 2017—2 Chronicles 30-32

 Companies and organizations often have bulky, boring handbooks that discuss the ins and outs of operation and procedures. The framework exists, but the people involved are only able to abide by the rules and expectations if they read them and know them. Many times, ignorance leads to violation or oversight.

 When Hezekiah became king, he purified the Temple because his father had desecrated the building and its contents with his idolatry and wickedness. Not surprisingly, Israel had neglected much of the worship God expected from them under the leadership of such an ungodly king. There had also been a growing number who simply allowed themselves to avoid the Passover celebration each year. Hezekiah sought to change that by his work at the Temple and also by reinstituting the Passover for the entire nation. There was no reason to be disobedient and unfaithful—willfully or unknowingly.

 Not everyone was on board with the idea (30:10). Many of those who were willing were not ceremonially clean, so Hezekiah prayed for God’s pardon (30:18), seeking God’s favor on the hearts of those who were seeking Him. He knew the condition of the heart was what God truly judged. As a result, there was great joy in all those who celebrated before Yahweh with one another, and a time of revival began (31:1-8).

 When God reinvigorates the souls of His people, outside forces will likely rise up to discourage and distract, claiming greater power than God and blaming Him for the hardship (32:10-15). Seek a growing understanding of God, His expectations, and the way to walk faithfully and humbly with Him.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 36

Sunday, September 3, 2017—2 Chronicles 10-13

 In retelling the story of Israel, the Chronicler avoided the era of the judges, a time of potential growth which instead was regional chaos. The people had failed to pass down the faith to the next generation, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. The spiritual tide finally turned under the leadership of Samuel and then the anointing of a king. In telling the stories of the kings, the Chronicler demonstrates to the people the importance of strong, godly leadership as they rebuild.

 In telling Rehoboam’s story, Chronicles highlights the need for godly leaders who listen to wise counsel. Saul, David, and Solomon had led a united people and finally established Israel in peace and influence. Rehoboam took the throne after his father Solomon’s death and decided to oppress his people, against the advice of his elders. When the desire for personal safety or glory overrides the benefit of the greater group, conflict will arise. Rehoboam received a united, strong kingdom but quickly destroyed it because of selfish, foolish decisions.

 Despite the turmoil, Rehoboam led as king and became strong. His foolishness, however, did not end. He and the people of Judah abandoned the ways of Yahweh (12:1), so God allowed Egyptian invaders to attack Jerusalem. In humility, they repented, and God relented, but they paid a high price (12:9-11). Rehoboam was not faithful, but his son and the people chose to rely on Yahweh (13:18), and in battle God honored their trust.

 Thank God for godly leaders who set the pace for faithfulness

Monday, September 4, 2017—2 Chronicles 14-16

 When the Cushites marched against Judah, Asa prayed, “Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord, our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you” (14:11).

 His prayer came from a heart willing to seek God and His ways. The prophet Azariah came to King Asa and encouraged him to lead the entire nation into revival. He referred back to a time when the nation was in chaos because they had neither a true God nor a priest to teach them (15:3). Knowing the potential for similar disaster, Asa ordered the removal of all the idols and made repairs at the Temple. The nation agreed together to seek Yahweh wholeheartedly. “They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side” (15:15).

 The journey with Yahweh is a marathon, not a sprint. Faithfulness in the beginning is good. Faithfulness in the end is just as important. In his later years, Asa faced a military threat and took some of the Temple treasures and used them to ally with the king of Aram. Hanani the seer blasted Asa for his foolish choice. God had been faithful against previous enemies. Why did he doubt this time (16:8)?

 Pray for a heart committed to seeking, knowing, and trusting(16:9).

Tuesday, September 5, 2017—2 Chronicles 17-19

 The mid-1800s were a dark time for the United States. The country was increasingly divided between the interests of the North versus those of the South, and the disagreements eventually ignited the Civil War. Some of those conflicting ideas remain topics of discussion and dissension today.

 Jehoshaphat led his people in a divided time as well. Israel had rebelled against Judah during the reign of his great-grandfather Rehoboam, and while the issues were not exactly like those of the United States, the divide highlighted differences in belief and practice. Israel demonstrated early their willingness to follow false gods, but Jehoshaphat would not allow himself or his people to do so. Because of His faithfulness to Yahweh, God established the kingdom under his control. He had great wealth and honor, and his “heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord” (17:6a).

 Because of common history, Israel and Judah were not completely opposed to allying with one another. King Ahab of Israel asked Jehoshaphat to fight with him against Ramoth Gilead, and Jehoshaphat said he would if Ahab first sought the counsel of Yahweh (18:4). When a true prophet, Michaiah, predicted Ahab’s death in battle, Ahab sentenced him to prison. Michaiah was proved right and all the other prophets false when Ahab died in battle. Jehoshaphat was rebuked by one of his prophets for participating in something not blessed by God.

 Ask God to develop your heart so you are seeking Him and Him alone. Pray for a walk with Him that puts prayer as the primary task.

Wednesday, September 6, 2017—2 Chronicles 20-22

 Fathers have much they can teach their sons. Some lessons they teach intentionally with words and examples. Many of those lessons the sons simply observe and absorb over the years of living together. Those lessons are often as much about what to avoid as they are about what to do.

 Scripture does not tell what lessons Asa taught his son Jehoshaphat, but there were certainly lessons to be learned. When Asa faced a great enemy early in his reign, 2 Chronicles 14 says he prayed for divine intervention, and God gave them victory. Later, when he faced an approaching army, 2 Chronicles 16 says he formed an alliance with a foreign king, and God rebuked him through his seer.

 In his first test, Jehoshaphat followed the early example of his father. When some men told him three armies were marching against Jerusalem, he called for national fasting and prayer (20:3-4). This trusting in God did not mean they were not to act. In fact, God sent them to the battle field. They had to demonstrate their trust, but God did all the work. Not every battle will be this non-confrontational, but every battle should begin with seeking the Lord.

 Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram, did not learn by word or example. He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh (21:6) and paid the price as surrounding peoples began to rebel and as he faced miserable physical conditions (21:18). Ahaziah, too, walked foolishly and paid the ultimate price.

 Thank God for truth in word and deed. Live in it.

Thursday, September 7, 2017—2 Chronicles 23-25

 The story of Joash is one of the strangest yet richest in the Old Testament. His very role as king was miraculous since his grandmother went on a murderous rampage when Joash’s father, her son Ahaziah, died. She wanted the rule to herself, but a sister hid Joash in the Temple. For six years, he remained undiscovered. How could this be? Athaliah had little use for Yahweh and the Temple because she worshiped Baal.

 When Joash was seven, Jehoida the priest planned with Temple and military leadership to anoint and proclaim Joash the king. Athaliah, of course, was incensed and accused them of treason, yet she was truly the one guilty. They carried her away to death, installed Joash, and destroyed all the altars and idols associated with Baal. Now as then, no place is safer than in the presence of God, and spiritual revival and restoration require effort from people in all areas of life.

 Joash began his reign at a young age, but he was not alone. Jehoida the priest was a constant presence and guide. When God’s people feel they are underqualified or incapable, He reminds them the calling is from Him, and He equips those He has called to accomplish the task. Some years later, Joash called for repair of the Temple, the very place which saved his life. Sadly, when his mentor Jehoida died, Joash strayed from truth. Amaziah, his son, fell into the same sin, serving God before straying to gods with no power.

 Pray for wholehearted devotion and godly companions.

Friday, September 8, 2017—2 Chronicles 26-29

 Long-distance runners have a different mindset than sprinters. Their goal is the same—to finish in the lead. The method is far different because the race is as well. To endure with success requires planning, training, and execution.

 God calls his people to a marathon of faith. The race isn’t to the swift but to the faithful. Chronicles tells the stories of numerous kings who began well but faded in their later years. Uzziah was one of those. “As long