

Tuesday, June 23, 2020—2 Kings 4-6

In his classic study *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby says God speaks to His people through the Word, the Spirit, other believers, and circumstances. Those walking with Him will begin to see some patterns in how God works through history and in their own personal past to see how He might be leading in the future. Knowing you are being obedient and fruitful is affirming and enhances the process of discipling others.

For Elisha, the life of his mentor Elijah was an example for him. God replicated many of the miraculous works He did through Elijah in the ministry of Elisha. The multiplication of oil and the raising from the dead of the Shunammite's son were not identical, but they were similar and had to be affirming to Elisha that God was using him and was pleased with him.

God does new things for His glory when His people grow in obedience and faith. Elisha saw God prevent poisoning and multiply food through him. Then, God brought a foreign official, Naaman, to Elisha for healing. Elisha directed Naaman to cleanse himself in the simple, dirty Jordan River to show that the healing came from faith in God, not from the water itself and certainly not because of having vast resources to purchase healing. His servant girl had faith God could do it. Naaman saw it happen.

When Elisha became a target, he knew those who were with him were greater than those against him (6:16). Pray for clarity in your call, faithfulness to serve, fruitfulness in obedience, and courage in difficulty.

Monday, June 22, 2020—2 Kings 1-3

When life becomes difficult, who or what you trust becomes apparent. These are the things and people to which you turn in order to find help and hope. They are the sources of protection and deliverance.

The northern kingdom of Israel had drifted so far from the moorings Yahweh had given them that the king, Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, consulted a foreign idol rather than Yahweh himself when he faced a serious health condition. Yahweh was no longer the only one. He was one of many and nowhere near the top of the heap. Ahaziah had no respect for Yahweh, so he received no relief or protection from Him.

Elisha was a student of Elijah's, and Elisha knew God was going to take Elijah from him. He was facing a difficult situation like King Ahaziah, yet he did not consult some foreign god. He told Elijah he wanted a double portion of the calling and power God had given Elijah himself. He knew his only hope was for the hand of God to be on him.

When Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went into battle with the king of Israel and the king of Edom, they found themselves without water and in need. Jehoshaphat did not turn to idols but to the prophet of Yahweh, Elisha, for guidance. Elisha assured them of God's provision and victory.

God does not want to be a last resort. He wants to be the first and only source of hope, identity, and purpose. Seek Him alone today.

Sunday, June 21, 2020—1 Kings 20-22

God works to display His own glory. That means He will sometimes work through the most unlikely vessels so the results are undoubtedly due to His mercy and grace. Elijah had demonstrated clearly the spiritual bankruptcy in which Ahab was leading Israel, yet God was gracious to allow Ahab to find victory over the king of Aram and his troops. Yahweh demonstrated to Ahab in battle what He had demonstrated through Elijah on Carmel—He was the only true God. He demonstrated to the Arameans that He was God in the hills and valleys. There is no other God but Yahweh.

Despite the powerful display, Ahab remained short-sighted and self-centered. He decided he deserved another man's possession, so Jezebel had him murdered. His desires were paramount to all else. Elijah pronounced judgment on the king, and his acts of repentance delayed God's judgment for a time.

Ahab grew dissatisfied once again and decided to go to war with Aram to reclaim some land. Jehoshaphat, the king of the southern kingdom, encouraged Ahab to pray first (22:5). Several prophets told them to go, but Jehoshaphat knew these men were not legitimate. A genuine prophet finally stood before Ahab and told him he would lose the battle. Ahab was indeed wounded in battle and died. His son succeeded him and continued his wicked ways.

Pray for God to use you for His glory. Pray that you respond in humility and obedience to His revelation. Live in a spirit of humility and service to God and to others.

Saturday, June 20, 2020—1 Kings 17-19

God raises up prophets to speak truth to power. Ahab was boldly sinning against the Lord, so Elijah called him to repentance. God was going to send a drought on the land until the king and the people admitted their sin and turned from their wickedness (17:1-6).

Speaking truth makes the prophet a target, so God sent Elijah away and provided for him through nature and through a simple widow. In turn, Elijah called the widow to faith and was able to perform miraculous works to confirm her faith and obedience. When God called Elijah to return to confront the king, God challenged Obadiah to grow in his faith. He had taken a risk and protected 100 prophets by hiding them in a cave, but now God was asking Obadiah to bring one prophet into the presence of the murderous king (18:1-15).

Elijah called Ahab and the people to decide whether Yahweh was the true God or whether Baal filled that role (18:21). Only one could be supreme, and they needed to dispense with the charade of serving both. In an epic, day-long event, Elijah proved Yahweh was God and brought rain back to Israel. Elijah brought shame to the queen, so she threatened his life. The emotional, physical, and spiritual toll on Elijah led him to despair, but God spoke to him gently (19:12) and restored him. God assured him he was not alone and the work of the Kingdom would continue.

Pray for boldness to speak the truth in love and encouragement to remain faithful.

Friday, June 19, 2020—1 Kings 14-16

Jeroboam had sight but couldn't see. He needed an answer from God but would not approach him because of his rebellion against Him. Ahijah could not see (14:4b), but he had insight from God to see through Jeroboam's deception. The sickness of Jeroboam's sin was a visible symbol of the spiritual sickness plaguing the newly-formed nation of Israel. His son would not survive, and neither would Jeroboam's reign. Sin leads to death.

The southern kingdom, Judah, fared little better. They had access to God at the Temple in Jerusalem, yet they chose to set up altars to idols throughout the land (14:23-24). Solomon's spiritual compromise now infected his family and kingdom. After being attacked by the Egyptians, Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace the gold ones taken by the Egyptians (14:27). He wanted things to appear as if nothing were different. Everything was not okay, but he acted as if it were.

Sin always leads to bargaining and further compromising. Sin never convinces people to repent and return to God. Abijah continued leading Judah in sin, but Asa did what was right in God's eyes (15:11). During Asa's reign in the south, the northern kingdom experienced death, turmoil, and further spiritual disintegration. King Ahab was so bold in his sin that he built an altar to the false god Baal and did more to provoke Yahweh than any king before him (16:32-33). Sin led to bold defiance . . . and more death.

Praise God for spiritual insight. Pray for His truth to lead to obedience.

Thursday, June 18, 2020—1 Kings 11-13

Solomon believed a lie. He thought that pleasure was more important than faithfulness to Yahweh. He believed he was above the rules and could balance the obligations of the covenant with the desires of the flesh. The Bible includes many stories of men with multiple wives, not to glorify them but to use them as examples of how not to live. There is not a single example of polygamy that worked out well. It is devastating spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

God pronounced judgment on Solomon because of how his wives had led him to spiritual unfaithfulness (11:11). In grace and mercy, God allowed part of the kingdom to remain with David's family. Solomon wasted the blessings of God for the pleasures of the flesh. He had known peace like no other, but now adversaries were plotting against him (11:14-25). God raised up Jeroboam to take 10 tribes of the kingdom and charged Jeroboam with the same expectations of faithfulness (11:38).

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king, but his prideful thinking forced his people to rebel and align with Jeroboam (12:1-24). Jeroboam accepted the role as leader of the new northern kingdom, Israel, but he immediately doubted the loyalty of the people if they remained faithful to God's call to worship only in Jerusalem. He made alternate worship locations to secure his standing. His first act led his people to idolatry (12:25-33). The awful death of God's prophet was a metaphor to Israel of what they were doing to themselves in disobedience (13:1-34).

Pray for faithfulness that denies selfish desires.

Wednesday, June 17, 2020—1 Kings 8-10

The Temple was the place where God's presence rested. He had led them through the desert with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Now, His presence would remain in the Temple at Jerusalem and nowhere else. When Solomon brought the Ark, which contained God's covenant with His people and which was covered by His mercy seat, to the newly-constructed Temple, the presence of God filled the Temple with such power and glory that the priests could not remain in the room (8:10-11).

Solomon led the people in sacrifice and praise because God had been faithful to keep His promises (8:20). Solomon then turned His attention to Yahweh in prayer, dedicating the Temple as a place for God to interact with His people to bring blessing, healing, rebuke, growth, forgiveness, and worship (8:22-53). God answered Solomon in a vision, affirming His presence at the Temple and charging Solomon with personal obedience and righteousness to be the leader God called him to be (9:1-9).

Because he was king, Solomon dealt with his people and their needs, and he interacted with foreign leaders. The queen of Sheba was so amazed by God's blessing on Solomon that she herself praised God (10:9). Solomon did not let this success or all the necessities of leading distract him from his obligations at the Temple (9:25). God would not bless compromise.

Praise God for His promise to save from sin and send His Spirit to dwell in each believer. Pray for wisdom and obedience to be daily characteristics of your life.