
SUMMARY

We're inviting our Life Groups Leaders to play an integral role in our Year in the Bible by aligning their weekly gatherings with our church-wide reading plan. This alignment will not only increase engagement with the plan, but—more importantly—deepen biblical literacy across our church. To support our leaders in this effort, we've created weekly Leader Guides that include discussion questions, commentary insights, and practical teaching tips. Whether your group is Community, Discussion, or Traditional in format, these guides are designed to serve as a helpful and flexible resource.

Format of the Year in the Bible Leader Guides

Our Leader Guides will be sent to Life Group Leaders in monthly packets by the twentieth of the preceding month. Each weekly guide contains five sections, outlined below. Leaders are welcome to walk their group through the guide step by step or to pick and choose the sections that will be most helpful for their group, as we trust that our leaders know their groups best. We've also provided recommendations later on based on group type to serve as a helpful starting point.

1. Create Interest

We'll kick off each guide with a thoughtful opening question designed to help your group engage and generate interest in the Scripture passage being covered. We've found that beginning with simple, personal questions—ones everyone can answer—helps build participation, comfort, and momentum for deeper discussion.

2. Study the Bible

The core of the Leader Guide is the weekly Scripture reading, broken into smaller sections with discussion questions and a few simple activities. Community Group leaders may choose to dive deeply into one section, while Discussion Group leaders may be able to cover the entire passage. Traditional Life Group leaders can use this section to help structure their teaching time.

3. Connect to Christ (Apply God's Word)

Every story in the Bible points to Jesus Christ, and as leaders, it is our responsibility to help our members discover how. We also have the opportunity to show how each passage of Scripture applies to our lives today. Because of its importance, we're asking every group to integrate this section in some way each week.

4. Pray Together

Prayer draws our hearts to God and to one another, so regardless of group type, size, age, or stage, we're asking that every group set aside time each week to pray together.

5. Commentary

For those who want to learn more, this will take excerpted and slightly adapted material from *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the three distinct and valuable types of Life Groups at Central, we wanted to offer recommendations for how each might get the most out of the Leader Guide. We trust you to discern what your group needs and are here to support you along the way.

Community Groups

Time Allotment

- *10 mins – The Bible:* Provide an overview of a passage and how it Connects to Christ.
- *40 mins – People:* Engage through your normal weekly rhythms.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Lift up concerns and praises shared during the group.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which passage of Scripture is most relevant to your group and its Connect to Christ, creating a concise overview of any needed context.
- Adapt or add to your weekly community questions to incorporate the Connect to Christ section.

Discussion Groups

Time Allotment

- *10 mins – People:* Open conversation or discussion over a question, high/low, etc.
- *40 mins – The Bible:* Discuss the passage and its Connect to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Invite members to share personal requests and praises.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which sections or activities may be skipped due to time constraints and create an overview for those portions.
- Use strategic questions to lead your group into the Connect to Christ section.

Traditional Groups

Time Allotment

- *20 mins – People:* Weekly catch-up and social interactions.
- *30 mins – The Bible:* Teach the passage, revealing its Connection to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Provide space for those who want to share requests and pray.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Consider following the same passage breakdown as the guide, and incorporate questions either rhetorically or literally, depending on the needs of your group.
- In your application, show how we might trust in God's grace—not our works—for salvation and sanctification revealing the Connection to Christ.

4SEEKING AND USING GODLY WISDOM: 1 Kings 3:4-15; 23-28

The Point: It pleases God to give wisdom to his people so they can bless others.

The Purpose: Participants will humbly seek God's wisdom for their decisions and use it to serve and bless others around them.

Christ Connection: Jesus is the greater Son of David, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, perfectly embodying God's wise rule.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: If you were given one wish, what would you ask for?

Many of us would ask for comfort, success, or security if given one wish. Whatever your answer, it reveals what you value most and where you look for help. Today we will see Solomon ask not for comfort but for God's wisdom to serve others.

Transition to the Study

The "one wish" question helps us uncover what our hearts most desire. In 1 Kings 3, Solomon is essentially given that kind of open invitation from the Lord: "Ask what I shall give you." Instead of choosing riches, revenge, or a long life, Solomon asks for wisdom to lead God's people well. His request pleases God and becomes a model for how we should seek wisdom, not just for ourselves but for others' good. Let's turn to 1 Kings 3:4-15 and 23-28 and see how God responds and how Solomon's wisdom is displayed.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Kings 3:4-9

Read Aloud: Have someone read 1 Kings 3:4-9.

Discussion: Who is the wisest person you've known, and what is something they said that you remember today?

Hearing examples of wise people helps the group see that true wisdom is memorable, practical, and usually others-focused. This prepares us to appreciate Solomon's desire for a "listening heart" from God.

What did Solomon's request for wisdom demonstrate about him?

Solomon's request shows humility, dependence, and a servant heart. He knows he is

young, inexperienced, and responsible for God's people, so he seeks God's help instead of trusting his own abilities.

Why do you think Solomon requested wisdom above all other gifts he could have sought?

Solomon values God's people and God's will more than personal comfort. He recognizes that wise leadership honors God and blesses others, making wisdom more valuable than wealth, power, or safety.

Teaching Tip: Invite Stories of Dependence

Encourage group members to briefly share times when they felt in over their heads and had to rely on God. This normalizes humility, deepens authenticity, and helps the group see wisdom as God's gift, not human achievement.

1 Kings 3:10–15

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read 1 Kings 3:10–15.

Discussion: Why did Solomon's request for great wisdom, as shown in v. 10, please God? Is there something we should learn from this?

God delights in requests that align with his heart and purposes. Solomon's prayer was kingdom-focused and others-centered, modeling how we should pray for wisdom to serve, not just to improve our circumstances.

What are some ways believers acquire godly wisdom today?

Godly wisdom comes through Scripture, prayer, the Holy Spirit's guidance, wise counsel from mature believers, and obedience over time. We grow wise as we consistently respond to God's Word in everyday situations.

How can believers share godly wisdom with non-believers who face difficult decisions without giving them the impression of superiority?

We must speak with humility, listen well, and share wisdom as fellow sinners in need of grace. Pointing to God and his Word rather than our insight keeps the focus on him, not us.

1 Kings 3:23–28

Discussion: What is the hardest decision you've had to make lately, or one you are facing right now, for which you need 'the wisdom of Solomon'?

Inviting people to name real decisions makes the passage immediately relevant. It also opens the door for prayer, support, and practicing dependence on God's wisdom together as a group.

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud 1 Kings 3:23–28.

When you make a decision, how do you know you've made the right one?

Wise decisions align with Scripture, honor God, reflect love and justice, and bear good fruit over time. This contrasts with decisions driven mainly by fear, pride, or convenience.

Does anyone in the group have a decision you are facing for which you need prayer? (If someone responds affirmatively, stop and pray for them.)

Praying for specific decisions helps the group experience God's wisdom as a present help, not just a concept. It also reinforces that we seek God's guidance together, not in isolation.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Solomon's story shows a king who knew he was inadequate and asked God for wisdom to serve his people. God gladly answered and displayed that wisdom in real, complex situations. In Jesus, we meet a greater King whose wisdom is perfect, whose justice is pure, and whose compassion is unfailing. As his people, we are invited to seek his wisdom and reflect his heart in the decisions we face every day.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

Solomon's God-given wisdom and just judgment foreshadows Jesus, the perfect King who always judges rightly and lays down his life for his people. Where Solomon's wisdom was limited and temporary, Jesus' wisdom is complete and eternal, available to all who trust him.

Connect to Christ: Solomon, the son of David, received wisdom, honor, and a kingdom so he could rule God's people with justice. His famous judgment between the two women points to a greater Son of David, Jesus, who embodies God's wisdom perfectly. At the cross, Jesus displays both justice and mercy, bearing our guilt so we

can be declared righteous. In him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, inviting us to trust his rule and follow his ways.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Pray daily for wisdom in one specific area of decision-making (family, work, finances, relationships). Ask God to give you a “listening heart” that discerns good and evil and seeks others’ good.

Read one chapter of Proverbs each day for one month. Note one verse of wisdom to memorize and practice, then share it with someone who might benefit from God’s counsel.

Think of a past decision that hurt someone. Seek forgiveness where possible, and ask God to grow you into a person whose choices consistently reflect his wisdom, justice, and compassion.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for generously giving wisdom to those who ask, for revealing his perfect wisdom in Jesus our King, and for guiding us to make decisions that bless others and honor his name.

COMMENTARY

Book Chapter Background

The 1 Kings 3 begins with Solomon forming a political alliance by marrying the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Solomon is depicted worshiping at high places because the temple in Jerusalem had not yet been built.

The most notable event in this chapter is Solomon's dream at Gibeon, where God appears to him and offers to grant him anything he asks for. Solomon famously asks for wisdom to govern the people effectively.

Pleased with Solomon's request, God grants him unparalleled wisdom, as well as riches and honor, promising that there will be no king like him.

The chapter concludes with a demonstration of Solomon's wisdom in the famous story of the two women who come to him with a dispute over a baby. Solomon's clever judgment in this case earns him great respect and solidifies his reputation as a wise ruler. This chapter sets the stage for Solomon's reign, highlighting his wisdom and the divine favor he enjoys.

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Verse by Verse

3:2-3 With no central worship site, the people “were still sacrificing at the high places.” These shrines were located at slight elevations throughout the land, were quite often fairly elaborate in design and construction, and were roundly denounced by the author of 1, 2 Kings after the temple was built. For now this practice is excusable.

3:4-5 Solomon demonstrates his love for the Lord by journeying approximately seven miles northeastward to Gibeon and offering burnt offerings there. This text does not say why Gibeon was the most important high place, but 2 Chr 1:5-6 explains that while David had brought the ark to Jerusalem, the Mosaic tabernacle and “the bronze altar that Bezalel ... had made” were still in Gibeon. The very necessity of going more than one place to use the traditional implements of worship underscores the need for a central sanctuary. God seems pleased at Solomon's piety, for the Lord appears in a dream and tells the king to ask for whatever he wants.

3:7-9 In light of the greatness of the Lord's relationship with David, Solomon humbles himself before the Lord. He admits that God is the cause of his rise to power. Further, he says he is but a small child who does not know "how to carry out my duties." This last statement in Hebrew literally says, "I do not know how to go and come," an idiom referring to the skills of leadership (cf. Num 27:17; Deut 31:2-3; Josh 14:11; 1 Sam 18:13, 16; 29:6; 2 Kgs 11:8). In contrast to his own personal and experiential lack of stature, Solomon must lead a people whose greatness is first measured by the fact that they were chosen by God. Solomon now becomes the head of the nation once led by Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David. According to Deut 17:14-20, he must embody God's standards for the people. Israel's greatness is also measured by its growing population. Solomon senses that perhaps old ways of governing may not meet the current needs of his subjects. Given this personal dilemma, Solomon requests "a discerning heart." This phrase literally means "a listening heart" or "an obedient heart."

3:10-13 God is pleased with Solomon's attitude. Though Solomon could have asked for selfish favors such as wealth, long life, or revenge, he desires the ability to help others. Thus, in the first of four revelations to Solomon, God not only agrees to grant the request but makes promises beyond what Solomon imagined. He will indeed have "a wise and discerning heart," one that will set him apart for all times. Solomon's wisdom will exceed those before and after him. Further, though he did not ask for wealth and fame, these blessings will be his as well. What all kings want, yet rarely achieve, Solomon will have because of God's answer to his prayer.

3:14-15 "All" Solomon must do to secure these blessings is to follow David's example of adherence to the Sinai covenant. If he keeps the "statutes and commands," Solomon will honor his father and thereby have "a long life." This reference to Exod 20:12 underscores the continuity of God's covenant with Israel, with David, and with Solomon, the new generation. It also emphasizes the conditional nature of Solomon's kingship, an idea that is repeated every time God addresses Solomon directly (cf. 6:11-13; 9:3-9; 11:11-13). God's covenant with David is eternal, but Solomon can be replaced with another "son of David" if he disobeys the Lord. When the king awakes from this lifechanging dream, the king seals the agreement. A celebration marked by sacrifices and a feast prove his sincerity and determination to keep the covenant. God's approval of Solomon has finally been clarified.

3:23 This story is one of the best known in the whole Bible. Having been promised wisdom, Solomon will now have this wisdom tested. Israel's kings were sometimes called upon to

settle particularly hard cases (2 Sam 12:1–6; 14:1–11), and this situation is quite perplexing. Two prostitutes have had babies. One woman quite carelessly smothers her child in the night, then switches babies while her colleague sleeps. Now both women claim the living child as their own. Without other witnesses or evidence, Solomon must devise some way to solve the case. Will God's promised sagacity materialize? Will Solomon wilt under this newly imposed pressure?

3:24–28 The king quickly produces his own evidence. He decides to try the case based on the women's maternal instincts and human compassion. Calling for a sword, he orders the child cut into halves, with each woman getting an equal share. The real mother, who has already cared enough for her child to plead her case before the king, acts out of "compassion for her son." She begs Solomon to give the baby to the other woman. In startling contrast the careless, dishonest woman is willing to take her "half." Her cruelty has been revealed, just as the other mother's kindness has emerged. Solomon can now give a just verdict. The compassionate woman is given the child. He has the insight to see the difference between just and unjust persons even when he has no corroborating evidence. When this verdict became public knowledge, the nation was in awe of (lit., "feared") the king. This comment reinforces the statement in 2:46 that the "kingdom is now firmly established in Solomon's hands." Most importantly, this respect stems from the knowledge that wisdom like Solomon's can come only from God. Israel now understands, as does the reader, that "the wisdom of God is in his heart to do justice." If so, the nation will flourish under his leadership. So far Solomon has been faithful to the God who has kept the promises made to the new king.

GOD'S SUSTAINING GRACE: I Kings 19:1-18

The Point: God cares about us when we struggle and provides just what we need at the right time

The Purpose: Participants recognize God's tender care in seasons of fear and exhaustion, receive his provision personally, and leave trusting his plan even when they feel alone or overwhelmed.

Christ Connection: Jesus, greater than Elijah, entered our despair, bore our weakness at the cross, and now gently restores, sustains, and leads his people by his Spirit.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: When you get 'down in the dumps,' what gets you going again?

We all turn to something (distraction, people, habits, or faith) when we feel low. Today's passage reminds us that God himself is the one who truly restores, giving real rest, hope, and strength when we're drained. If your group has a harder time sharing, consider reaching out to a member of the group ahead of time and share the question with them asking them to be the first to answer

Transition to the Study

You've probably heard the phrase, 'When life gives you lemons, just make lemonade.' That's sometimes easier said than done. Struggles are real, and we all face situations that overwhelm us. In today's Bible study, we will see that a great prophet of God, Elijah, faced exhaustion, depression, and loneliness. In the midst of his struggles, Elijah discovered that God cared about him and provided exactly what he needed: rest and replenishment, a reminder of his presence, and encouragement that Elijah was not alone.

STUDY THE BIBLE

I Kings 19:1-9

Read Aloud: Have someone read I Kings 19:1-9.

Discussion: After hearing Jezebel's threat and fleeing into the wilderness, how would you describe Elijah's mental, emotional, and physical condition in these verses?

Elijah is exhausted, afraid, and discouraged and so overwhelmed he wants to die. Yet even in his depleted state, God meets him with rest, food, and gentle care, showing that our weakness is not a barrier to his compassion.

What is significant about Elijah’s forty-day journey through the wilderness to Horeb (the mountain of God), and what might this length of time suggest about what God was doing in him?

Forty days echoes other biblical “forty” seasons of testing and preparation. Elijah’s journey is not wasted wandering but a God-ordained period of slowing down, being sustained, and being readied to hear from God in a deeper way.

Where do you see God’s provision for Elijah in these verses, and how have you personally experienced God’s provision during a difficult or draining time?

God provides exactly what Elijah needs (rest, food, water, and renewed direction) before calling him forward. In our own hard seasons, God often meets us through practical care, people, and his Word, reminding us He has not forgotten or abandoned us.

Teaching Tip: Building Authenticity

Remind participants that Elijah was a prophet who still struggled deeply. Creating space where people can honestly share discouragement or fatigue helps the group feel safer, builds authenticity, and often leads to more meaningful spiritual conversations. Even as a leader it is important you share vulnerably.

I Kings 19:9b-13a

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read I Kings 19:9b-13a.

Discussion: How does God typically speak to his people in Scripture? Through what means or circumstances have we seen him communicate?

God speaks in many ways through his Word, prayer, creation, others, and the Holy Spirit. Remembering these examples helps us stay attentive to his voice in daily life.

What can Elijah’s experience of hearing God in a gentle whisper teach us about how to listen for God’s voice in our own busy or chaotic moments?

God often speaks quietly, inviting us to slow down and focus. Like Elijah, we can create stillness to better hear and respond to his presence.

Elijah felt isolated and discouraged. What practical steps can we evaluate and commit to as a group to ensure pursuing those among us who might feel spiritually or emotionally alone?

Community care reflects God's heart. Through prayer, encouragement, and regular check-ins, we can build a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and seen.

I Kings 19:13b-18

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud I Kings 19:13b-18.

Discussion: Looking at God's interaction with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:13b-18, which of these statements best fits your current season, and why?

- **I need to be quiet in order to hear God speaking to me.**
- **I have felt alone in living for God, but I'm realizing that I'm not.**
- **I need God to refresh and sustain me.**
- **Things may not be as bad or dark as they seem.**

Elijah's story shows God as gentle, present, and in control even when Elijah feels alone and overwhelmed. Like Elijah, we can admit our need, receive God's care, and remember He is working in ways we cannot yet see.

What does God actually say to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:13b-18, and what does this message reveal about God's perspective on Elijah's situation and the future?

God corrects Elijah's distorted perspective, gives him new assignments, and reveals a faithful remnant. God's message is: You are not alone, I still have a plan, and I am faithfully preserving my people even when you cannot see it.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Elijah was a person just like us, and although he did great things for the Lord, he faced moments of fear, depression, and aloneness. In every circumstance, God met his needs fully. Life can be difficult, which is why we should trust that God can and will encourage us, provide for us, and refresh us so we continue living for him. God cares about us, and when we face struggles, He provides exactly what we need when we need it.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

When Elijah was weary and felt utterly alone, God met him with compassion, provision, and purpose. In Christ, we see this same heart magnified. Jesus meets us in our weakness, restoring our hope and strength so we can continue faithfully in his calling and care.

Connect to Christ: Elijah's experience in the wilderness points ahead to Jesus, who also faced exhaustion, solitude, and suffering for our sake. Just as God sent an angel

to sustain Elijah, the Father sent his Son to carry our burdens and renew our souls. Jesus not only bore our despair on the cross but now, through his Spirit, whispers peace into our fear and gives strength in our weakness. Where Elijah encountered God on the mountain, we encounter him in Christ, the ultimate revelation of God's tender presence and restoring grace.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Make time to rest. Just as Elijah experienced physical and emotional exhaustion, many people today face burnout from work, responsibilities, and life's pressures. The passage shows the importance of rest and renewal, so make time for God on your calendar.

Hear from God in quiet moments. In a world filled with noise and distractions, Elijah's encounter with God in a gentle whisper reminds us to seek moments of silence and stillness to hear God's voice and find peace. Set a time and place every day to pray and read God's Word.

Thank God for his divine provision. God's provision for Elijah through an angel's food and drink teaches us to trust that God will provide for our needs, even when we feel depleted and alone. Name the ways God has provided for you throughout the last year.

Commit to make this group a priority: God reassures Elijah that he is not alone and that there are others who remain faithful, emphasizing the importance of community and support systems in our lives. Look for others in the group who need encouragement and a friend to help them face a difficult circumstance.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs, especially where they feel tired, afraid, or alone. Close by thanking God for meeting us in our weakness, for providing exactly what we need, for speaking in the quiet, and for reminding us that we are never alone because He is always present and at work.

COMMENTARY

Book Chapter Background

Leading up to 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab of Israel, who, under the influence of his wife Jezebel, had led the nation into idolatry by worshipping Baal.

Elijah declared a drought as divine judgment, resulting in a severe famine lasting three and a half years. During this time, God miraculously provided for Elijah, including being fed by ravens and sustaining a widow and her son with an unending supply of flour and oil.

Elijah then challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel to demonstrate the true God is. God answered Elijah's prayer by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, leading the people to acknowledge the Lord as God.

Following this victory, Elijah prayed for rain, and God ended the drought with a heavy rainstorm. Despite these miraculous events, Jezebel remained defiant and threatened Elijah's life, vowing to kill him as he had killed the prophets of Baal. This threat prompted Elijah to flee into the wilderness, setting the stage for the events of 1 Kings 19.

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Verse by Verse

19:1-2 So far, Elijah has encountered serious yet less-than-overpowering opposition. At this point in the story, though, he meets the one person as committed to Baal as he is to Yahweh. What Jezebel hears from Ahab causes her to threaten Elijah's life. She swears by the "gods" that Elijah will die. Jezebel has killed Yahweh's prophets before (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4, 13), so Elijah has no reason to doubt her threats indicate her true intentions. This woman has the fierceness Ahab lacks, the civil authority the prophets of Baal lacked, and a freshness for battle that Elijah no longer possesses. She is as worthy an opponent as God's servants ever face in Scripture. Who, or what, can defeat her?

19:3-8 For whatever reason – fatigue, lack of faith, or a sense of resignation at the prospect of never having peace – Elijah flees. He fears death the way Obadiah did (18:9-14). DeVries thinks "Elijah interprets Jezebel's personal attack on him as the end of his ministry." Indeed, the fact that he dismisses his servant in Beersheba, the

southernmost point in Judah, then goes a day's journey farther may indicate he has given up his ministry altogether. Elijah's flight in 19:1-3 changes the face of the story. In three short verses the writer has totally changed the flow of the story. Victory seems to be transformed into defeat, the brave prophet into a cowering refugee, and the victory over death and Baal into an opportunity for death to reassert itself through Jezebel's oath to take Elijah's life. How will the Lord prove to be God now? This question remains the fundamental issue in the story. After "a day's journey into the desert," an exhausted Elijah says he wants to die, which, ironically, is the opposite desire to what he expressed by fleeing into the desert in the first place. Now God begins to renew his faith by miraculously feeding him. In other words, the Lord ministers to him as in the past. Twice an angel feeds him, thereby giving him strength to travel to "Horeb, the mountain of God." Elijah knows God exists in Israel, Phoenicia, and the desert. He knows God revealed himself at Horeb, the mountain of Moses' calling and the giving of the covenant (cf. Exod 3-4; 20-24). Here at another mountain Elijah will decide for himself if the Lord is God.

19:9-10 Besides feeding the prophet, the Lord reassures Elijah with the book's most certain comfort – God's word, which never fails. The first "word of the Lord" asks him why he is at Horeb. He replies that Israel is apostate, they kill the prophets, and he alone stands for covenant faith. Again, he sees no real reason to continue. Apparently he had hoped that the Mount Carmel episode would produce a final victory over Baalism.

19:11-13a A second word of the Lord invites the prophet to "stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord," for God will pass by there. This theophany, or appearance of the Lord, reminds readers of Exod 33:18-22, where Moses desires to see God's glory and is rewarded by being allowed to view "the back" of the Lord's splendor. God places Moses in the rock and covers him with a divine "hand" to protect him. Here, Elijah waits for God's word through tearing wind, ground-shaking earthquake, and roaring flame. The Lord does not speak, however, through these natural phenomena. Certainly, Elijah has experienced God's sovereignty over nature, and has benefited from miraculous fire, but what he needs now is a definitive word from the Lord. He receives this word in "a gentle whisper." Perhaps the Lord attempts to teach Elijah not to expect always the miraculous and wondrous deliverance from problems. Maybe God wants "to signify to the prophet that He did not work in his earthly kingdom with the destroying zeal of wrath, or with the pitiless severity of judgment." Or the Lord may simply try to explain to Elijah that he works in small ways at this time. God speaks in a quiet voice here to a prophet drained of strength. The next passage will reveal still further the Lord's willingness to labor with relatively limited human resources. Regardless of the meaning of the natural wonders, however, it is God's word alone that will heal the prophet in this moment of crisis.

19:13b-18 The voice asks Elijah why he has come to the mountain. R. Gregory says that this repetition of the question asked in 19:9 forces Elijah to consider carefully his current position and his future destiny. "The first time this statement of defense is presented to the audience, the emphasis falls on Elijah's feelings (informative) but the precise reiteration exhibits Elijah's inflexibility and egocentrism (elucidating)." God has fed him as before, and God has spoken to him as in the past. Why has he fled?

Elijah answers as in 19:10: Israel has rejected the covenant, Israel has become idolatrous, he is the only prophet left, and Jezebel plans to kill him. Implied in this response is Elijah's doubts that the Lord can save him or turn the nation back to the covenant. Who has God become in the prophet's life? Only a restatement and reassessment of his theology can extricate him from this pit of fear and depression.

The Lord's word to him reaffirms God's uniqueness, his sovereignty over all nations, and the importance of the prophetic word. God tells him, "Go back the way you came," a command that calls Elijah back into active service of the Lord.

He must anoint Hazael king of Syria, which declares Yahweh's lordship over that non-Israelite country. Similarly, he must anoint Jehu king of Israel, thus reestablishing the Lord's rule over the Northern Kingdom. Finally, Elijah must anoint Elisha to take his place.

This command, coupled with the Lord's comment that he has selected, or caused to remain, seven thousand persons who do not worship Baal, reminds Elijah that God's Word cannot be silenced. It remains the force that produces the remnant, protects the remnant, and empowers the remnant. As a part of this remnant, Elijah can expect God's protection and empowerment. Elijah is not alone, he only feels that he is.

UNDIVIDED HEARTS: 2 Kings 23:1-30

The Point: Whole-hearted repentance responds to God's word with radical obedience and covenant renewal.

The Purpose: To move participants from casual agreement with Scripture to concrete, costly steps of turning from idols and ordering life under God's word.

Christ Connection: Josiah's rare obedience anticipates Jesus, the perfectly righteous Son of David, who fully keeps God's law and renews the covenant through his death and resurrection.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: What is one habit or practice you have had to completely remove from your life because it kept pulling you away from something important?

Many of us discover that certain habits, even if they seem small, slowly pull our hearts and time away from what matters most; naming and removing them is often a key step toward greater freedom, focus, and faithfulness.

Transition to the Study

After the Book of the Law is rediscovered in the temple, Josiah realizes how far Judah has drifted from God. Instead of ignoring what he hears, he gathers everyone (leaders, priests, prophets, and ordinary people) to listen to God's word together. Then he leads sweeping reforms, destroying idols, cleansing worship, and restoring the Passover as written in Scripture (Exodus 12). 2 Kings 23 shows what it looks like when a heart and a community take God's word seriously. As we walk through this chapter, we'll see how Josiah responds and consider what faithful, Scripture-driven repentance might look like for us today.

STUDY THE BIBLE**2 Kings 23:1-14**

Read Aloud: Have someone read 2 Kings 23:1-14.

Discussion: What did Josiah do with the Book of the Covenant, and what broad kinds of reforms did he begin in response?

Josiah gathered all the people, read the Book of the Covenant aloud, made a covenant to follow the Lord, and began removing idols, false priests, and pagan worship objects from the temple and high places.

How does Josiah's decision to gather everyone around God's word and then act on it challenge the way we respond when Scripture exposes sin in our community or habits?

Josiah moves from hearing to communal repentance and action. His example pushes us to treat conviction as a call to shared, concrete change, not just private regret or discussion.

What do Josiah's decisive actions against idols in the temple and high places reveal about the danger of "tolerated" sin, and how might we evaluate similar areas of compromise today?

He refuses to coexist with idol worship, showing that tolerated sin eventually shapes hearts and worship. It invites us to examine places we've grown comfortable with compromise and consider more decisive steps of removal.

Teaching Tip: Read It Twice, Two Voices

Have one person read the passage slowly, then a second person read it again from a different voice or age group. Hearing it twice helps details stand out and invites broader participation from the start.

2 Kings 23:15-24

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read 2 Kings 23:15-24.

Discussion: What did Josiah do to the altar and high place at Bethel and to the high places in the cities of Samaria?

He destroyed the altar at Bethel that Jeroboam had made, burned and crushed it to dust, defiled high places in Samaria, and carried out judgment on idolatrous priests, fulfilling the word spoken long before.

Josiah's reforms reach beyond Judah into former northern territory. What might it look like for our obedience to God's word to extend beyond "safe" or expected areas of life?

His obedience pushes into uncomfortable spaces, not just his immediate circle. Likewise, we're called to honor God in public, relational, and cultural areas, not only in private spirituality, even when that brings misunderstanding or resistance. This could look like not participating in workplace gossip, or inappropriate joking, inviting someone to church or even better sharing the gospel with them, choosing to pray for someone in the moment wherever you are, or walking out of a movie or watching a show when you realize its inappropriate, etc.

The writer says no king turned to the Lord like Josiah, yet the reforms come late in Judah's history. What does this combination of remarkable obedience and timing teach us about both the power and limits of reform movements?

Reform matters and pleases God, but it cannot erase generations of entrenched sin. Real change is significant yet limited when hearts and histories are deeply marked by rebellion, pointing us beyond human reform to God's deeper rescue.

2 Kings 23:25–30

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud 2 Kings 23:25–30.

Discussion: How is Josiah's devotion summarized, and what does God still say about his anger toward Judah?

Josiah is described as turning to the Lord with all his heart, soul, and might, unlike any king before or after. Yet the Lord did not turn from his great wrath because of the sins of Manasseh.

How does the reality that even a godly leader like Josiah cannot cancel God's judgment affect the way we place our hopes in spiritual or political leaders today?

It reminds us to be grateful for faithful leaders but not to treat them as saviors. Our ultimate hope must rest in God himself and in the King who can truly deal with sin.

Josiah dies in battle, and his son does not follow his example. What does this show about the need for a lasting, righteous king, and how does it set the stage for the messianic hope?

Josiah's death and his son's failure reveal how fragile human reform is. Even the best king cannot secure lasting faithfulness, highlighting the need for a permanent, righteous Son of David who will not fail or be replaced.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: 2 Kings 23 shows a king who hears God's word, gathers his people around it, and responds with radical obedience from destroying idols to restoring the Passover. Yet even Josiah's reforms cannot permanently reverse Judah's long-term rebellion. The chapter calls us to serious, Scripture-shaped repentance while also exposing

the limits of human efforts. It invites us to look beyond Josiah to the perfect King who can truly cleanse, renew, and keep God's people.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

Josiah models a rare, whole-hearted response to God's word, but his death and Judah's later fall show that we need more than reform. We need redemption. Jesus, the greater Son of David, perfectly keeps the covenant, bears our judgment, and establishes a kingdom that cannot be dismantled.

Connect to Christ: Josiah renews the covenant, cleanses the temple, destroys idols, and restores the Passover, yet he dies and judgment still follows. Jesus steps in as the true King who fulfills what Josiah could only foreshadow. He obeys God's law perfectly, cleanses the true temple (his people), and becomes our Passover Lamb whose blood turns away wrath. At the cross, He bears the judgment centuries of sin deserve and inaugurates a new covenant written on hearts, not stone. In him, repentance leads to lasting restoration.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Remove a modern idol. Identify one area (work, entertainment, approval, comfort) where something good has become ultimate. Take one specific, costly step to "tear it down" this week (a boundary, fast, or change of habit), inviting a trusted friend to hold you accountable.

Restore a neglected rhythm. Choose one biblical practice you have drifted from (Lord's Supper, gathered worship, daily Scripture, Sabbath rest). Make a clear plan to re-establish it this week, asking God to use it to re-center your heart on his grace.

Lead like Josiah. If you have influence in your home, group, or ministry, take one step to bring people together around God's word like a family reading time, a group Scripture focus, or a renewed emphasis on obedience, not just discussion.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for giving his word, for exposing idols, for raising up leaders who turn people back to him, and supremely for sending Jesus, the righteous Son of David, who perfectly keeps the covenant and leads us into true and lasting renewal.

COMMENTARY

Book Chapter Background

Judah had drifted far from God under kings who normalized idolatry, especially Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with false worship and bloodshed. The temple itself was polluted, and high-place worship had become routine. In Josiah's reign, the Book of the Law was found in the temple. Hearing its words, Josiah tore his clothes in grief, realizing how deeply Judah had violated God's covenant. He was told judgment was certain but delayed because his heart was tender.

In 2 Kings 23, Josiah gathers all the people, reads the law publicly, and makes a covenant to follow the Lord wholeheartedly. He then launches sweeping reforms: destroying idols and altars in the temple, throughout Judah, and even in Bethel and former northern territory, fulfilling earlier prophecies. He stops child sacrifice, removes occult practices, and restores the Passover "as it is written," in a way unmatched since the judges. Yet the Lord does not turn from his wrath over long-standing sin. Josiah dies in battle, and his son returns to evil, showing that even great reform cannot finally prevent Judah's coming judgment.

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Verse by Verse

23:1–3 To his credit Josiah is not content with waiting for his own peaceful death. Rather, out of gratitude for God's mercy in his own life he determines to attempt "to lead the whole nation to true conversion to the Lord, and thereby avert as far as possible the threatened curse of rejection, since the Lord in his word had promised forgiveness and mercy to the penitent." This attempt begins with a covenant renewal ceremony that stands in the tradition of great renewals such as the one Deuteronomy itself represents and the one Joshua initiates (Josh 24:1–27).

The scene of the covenant renewal closely resembles Solomon's dedication of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs 8:1ff.) As in Solomon's ceremony the king, elders, priests, and people join together in the service. One new group is represented, however, the prophets (missing, however, from the parallel text in 2 Chr 34:30). Perhaps Huldah's role in Josiah's increased Yahwistic commitments helps elevate all the true prophets to their rightful place in Judah's religious community. Once in place the king and the people listen to "all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord." Now the assembly knows the

privileges and obligations inherent in the relationship with the Lord. First, Josiah promises to keep the covenant, then the people follow his example. Each person pledges to obey God's "commands, regulations and decrees," a diverse enough list of types of laws to suggest they have heard a law code of some scope and substance.

23:4-14 Because of their renewed dedication to the Lord, the king and people remove non-Yahwistic worship sites and implements, first from Judah, then from the old Israelite territory. N. Lohfink notes that ten separate items/issues are dealt with here. First, Josiah orders the priests to remove from the temple all cultic vessels used in worship of other gods. When they complete the task, the king burns them all. Second, "he causes to cease" the "pagan priests" who staff the high places where the people worship idols. These individuals may have existed with royal approval since Solomonic times (cf. 1 Kgs 11:1-8). Third, he burns the Asherah pole Manasseh placed in the temple. Fourth, Josiah demolishes the living quarters of "male shrine prostitutes," literally, "the separate ones" (*haqqēdēšîm*) where materials for Asherah are also made. Since the text mentions both males and females, perhaps all these individuals engage in sacred prostitution, a common element in Baalism.

Next, the narrative recounts Josiah's efforts outside the temple area. Thus, his fifth act is to desecrate high places "from Geba to Beersheba," Judah's northern and southern boundaries. Sixth, he demolishes shrines in the city gates. Seventh, he defiles Topheth, where child sacrifices had been made in honor of Molech.

The three remaining actions occur near the temple and just outside the city. Josiah's eighth reform is to take ornamental horses "dedicated to the sun" from the temple entrance. Ninth, altars on roofs, probably set aside for worship of astral deities (cf. 20:11; 21:3-5; Zeph 1:5), are removed. Tenth, Josiah desecrates, then smashes, the high places Solomon built for his wives. With this last act Josiah rolls back the clock, so to speak, to preidolatry Jerusalem, to the glory days of David when images were not welcome in the capital city of the Lord's people. Monotheism is once again at least the official theology, whether or not the people in fact embrace what is, to them, a novel concept.

23:15-20 With Judah cleansed, Josiah moves north to Bethel, which had served as one of the major worship centers in Jeroboam's maverick cult (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25-13:5). He treats this place like the nonseparatist Yahwistic cultic shrines in Judah, thereby reclaiming all the promised land for the worship of the Lord. Again the author emphasizes restoration. Both

parts of the divided kingdom are reunited spiritually, if not politically. Both sections of the land return to fidelity to the Lord and to an emphasis on worship at a central sanctuary. In the midst of the Bethel cleansing, Josiah removes bones from priestly graves (2 Chr 34:5) and burns them on the altar to defile it. This desecration fulfills the prophecy made by the unnamed prophet of 1 Kings 13 (cf. 1 Kgs 13:1–13) who lived during Jeroboam I's reign (ca. 930–909 b.c.). Three centuries have passed, but God's word comes true because it cannot fail. This episode is but the latest example of the author's emphasis on the truthfulness of the prophetic utterances.

Josiah's defiling of northern altars continues with a purging of "all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria that had provoked the Lord to anger." Part of this purging is the slaying of the priests who facilitate worship in those places. Gray concludes that this account is a "late elaboration" added to the text, since the killings constitute "an enormity which would have reflected no credit to Josiah." One could wonder why they needed to be killed or why they are killed and Judah's priests are not (cf. 2 Kgs 23:8–9). Keil suggests that the punishment's severity results not only because the northern priests are not Levites, "but chiefly from the fact that they were really idolatrous priests." In other words, the Judahite priests may have corrupted worship of Yahweh yet not have led in veneration of other gods, while the northern priests may have been polytheists or syncretists. Thus, Josiah does not just use geographical boundaries to determine who will live and who will die.

Still, why inflict the death penalty? The answer may lie in Josiah's interpretation of the Book of the Law. Deuteronomy 13:6–11 and 18:20 counsel Israel to put to death prophets who teach people to follow other gods, an admonition Elijah follows in 1 Kgs 18:40. Perhaps Josiah applies this principle to the priests here because of the seriousness of the consequences of idolatry for the nation (cf. Deut 28:15–68). On the other hand, he may follow the more general command in Exod 22:20. Whatever his motivation, and the author does not pass direct judgment on them, the effect of the purge remains clear. All the territory of Israel has been reclaimed for the covenant God. The national part of the spiritual agreement has been kept.

23:21–23 Not all of Josiah's efforts are prohibitive in nature, for he also orders the Passover kept. Again the festival will be kept because of what the "Book of the Covenant" teaches. Both Exod 12:1–11 and Deut 16:1–8 command Israel to keep the Passover on an annual basis as a reminder of their deliverance from Egypt. Unfortunately, for years this festival has not been observed in the manner intended.

Some commentators believe that v. 22 contradicts 2 Chr 30:1–27, which recounts the Passover observed in Hezekiah’s time. An examination of the Hezekiah and Josiah stories in 2 Chronicles, however, may help clarify the matter. After depicting the Hezekiah Passover, the Chronicler then summarizes Josiah’s Passover in terms similar to 2 Kgs 23:22: The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem. (2 Chr 35:18)

The distinction the Chronicler makes, then, may lie in the fact that “the numbers of offerings and celebrants at Josiah’s Passover exceeded that of Hezekiah.” Unlike in Hezekiah’s era, people from all the tribes appear for Passover, and Josiah’s festival follows Moses’ prescriptions more closely than Hezekiah’s. Given the Chronicler’s data it seems that 2 Kgs 23:22 speaks more of this Passover’s thoroughness and attention to covenant standards than of the absolute uniqueness of any Passover event whatsoever.

Josiah’s emphasis on the Passover is one more attempt on his part to take the covenant nation back to their roots. It is as if he believes the nation has a chance to survive if the people will return to basics like an emphasis on God’s Word, on covenant keeping, and on ceremonies that pass the faith from one generation to another. Despite Huldah’s prophetic message that predicts Judah’s doom, the king works to save the nation. In this way he acts like Moses, who serves God and Israel even after he knows that neither he nor his people will reach Canaan. Both leaders work to redeem the time and the remnant and to offer the witness that God is worth serving under any and all circumstances.

23:24–25 One last reform remains. Josiah rids the land of “mediums and spiritists,” individuals skilled in “the art of alleged communication with the dead. This was, to judge from the condemnatory passages, a common problem in Israel (cf. Lev 19:31; 20:27; Deut 18:11).” He also expunges idols “used in the practice of divination.” These actions remove not merely idolators but those who, because of their divination practices, compete with true prophets. The way is now clear for God’s Word to flow directly to the people.

Josiah’s reason for undertaking these reforms serves as his legacy to all readers of the text. He changes Judah “to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book,” a book that is synonymous with “the Law of Moses.” Thus, he provides an example of what Davidic kings

should do as the leaders of the Lord's people. He demonstrates proper motivation, proper sensitivity to God's Word, and proper obedience to the Lord.

23:26–27 Sadly, Josiah acts as Judah's last righteous king, and his death must have come as a great shock to his followers. The Lord's decision to judge Judah does not change. Huldah's words will come true. Any questions about the justness of this eventuality are answered by the future. The people revert to the worst parts of their past rather than continue in Josiah's ways. National suicide has been averted for a time by the sheer determination of the king and prophets, but the people go back to their old habits as soon as Josiah dies.

23:28–30 World events and questionable judgment combine to produce the circumstances surrounding Josiah's death. Judah has enjoyed a break from foreign dominance from at least 627 b.c. until 609 b.c., when this story occurs. Now Pharaoh Neco II determines to march through Israel on his way to help Assyria try to recapture Haran from Babylon. Josiah decides to engage Neco at Megiddo in northern Israel. Why does he want to fight the Egyptians? Bright suggests that Josiah may have been pro-Babylonian, as Hezekiah apparently was (cf. 2 Kgs 20:12–19), or that Judah's king thinks an Egypt-Assyria victory could place him under Egypt's control. Another possibility is that Josiah wishes to stake absolute claim to what was once Israel and considers the Egyptian movement a threat to that desire.

Regardless of his motives, the result is the same. Neco's army defeats Judah, killing Josiah in the process. Since Josiah's forces could not possibly have approximated Egypt's, his judgment appears questionable here. Maybe he expects a miracle like Hezekiah's. Again the result does not change with a clear answer. Josiah dies before the coming defeat of Jerusalem, a privilege Huldah promised him.

GIVE THANKS: I Chronicles 16:8-13; 23-36

The Point: God's actions and character should cause his people to praise him continually.

The Purpose: Participants remember specific ways God has acted and praise him for his faithful character, learning to express thanks with their words and lives in everyday situations, not just during worship gatherings.

Christ Connection: This song of thanks anticipates Jesus, the promised King, through whom all nations are invited to rejoice in God's salvation and praise his name forever.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: What is something you are truly thankful for?

Our thankfulness often centers on relationships, provision, and moments of rescue. This sets us up to see that Scripture calls us to thank and praise God first for who He is and what He has done.

Transition to the Study

Christians have much to be thankful for. In fact, we should be the most thankful people on the earth. The psalm of David found here in I Chronicles 16 is a beautiful reminder that God's people have been abundantly blessed by God which should result in continual praise and thanksgiving as we remember his mighty deeds on our behalf.

STUDY THE BIBLE**I Chronicles 16:8-13**

Read Aloud: Have someone read I Chronicles 16:8-13.

Discussion: According to verses 8-13, what specific things are God's people commanded to do in response to him (list the verbs and phrases)?

God's people are called to give thanks, call on his name, make him known, sing, glory in him, seek him, and remember his works. These active responses show that gratitude is meant to be expressed, not merely felt.

How does remembering God's "wondrous works" and covenant faithfulness in these verses shape the way we view our current circumstances and respond to hardship?

Remembering God's past deeds guards us from fear, entitlement, and forgetfulness. It reframes our present struggles, anchoring us in his unchanging character so that praise and trust become our first response, not our last resort.

Teaching Tip: For Musical Learners

Play a hymn or praise song in the background as they arrive. Or at this point in your lesson, play your favorite song once people have answered the above questions, listening for what the lyrics tell us about God.

I Chronicles 16:23-29a

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read I Chronicles 16:23-29a.

Discussion: What are God's people commanded to do in "all the earth" and "among the nations" regarding his salvation, glory, and marvelous works?

David calls God's people to sing, proclaim his salvation day after day, declare his glory among the nations, and his marvelous works among all peoples. Worship is both vertical (to God) and outward (before the world).

What are some practical ways you personally can "declare his glory" this week (in your workplace, home, or friendships)?

Declaring God's glory can be simple and natural: speaking of answered prayer, giving God credit for good gifts, sharing the gospel, or responding differently under pressure. Everyday moments can become opportunities to point people to him.

What does this passage suggest about the role of music and song in worship, and how might that challenge or affirm how you currently engage in worship through singing?

Song is not an optional extra. It is a God-given way to proclaim his salvation, unify his people, and display his worth. Evaluating our engagement in singing reveals much about our view of God and our willingness to honor him.

I Chronicles 16:29b-36

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud I Chronicles 16:29b-36.

Discussion: Verse 34 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." What truths about God's character are highlighted here?

God is good, and his steadfast love does not run out. Gratitude flows from remembering who He is, not just what He gives. This verse anchors our thanksgiving in his unchanging character.

In light of verse 34, what is one specific way you can practice daily gratitude this week, especially in an area you usually complain or worry about?

Daily gratitude is learned in small, concrete choices: naming blessings, thanking God aloud, and reframing complaints. As we practice, our hearts are slowly trained to see his goodness even in imperfect circumstances.

“Blessed be the Lord...from everlasting to everlasting” (v.36). How does seeing God as eternal, beyond our circumstances, shape the way we worship and trust him today?

An eternal God is not threatened by our changing seasons. Remembering his everlasting rule lifts our eyes beyond immediate struggles, leading us to steadier worship, deeper trust, and confidence that his purposes will stand.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: 1 Chronicles 16 is a powerful chapter that highlights the importance of worship, gratitude, and remembrance in our relationship with God. Through David's song of thanksgiving, we are reminded of God's greatness, his steadfast love, and his wondrous deeds. The chapter encourages us to cultivate a heart of worship, to declare God's glory among the nations, and to celebrate his faithfulness in our lives. By embracing these principles, we can deepen our faith and live out our calling to honor and glorify God in all that we do.”

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

God's covenant faithfulness, worldwide glory, and saving works in 1 Chronicles 16 all find their fullness in Jesus, the eternal King, who gathers the nations to praise God for his steadfast love and salvation.

Connect to Christ: David's psalm celebrates God's covenant, salvation, and glory among all nations. These threads come together in Jesus, the Son of David and promised King. Jesus fulfills God's covenant promises, reveals God's wondrous works supremely in his death and resurrection, and opens the way for every nation to “declare his glory” and “boast in his holy name.” Through Christ, God's steadfast love truly endures forever, and the call to sing, praise, and give thanks reaches its highest expression in the worship of the risen Messiah.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Remember God's Faithfulness: Reflect on past experiences where God has been faithful. Use these memories to strengthen your faith and trust in him during challenging times.

Engage in Worship: Make worship a central part of your life. This can include singing, praying, and reading Scripture. Consider joining the church's worship team or singing along to worship songs in your car or during your time with God.

Share God's Deeds: Tell others about the wonderful things God has done in your life or what you are reading in his Word. This can be through personal conversations, social media, or testimonies in church.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for his steadfast love, his mighty works on our behalf, and the privilege of declaring his glory and salvation day after day among all people.

COMMENTARY

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

The NIV Application Commentary, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI

The College Press NIV Commentary, College Press Pub. Co., Joplin, MO
(Specific reference given after each entry)

Book Chapter Background

The psalm of thanksgiving commemorating the installation of the ark in Jerusalem, in one sense, is the theological center of the Chronicler's retelling of Israel's history. The installation of the ark marks Israel's return to God under David's leadership and a renewal of the nation's covenant loyalty to the God of their ancestors. The ark itself symbolizes the covenant agreement established by Yahweh with Israel at Mount Sinai. The Sinai treaty was mediated by the prophet Moses, and the written record of that binding pact was archived for Hebrew posterity in the sacred ark. The Chronicler's song of praise celebrates God as both covenant maker and covenant keeper, the lynchpin in his theology of hope for postexilic Judah.

Andrew E. Hill, 1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 237-238.

Verse by Verse

16:8-13 These verses provide a hymnlike introduction to Asaph's hymn of thanksgiving. Israel is exhorted to give thanks to the Lord, to call upon his name, and to make known (publicize) among the peoples his deeds (v. 8); to sing to him, sing praise to him, and talk of all his wonderful works (v. 9); to glory in his holy name, to let those who seek rejoice (v. 10); to look to the Lord and his strength, and seek his face continually (v. 11); to remember the marvelous works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments of his mouth (v. 12).

16:8-9 Thank the Lord This thanksgiving is based on Psalm 105:1-2 with only stylistic changes. The poetry is perfectly balanced: each verse contains three imperatival sentences (give thanks, call, make known and sing, sing praise, tell). The last line in each recalls the mighty acts of God. In the light of God's mighty deeds, the people of God give thanks and honor him with music.

16:10-11 Praise the Lord This praise is based on Psalm 105:3-4 with no changes. The poetry is balanced: each verse contains two imperatival sentences (glory, rejoice and look,

seek). The call to praise (hll) is translated “glory” by the NIV and paralleled with “rejoice.” The object of praise and joy is the Lord, but it only belongs to those who seek the Lord. The verb “seek” (קַבַּץ, bqš) is used twice and its synonym (“seek”; רָאָה, drš) is translated “look” (cf. 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 7:14). Those who seek the Lord will find joy in the praise of his holy name.

16:12–13 Remember the Lord This proclamation is based on Psalm 105:5–7 but with one significant change. Where Psalm 105 reads “seed of Abraham” (Ps. 105:5), Chronicles reads descendants (seed) of Israel (1 Chr 16:13), which probably particularizes the application to postexilic Judah (Williamson, 129). The first two sections emphasized God’s mighty deeds (“strength” in 1 Chr 16:11). This section has only one imperative: remember (1 Chr 16:12). The emphasis is what (wonders, miracles, judgments) to remember and who (Israel, Jacob) should remember. Israel, as the elect servant nation, should remember what God has done for them. With such a memory they can confess that he is the Lord our God. The God of the universe (in all the earth) is the God of Israel.

John Mark Hicks, 1 & 2 Chronicles, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 2001), 167–168.

16:23–29 The theme changes. The kingship of Yahweh comes to the fore. If the Chronicler’s readers could identify themselves with their forebears, the patriarchs, who were a politically insignificant group that grew to a significant people as their story unfolded, the people of Israel of the Chronicler’s day might well take hope and look to a brighter future. Their God was a great God whose salvation was to be proclaimed from day to day. He was great and most worthy of praise, to be revered above all Gods.

The gods of the nations were but idols, but Israel’s God made the heavens. Before him was splendor and majesty; strength and joy were in his dwelling place.

The latter words of v. 29 have been variously understood. The probable meaning of the phrase is that the Lord’s actions always display his holy splendor, for which he deserves holy worship (cf. 2 Chr 20:21; Pss 29:2; 96:9).

J. A. Thompson, 1, 2 Chronicles, vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 141.