

Kings & Kingdoms #1
The Pitfall of Discontent

Word

Scripture Reference

Judges 18:1-31

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes you content with your life?
2. In life, it may be important to start out well, but it's even more important to finish well. Understanding the pitfalls in your life will help you to finish well. The Bible gives us several examples of how people started out well, but some finished badly while some were able to keep their walk with God until the end. In the book of Judges, we see how the entire tribe of Dan fell into the trap of discontent, an attitude that eventually led to them being written off the 12 tribes of Israel. Read Judges 18:1-31. God gave each of the 12 tribes a piece of land wherein they each were responsible to drive out the remaining people in that land. The tribe of Dan was a group of people who descended from the fifth son of Jacob (Israel). They were given some of the best land in Canaan, but how did the people feel about the inheritance given to them by God? Why (v. 1)? What did they decide to do instead? Discuss why Christians, despite being given God's bountiful, rich blessings, still feel discontented with what they have?
3. The Danites could have obeyed God—conquered and developed the land of their inheritance. However, their discontent led to their fall. Our passage shows four steps towards how discontent leads God's people to fall:
 - a. Discontent clouds your judgment (v. 2-6). The Danites looked for another land because they were discontented with what God had already given them. Did they do the right thing? Who were Micah and the Levite priest (Judges 17)? Were they from God? How did discontent cloud the minds of the five Danite spies? Discuss how discontentment clouds people's minds, in the process manipulating the will of God to make it conform to what they want. Did you ever want something so badly that you did whatever you could to get it at all cost? Was it worth it? Share and discuss with the group.
 - b. Discontent leads to disobedience (v. 7-10). Describe the land that the five spies found in the city of Laish. Because they liked and coveted the land, what conclusion did they come up with in verse 10? Why was their assumption wrong? How did their discontent lead them to disobedience? Give examples on how Christians disobey rules, moral

values, or even legal matters because of wanting something that they cannot have. Why is it wrong?

- c. Discontent leads you to make your own rules (v. 11-18). How did the rest of the Danites respond to the report of the five spies about the city of Laish? Instead of destroying the false god in Micah's house, what did the 600 Danite men do to it? Share how you feel about how far the Danites have fallen. How did the progression of their discontentment with the land that God had given them lead them to also be discontented with their faith in the One True God? How does being discontented lead Christians to make their own rules instead of being faithful to God and His commands? Share examples of the "rules" that Christians make to manipulate the Bible to their likings, instead of them adjusting to what the Bible actually says.
- d. Discontent leads to apostasy (*def. turning away from God*; v.19-31). What did these Danites tell the Levite priest of Micah to do that led them really far away from God and to their eventual destruction? What did they do when Micah tried to stop them (v. 22-27)? What did they set up as they settled in the former city of Laish, now the city of Dan? What is the question that Satan often asks you so that you would lose contentment in your life, whether it is in your work, studies, relationships, or walk with God? Discuss what you should do so that you will not fall into this trap.

Walk

"So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." (v. 31)

This verse tells you that people who once walked with God could be led far away from Him because of discontent. The Danites were not satisfied with what God gave them and tried to take something that God did not give them. As a result, they lost everything. Examine your heart if the discontentment you have in your life is clouding your judgment, causing you to disobey, to make your own rules instead of following what God says, and leading you to turn away from God. What should you do about it? How can you develop an attitude of contentment so that you will not go down in the pitfall of discontent?

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the discontentment I allowed to grow in my heart. Many times I'm so focused on the things You don't give me that I don't see the richness and abundance of what You do give me. I don't want to be led away from You because of my own selfishness and greed. Today I repeat the words of David in Psalm 139:23-24,

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*

I pray that You would cleanse me from this sin, and enable me to see Your ways through the lenses of contentment and gratefulness. In Jesus name. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #2
The Pitfall of Distrust

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 14, 16

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes you distrust people?
2. Whom you choose to trust is one of the most important decisions you will need to make. If you trust an unreliable world to catch you when you fall, and it didn't catch you, then you do not have anyone to blame but yourself for trusting something that will let you down. Whom you put your trust in is a decision that only yourself can make. King Asa, the king of the south kingdom when Israel was divided into two kingdoms, started so well but ended badly. Read 2 Chronicles 14,16. King Asa started out well by doing the following:
 - a. He did what was right in the eyes of God (ch. 14:1-7). Describe how King Asa led God's people good and well in the eyes of God. King Asa acknowledged that God blessed him and his kingdom with peace and prosperity because he trusted and obeyed in God (v. 7). God's principle is simple: obey Him and He will bless you. When you have to make decisions, do you ever ask the question, "What does the Bible say about this matter?" Do you find yourself disobeying God, yet expect His blessings? How do you lead your family members or people under your management/guidance according to what pleases the Lord? Do you lead by example? What difference does your leadership make in other people's lives?
 - b. He trusted in God whole-heartedly (v. 11). Read King Asa's beautiful and heart-felt prayer in verse 11 before engaging in a big battle against a mighty and vast army. What can you learn from his prayer? How did God bless King Asa and his army because of King Asa's trust and obedience (v. 12)? More often than not, the first person you seek out in times of crisis is the person you trust. Think about what you do first when you encounter a problem. Do you come to God in prayer right away, or is prayer just a back-up plan for you? If you have ever encountered a problem and the first thing you did to deal with it was to pray, can you share what your prayer was like.

3. For one who started so well, King Asa ended badly. Something went wrong in the last few years of his reign as a king:
 - a. He stopped trusting in God (ch. 16:1-8). What does the passage say about what King Asa had to deal with? How did he handle it? Who did he turn to this time? Why do you think he stopped trusting in God? Often, as Christians get older and more confident in their job or life in general, they trust God less and less. But there is no middle ground in trusting God. You either trust God, or you don't (you trust the world instead). Discuss the signs Christians show that they have fallen into the pitfall of distrust in God and have chosen to trust the world as they get older in faith instead of growing and maturing in the Lord.
 - b. He forgot that God's eyes are looking for people to help—ones who trust Him and are loyal to Him (ch. 16:9-13). God's eyes range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. How did God find Asa's heart? How did King Asa react to the prophet who rebuked him (v. 10)? What was the consequence of his foolish action? God wants to show to those whose hearts are loyal to Him that He is strong, and wants to bless those who trust Him. What will be the consequence if you ever take your trust off of God? King Asa had foot disease that should have caused him to turn around and repent, but he didn't. His heart was hardened. Discuss what you should do to keep the same fate from happening to you. How should you respond to God's rebuke?

Walk

King Asa started so well, as a leader of God's people who trusted God for everything. But his competence as a King made him so proud that towards the last years of his reign, he stopped trusting in God. As a Christian, your trust in God should be whole-hearted and genuine. Do you desire to do what is pleasing in His eyes? Is your faith a situational kind, trusting God only when your situation is desperate and unbearable? Do you allow pride brought upon by successes, honors, and competency to keep you from fully trusting the Lord? When God reminds you of your sin, do you repent and turn from it? Ponder these thoughts and ask Him to keep you from the pitfall of distrust.

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for reminding me that trust is to be lived out. Often I say I trust You, but rely on my own strength when I encounter difficulties and choose to trust other people to help me. I only come to you when nobody else can. Forgive me, Lord. I forget that in my weakness, You are my only strength. I humble myself before you and ask to cleanse me of pride. Do not allow my heart to be hardened from hearing Your Word. Give me wisdom and strength, and give me the support I need for the times You need to teach me how to trust You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #3
The Pitfall of No Discernment

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 17-20

Discussion Questions:

1. Someone said that, "Who you are today is decided by what you chose yesterday." Discernment is the ability to clearly differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. What do you think are some factors that can influence a person's discernment? Share one major life decision you have made. How did you come up with your decision?
2. Read 2 Chronicles 17-20. Jehoshaphat was a king of Judah who lived in righteously in obedience to God. In addition to knowing the importance of loving and learning the word of God, Jehoshaphat demonstrated godly leadership by living out righteously in obedience to God. As the king, he sent out people to teach the word of God (ch. 17:9). It is very important that the life Jehoshaphat lived was consistent with what was taught in the word of God to preserve his moral authority. How much importance do you give to God's word? How much time and effort do you spend in it each day? Do you intentionally and personally teach God's word to others (i.e. children)? Can you firmly attest that you are living a life consistent with what the word of God says?
3. We learn three things about discernment from our passage:
 - a. *Wise discernment must be based on truths from God's Word (ch. 18:1-13).* Instead of simply agreeing with King Ahab to go to war with him to Ramoth Gilead, King Jehoshaphat insisted to hear from a prophet of God. It is important to remember that a heart that fully trusts God will make it a priority to turn to Him first, seeking His opinion and not the majority's. God is an unchanging God and therefore His word is also unchanging. Truth does not fluctuate. What are some popular opinion today that contradicts God's word? Share an instance wherein you have based your decision on popular opinion and not from God's word. What was the outcome? How would you have changed your decision?
 - b. *Wise discernment is needed because there are lying spirits in the world (ch. 18:14-27).* Micaiah the prophet told King Ahab that lying spirits will influence false prophets in order to persuade him to make a decision that will bring disaster against him. The Bible teaches that evil or lying spirits are not the spirits of dead people, but of demons who persuade and influence people to make decisions that contradict or go against

God's desires. Lying spirits pervade this world and seeks to distract us in the decisions we make. Nevertheless, the responsibility, as well as the consequences that come with it, still lies upon the person who makes the decision. If all that we care about is getting what we want, God may allow it because we do not care about His will. Discernment is necessary, otherwise we fall upon the trap of the lies of this world. What are some of the lies this world offers? How are we often persuaded to believe those lies and make the wrong decision?

- c. *Wise discernment must lead to action on that decision (ch. 19:7, 9-10).* Even though the prophet Micaiah already revealed that going to Ramoth Gilead was not God's will, Jehoshaphat still decided to join King Ahab. King Ahab died in that battle. Despite his wrong decision in joining King Ahab, King Jehoshaphat was spared and given a second chance by God. When He got home he then urged the people to do and act upon what was right before God. Unless we act rightfully on something, head knowledge means nothing and does not do anything. Many Christians still choose to do the things that are clearly against God's ways even knowing what is right. What would you say are some reasons that some people do not let their knowledge lead to action? What happens when people do not live out what they know is right before God? How can we encourage one another to make sure that our spiritual knowledge lead to tangible actions?

Walk

King Jehoshaphat was a good and godly king because he obeyed God and walked according to His ways. He made sure that God's word was the standard to live by and even taught it to others. He sought to be wise and align his decisions based on the truth of God's word. As a result, God blessed him and established his kingdom because of his obedience. On the other hand, King Ahab depended on popular opinion and on what he wants. In turn, he was influenced by lying spirits which cost him his life. How about you? Where do you base your decisions? Are you continually growing in your knowledge of God's word? Do you examine various opinions and options based upon the truth of God's word, or are you easily persuaded by popularity or majority? Do you put your knowledge into action, or does your spiritual knowledge not really lead you to act righteously? In what area do you find it a challenge to obey God with a joyful heart? Think about these things and ask God to cultivate discernment in you as you seek to make decisions that please God.

Worship & Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for giving us Your Word that can enable us to be wise. We are grateful that you are an unchanging God and that your truth does not change. For that, we can fully rely on what you have revealed and taught us. Help us to discern and make decisions that are consistent with Your will for our lives. May we never rely on what we want, or what the majority invites us into. Rather, make us become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and not give in to the lies of this world. May we experience your blessing upon us as we seek to be wise and live in obedience to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #4

The Pitfall of Pride

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 26

Discussion Questions

1. How did pride ruin a life of a person you know?
2. Pride often brings the best and worst of feelings. A lot of times, people tend to be upset and jealous when they are not openly recognized after they did something exceptionally. This is a sign of pride.

Pride is dangerous and can ruin a person. Read 2 Chronicles 26. At 16, Uzziah was not too young to follow God. He did what was right in God's eyes, and because of that he became king of Judah at a very young age, and as long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success (v. 5). How did God help Uzziah to become exceedingly strong and powerful (v. 6-15)? Share how God has evidently helped you in order to accomplish something great. Would you have done as well without His help?

3. King Uzziah matured quickly and did great things. His fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped, as accounted in the Scriptures. Despite having great success as king, what went wrong with Uzziah (v. 15b)? Discuss how power destroys a person. Does success come singlehandedly? How does self-confidence and self-sufficiency lead a person into the pitfall of pride? How could it be avoided?
4. King Uzziah fell into the pitfall of pride (v. 16-18). When he was strong, he became prideful. He began to think he was stronger than God. He did as he pleased by burning incense in the temple, which only priests were allowed to do, as specifically instructed by God. He knowingly usurped the priests' God-given responsibility because of pride. Pride indeed is the beginning of one's downfall. Uzziah's life story shows us three signs that manifest when pride sets in:
 - a. *Pride causes people to think of themselves more highly than they actually are.* You tend to forget that it is because of God's grace, mercy, and blessings that you are who you are today. Pride takes the glory of God. How did the priest try to stop and Uzziah from being unfaithful to God (v. 17-18)? Discuss in what ways people tend to think that they are higher than they are. How do you usually react to people who are so full of themselves? If you sense that pride has crept into your life, what should you do about it?

- b. *Pride causes people to get angry when they are corrected (v. 19).* What was Uzziah's reaction to the valiant men who stood up to and rebuked him? How does absolute power corrupt a person? Have you allowed your success to get the better of you? Why is it important not to let yourself be surrounded by people who only tell you what you want to hear?
- c. *Pride causes God to act in order to humble you and to protect His glory (v. 20).* King Uzziah already had it all, but he also thought he could take anything he wanted. Describe what happened to King Uzziah because of his disobedience to God, which was a result of his pride? Uzziah forced God to act to stop him. This is the danger of pride—when God is forced to act, because He doesn't share His glory with anyone. How was King Uzziah remembered as a king despite starting out so well (v. 21-23)? How does pride turn you away from trusting God? Discuss how you, as a Christian, could “steal” the glory from God. Share how you think you could keep yourself humble before the Lord.

Walk

God is God. You can never be as big as Him; not even close! In the presence of such sovereignty and power, you need to be humble. Do not let success make your heart prideful. Examine yourself and see if you can ask God not to give you success that would make you conceited. How does the cross keep you humble before God? How does guarding your heart from pride keep you from the pitfall of pride? Who among your family members or friends speak the truth to keep you humble? King Uzziah's life would have certainly had a better ending had he listened to the priests who rebuked him. Finally, why is it important to know how to say “I am sorry” or “I was wrong” if you have to?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I know sometimes, in my pride, I view being nothing without You as an unacceptable fact. Allow me to humble myself before You, and ask for your mercy in forgiving me for thinking I can ever be anything, do anything, without Your grace. I ask for your blessing of a second chance to live a life of righteousness, and the strength and wisdom that comes with it. Bless me also with people who will speak Your truth to me with gentleness and love, especially in times I need correction. I ask these in Jesus' name. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #5
The Pitfall of Isolation

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 24

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt isolated? How did you feel about it?
2. Many Christians think that they don't need to be a part of a church community, but the Bible tells us that it is in community that the Christian life grows and flourishes. King Joash's life story is a warning for us to not tumble into this pitfall. He was the last child of King Ahaziah. His grandmother Athaliah killed all of the royal heirs of Judah's kingdom (ch. 22). Joash was cared for by his aunt and her husband Jehoiada the High Priest who took back the throne for Joash, who was the rightful heir of the kingdom (ch. 23). Read 2 Chronicles 24. How old was Joash when he became king (v. 1)? How did the Scripture describe Joash's reign (v. 2)? What was Jehoiada's role in Joash's life? Discuss how working as a team made Joash and Jehoiada very efficient.
3. We see from this account three benefits of working as a team instead of working in isolation. The first benefit is unity (v. 8-10). Describe the difference in the fund raising for the upkeep of the temple before and after Jehoiada joined forces with King Joash. What did the people see that got the project going that made them respond? Why is teamwork important? Discuss why unity among church leaders or in other companies and organizations so important. How does unity in your church bring glory to God?
4. The second benefit of being in community is accountability (v. 11-13). How did the leaders take good care of the money collected for the refurbishing of the temple? Discuss why accountability is important especially in financial matters, even for church ministries when you may think that everyone is trustworthy? How do people respond when there is good accountability in what they give as an offering to God?
5. The third benefit of being in community is continuity (v. 14). What did they do with the rest of the offering after they had finished renovating the temple? Note that the temple was used every day as it was intended by God, but for how long? Who has been an encouragement to you to continually do the good things you do? How does community in Christianity ensure that there is continuity in what the church does? King Joash did very well with his partnership with the High Priest Jehoiada. However, Joash turned from spiritual community to isolation. What

was his turning point (v. 15-16)?

6. Joash's isolation resulted in the following:
 - a. No continuity (v. 17-19). What happened after the death of Jehoiada? What should King Joash have done to avoid this turn of events? Discuss what would happen to your good intentions, hard work and accomplishment if you live in isolation instead of living or working with others and passing your wisdom to others?
 - b. No accountability (v. 20-22). Who was Zechariah? What did King Joash do to him that was a clear indication that there was no accountability, hence, there was no one to tell him that what he did was wrong? You can be a person with the highest integrity and morals, but accountability protects you from yourself. What are the dangers looming to anyone who has no accountability? Do you have anyone to hold you accountable for your responsibilities as a child of God? Share how having accountability has helped you in your life whether at home, school or at work. How does accountability protect you from yourself?
 - c. No unity. There was no unity among the leadership of Judah (v. 23-25). What happened to King Joash as a result of disunity not only among his kingdom's leadership but in his own household as well? What happens when there is no unity in your home or in your Christian community, the church. How can it be avoided?

Walk

When you are part of a community, there is unity, accountability, and continuity. In contrast, in isolation there is no unity, no accountability and no continuity. How can you avoid falling into this pit? How would you show your appreciation to the people you are surrounded with? How would you show your appreciation to the Lord who cares for you and doesn't want to leave you in isolation?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us to be relational beings, for designing us to belong to a community so that unity, accountability, and continuity helps us flourish as Christians. Sometimes, Lord, it's easier to be alone because it's less hassle, fewer disagreements, it seems more efficient. But those "hassles" are only because of my pride and selfishness. Forgive me, Father. Help me deal with those sins with humility and patience. Let me not be content with simply being going to church. I ask You, Lord, that I may find a spiritual accountability group that will help me grow in my spiritual walk, encourage me to serve, and hold me accountable in my responsibilities as a child of God and as a member of the church community. These I ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #6
The Pitfall of Disloyalty

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 25

Discussion Questions

1. Think of people, organizations, teams, brands, etc. to which you are (or have been) loyal. Which ones deserve your loyalty? Which ones do not?
2. A person's loyalty is most seen not in words, but in one's actions. For many believers, loyalty is half-hearted, which is often evidenced by their actions & priorities. What are some factors that make our loyalty to God conditional rather than unconditional?
3. *Loyalty is standing with God by obeying His commands, knowing He is able to help you (v. 5-8).* Amaziah is one of the kings of Judah. He did what was right in the sight of God, yet he had a heart that is not loyal (v. 2). King Amaziah assembled able men from Judah for battle, but he also hired men from Israel (Northern Kingdom). However, a prophet of God warned him not to join with Israel because they do not follow God. Amaziah was relying on the ability and quantity of soldiers to produce a favorable outcome in battle more than he relied on God. Loyalty must be based on the object rather than the circumstance. "Loyalty is rooted in relationship and respect regardless of differing opinions, approaches or philosophies." How does relationship and respect influence loyalty? How is your relationship with God? What are some instances where, because of your loyalty to God, you have experienced His help?
4. *Loyalty is standing with God by obeying His commands, knowing He can make up your temporary loss (v. 9-13).* Through the prophet's advice, Amaziah listened and sent home the mercenaries. Though he lost a large sum, Amaziah experienced great victory against the Edomites. Everybody wants to win and be successful, which is often a cause of disloyalty. It is very easy to focus on what we may lose now rather than what God can give later. God promises the He will make it up. In what area of your life do you seek to be most successful? What are some things that you may find difficult to give up to remain loyal to God? Share an experience wherein you gave up something to obey God and in turn God blessed you more than what you lost.
5. We learn from our passage what Amaziah's disloyalty caused:
 - a. *Disloyalty to God causes you to turn to things that are not able to help you (v. 15-16).* Amaziah began to worship the gods of the Edomites whom he had

just defeated. The prophet rebuked him but Amaziah did not listen, and instead sought other gods. Without unconditional, whole-hearted loyalty to God, virtually anything can cause you to change allegiance. Half-loyalty is really no loyalty at all. There is no such thing as neutral a neutral position in your walk with God. In what area of your life do you often find yourself being disloyal to God? What are some situations or circumstances that cause you to compromise your loyalty?

- b. *Disloyalty to God often causes one trying for temporary gain to experience permanent loss (v. 17-28).* Because Amaziah turned his loyalty to things that really cannot help him, God allowed him to experience utter defeat. He lost everything, including his life. When we turn our loyalty away from God, He is under no obligation to extend His help again. Never take God's patience and grace for granted. What are some temporary gains you are seeking (or have sought) to achieve? How have you experienced the consequences of disloyalty to God?

Walk

King Amaziah started well as he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. However, he never set his heart to be fully, unconditionally loyal toward God. There were times that he loyally obeyed God and experienced victory and blessing, but in times where he disobeyed and did what was right in his own eyes, he ended up defeated and experienced the terrible consequences of his disloyalty toward God.

Loyalty to God is often reflected in our actions. Our actions--our obedience to God--speak a lot about our relationship with Him and how much we anchor our trust in Him. Half-hearted loyalty is still no loyalty. Whatever our circumstance, unconditional loyalty causes us to stand with God. How much of God's character and promises do you know in order to remind you that He can be your help in whatever situation? Do you wholeheartedly obey God despite temporary loss, knowing He will surely make up those losses for you?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for being a faithful God in whom we can anchor our loyalty. We ask for forgiveness for the many times that we have been disloyal to You, by finding our help in other means and also in times when we focus our attention on temporary gains. We pray that we do not test Your patience and grace, to the point that we will need to suffer loss for us to learn how to be loyalty to You. Rather, it is our humble desire to remain faithful and loyal in our obedience regardless of our circumstance, knowing that You are the God who can be our help and the God who can bless us exceedingly and abundantly beyond any loss, whether it be in this life or the next. May our actions speak and be a bold testament of our allegiance to You alone. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #7
The Pitfall of Neglect

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 29-31

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these two statements about relationships would you say is truer for you, "Distance makes the heart grow fonder" or "Out of sight, out of mind"?
2. There is a direct correlation between the heart and the action of a person. The action of neglect is indicative of a heart that didn't care about God. King Hezekiah was one who cared much about God and wanted the people to not neglect God (ch. 29:10-11). He knew that spiritual negligence is not a small matter. What happens when something is neglected?
3. **Doing Something Without Gladness or Joy in One's Heart (29:29-30).** In King Hezekiah's reign, the first thing he did was to repair the house of God. When the temple was open again and the priesthood was restored, the people were now able to offer sacrifices and offerings to God. And they did so with gladness in their hearts as they worshipped God. Oftentimes, many people do not find worshipping God to be enjoyable, whether it be in private or corporate worship. It is easily neglected for other things that are "more enjoyable." Do you gladly participate in the corporate worship of God? How about your personal worship, do you regularly do so and find joy doing it? How can you develop a joyful heart and be more consistent?
4. **Doing Something Out of Sense of Obligation Without a Willing Heart (29:31-35).** After the people offered their mandatory sacrifices, they were given the opportunity to give thanksgiving offerings, in which they have the option to participate or not. Overwhelmingly, the people voluntarily gave an abundance, to the point that the priests needed other Levites to do the job. The people offered out of a willing heart. Things done out of obligation are the easiest to neglect, especially when the chance to do so comes. But the things done out of a willing heart gets accomplished in the most excellent of ways. It makes a difference. What is your heart condition in giving of your time and resources for God? What are some things you realize you do for God but out of a sense of obligation? What can you do to overcome this attitude and cultivate a willing heart?
5. **No united purpose or conviction to obey God (30:1, 6, 9-12).** King Hezekiah invited the northern tribes of Israel to join and worship with them. Though the king's messengers were mocked and laughed at by many, God blessed them as

they are unified and have purposed to worship and obey Him. Historically, the northern tribes of Israel did not follow the prescriptions God has set and devised their preferences. They have not purposed to abide with God and thus have neglected their obedience to God as a nation. It is easy to disregard/neglect God when you are not purposed or do not have the conviction to obey Him. If something is not intentional, then it is negotiable. And if something is negotiable, then it is neglected. When was a time that your obedience became negotiable? What area/s in your life do you need to be more intentional in your obedience to God? What are some ways that can help strengthen our conviction/s?

6. **Not Actively Doing What is Right (Only Passively Not Doing What is Wrong) (31:1).** The people of Israel who participated in King Hezekiah's spiritual revival broke down and destroyed all the idols and altars that exist in Judah, and even in Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. They did not settle with not doing what was wrong, but have actively done what was right. Many Christians are simply contented to just avoid doing what is wrong, while very few proactively take the next step to boldly do and/or speak up for what is right. Passivity leads to neglect. The enemy may not push us to reject God, but he keeps us passive to the point of neglect. Share an instance wherein you became passive rather than proactive to do what was right. How could that situation have been different if you actively did your part? What are some current issues that are necessary for Christians to proactively participate in by speaking up and/or doing what is right?

Walk

In King Hezekiah's leadership, he turned around a generation back to worship and obey God. He was used by God to cause a spiritual revival by enforcing spiritual reform in the lives of the people. He led by example and dedication out of his love for God. Hence, his people was greatly challenged and moved to return to God and not neglect Him. As believers, we are not exempted from the possibility to disregard God. And in order not to fall into the pitfall of neglect, we must remember to look after our hearts. That in whatever we do for God, we are to cultivate both a gladness as well as a willingness of heart. Spiritual negligence can be avoided when we strongly purpose in our hearts to obey God and actively do what is right. How about you? What is your attitude toward the things you do for God? Are you doing them with a glad and willing heart? How are your convictions? Do you purpose to obey God with singleness of heart? Will you make a stand and be more proactive to do what is right and overcome passivity?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for being a God who is unchanging and never neglects us. We ask for forgiveness for the times when we did things for You with a heavy and unwilling heart. We pray that from this time on, we would be strengthening our convictions and purpose in our hearts to obey you fully, and not selectively. Give us the boldness to do what is right, and settle into the mediocrity of passivity. Make us stand for You as You have made a stand for us. May our actions indeed communicate a bold statement to the world around us of how important You are in our life. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

Kings & Kingdoms #8
The Pitfall of Overconfidence

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 32

Discussion Questions

1. What have you been overconfident about in the past that has caused you to fail?
2. King Hezekiah had led the nation of Judah to undergo spiritual reformation. Read 2 Chronicles 32. At this time of spiritual revival, Sennacherib, king of Assyria came with an intent to conquer Jerusalem (v. 1). Have you ever experienced being tested after you had been spiritually revived? Why would testing come in spite of your being fervent in your faith? Do you trust in your circumstances instead of trusting in God who controls circumstances?
3. Reading verses 2-12, we see that Hezekiah's confidence is in the Lord. After consulting with his leaders, King Hezekiah strengthened himself, fortified the city, appointed military officers over the people, assembled and encouraged them. What did Hezekiah say to encourage his people (v. 7-8)? What effect did Hezekiah's words have on them? Just like the Judeans, we should also be confident in the Lord because of who He is and what He is able to do. Share how God has encouraged you these past few days. What effect did it have on you?
4. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was an overly confident leader. Men and women like him become over-confident because of three things:
 - a. **Because of their past achievements and past actions (v. 13).** What past achievements have made Sennacherib too confident? Share how you have relied on the Lord when you were just starting out in your business/work or studies. Discuss how experiences make a person overly confident at the expense of their trust in God.
 - b. **Because of wrong placement of trust (v. 14-15).** Sennacherib trusted only in himself, his military, and his false gods. He definitely did not trust in the true God and soon had to bear the

consequence. What are the usual objects of trust when a person is overconfident? Why does being overconfident keep you from trusting God? What does John 15:5 remind you about the importance of remaining in God regardless of the level of your confidence?

- c. **When you are not scared or intimidated by God (v. 16-19).** Sennacherib obviously was not afraid of the God of the Israelites, the One True God. In fact, he even ridiculed God. We become overconfident when we are not scared of God. The fear of God is lost in this generation. Discuss when fear of God is a good and helpful fear. Share what happens when you fear or respect God for who He is and what He can do. On the other hand, what would happen if you do not fear and trust God?
5. Describe how King Sennacherib's life ended as a result of his overconfidence (v. 20-21)? What can you learn from his experience?
6. Hezekiah went through pride and overconfidence as well. How did He differ from Sennacherib (v. 24-33)? How did Hezekiah finish well? What can you emulate from him?

Walk

*"My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand."*

How do you react to success? Does it make you so overly confident that you forget to trust God? Would you keep your feet on the ground by acknowledging that without God, you are heading to the pitfall of overconfidence?

Worship & Prayer

Father God, in Jesus Christ I've experienced great blessings I have never before known--the blessing of forgiveness, mercy, grace, love, hope. In abundance You have showered me with material possessions and success. But because of my sinful heart I forget that it's all from You, and all for You. Forgive me for the times I think I can do things on my own, for the times I grow so confident in my own abilities, forgetting that it is You, Lord, who provided and enabled. I pray that if there is anything, Lord that may take my trust away from You alone, please do not allow me to have it. Make me like Hezekiah and David, who despite falling into over-confidence humbled themselves and acknowledged Your power. May I always walk humbly, act justly, and love mercy, and may my life proclaim of confidence in the God who is able. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #9
The Pitfall of Not Listening

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 33

Discussion Questions

1. Share about a time when you listened selectively, which led to consequences that could have been avoided if only you listened actively.
2. King Hezekiah established a godly nation. However, his son Manasseh, who became king after Hezekiah, did evil before God by re-establishing pagan worship which his father had already taken out. He did so much evil that God was provoked to anger (v. 33:1-9). Yet God was gracious and merciful to constantly warn him and the people of Israel to return to Him; but they still refused to listen to God. Oftentimes, God is very gracious to us for the wrong decisions we make, yet we also take for granted and do not intently listen to His instructions to us. What area or aspect of your life have you been refusing to listen to God?
3. There are 4 reasons why we don't listen to God's Word:
 - a. *We don't think it concerns us, so we are disinterested.* We don't think what is being taught is applicable to us since we already know it and got it all figured out. We don't feel it's going to help us. Hence, we selectively listen to what we only like to hear.
 - b. *The sounds of the world drown out the one voice we need to listen to.* We are often too occupied with so many noises that surround us, and eventually drown out the voice of God. We do not devote time of silence and solitude to be able to listen to God clearly.
 - c. *We are not focused on choosing to hear the voice of God through His Word.* We often are not intentional to choose to give time to hear from God's word. We are too distracted and do not give our undivided attention and focus.
 - d. *We listen to the wrong voice.* We listen to what we want to listen to, to the things that tickle our ears and make us feel good. We don't

like being corrected nor be rebuked by the truth.

Which among these 4 reasons do you tend to easily fall into? How do you think you could be more cautious and sensitive to avoid falling into it again?

4. **Consequences of Not Listening (v. 33:11).** Because King Manasseh did not want to listen to God, God allowed him to be captured by the Assyrians and taken to Babylon in such a humiliating manner, with hooks attached to his nose and being dragged along like an animal. When God extends His grace for so long and His people do not listen, time will come when He finally points out that listening to Him is a serious matter. There are consequences to not listening to God, and they are severe. Share about an instance when God allowed you to go through a consequence because you took for granted what pleased Him and chose not to listen. Do you think it is fair for God to allow severe consequences for not listening? Why or why not?
5. **Results of listening with humility (v. 33:12-13a).** King Manasseh learned to listen to God the hard way, by having to go through affliction before realizing the importance of listening to God. After enduring the consequences, King Manasseh finally had a change of heart. He called to God and humbled himself. As a result, he was led out of captivity and was restored as king over Judah. Sometimes, God gets our attention by allowing us to be in distress or in need so that we will listen to Him. And when we listen to God with humility, it results to salvation for our benefit. Listening to God is for our good. Was there time that you have experienced being spared from potential consequences, simply because you humbly listened to God? Share to the group.
6. **Listening must result in right actions (v. 33:13b-17).** King Manasseh finally came to the realization that the Lord is God. He acknowledged the authority of God over all, which showed that he finally listened to God fully. Manasseh then removed the false gods, cleansed the temple, did that which was appropriate in the worship of God, and commanded the people to serve the God of Israel. King Manasseh did not just listen; his listening resulted in the right actions.
 - a. We listen carefully when we acknowledge the authority of the person who is speaking. When we respect and in awe of someone, recognizing his authority causes us to listen carefully. And the same must be true when it comes to our listening toward the one true God. Unfortunately, many of us have a very low view of God and do not think that God deserves our wholehearted listening. Describe some actions which reflect a low view of God. What can

help us view God with higher reverence and awe?

- b. Listening without action is a useless task and a waste of time; and the response is not just any action, but the right actions. Doing must correspond with what was heard. What is the danger of stopping with just listening? How can we ensure that we do the right things with what we listen to?
7. ***Listening to the God who listens to us (v. 33:18-20).*** After King Manasseh learned his lesson, he returned to God and sought Him in all that he did. As an ending to King Manasseh's account, the chronicler honors the fact that Manasseh ended well by doing what was right in God's eyes, and also noted the important fact that God listened to King Manasseh. God is one who does not only desire for us to listen to Him, but also is one who listens to the prayers of His people and does so with mercy and grace. The fact that God does not tire of listening to us is all the more reason that we should not tire of listening to Him. Think about the times that you experienced God listening to your prayer. What does that tell you about God? How then should we respond to God, knowing that He listens to us?

Walk

King Manasseh learned to listen to God the hard way. He had to first suffer severe consequences before realizing that listening to God is a serious matter. But when he returned and listened with a humble heart, God blessed and spared him from trouble. God desires the good of his people, and we benefit the most when we listen carefully to what God has to say to us. And this best happens when we become sensitive to God's voice through His word. But more importantly, our listening must lead towards doing the right actions. What is God telling you today? Is there any area in your life that God calls you to listen to Him more intently? What is the right action that God wants you to do as a result of your listening?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for being a God who listens to us all the time. Thank you for never getting tired of hearing our concerns and sometimes, even demands. Even though we often take for granted and not listen to you very carefully, you have and still continues to extend your grace and mercy to us. We pray that we will gain a more attentive heart and mind as we seek to be more sensitive in listening to you. It is also our prayer that our listening will not just be a source of information, but one that will cause us to do the right action and lead toward life transformation. May you Lord grant us wisdom and humility in doing so and your Spirit be our constant source of strength. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #10
The Pitfall of Inaction

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 34

Discussion Questions

1. What usually keeps you from accomplishing something for which you have planned?
2. We live in a generation that looks for purpose. People want to do something with their lives, but more often than not, it does not concern spiritual matters, even for many believers. We have fallen into the pitfall of inaction in our spiritual lives. What do we need to do in order to avoid falling into this pit? Take a look at the life of King Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34. King Josiah reigned after two kings—his father and grandfather—who did not follow God, but because King Josiah sought God, his reign was very different from his predecessors. How old was King Josiah when he became king (v. 1)? How long did he reign? How does verse 2 assess his reign? When did he consciously start his personal spiritual journey (v. 3)? Discuss the importance of teaching your children about spiritual matters at a young age. How are the children and youth ministries in your church helping the life of your children? What are you doing to participate in these ministries and impact young lives?
3. King Josiah's relationship with God was intensely personal. It was not a group decision, but personal decision to seek God (v. 3a). This decision prompted him to four concrete actions that made him focused on God:
 - a. *The action of intolerance when God's specific instructions are in view (v. 3b-7).* At 20 years old, Josiah already had a very close relationship with God that he could not tolerate the worship of other gods or idols. Describe what he did to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem from idol worship. Our generation today have a distorted understanding of tolerance. For most people, tolerance means that you cannot disagree with someone even when it is wrong. Discuss some of the things that you are expected to tolerate/accept even if you know that the Word of God tells you the opposite. Have you fallen into the pitfall of inaction because of tolerance? How can you make a stand for the truth based on the specific instructions of the Word of God?
 - b. *The action of self-reflection and self-examination (v. 8-21).* At the age of 26, Josiah's next project was to repair the temple of God, with details of how it was done described in verses 10-13. What did Hilkiah the priest find while they were repairing the temple (v. 14)? How did King Josiah react upon

learning of this news (v. 19-21)? How do you react when the Word of God speaks to you? Do you self-reflect ("How does it affect me?") and self-examine ("How should I change?") in response to the convicting power of God's Word? Like King Josiah did in verse 22, you, too, have the responsibility to act in accordance to the Word of God over the people under your responsibility or influence. How are you going about it? Discuss what you need to do so that the next generation can continue to love the Lord and follow His Word.

- c. *The action of keeping a tender heart (v. 22-28).* Because King Josiah's heart was tender, he was moved to action. As a result, God's judgment to His people's disobedience was delayed. A person with a tender heart is strong in character and courageous enough to allow God to change him/her. In what way does a tender heart show in your actions? Why would a hard heart pull a person down to the pitfall of inaction?
- d. *The action of calling people to emulate you as you follow God (v. 29-33).* King Josiah gathered all the people, and in front of them he renewed his commitment that He would follow God and keep His commands. How did the people respond to King Josiah's action? Like King Josiah, can you call the people around you to emulate you as you follow God? As a parent or a teacher, what are the things you do that you could ask your children or students to emulate? Are you confident to ask someone to follow you because you are following Christ?

Walk

Unlike other kings in the Old Testament, King Josiah was a king who started young and well, and he also ended greatly because he sought and followed God as long as he lived. Take a look at and assess your spiritual life. When was the last time you were motivated to do something great for the Lord? How do you seek Him with your life? What are the clear instructions on the Word of God that you should live out in order to avoid the pitfall of inaction?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word that reminds us continually to come back to You and follow You. Thank You because You never let age hinder anyone from choosing to be Your disciple. I pray for courage, Lord, to stand firmly by my convictions based on Your Truth, and to demonstrate gentleness and love without being tolerant of sin. As I continue to study Your Word, show me what behaviors I need to change and enable me to do so. Keep my heart tender, and allow me to have people around me who will encourage me towards drawing closer to You. As young or as old as I am, may I serve as an excellent example to other people of what following Christ looks like. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Kings & Kingdoms #11
The Pitfall of Inattention

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Chronicles 35

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever experienced getting into trouble because you didn't pay attention to what you were doing? Share with the group.
2. No matter how important your message is, people will miss it unless you have their attention. And it's when you have tuned out that you get into trouble. It's in the pitfall of inattention or neglect that people end up bad in a bad situation. How do we avoid falling into this pit? Read 2 Chronicles 35. In chapter 34, the people of God led by King Josiah rediscovered the Word of God while refurbishing the temple. They found out from the Word of God that they had to keep the Passover feast as prescribed to the Jewish people (35:1-2). Passover is the greatest memorial feast of Israel, remembering their freedom from slavery in Egypt centuries before. It was when God spared the eldest son of every family when an angel of the Lord passed over every home marked that had the blood of a lamb on the doorpost. In preparation for the Passover feast King Josiah was very involved in every detail. From this we can learn four Biblical principles for how we are to pay attention to these areas of life so that we also can finish well and avoid the pitfall of inattention. What did King Josiah admonish the people to do in verse 3? Why was the sacred ark not in the temple? Discuss why people parade their gods around their community even to this day, which is definitely not prescribed in the scripture.
3. In preparation for the Passover feast, King Josiah was making sure that everything was put in their proper place. He wanted to make sure that there was decorum in the things of God. The first attention that you should learn from King Josiah is to put things where they belong (have proper decorum) because actions determine attitude (v.4-5). It seems that our generation doesn't have proper decorum (respect) for the things of God. Discuss in what ways are these true in the actions and attitude of many people. What happens when people no longer respect but belittle the things of God? Discuss how your actions determine your values? What happens when a person does not value the things of God?
4. The second attention to detail that you can learn from King Josiah is to follow what is written in the Bible (v.4-6). As they prepare for the Passover feast, King Josiah wanted everything done by the book to the smallest detail. What are the specific details that the Bible is instructing you to do? Are you living your life

according to the Word of God? Why is it freeing to know how God wants you to live?

5. The third attention that you should be aware of is to provide for no excuses and no exceptions in your spiritual life (7-19). When everyone saw how generous the king was, they also gave generously. Through the initial example of King Josiah he showed that he wanted everyone to participate in the Passover feast celebration. No one had the excuse to not participate. What are the usual excuses of some people so that they don't have to participate in the Christian life? How does participation help you to pay attention and be involved and engaged in Christian life?
6. The fourth attention that you should not miss out is to listen to the advice of others as wise counsel from God (v.20-27). After King Josiah had set the temple in order, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. What did Necho's messenger tell King Josiah in verse 21? What should Josiah have done when he heard the message? How did his life end as a result of his inattention? Do you pay attention to those whom God sends to save you from trouble? Instead of ignoring the advices of your parents and friends, do you filter them through the Word of God?

Walk

Falling into the pitfall of inattention can be avoided when you put things where they belong because actions determine attitude, when you follow what is written in the Bible, when you provide no excuses and exceptions in your spiritual life and when you listen to the advice of others as wise council from God. How do you respect the things of God? Do you live by the Word of God? Living by the book doesn't only keep you from falling into the pit but empower you how to live. Do you live in the sideline of faith and give excuses not to live out your faith? Do you listen to the advice of others whom God has clearly sent your way to keep you from trouble? Sometimes, it is just a little thing that would draw you to fall into the pit. Be warned.

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for reminding me that You're not only the God of big things, but of little things as well. Forgive me for the times I've taken for granted things, behaviors, that I thought were not important. But the fact that You specifically mention how I ought to live in Your Word means that You think it's important. Help me gain the sensitivity to hear what You tell me, be it big or small and no matter through whom You choose to tell me, so that I may learn how to act accordingly. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.