Unit 11, Session 4

A King Shows Kindness

Summary and Goal
In this session, we will see David, who has been given rest from his enemies, turn his attention to the internal affairs of his kingdom. This, in and of itself, was not surprising, but one of his acts was quite startling. Years before, David had promised Jonathan (1 Sam. 20) and Saul (1 Sam. 24) that he would not cut off their family’s descendants but that he would show them kindness instead. We will see David make good on that promise by extending kindness to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth. And in this account, we will see a picture of a greater act of kindness from a greater King: God adopting us into His family through faith in Jesus and giving us a place at His table.

Session Outline
1. The king looks for someone to whom he may show kindness (2 Sam. 9:1-5).
2. The king restores a lost estate (2 Sam. 9:6-10).
3. The king provides a seat of honor at his table (2 Sam. 9:11-13).

Session in a Sentence
God has extended kindness to His people, and through Christ we enjoy a seat at His table as His children.

Christ Connection
King David extended undeserved and unexpected kindness to Mephibosheth when he restored his lost estate and invited him to eat at the king’s table with his own sons. God has extended kindness to us by graciously adopting us into His family as His children through Christ. As God’s forgiven children, we look forward to celebrating at His table in His kingdom forever.

Missional Application
Because we have received God’s kindness in salvation through Jesus, we extend kindness to others so that they may see the greater kindness of God and become part of His family.
Group Time

Introduction

READ: Relay the story on page 66 of the DDG of how a canceled wedding banquet turned into a party for the homeless and less fortunate.

In June of 1990, a woman threw a party at the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston. The woman and her fiance had visited the hotel some weeks prior to plan their wedding banquet. The price tag: $13,000, with half required as a down payment. A few days later, however, the groom got cold feet and called off the wedding. When the former bride-to-be was told she could only get ten percent back, she decided to go ahead with the banquet, not for her wedding but as a blowout for the down-and-outs of Boston. Ten years before, she had been living in a homeless shelter; now she had the means to bless the homeless. So she sent invitations to rescue missions and homeless shelters. The night of the party, those used to peeling bits of pizza off cardboard for dinner were treated to hors d’oeuvres, chicken cordon blue, and chocolate wedding cake as they danced the night away.

INTERACT: Ask groups of 3-4 to discuss briefly the following questions. Allow a couple of moments for volunteers to share, if they wish, but don’t force anyone to do so.

When has someone extended undeserved kindness to you? How did it make you feel? How did you respond? (be prepared to give answers of your own to jump-start the conversation)

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will see David, who has been given rest from his enemies, turn his attention to the internal affairs of his kingdom. We will see David make good on a promise by extending kindness to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth. And in this account, we will see a picture of a greater act of kindness from a greater King: God adopting us into His family through faith in Jesus and giving us a place at His table.

For session-by-session training videos, please visit MinistryGrid.com/GospelProject.
For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
Point 1: The king looks for someone to whom he may show kindness (2 Sam. 9:1-5).

SAY: In 2 Samuel 8, we read of all the victories that David accomplished for Israel. The Lord gave him victory wherever he went and continued to establish his reign and kingdom (v. 14). Here, at the height of his power, David turned his attention toward getting the affairs of his house in order. First up was to make good on a promise to bless the house of Saul.


1 David asked, “Is there anyone remaining from the family of Saul I can show kindness to for Jonathan’s sake?” 2 There was a servant of Saul’s family named Ziba. They summoned him to David, and the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” “I am your servant,” he replied.

3 So the king asked, “Is there anyone left of Saul’s family that I can show the kindness of God to?” Ziba said to the king, “There is still Jonathan’s son who was injured in both feet.” 4 The king asked him, “Where is he?” Ziba answered the king, “You’ll find him in Lo-debar at the house of Machir son of Ammiel.” 5 So King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 67) to highlight the shocking nature of David’s desire to show kindness to his former rival’s family. Connect this to God’s call to Christians to do good to others.

The king of Israel, powerful, victorious, and blessed by God, was looking for ways to bless and extend kindness to another—to someone from his former rival’s family. In that day, it was customary for a new king to wipe out the former king’s family to reduce the threat of a coup or revenge assassination, not show them kindness. In this we see the depth of David’s character and trust in God. Deep down, he wanted to do good; he wanted to keep his word to bless the house of Saul and to honor his friend, Jonathan.

• Years before, David had promised Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14-16) and Saul (1 Sam. 24:20-22) that he would not cut off their family’s descendants but that he would show them kindness instead.

• Like David, Christians, should be compelled to seek out ways to do good to others around them. Jesus Christ did not redeem us merely to respond to opportunities to do good; He wants us to be eager and zealous to do good (Gal. 6:10; Titus 2:14). He wants us to be proactive, not reactive, in our quest to show others good in light of how we have been shown goodness by God. We are called to outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10). We are commanded to count others’ needs above our own (Phil. 2:3-4). In other words, we should wake up and ask ourselves: “Whom can I do good for today? Who needs grace and kindness from me? How can I love others and count their interests as more important than mine?”
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Where are some places Christians can intentionally seek out opportunities to do good for others? (at home; at work; at church; in the community; on the Internet; on social media; on the streets; at the bus stop; at the grocery store; at the gas station; at a restaurant)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 67) to note the one-sided nature of David’s kind act toward Mephibosheth. Then apply this to how we should consider the motives behind our good works.

David sent for Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, who was lame in both feet. Without regard for the harm or benefit to his kingdom, David planned to show kindness to the grandson of his former enemy, and that kindness would be purely one-sided. David was going to bless and extend kindness to Mephibosheth with no conditions, and there was no way Mephibosheth could repay him.

- David could gain nothing politically, militarily, or socially by doing anything for the family of his former enemy, Saul, and 2 Samuel 8 is clear that David had all that he needed. He did not need any social capital, nor was this a publicity stunt to gain the approval of the people in the city. Everyone was already in awe of David, and Mephibosheth could not further his standing in any way—he was lame in both feet.

*Application:* Christians are called to love others sincerely from a pure heart (1 Pet. 1:22). We should labor to keep our motives in check and frequently ask why we are seeking to do good to others—*What is my true motivation?* This is what Jesus meant by not practicing our righteousness before men in order to be seen by them (Matt. 6:1). When we put on a show for people, we get exactly what we want: the applause of people. Yet in so doing, we miss the applause of God. David shows us a way forward. He planned to do good for Mephibosheth without expecting anything in return. May we follow his example as we look for opportunities to extend kindness to others in need, especially those who cannot pay us back (Luke 14:12-14).

*Commentary:* A common understanding during David’s day was that when someone had an ailment or sickness, it was usually brought on by that person’s (or a parent’s) sin. We see examples of this in the way Job’s friends responded to his suffering (Job 4–31) and in how the disciples viewed the man born blind from birth (John 9). Even though Mephibosheth’s ailment wasn’t his fault (2 Sam. 4:4), there is no question that he would have been perceived as an inferior person. From God’s perspective, however, being lame or disabled in some way does not detract from one’s humanity and worth, nor does it disqualify from contributing in this world. Every person is an image-bearer of God, valuable in God’s sight, and with purpose in God’s plan.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What wrong motives might guide our good deeds? (guilt and shame; personal profit and benefit; the applause of our peers; the applause of those we would serve; just following the crowd; fear of judgment from God and others; pride of position and ability over others)
**Point 2:** The king restores a lost estate (2 Sam. 9:6-10).

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 9:6-10 (DDG p. 68).

6 Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, fell facedown, and paid homage. David said, “Mephibosheth!” “I am your servant,” he replied.

7 “Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “since I intend to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all your grandfather Saul’s fields, and you will always eat meals at my table.”

8 Mephibosheth paid homage and said, “What is your servant that you take an interest in a dead dog like me?”

9 Then the king summoned Saul’s attendant Ziba and said to him, “I have given to your master’s grandson all that belonged to Saul and his family. 10 You, your sons, and your servants are to work the ground for him, and you are to bring in the crops so your master’s grandson will have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, is always to eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 68) to highlight the personal nature of David’s kindness: David had Mephibosheth brought to him so he could show him kindness face to face. Further explain that this is the way of God’s kingdom—God personally showed us kindness in sending His Son.

David could have chosen a few servants to go to Mephibosheth and share how the king was going to show him kindness. David did not have to talk to Jonathan’s son face to face. No one would have thought less of the king had he merely sent messengers. Any act of kindness to the former king’s line would have been viewed as an exceptional act of grace in itself. But David chose to have Mephibosheth brought to him so he could announce to him personally how he was going to show him kindness.

- **This is the way of God’s kingdom.** While God certainly sent messengers in the form of angels and prophets to His people in the past, the expectation and hope was that God Himself would meet with His people personally and deliver them (Isa. 40:1-11). That is exactly what God did when He sent His Son to dwell among us and rescue us from our sin.

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“Love through me, Love of God; Make me like Thy clear air Through which, unhindered, colors pass As though it were not there. Powers of the love of God, Depths of the heart Divine, O Love that faileth not, break forth And flood this world of Thine.”

—Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)
EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 68) to elaborate on how David’s kindness toward Mephibosheth was a picture of grace. Point out how the nature of God’s kingdom is illustrated in this picture of grace—God takes undeserving sinners and elevates them to children of the King.

To Mephibosheth, the grandson of an enemy, David restored Saul’s estate and provided for its care. But even more astonishing, David gave Mephibosheth a permanent seat in which to dine at the table with the king. Mephibosheth surely approached King David with some fear for his life, and he considered himself a “dead dog” in his presence. But now he was the master of an estate and honored as royalty in the palace. Is there a better picture of grace?

- “Dead Dog”: Dogs are not spoken of positively in Scripture (e.g., Prov. 26:11), so Mephibosheth’s identifying himself as a dead dog reveals that he felt as though he were nothing in the presence of David; he had come before David in absolute humility. Perhaps these words resonated with David, for he too used this precise phrase to describe himself when he was on the run from Saul (1 Sam. 24:14). In Saul’s presence, David felt weak and useless, exactly how Mephibosheth felt in this moment. Christians too can feel like a “dead dog” before others, and even God. But whereas Saul stood over David seeking to take his life, David stooped down to Mephibosheth seeking to give him a new life. This was how the true king of Israel was meant to behave: blessing, defending, and protecting his people. God’s grace bestows dignity.

- This is the nature of God’s kingdom. Mephibosheth came before David in humility, with nothing to offer, and David elevated him to a master and royalty, such that he ate at the king’s table like one of the king’s sons (2 Sam. 9:11). This recalls the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), which shows us a picture of God’s heart for our salvation. After squandering his inheritance, the prodigal son returns home with a plan to work as a hired hand for his father. But when he approached the house, the father ran to his humbled son, escorted him home, and threw a party for his son who was lost but now found. This is what God does for us through the gospel: He takes undeserving sinners and elevates them to children of the King. This is the upside-down nature of God’s grace.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How does this passage reveal the upside-down nature of God’s grace in the gospel? (we come to Jesus weak and poor in our sin; through no contribution of our own, and only by faith, Jesus takes His enemies and transforms them into brothers and sisters, coheirs of the promises of God; God takes those who cannot provide for their own salvation and provides for their eternal salvation at His own expense)
Point 3: The king provides a seat of honor at his table (2 Sam. 9:11-13).

READ 2 Samuel 9:11-13 (DDG p. 69).

11 Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do all my lord the king commands.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table just like one of the king’s sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. All those living in Ziba’s house were Mephibosheth’s servants. 13 However, Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king’s table. His feet had been injured.

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 69) as you further connect Mephibosheth’s privileged position with our position in Christ in terms of adoption.

For as long as David was king, Mephibosheth would always have access to him and reap all the benefits of being at the royal table. There was no higher honor anyone living in Israel could have received. David, a powerful king in the world, treated this outsider, the grandson of his enemy, as one of his own sons. We have to remember that Mephibosheth did nothing to earn or deserve this blessing. He received all the benefits that David’s sons received solely by an act of the king’s grace.

• Again, this is a picture of God’s grace in the gospel. By grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we have been adopted into God’s family. We are now God’s sons and daughters and given full rights and privileges as His children, and the Father sees us the same way He sees His one and only Son, Jesus (Gal. 4:4-7). Just like Mephibosheth, there is nothing that we did to earn or merit this blessing. We were dead in our sins, straying from God, and enemies in God’s sight. But God, in His great grace, reached down, lifted us up, and seated us at His table (Eph. 2:1-10).

Commentary: This is how the gospel is radically different from any other worldview or religion, which says we must earn a deity’s attention and favor. In the gospel, we can do nothing to make God love us or want to accept us. Instead, He welcomes us to His table not because of what we can do or have done but because of what Christ alone has done for us. This is why Paul calls us to praise the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:3-6).

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 69).

Adoption: Adoption into God’s family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we pardoned from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God. Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a coheir with Christ.
Essential Doctrine “Adoption”: Adoption into God’s family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we pardoned from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God (John 1:12; Gal. 4:5). Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a coheir with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

EXPLAIN briefly some potential responses to God’s grace in our adoption and how obedience in His family should come from faith in the gospel, not from a misguided sense of human responsibility to earn our keep.

• As we consider our adoption by grace through faith into Christ’s family, some might struggle with doubt that God is for us as His children. We may feel the need to earn our keep, as if God were not pleased with us as we are. Others may feel a halfhearted duty to obey the Father. And still others may rationalize open rebellion against Him.

• While how we live certainly matters and there is room for growth in all of us, we can be assured that because of Christ, God already accepts us in full and that He is working for us. The more we understand and trust what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, the more we will be motivated to rejoice, to obey, and to submit to whatever our Father desires of us. And being sons and daughters of God, He faithfully pursues us, sanctifies us, and works all things in our lives for His glory and our good. No matter what comes, we can be certain that God is committed to our joy and well-being and to His glory being declared through our faithful lives.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 69) to highlight the future of believers as recipients of God’s grace in adoption, as those who have been given an honored seat at His table.

By adoption, believers are welcomed to dine at the Father’s table. Christians enjoy full access and fellowship with God, symbolized now, in part, through the Lord’s Supper. But there is still more to come. At present we remain in a fallen world that is under the curse of sin. But one day the curse will be lifted at our King’s second coming, and then we will dine forever with one another at His table (Isa. 25:6-8, cf. Rev. 19:6-9). At the end of history, there will be a feast unlike any we have experienced. We will be with our God, clothed in our Brother’s righteousness, all physically restored, dining at our Father’s table forever.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some ways we should respond to the grace of God in our adoption into His family? (in worship; in joyful obedience to God’s will; in humble repentance and confession as beloved sons and daughters; with a heart for the mission to proclaim the gospel to all the nations; in loving fellowship with all believers)
My Mission

EXPLAIN: In this session, we have seen one of the clearest pictures of grace between two humans in the Bible. But we need to be careful to see ourselves properly in this story. With respect to God, we are never David and always Mephibosheth, receiving His kindness from a position of desperation and weakness. Though spiritually crippled men and women, God has extended kindness and grace to us. He sent His Son to redeem us from the curse and bring us under His blessing forever. Only after seeing ourselves through the lens of Mephibosheth can we find ourselves in the place to imitate David with others, to extend God’s kindness and show others the mercy, love, and grace of our King. Who needs this kindness from you? We live in a world starving for kindness. May we be a people who are eager and willing to extend freely the grace that has been lavished upon us in Christ!

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 70), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have received God’s kindness in salvation through Jesus, we extend kindness to others so that they may see the greater kindness of God and become part of His family.

- What does God’s grace in adoption through faith in Jesus spur you on to do?
- How can your group serve those who feel useless or who struggle with physical challenges?
- What acts of kindness will you perform this week to point others to God’s greater act of kindness in sending Jesus to save sinners?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, thank You for the grace of adoption by which we are made members of Your family through the work of Your Son, King Jesus. May we extend grace to the helpless just as You extended grace to help us. Keep us in the joy of our salvation and zealous for good works through the Holy Spirit’s energizing presence as we seek to love those inside the household of God as well as those who are still outsiders. Amen.

PACK ITEM 8: ALL ARE WELCOME: Cut out these cards and pass them out to group members to remind them that all people are welcome at Jesus’ table by faith. This is an encouragement for believers and for missions.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 71-73), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 74) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 71-73) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 74) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

**Daily Study**

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 71-73) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 3 as a part of point 2 in the session: *Because Christ has taken our sin and given us His righteousness, we approach God not merely as His servants but as His beloved children.*

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2:** “God proactively came looking for us. And when He found us, He heaped such kindness upon us that we never could have hoped for.”
- **Day 5:** “Our task of reading and studying Scripture is not to stop until we get to Jesus. We are to see how each passage points us to Jesus.”

Visit [www.GospelProject.com/Blog](http://www.GospelProject.com/Blog) for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

**Encourage One Another**

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 74) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to show demonstrable kindness in the name of Jesus to those who may be marginalized because of disabilities and weaknesses.**
- **See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.**
Additional Commentary

Point 1: The king looks for someone to whom he may show kindness (2 Sam. 9:1-5).

“It was customary in ancient times for a new king to kill all the survivors of the previous king to prevent any challenge to the throne (see 1 Kings 15:29; 16:11). In such a political climate, David’s attitude to the family of Saul is extraordinary. The Hebrew theme word of this story is *hesed* (9:1,3,7), which means mercy, loving kindness and steadfast love. This is the word used for God’s unfailing, covenant love for his people, and David, God’s regent on earth, models this kindness to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth. When David searches for survivors of *the house of Saul* to keep his covenant with Jonathan, Ziba, one of Saul’s servants, tells David about Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth, who is living in Lo Debar (9:1-4). This village east of the River Jordan was near Mahanaim, the capital of his uncle King Ish-Bosheth’s kingdom (2:8), and Jabesh Gilead, a city sympathetic to Saul (2:4-7). So Mephibosheth was in a ‘safe house’ of sorts.”

“Established on the throne in Jerusalem after having effectively put down both internal and external opposition, David was now in a position to fulfill his commitment to ‘the house of Saul’ (v. 1). Accordingly, at an unknown point in time but perhaps before the events of 2 Samuel 21:1-10 (cf. esp. 21:7), he began a search for someone to whom he could ‘show kindness for Jonathan’s sake.’ Ziba, a well-to-do (cf. v. 10) ‘servant of Saul’s household’ (v. 2) who apparently managed the former king’s royal estate, was called in and questioned by the king. The narrator’s seemingly unnecessary repetition of David’s question in v. 3 (cf. v. 1) is in fact significant in establishing the theme of this chapter. It underscores that David was not an enemy of ‘the house of Saul’ (v. 3); in fact, he was an agent of ‘God’s kindness’ (Hebrew *hesed*; ‘loving faithfulness’) working to benefit Israel’s former dynastic family.”

Point 2: The king restores a lost estate (2 Sam. 9:6-10).

“David immediately puts Mephibosheth’s mind at rest and explains what he intends to do for him and why (9:7). He is not executed but is given life and a livelihood. Saul’s properties in Benjamin had probably been taken by the crown and administered by David’s men. But he returns them to Mephibosheth and orders Ziba and his household to manage the estate to provide for Saul’s grandson (9:9-10). The crippled Mephibosheth will live in David’s palace and eat at his table, a privilege that puts him at the same rank as David’s sons. The story mentions this detail four times, probably to stress how amazing this is (9:7,10,11,13).”
“Ziba is here referred to as a servant (Hebrew na‘ar, ‘young man, servant’), but because Ziba had 15 sons (v. 10), it was probably the more specific ‘steward of an estate.’ Ziba had probably continued to be the steward in charge of the land after Saul’s death, but had paid the benefits of the estate to David or to someone to whom David had assigned the land. But from now on he is required to pay the benefits to Mephibosheth.”

“It was oriental custom, that rulers, and especially those of a new dynasty, should slay all the relations of a predecessor. David relieves him of this fear by declaring: 1) that he would show him kindness for his father Jonathan’s sake; 2) would restore to him all Saul’s land—that is, his private estate at Gibeah (comp. 1 Sam. 9), which had passed into the possession either of David or of remote kinsmen of Saul (Mephibosheth had therefore hitherto been a poor man, dependent on others); and 3) would take him during his life into his house and to his table.”

**Point 3: The king provides a seat of honor at his table (2 Sam. 9:11-13).**

“Ziba was given the task of caring for Mephibosheth’s restored estate, and he submitted to David’s command at first. However, he later attempted to secure the estate for himself and his fifteen sons (16:1-4; 19:17,24-30). The phrase Mephibosheth ate at David’s table just like one of the king’s sons is a touching comment in light of his father Jonathan’s earlier prediction to David (1 Sam. 23:17)—a prediction that did not come true because Jonathan died in battle (1 Sam. 31:2). David thus took the son (Mephibosheth) of his brother by covenant (Jonathan) and treated him as a son.”

“What about David? He was a type of the Messiah to come. His actions toward Mephibosheth transformed him from shame to honor. Because of David, Mephibosheth had a seat at the messiah’s banquet table. But because of the true Messiah and His act of kindness and love—giving His own life for ours—we who are washed by the blood of the Lamb now will share in the banquet of Jesus forever. Jesus truly gives us beauty for ashes and garments of praise. He comes and adorns us with joy and gladness instead of despair.”

References
4. Ibid.
In this volume of The Gospel Project, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel's heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them—one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God's character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God's people wanted and needed, each one proving God's warnings true. Bookending God's people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God's people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God's people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?