A Nation Divided
Daily Discipleship Guide
FALL 2019 | VOL. 5 | CSB

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A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 13: God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested for the week of</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 22 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 14: God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested for the week of</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13 66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 15: God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chronicles; Prophets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested for the week of</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 20 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 27 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 17 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 24 121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The prophetic books of the Old Testament can be confusing, both to the newcomer to the Bible and the longtime reader. Where do these prophets fit in the overall narrative of Israel and Judah? What messages did they communicate? What was God doing in and through their work? The benefit of this volume of The Gospel Project is that it gives you a glimpse of the prophets right at the point their message was going forth to God’s people. We can ask questions of God with Habakkuk, look forward to the coming Suffering Servant with Isaiah, stand amazed at the stunning picture of relentless love in Hosea, and learn something of God’s extravagant love with Jonah.

As you work through the sessions in this volume, keep an eye on all the different ways God reveals Himself and communicates His messages of judgment and grace. Fall to your knees in awe, and then stand up and boldly proclaim the love of this great God, who inspired the prophets to deliver His word.
Tony Merida (unit 13, sessions 1-4) is Pastor for Preaching and Vision of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Tony has an extensive itinerant ministry and has written several books, including *The Christ-Centered Expositor* and eight volumes in the *Christ-Centered Exposition* commentary series. He is happily married to Kimberly, and they have five adopted children.

Whitney Putnam (unit 15, sessions 1-3) serves as the Ministry Engagement Director at Stonecroft, an international women’s ministry. She is pursuing her Masters degree at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She loves serving with her husband at their little church and teaching her three little girls they can be world-changers of their own.

Blake Ring (unit 15, sessions 4-6) serves as the Pastor of Missions and Small Groups at Ninth & O Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He is married to Lydia, and they have one son, Will, and four daughters, Riley, Emery, Hadley, and Ainsley. He earned a PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he serves as an adjunct professor.

Halim Suh (unit 14, sessions 1-3) and his wife, Angela, have four kids and live in Austin, Texas, where he is Pastor of Teaching and Theology at The Austin Stone Community Church. He co-authored two Bible studies with Matt Carter: *Creation Unraveled* and *Creation Restored*. Halim earned an MDiv from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.
The Gospel Project
A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2018

In the Beginning
Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)

Winter 2018-19

Out of Egypt
God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)

Spring 2019

Into the Promised Land
God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)

Summer 2019

A Kingdom Provided
God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Sam.; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Ecclesiastes)

Fall 2019

A Nation Divided
God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)

Winter 2019-20

A People Restored
God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
<td>Jesus the Messiah</td>
<td>Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Among the People (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2020</td>
<td>Jesus the Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus the Healer (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>Jesus the Savior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus the Savior (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2020-21</td>
<td>The Mission Begins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2021</td>
<td>The Church United</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Forget (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2021</td>
<td>All Things New</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gather with your group for Bible study and fellowship. Use the Group Time in your Daily Discipleship Guide to follow along and participate in the session. Mark up the Scripture passages, answer the questions, fill in the blanks, do the activities, write out questions and thoughts—Make this guide yours!

At the conclusion of the session, use My Mission to respond to the truths from God’s Word. Choose at least one of the questions on the page to drive your response in faith, in community, and in mission for Jesus Christ, the center of God’s Word and our purpose in life.
Finally, **Encourage One Another** provides a brief guide for small 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. Meet up with a group once a week for fellowship, encouragement in the faith, and mutual accountability.
God Speaks to His People

1–2 Kings

Memory Verse

“Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back.”

–1 Kings 18:37
The Pictures of God’s Authority

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God's miracles reveal He is the one true God.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: 1 Kings 17

When my kids were younger, they often wanted to eat at McDonald’s® because they wanted a Happy Meal®. They enjoyed the food, but they loved the cheap toy inside even more. Now, however, my kids are older, and they never ask me to pull into McDonald’s for a Happy Meal. Now they want steak! They have grown up. The Happy Meal days are gone.

Some people today look at the miracles in the Bible like Happy Meals—to be cherished as children but not as adults. The skeptics believe you should grow up and see these biblical stories as fictional. But should we discard the miracle stories of Scripture?

What beliefs and doctrines are affected when a person rejects the validity of miracles in the Bible?
Group Time

Point 1: God provides in unusual ways (1 Kings 17:1-4).

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from the Gilead settlers, said to Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, in whose presence I stand, there will be no dew or rain during these years except by my command!”

2 Then the word of the LORD came to him: 3 “Leave here, turn eastward, and hide at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. 4 You are to drink from the wadi. I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.”

During the reign of Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, the Northern Kingdom of Israel practiced idolatry to a level not seen before (1 Kings 16:29-33). The worship of Baal, the false god of rain and fertility, was state-sponsored and modeled by the king and queen. So God raised up the prophet Elijah to minister in this dark time. Elijah boldly confronted the king and proclaimed a drought, which was actually a promise fulfilled (see Deut. 11:16-17; 28:14-15,23-24). God was punishing His people for their pagan idolatry.

What are some similarities between Elijah’s context and the present context of your culture?

At the Lord’s command, Elijah fled to the east after his initial confrontation with Ahab. Seeking protection from the wicked king, he went to an inhospitable area by the Jordan River, where he drank from a brook and was fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:5-6). Elijah was on the “wilderness meal plan”; bread and meat were provided by the ravens every morning and evening (see Ex. 16:8,12-13). His needs were provided on a daily basis.

How have you seen God provide for your daily necessities, especially in a difficult season of life?

Voices from Church History

“We can be certain that God will give us the strength and resources we need to live through any situation in life that He ordains. The will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us.”

–Billy Graham (1918-2018)
**Point 2: God provides in miraculous ways (1 Kings 17:10-16).**

10 So Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the city gate, there was a widow gathering wood. Elijah called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup and let me drink.” 11 As she went to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.”

12 But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I don’t have anything baked—only a handful of flour in the jar and a bit of oil in the jug. Just now, I am gathering a couple of sticks in order to go prepare it for myself and my son so we can eat it and die.”

13 Then Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid; go and do as you have said. But first make me a small loaf from it and bring it out to me. Afterward, you may make some for yourself and your son, 14 for this is what the Lord God of Israel says, ‘The flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the surface of the land.’”

15 So she proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah. Then the woman, Elijah, and her household ate for many days. 16 The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry, according to the word of the Lord he had spoken through Elijah.

After the brook dried up, Elijah went to the Phoenician town of Zarephath, which was Baal’s territory. Here God promised to use an unnamed widow to provide for Elijah (vv. 8-9). Not only could Baal not bring rain on the land and stop the drought, but Yahweh’s provision for His prophet extended right into Baal’s home turf. God had “prepared a table for Elijah in the presence of his enemies” (see Ps. 23:5).

**How does Elijah’s presence in Zarephath compare to the Christian’s life on earth?**

Elijah tested the widow’s faith and asked her to provide for him first, then for herself and her son. He assured her there would be enough for her and her son and that her flour and oil would be sufficient to get them through the drought. The widow trusted Elijah, acted accordingly, and God provided. Elijah’s word was confirmed through this miracle. Imagine this scene: Every day the widow went over to her little barrel of flour and small jar of oil, and every day, there was enough to bake bread for one more day!

**Miracles:** A miracle is an event in which God makes an ________________ to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His ________________ and/or validating His ________________.
Point 3: God provides through His servant (1 Kings 17:17-24).

17 After this, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. His illness got worse until he stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, “Man of God, why are you here? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?”

19 But Elijah said to her, “Give me your son.” So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upstairs room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. 20 Then he cried out to the LORD and said, “LORD my God, have you also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?” 21 Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the LORD and said, “LORD my God, please let this boy’s life come into him again!”

22 So the LORD listened to Elijah, and the boy’s life came into him again, and he lived. 23 Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upstairs room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, “Look, your son is alive.”

24 Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD’s word from your mouth is true.”

Elijah took the dead boy and cried out to God. With full honesty, praying in faith and desperation, he took his anxieties and concerns to God. The Lord heard the prayer of this righteous man (Jas. 5:16) and brought the child back to life (Heb. 11:32-35).

When you face a trial, what is your first instinct?

Fearful Panic

Faithful Prayer

Receiving her son back alive, the widow affirmed her trust in the prophet Elijah’s word and confessed her faith in God. Stories of death surround us, but there is hope beyond the grave for every grieving believer: God raises the dead. In this Old Testament story of provision and faith, God gives us a little sign of His resurrection power that would later be put on full display in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, never to die again.

Christ as Prophet: Jesus _________________ the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate _________________ and has the words of eternal life. Jesus is also God’s ultimate _________________ of Himself, the very Word of God.

Why should the promise of spiritual and physical resurrection in Christ inspire us to pray and act with great faith?
My Mission

Because we have come to know Jesus as the Word of God and have been forgiven and transformed by Him, we declare God’s Word to those around us with faith and boldness so that God may move others from death to life.

- What will you pray for in the name of Christ that reflects His power and His grace?
- About what should your group join together more in prayer?
- For whom will you be praying to share the gospel of Jesus with them?

Voices from Church History

“In all your prayers forget not to thank the Lord for his mercies. When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words, than thy words without a heart. Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer ... Pray often; for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.”

—John Bunyan (1628-1688)
Some of the kings in 1–2 Kings had commendable traits, though none were flawless, and many were a total mess. What keeps certain portions of 1–2 Kings from being depressing is this: God was preserving a remnant so that the ultimate Son of David would come and reign forever. God was preserving “a lamp before me in Jerusalem” (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4).

The writer gave quick facts about many kings, such as: 1) the king’s identity; 2) the length of his reign; 3) his relationship to the king in Judah or Israel; 4) the identity of the king’s mother (in the case of Judah’s kings); 5) occasionally an explanation of the divine point of view; 6) a statement of death; and 7) recommendations for further study.

We meet Judah’s King Abijam in 15:1-8. He was not completely devoted to the Lord as David had been. But his son, Asa, Judah’s next king, sought the Lord for the majority of his life (vv. 9-24). Only Hezekiah and Josiah receive higher praise than Asa. Sadly, Asa fell later in life due to unbelief (2 Chron. 16). Then we read of Israel’s King Nadab, who did evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings 15:25-32). He continued in the sins of his father before being killed and replaced by another bad king, Baasha (vv. 28-30).

We need a better king, and praise God we have one—the Lord Jesus!

What are some lessons to glean from the lives of the kings in 1 Kings 15?
Day 2: Read 1 Kings 16:1-34

This chapter highlights the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It also shows us our need for and the trustworthiness of God’s Word. We meet the prophet Jehu, who brought a word against Baasha. Baasha acted like Jeroboam, leading the people to sin against the Lord with their false worship, and consequently, he shared Jeroboam’s fate (16:2-4). Then his son, Elah, got drunk and was assassinated by Zimri, who went on to kill the rest of Baasha’s house (vv. 8-14). This fulfilled Jehu’s prophecy against Baasha (vv. 3,12). Zimri only reigned for seven days (v. 15). Omri then reigned for twelve years (v. 23). He established Samaria as the new capital city of the Northern Kingdom. It remained Israel’s capital until Assyria plundered it in 722 BC.

Finally, we meet the evil king Ahab. He reigned for twenty-two years (v. 29). He married Jezebel, a daughter of the king of the Sidonians. She was a Baal worshiper, and she had hundreds of prophets for Baal. She also killed God’s prophets (18:4,13). Following the heart of his wife, Ahab also served Baal, the first Israelite king to do so. It was into this context that God sent His prophet Elijah to proclaim the His word.

What are some of the consequences of sin, whether yours or others’, that you have experienced?

Day 3: Read 1 Kings 17:1-7

Evil king after evil king, and then—“Boom!”—we meet Elijah the prophet. He was a settler from the wild, forested area east of the Jordan in Gilead.

God chose this man from the middle of nowhere. Unlike the kings, we don’t know who his family was, and we don’t know anything about his childhood. God chose him out of obscurity in order to confront apostasy. God loves to use “nobodies” from “nowhere” places.

The chapter begins with Elijah proclaiming a message to King Ahab (17:1). Picture the awkward sight of a wild man entering the presence of the king. But because Elijah knew the living God, he was able to stand fearlessly before Ahab. Because he knew the living God, he could also trust God for his daily provision (vv. 2-7). Elijah had great faith because he had a great God.

What steps can you take this week to elevate your understanding and trust of God?
Day 4: **Read 1 Kings 17:8-16**

In this passage, God provided for His prophet through a widow at Zarephath. She had nothing to offer but a handful of flour and a bit of oil, but God multiplied these meager supplies. Elijah promised the widow that if she would bake him a cake before feeding herself and her son that the flour jar would not be empty and the oil would not run out. She submitted to Elijah’s word, and her household ate for days. This all took place according to the word of God (17:8,14,15,16).

Observe God’s sovereignty and grace. God chose this widow to provide for Elijah. God told Elijah, “I have commanded a woman who is a widow to provide for you there” (v. 9). But we don’t read that God ever spoke directly to the widow. Even though she may not have heard this news from a prophet beforehand, God proclaimed it to be so because He is the only sovereign. He works in the hearts of the mighty and in the hearts of the lowly to accomplish His purposes.

How might this passage address the times when you are anxious, afraid, or overwhelmed by the cares of this life?

Day 5: **Read 1 Kings 17:17-24**

A third miracle—and a more dramatic one—took place next in 1 Kings 17. The widow’s son became ill and died (v. 17), but God raised him from the dead through the ministry of Elijah. We’re reminded of the reality and pain of death in this story. Stories of death are all around us. At any moment, a loved one could take his or her last breath. Like in this story, just when things seem to be working out wonderfully, death can take someone. In this case, it was a precious child.

But there is hope beyond the grave for every grieving believer: *God raises the dead.* God gives us a little sign of his resurrection power in this Old Testament story.

We should look forward to the resurrection when Christ comes again. Yet in the present, we should ask God to do what only He can do—raise spiritually dead people to life (Eph. 2:4-5). This young boy eventually died again. What everyone needs is to be raised up forever by the resurrection power of God through faith in His Son, Jesus.

How might this story inspire you to pray more fervently?
Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God provides in unusual ways (1 Kings 17:1-4).
- God provides in miraculous ways (1 Kings 17:10-16).
- God provides through His servant (1 Kings 17:17-24).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

Why are miracles not only a demonstration of God's power but also of His care for His creatures, namely, His people?

How can the miracles that God performed through Elijah inform how we serve and bless those around us, both inside and outside of the church?
UNIT 13

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
2. Charles Spurgeon, in *Charles Spurgeon’s Classics* (Charles River Editors, 2016) [eBook].

SESSION 4

UNIT 14

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

UNIT 15

SESSION 1

SESSION 2
3. Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Charles River Editors, 2018) [eBook].

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5

SESSION 6
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A Nation Divided

After Kings David and Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel was split in two as a judgment of Solomon’s idolatry—the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In spite of the idolatry that often marked both kingdoms, God continued to speak to His people through the words of His prophets and the signs of His power.

Though God’s people continued to rebel against Him, He pursued them with an ever-faithful love. God offers mercy to those who repent, but rebellion cannot be ignored. God would be faithful to His word and exile His people from their land for their sin.

God demonstrated His commitment to His people over and over again and called people to turn from their sin and back to Him, waiting with open arms. But in the end, the people’s hearts refused the God who had made them. So in His mercy and faithfulness, even in the midst of His judgment for sin, the Lord promised that one day new hearts and new life would come to humanity—a promise fulfilled by faith in Jesus Christ.

What’s Next?

WINTER 2019-20
Volume 6: A People Restored
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God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
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Volume 7: Jesus the Messiah
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Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)

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