

Pondering Christ in 1 Kings

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord, as it was preached to us on Sunday, and as we encounter it in our everyday lives.

My name is Jack, I'm here with Tristan, Ben, and Jono, and we're discussing Ben's sermon back in the Christ in Scripture series, Christ in 1 Kings. Ben, give us a little recap of that.

Yeah, we'll do.

As you said, we're back in the Christ in Scripture project after a couple of weeks off, and we're looking at 1 Kings, which is the first part of the two part, 1 and 2 Kings, originally one scroll, but divided into when it was translated from Hebrew

into Greek. What I found interesting about Kings is that from start to finish, there's a wildly different situation for the people of Israel. A lot changes over the course of Kings.

And so we kind of looked at an overview of the story of Kings through the framework of the kingdom, which is God's people under God's rule in God's place.

And how each of those things, God's people, God's rule, God's place, changes significantly from start to end in the Book of 1 Kings.

And we ended with the words of Jesus in Revelation to repent, which is to think about your thinking, to realize the situation that you're in and how far you've fallen from where you once were.

And then next week, kind of the two part of this sermon, we're going to look at the positive of coming back to God and what that looks like.

Jonah, Tristan, did you guys have any reflections coming out of that sermon?

Yeah, my main reflection was it was awesome to look at it throughout the story of Kings. And the main question I wrote down here for myself is, what's the score at the moment in terms of what is the score for the kingdom now?

Because we were losing 3-0 in the sermon. So what's the score now? And I'm still figuring that out.

That's good, yeah.

I really liked the part towards the end where you referred to idolatry, injustice and immorality.

That was really profound, which we will come to later.

Well, I might start us off in terms of questions with a question submitted by one of our viewers, by Kathleen, who is one of our most regular question askers, so shout out to Kathleen.

The question is, the few good kings were able to pass on their victories slash kingdoms to their sons. Why were they not able to pass on their relationship with God? Were both impossible from the start?

What do you guys think?

I think it's a very complex question, and lots of things could be said. One thing is that this is before Christ, before the Holy Spirit, so they have a significant disadvantage in that way compared to us post-Gospel, post-Holy Spirit.

But also 1 Kings chapter 1 verse 6, I read, which I think is really interesting. It says, his father, which is David, King David never rebuked his son Adonijah by asking, why do you behave as you do?

He never rebuked him, which I took that as an interesting failure in David's part to have a difficult conversation when it needed to be had with his son.

Part of the failure of the kings to pass on faith to their children and discipleship is failing to have conversations at the time that they needed to be had.

Maybe the father saw the son going down the wrong path and neglected to have the difficult word. I don't know. What do you guys think?

It's very much in the text of the Old Testament, what you just said, isn't it?

Tell this to your children. It's not as though it was a secret. That really struck me as you said that.

Every generation has the capacity to forget. But God said very clearly, do this to remember. Tell the story again and again.

Bind it on your forehead. Deuteronomy 6, 5, the Shema. Like it's just every day, you've got to remember, be a people of faith.

Tell your community, let the elders repeat the great things that God has done. It's what the Psalms talk about so much, isn't it? What you have done from the rising to the setting of the sun, it's God's grace and goodness that we're trusting in.

So they must have forgotten that. Clearly, that's the answer. It hasn't been rehearsed and remembered enough.

I mean, we only really get one instance of a king passing on, urging his son to follow in the way, and that's David's final speech before he dies in the beginning of 1 Kings.

And even that speech is not necessarily David's finest moment because he kind of tells Solomon, the mafia boss speech, that's what that is. All the people I had mercy on don't let them grow old.

So you wish he had left that part out, but otherwise, that's the only instance I can think of of a king. And they're different to the point about passing on their kingdoms and victories. They're different skill sets.

I mean, you can pass on the family business to someone else. It doesn't necessarily mean you pass on your values or anything like that. They're just different realms.

And certainly Genesis 12 to 50 presents a complexity of family dynamics.

Like every character that comes along, we're clearly showing their foibles. So everyone has their own journey of faith.

It's hard enough to pass on anyway, but I think Genesis 12 to 50 is just this clear communication that family systems are pretty hard. They mess people up. But goes back to Genesis 15, Abraham believed that it was credit to him as righteousness.

Like every generation is invited to believe, receive the grace of God and step into the blessing of God.

Now, I have a sort of a pokey question that was suggested to me. So you talked, Ben, about this idea that the best way to minister to people is in the family and in the home.

And an objection was raised to me that if you were skeptical, you could say, well, the only reason you believe in your faith is because of your family or your parents, or, you know, this is just some cultural thing.

How would we respond to an objection like that?

That's a very good point.

The article that I mentioned by Ryan Burge, who's the political scientist, the one who said that this most statistically influential place of faith development is the home, that article is titled, Social Inertia Rules the Church.

Inertia is the first law of motion. An object in motion stays in motion and at rest stays in rest, unless acted upon. Any side of the statistics that if your parents are Christian, you're more likely to be a Christian.

If your parents are Atheists, you're more likely to be an Atheist. If they're Hindu, Hindu, Sikh, Sikh, Muslim, Muslim. All these different religions, we tend to stay in the upbringing that we were brought up in.

That's the law of inertia, which is an important observation that that's true. And that's a cynical take, but it's fair. It speaks nothing to the truth of the faith itself.

Willard has this good saying that the term absolute truth is nonsense, because all truth is absolute truth. There's no such thing as partial truth.

He says, regardless of whether or not I believe there's petrol in my car's tank, there either is or there isn't.

I happen to be a Christian largely because my parents believe it's true, but that doesn't impact the central truth claim of Christianity itself, which I ground in the resurrection of Jesus.

That either happened or it didn't, and I believe it did happen, therefore Christianity is true.

And so the social inertia thing is a good point to say that the atheist is an atheist because their parents were and the Christian is because their parents were, but it doesn't touch the truth claim at the heart.

That's what we need to be evaluating and see if that is true or not.

One of the nuances of it is NT. Wright talks about, there is absolute truth, but I have no way of accessing it but through my own subjective eyes for truth. And that is hugely formed by my family of origin.

I wouldn't say because of my family's, the way they like raised me was the only reason why I came to faith.

But it certainly played a massive, massive part of it.

Like it's always good to understand that the role my parents played was very influential in terms of pointing me and guiding me through correction, through encouragement, through all these different ways of pointing me to Christ.

So I wouldn't say it's the only way, but it's good to acknowledge that it's a massive part of it.

And I think there's an element of, and granted, you know, you said the statistic, Ben, that this occurs in other traditions as well.

But I think from my experience, having been raised in a Christian household, I see my parents and how they've lived out their faith. And that's appealing to me. I'm like, that's actually, they are kind of the people I want to be.

This is something that works. And of course, we all know of examples where parents have modeled faith badly, and that has actually driven people away from the faith as well. And so I think Christianity modeled well in the family.

Yeah, you should look at that and say, yeah, I want to be like my parents, because I think that way of life and the way God has played a role in our family is a good thing.

So kind of taking that discussion and moving it to this idea of passing on the gospel. Ben, you highlighted the failure of the kings to do that, and we've chatted about that.

I want to talk about how we do that, and I'm going to divide this question into two parts. So we'll discuss the first one first. How do we, first of all, for those of us who have families, how do we pass on the gospel at home?

This was obviously a Father's Day sermon. Well, perhaps, what's been your experience of having the gospel passed to you in your home by parents or family members?

I have only been a dad for 10 months, so I don't answer this on behalf of being a dad, but on behalf of being a son of a Christian, of a pastor, more than that. One of the big things is that faith is not separate from regular life.

I was utterly convinced my entire life that dad is not putting on a show when he goes up on stage and preaches. I was convinced that he's not one person on Sunday and a different person at home. He was the same person.

And so I was fortunate being a pastor's kid that church was very integrated with my family life, like I spent a lot of time at church. Faith itself was very integrated into family.

So I never had the experience of this is my real life and then there's my Christianity as two separate things, but they were totally linked.

So from the perspective of a child, I've appreciated the lack of hypocrisy in my parents and the kind of integration of faith and life. And so as Courtney and I think about raising Esther, we're trying to be conscious of doing that same thing.

I'm really conscious of aiming to not be a pastor and a Christian on stage when I'm preaching, and a different man at home, but to be integrated in those two spaces.

Yeah, mine is very similar, same like similar upbringing. And the way I always describe it is it's by full immersion. It's like putting me in context where the gospel is so evident in the way people operate and the way they speak.

And that's always been such a blessing in a way.

And that's hopefully something I can model well when I started family, or even now in my home where it's like, even if things are tough and things are down, I can still model the things that my parents taught me.

Like it's still, it's still evident, and it's trying to achieve that. But in a way where it's not just works, but the way you love your life, it's full immersion.

And that's not perfection in the home as a parent. It's modeling the Gospel, which is owning up to failure, even to kids, to ask for forgiveness. Yeah, just to be genuinely real and to have grace in the home.

Jono, as the only one who's actually raised kids, can I ask, did you have an intentional strategy when you were thinking about how you would pass the Gospel on to your kids?

Oh, absolutely.

You're always talking about the story of the Gospel in an age-appropriate way.

Introducing kids to prayer is a really important part of discipleship, so I think, looking at my two granddaughters, just recently in Brisbane, are just amazing, just, they've learned about prayer, you know, four years old and two years old.

And they will just spontaneously go, can I pray for you, daddy, or can I pray for my uncle? And then they start praying. It's just, like, beautiful.

But clearly, you know, age appropriate is important.

I feel like there's another layer, like the whole thing about integrity and who you are, that your kids hopefully see how much you love them and the type of person you are, that there's character in mum and dad, or one, if there's only one.

But if you don't have time, both quantity and quality, they don't get to see that. And I think that's the thing that takes you out. It's like, I'm, I'm integrist and I, I'm loving the Lord.

But the reality is, kids haven't seen you, mate, or miss, misses if you're just working all the time. And that's a real challenge now that we've moved more towards both people working full time. Of course, that's just sort of the Sydney reality.

But you don't realize how less of yourself you are when you're completely wasted, and your kids have been looked after by other people or at school and extracurricular. And it's, it's just the road to potential ruin is actually happening before you.

And if I would focus in on what it actually is, it's you don't have enough time to build the robust relationship threads, connectors that you need for that conversation that happens with your 16-year-old.

People have said to me, when my kids were young, they said, you don't know what parenting is. It's only when your kids become adults that you realize how hard it is.

And I said to them, if you don't have a relationship with your kids before they become adults, the horse has bolted. And that's, as my oldest is 31 and a half. And that's completely true.

We've got four kids. And if you don't have the relational equity that's been built up from birth, through till picket age, teenager 20-something, it's just not there. Now, I'm not saying all is lost, but they may have moved towards non-faith.

And your choices, and I honestly believe this, your choices as a parent have contributed to that. That's the big, and I say it because the stakes are high.

If they weren't high, if it was just a flip of a coin, which I fear is where we go to out of fear of offending, to say that parents have anything to do to raise your children in the way of the master.

I find there's a pushback, like you can't say that, you don't know what it was like for me.

And the answer is, I don't know what it was like for you, but I know if you think about it, there are most likely decisions you made along the way that were less helpful.

And because I just refused to believe from the Bible that it is a toss of a coin to see how your kids go.

I feel like there's a whole lot of work you have to do that puts them in the best place to receive Christ for themselves, which is what we say at a dedication.

We say, we're going to pray with you, and you make a commitment to live in such a way to point Esther to Christ so that the appropriate age she can take on faith for herself. And we can't make that decision.

That's a mystery, a sovereign mystery about what happens with people's hearts. But you've got to be able to contribute to it. And so I would say, getting back to the Kings, they didn't do that enough.

They didn't do that enough. And you can see, one of the problems is multiple wives and too many kids.

Yeah.

It's like favoritism. It's just reeks of havoc. Relational dynamics not working in the home.

Praise God, he's got mercy for parents.

I'm just getting off my high horse here.

Yeah.

Well, praise God that he's got mercy for parents. Okay. Maybe something that's a little bit more relatable for those who are listeners who aren't parents.

The second part of this question, I thought, was how do we pass on the gospel at church?

Because even though we may not be parents of kids ourselves, we're part of a church community, and part of what that community is, is sharing what the gospel has done to the kids in our church, or just to other people within our church.

So what does that look like? What do you guys think about that? Tristan, as our youth coordinator, maybe you want to input?

Well, I would say I would answer it on two sides of the coin, right?

So I would say as a kid, or as a teenager, or whatever, always look forward to the next generation to gain some sort of wisdom, because they've gone through what you're going through now. Like that's always important.

That's why I try and position teenagers with an older young adult, or with an older leader, where they know exactly what you're going through, because they just went through that.

Like, it's always trying to look forward to, and try and really take advantage of the church in front of you. And on the other side, I would say, when it's influencing kids, don't be afraid to have a conversation with them.

Like, it's a really community-driven thing. It takes a tribe to raise a child, and that's such a vital part of it. That's my whole testimony.

It's not just my parents, not just my uncle. It was literally the church that raised me, and that was so influential.

And the key part is, obviously, you said with appropriate level of discernment, not exposing them to crazy things, but it's also like step by step, start with the small things, but start young. That's what I would say.

It's important to give people an opportunity to exercise their gifting, to step in and do, to experience. So that's part of it, just because Christianity is a practical, lived thing. It's sort of like the Spirit of God inhabiting us.

And so part of it is trying stuff. But what we really believe at church here is teaching the gospel in its fullness.

And that sort of includes a simple understanding of that I have sinned and I need a savior, a broader understanding that there's a cosmic Lord who's transforming the whole universe in Jesus.

But then we would often talk about biblical theology, and we want to teach that as part of the training for following Jesus. What's the big story? What's the story from Genesis to Revelation?

And then we try to say, well, you should actually learn theology, like in what we might call systematic theology. Who is God? What has he done?

And what's he like? Same with Jesus, same with Spirit, the Spirit. So as a pastor for many years, I think it's really important to have a program, a schedule of learning.

And so that's part of it for me.

It was awesome yesterday, being Father's Day, we had little Lucas do the Bible reading, which I look back at my life, and I distinctly remember doing a Bible reading in church as a kid, which was such an honor and the most terrifying but awesome

thing, because I was contributing to the church. And actually, you talked about practicing and exercising the faith. The same thing with kind of the rites of passage of baptism.

It's giving people a chance to take steps forward, so they're not only consuming content but having the chance to respond to it and to integrate it into their life.

And depending on your culture of your church, having opportunities to make a declaration of faith, baptism is one, but we don't have an altar call culture much in our church.

But so many people, that's their story, that there was a gospel message, and then there was a call to respond.

And so that's part of it, I think, to create space in the year, the calendar year of our church programs, where people are called to respond.

And I think when you're trying to present an opportunity to respond, it's vital to understand that that takes a lot of patience and timing and trust in God's timing with that, because you can have seasons when you're going through the ebbs and flows

of ministry and youth ministry and kids ministry, where it doesn't seem like it's firing on all cylinders, but you're trying your absolute best for the sake of the kingdom. And sometimes God just presents you with the kairos moment.

He presents you with an opportunity where it's all worth it. It's so worth it. So I think really trusting through prayer and surrounding yourself with a team that has the same focus of presenting the gospel well and true, you will get those moments.

I just remembered something which draws together so many themes.

You preached a sermon years ago, Dad, talking about discipleship, and you had three words, content, apprenticeship, and immersion.

I think that's a really good package to summarize what we're talking about, that there's content that needs to be communicated. What is the gospel? Who is God?

What is the Bible? That's important. Then there's apprenticeship, which is learning the way of the master, contributing, reading the Bible in church, baptism, and then immersion.

You mentioned that word, Tristan. Immersion in a community that's living a certain way, teaching you how to live that way. Older mentors, younger people that you're mentoring.

When you get content, apprenticeship, and immersion, I think that's like 90% of the way to passing on the gospel to the next generation.

That's so good. Only I could remember all these things I preached.

Moving now, you talked about God's rule and how the kings failed to live in God's rule. And you talked about these three points of idolatry, injustice, and immorality, which we see played out in the Book of Kings.

And you mentioned that we can also experience these, especially in our family homes as well. Now, I've got some questions regarding these. Now, thankfully, with injustice, we can be pretty clear.

You said injustice is making myself God, playing God with others. And we see that very sadly in abusive homes. And I don't have a question about that because it's unquestionably wrong.

And there's no no one's there. Don't do it. With regards to idolatry, you mentioned this idea of parents elevating their kids, idolizing their kids and their achievements.

Now, obviously, we want to love our kids. And there's a sense which we can kind of be proud of our kids. How do we have a balanced view of kids or other family members?

Without sort of elevating them to the level of idolatry.

Yeah, the simple answer to that whole segment in the sermon is put God back in his place. Because those three things come when you take God off the throne. God making, God playing, God forsaking, injustice, immorality, idolatry.

They come when God is not on the throne. So, there's nuance and there's practical stuff that applies specifically to the family.

But the easiest answer is put God back in his place and worship him, God alone, you know, the great commandment, love the Lord your God with all your hearts, soul, mind and strength. The first of the ten commandments have no other gods before me.

So, if Yahweh is on the throne, you will not worship your kids and they will not be a God that you're living for. As for kind of practical stuff, it's interesting being a new parent.

Courtney and I have discovered that on one level, it's really easy to talk to other parents because you have so much in common. There's like, how are you going with this and this and this and this?

But it's also hard because there's this comparison that parents have, like, oh, your child's 10 months and they're not walking yet. Oh, interesting.

And there's this weird competition that parents have with each other, which part of it comes from this idolatry thing of the achievements of my child reflect on me, and I care a lot about me.

And so, we kind of, yes, we're worshiping the child, but more so we're worshiping ourselves in our own status and what our kids tell us about our status.

And so, the solution to that, again, is put God back on His throne, worship Him, and kind of get your priorities, your loves in the right order, I think.

Yeah, the question I was always challenged by with my old mentor was, what is the priority for you?

Because I was very sporty in high school, so I would, when it came to, when I was like 16, I would go for the first 11 for the sports I was competing in.

But it was also a pivotal time in my faith where there was a Bible study on a Tuesday night, but there's hockey practice on a Tuesday night. There's another practice on a Friday night. No, there's youth on a Friday night.

So it was a combination of my parents and my mentor, really imprinting into me, what is your priority here? What is going to affect you in the long term?

So I think having that mentality, sometimes very discipline-like, but also very soft-handedly just saying, wait, hold on, this is the redirection that we need.

So I think like my last youth talk that I ever did at my last church, the title is, what is their priority?

And it was speaking to the same context that those teens are in, where everything else looks attractive, all the secularism, secularism, secularism. Speaking to teens in the context of secularism, I'm saying it right.

Secularism.

Secularism. I'm going to scrap the word. Speaking to teens in the context of that thing, where...

Yeah, everything else is attractive, but the church is not attractive. So it's not changing stuff to make the church attractive, but just saying, what is your priority?

Where is your life going after all the sports, after all the things you're chasing for now? How can we just do a course correction? So what is the priority?

That's the main question.

It's helpful to recognize that idolatry can happen really quickly. Like as Calvin says, the human heart is an idol factory. And I find that helpful to just remember, they pop up quick.

They're not forged in a furnace for three years and go, I finally have my idol. To realize you could get obsessed with something and it has just snuck in, in a disordered way and is the love of your life.

And so, you know, you could be something about sport that if you're a kid and the kid's doing well, and it becomes a bit obsessive. There's an interesting line between obsession and idolatry. I mean, the two things blur a bit probably.

I feel like God in His grace allows suffering and sickness to come on our kids. And we suddenly realize they certainly aren't the God that's going to help them here. We need a God above.

This little person that I love with all my heart is the most important special thing. But sickness will remind you, you need something, a power bigger than them. It's just, it's not appropriate to worship your child.

And then they're not for that. But at the same time, I love that line where, for a pastor, Andy Stanley used to say it, that it's a great thing to remember. Jesus said, I will build my church, but you need to build your family.

And so it's like, go home, don't be a workaholic. Jesus said, he's going to build his church, but he is going to build your family, but you've got a really special job as a parent, so don't neglect them.

So that means, they're not to be worshiped, but they are to be prized, our kids. So there's nothing wrong with just loving them to bits and being even quite obsessive about protecting them and nurturing them, because it's our job.

Jesus said, he'll build his church.

Turning now to the immorality part of that. Just quickly, you talked about how we can move to immorality, to cope with the stress of being a parent, and I think that applies to other areas of life as well.

And yes, we've got to put God on the throne, but what can we use in place of immorality to help us cope with those stresses?

I must say the immorality piece was the least developed in my mind. I thought through that the least. But thinking about it now, immorality is seeking to satisfy a good desire the wrong way.

So we have these desires, and we talked a lot about this last week in the sermon called The Ruin of Desire. We have these desires, but immorality seeks to satisfy it the wrong way.

So the desire for intimacy, which God designed to be fulfilled in community and a certain type of intimacy in sex within marriage, immorality is satisfying that desire through adultery, sex outside of marriage.

And so the solution to your question, I think, is taking those desires and satisfying them in God and the right and proper ways that God has designed them to be satisfied. So in community, in exercise, in health, in good things, not in bad things.

That would be maybe a simple answer.

Yeah. All right. Well, I think that will do us.

Let me read this short verse from Deuteronomy 6, verse 4 to 9 to close. Here, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.

When you lie down and when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. Have a good week.