

# Trust God and Pray About It

*June 23, 2024*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

1 Kings 12

### **Session Outline**

1. Advice Needed (1 Kings 12:1-5)
2. Wisdom Rejected (1 Kings 12:6-11)
3. Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12:12-19)

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### **Theological Theme**

To receive and exercise wisdom in decision making, we must pray and seek Godly counsel.

### **Call to Action**

To whom do we go when we make decisions in life? Prayer needs to be foundational in everything we do. We trust and depend on God to guide us.



## Leader Guide

# Trust God and Pray About It

### Introduction

Most people have specific individuals they turn to for advice. Your car is making a funny noise, so you call that one person. You aren't sure about a parenting issue, so you ask the couple that is your go-to for ideas. Health issues? Money questions? Career challenges? For almost any issue, there is likely a person or group of people you trust to give you sound advice.

We tend to go to different people in different circumstances depending on their level of experience or expertise on a subject. You don't ask a medical expert about car problems or the car guy about your recipe dilemma. Knowing where to find the help you need is a form of wisdom. As Christ followers, we have access to the Lord and His infinite wisdom for any and every question we face. As we will see today, when a person refuses to seek counsel from the Lord or listen to the wisdom and experience of godly people, it does not end well.

- ❓ Who are some of your "go to" people for different issues?
- ❓ Why is it important to ask advice from the right sources? Why is it dangerous to ask the wrong person for counsel?

### Session Summary

As the new king, Rehoboam was faced with a major decision that would set the tone for his entire reign. Although he had access to the experienced advisors of his father Solomon, he ignored their wise counsel and turned to his friends for advice. This choice to listen to the people who advised him toward selfish and ungodly actions resulted in consequences that split the kingdom and derailed his rule.

Under Solomon the people had worked hard and carried the weight of heavy taxes. They asked this new king to give them some relief and his selfish pride led him to make life harder for his subjects. The people of Israel under leadership of the elders and Jeroboam revolted and refused to acknowledge Rehoboam's authority. As a result, ten tribes banded together and separated from the other two. This left Israel as the northern kingdom with Jeroboam as king and Judah as the southern with Rehoboam as king.

Although he had access to wise and experienced counsel, Rehoboam refused to listen and never sought the Lord in his decision-making. This was his downfall, and the consequences were felt by more than just the king. Those who desire to live godly lives full of wisdom and discernment should make prayer their priority and go to God first and when we need guidance. The Lord has given us full access to His wisdom and counsel. It is up to us whether we take advantage of His guidance through prayer and wise counsel or listen to what the world has to say or simply follow our own desires.

## 1. Advice Needed (1 Kings 12:1-5)

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam took the throne. He was the only son of Solomon listed by name but, as we quickly see, he was not a wise leader. He gives an example of what not to do when you need guidance about complicated decisions that come your way. Instead of strengthening the kingdom, he was instrumental in the ultimate division of Israel, and the consequences were great.


Under Solomon's rule, the people had worked hard. Those who came to Rehoboam described Solomon's yoke upon them as "harsh." The people wanted relief as a condition of their acceptance of Rehoboam's rule, and they offered their allegiance if he agreed to their terms. This was a pivotal moment in the history of the land and the reign of Rehoboam.

This meeting took place in Shechem, a city with rich history for the Jewish people. It was centrally located in the middle of the northern ten tribes. Jeroboam was one of the leaders of the elders who called for Rehoboam to meet with them and interestingly, this future king went to where they were instead of calling them to come and meet him in Jerusalem. There in their territory, Jeroboam and the elders pointed out the issues they had with Solomon and made their case for this new king to lighten their load and give them relief in exchange for their allegiance.




Why do you think it is significant that Rehoboam went to where the ten tribes were? How could he have responded differently as the new king?

These difficulties were described and predicted earlier in Scripture when the people continually asked God to give them an earthly king. In 1 Samuel 8, God cautioned the people of all that a king would take from them. He was clear about the ways that they could and would suffer if they insisted on having a king and yet, they ignored His warnings. Throughout 1 Kings, we see the ways these earthly rulers could never fulfill the true desires of the people and continually failed to lead in the perfect way that only God is able.

-  When was a time you recognized God's leading or warning but thought you knew better? What was the result?


Notice that instead of answering the people, Rehoboam sent them away for three days to seek counsel and devise his response. Sometimes a quick response is required. But when possible, we should allow time to pray, read God's Word, and seek the wise counsel of fellow believers when facing important decisions. Simply taking our time doesn't guarantee we will choose wisely, but it does give us time to consider the options and consequences.

-  Application: Where might God be leading you or cautioning you right now? How do you need to respond in obedience?

## 2. Wisdom Rejected (1 Kings 12:6-11)

The same men that spent time with and gave counsel to Solomon were available to Rehoboam. God had used these men to provide insight and counsel for the wisest king to rule Israel. It was a hopeful sign of wisdom that Rehoboam turned to them to ask what they thought about the situation with the Israelites and how he should respond to their requests.

Instead of encouraging Rehoboam to respond like Solomon had, they encouraged him to establish a relationship with the people for himself. The decision of his father would not automatically be the best choice for him. Many leaders need to receive this counsel. Each person is uniquely gifted and when God gives the opportunity to lead, he or she must learn to do so as the person God created him or her to be under the guidance of His Holy Spirit.

-  Why is it important that we not simply follow norms because it's the way something has always been done? What are the dangers of following this line of thinking without seeking God's wisdom?


Rehoboam started well by asking the elders their thoughts. What happened next is where it all went wrong. The elders encouraged him to establish a new path forward with the people, one that was not as harsh to the people as their relationship had been with Solomon. This didn't sit well with Rehoboam. He rejected their words and decided to ask another group, seeking an answer more in line with his own desires.

This is a common practice. We tend to shop around asking many for advice until we hear something that sounds good to us or that strokes our ego. Rehoboam rejected the wisdom of the elders and sought out some of his buddies. He turned to some of his friends likely because he knew they would


### Foolish Arrogance

Rehoboam's arrogance can be explained only by his presumption that he could demand and receive Solomon's absolute power. Rehoboam wanted to operate in terms comparable to the divine right of kings but with neither the military power nor the moral authority to enforce this approach. Rehoboam's younger (fortyish) companions, who had grown up in Solomon's absolutism, supported him with two proverbial similes and overrode the better counsel of the elders.

give him advice that he wanted because they thought in similar ways. In doing so, Rehoboam gave the appearance of seeking advice but didn't have the wisdom to listen to the right voices.

 When have you received sound advice but rejected it because it wasn't what you hoped to hear? What happened?


These younger friends of Rehoboam gave him the opposite advice of the experienced, wiser men. This was what he had been looking for as it fed his ego and gave him a greater sense of power. The young men told the king to do the opposite and make life even harder for the people. According to his friends, this was Rehoboam's chance to throw his weight around and show the people he was an even more dominant leader than his father. Their goal was for the people to fear the king and for him to garner the people's service out of fear of him as a tyrant.

 Application: What is a difficult decision you are looking to make? How can you seek godly counsel and reject worldly wisdom, even if it's what you want to hear?

### 3. Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12:12-19)

A leader needs to discern when to listen to the opinions of the people and when to stand on a different thought. Rehoboam chose wrongly and listened to the advice of his friends. This was detrimental to his reign and to the kingdom. The effects of this situation would be felt for a long time and had generational consequences.

The Lord does not cause people to act unwisely, ungodly, or destructively, but He does allow it. God is always at work and knows exactly how the details will play out. If you have access to the One who knows everything about your situation that has happened and will happen, why would you turn to anyone else for advice?

 What are some voices you tend to listen to over God's (i.e., family, friends, your own)?

Following ungodly advice can lead to devastating consequences as we see with Israel. Rehoboam's words were not well received, and Israel rejected his leadership. Things became violent when Rehoboam sent a tax collector to start collecting from the people and they stoned him instead of giving in to the king's edicts. This episode opened the king's eyes to the seriousness of the decision he had made and the long ranging effects of rejecting wisdom.

The kingdom became divided with ten tribes making Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officials, their king (v. 20). The remaining two tribes remained loyal to Rehoboam. Israel was divided into two kingdoms with Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

- ❓ You and I aren't royalty with reign over an entire group of people, but where do you have influence? Where are you tempted to use your own leadership or influence for selfish gain rather than godly purposes?

We all have the potential to make decisions that bring harm or good. Our choices don't just affect us, they also affect the people around us and the generations that follow. To live as wise people and make decisions that have positive effects, we must listen to the Lord and follow His instructions. We can know what He wants for us through prayer and His Word. Instead of seeking advice from those who will tell us what we want to hear, we can turn to the Lord and pray about every single decision we face. Even if we prefer a different way, God's wisdom is always the best path forward.

- ❓ Application: How much of a role does prayer play in your decision making? How can you grow in seeking God's wisdom above your own or that of other people?

## Conclusion

We all face many decisions daily. Knowing who to go to for advice is imperative to making wise decisions. There are always consequences to the choices we make and as we see from the story of Rehoboam, when a person chooses unwisely, the consequences can be far reaching and devastating.

Because of one king's selfish, prideful ways, the line of his ancestor David was completely rejected, and the kingdom of Israel was divided. Turning away from the Lord and making selfish and sinful decisions led to Rehoboam being an example of what not to do instead of his receiving the wisdom God made available to him.

- ❓ Do you tend to make decisions quickly? What could you do differently to weigh your choices more carefully and consider other alternatives?
- ❓ What qualities should we look for in those from whom we seek counsel in a difficult situation? How can we evaluate the advice we receive?
- ❓ How can thinking through the possible short-term and long-term consequences of a decision you are now facing save you grief and suffering? Why is prayer crucial to this process?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank the Lord for loving you and promising to give you wisdom as you seek Him. Ask for discernment to make wise decisions guided by Him.*

## Memory Verse

*But he rejected the advice of the elders who had advised him and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and attended him. — 1 Kings 12:8*

## Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings* by Tony Merida
- *Be Responsible* by Warren Wiersbe
- *1 Kings: Power, Politics, and the Hope of the World* by John Woodhouse

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of 1 Kings

## Purpose

The theological perspective of 1 and 2 Kings is expressed in a number of themes: (1) the sinfulness of the kings and the nation; (2) the conflict between the demands of practical politics and the demands of faith; (3) the glory that God gave to the obedient covenant kings; (4) God's harshness in judgment on some occasions and leniency on others; and (5) the conflict between the worship of the Lord and the worship of other gods.

## Author

Scholars cannot identify the authors of any portions of these books. Traditional guesses such as Samuel and Jeremiah lack evidence, although a prominent worshiper of the Lord like Jeremiah would have been influential in the circles that produced these books. Since the books clearly incorporated many earlier documents, the complete authorship would include all writers who contributed to the source documents of this work. At some point, the Holy Spirit worked in the human authors to authenticate the inspired, inerrant books of 1 and 2 Kings. The final stage of composition or compilation had to come after the release of Jehoiachin from Babylonian imprisonment (ca 562 BC). That edition may have added only a postscript to a work completed years earlier, or it may have involved significant additions.

## Setting

The history recorded in 1 and 2 Kings covers approximately 410 years. First Kings begins around 970 BC with the death of King David, and 2 Kings ends around 560 BC with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison. During this time, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms (930 BC), and both kingdoms went into exile (Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 587 BC).

## Special Features

The titles of these books are certainly descriptive of their contents: the history of the kings and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. First and Second Kings are part of the twelve Historical Books (Joshua-Esther) of the Old Testament. Originally, these two books were just one, but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament; aka LXX).

## Extended Commentary

### 1 Kings 12:1-19

12:1 Shechem was strategically located on the main road north of Jerusalem near the border of Ephraim and Manasseh; therefore, it was a good location for shadowing Jerusalem on the north and for gathering the traditional northern tribal leaders. The advantages of this location were confirmed when Jeroboam made Shechem his capital. David, earlier, had made a covenant with the elders for the kingship (2Sm 5:3), but these elders were ignored when Solomon came to power (1Kg 1). They were open to David's dynasty, but they wanted to negotiate. Rehoboam had to satisfy the traditional elders in order to become king. Clearly, if it had been God's choice for Rehoboam to rule the united empire, he could have accomplished it, but the Lord had rejected Solomon, so he permitted the forces of disunity to proceed.

12:2–4 Jeroboam was summoned from Egypt to speak for the elders. After living under Solomon's oppressive policies, they demanded that the economic burdens be lightened.

12:5–7 Apparently Rehoboam was not happy about hearing the words servant and serve applied to him.

12:8–16 Rehoboam's arrogance can be explained only by his presumption that he could demand and receive Solomon's absolute power. Rehoboam wanted to operate in terms comparable to the divine right of kings but with neither the military power nor the moral authority to enforce this approach. Rehoboam's younger (fortyish) companions, who had grown up in Solomon's absolutism, supported him with two proverbial similes and overrode the better counsel of the elders.

12:17 Rehoboam had no idea how close he came to losing everything—but for God's grace and the Davidic covenant.

12:18–19 Rehoboam's naïveté and foolishness were demonstrated by his sending Adoram (the same man as Adoniram, 5:14), director of the forced labor battalions, to enforce his rule. Adoram represented one of the heavier and more degrading of the burdens Solomon had placed on the people. The northerners killed him in a particularly insulting way, and Rehoboam barely escaped with his life.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Andrew C. Bowling, "1 Kings," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 529.