LESSON 8

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 24 2024

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 14–16; 1 Kings 15:8–16:34.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 8.

crossroads



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flashlight

"Alas, how had the glory of Israel departed! Never before had the chosen people of God fallen so low in apostasy. Of 'the prophets of Baal' there were 'four hundred and fifty,' besides four hundred 'prophets of the groves.' 1 Kings 18:19. Nothing short of the miracle-working power of God could preserve the nation from utter destruction. Israel had voluntarily separated herself from Jehovah, yet the Lord in compassion still yearned after those who had been led into sin, and He was about to send to them one of the mightiest of His prophets, through whom many were to be led back to allegiance to the God of their fathers" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 116).

keytext

"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war."

(2 Chronicles 16:9, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following spiritual battles from the easiest (1) to the hardest (10):

___ Keeping pure thoughts
___ Refraining from gossip
___ Being honest in schoolwork
___ Speaking only words of kindness
___ Managing anger
___ Spending adequate time with God
___ Refraining from drinking alcohol
___ Helping the undeserving
___ Setting appropriate relationship boundaries
___ Believing in God through hard times

did you know?

In an attempt to keep the different characters in the story straight, note the role each person played and the Hebrew meaning behind their name.

Asa (King of Judah)—"Physician" or "Doctor" or "Deity."

Omri (Made king of Israel instead of Zimri who had slain Elah)—"Bundle of corn" or "Impetuous" or "Jehovah apportions."

Ahab (Son of Omri, and his successor as the seventh king of Israel)—"Father's brother" or "Uncle."

Jezebel (Wife of Ahab and queen of Israel)—"Condemned" or "The woman who was a she-devil."

Hanani (The prophet who rebuked Asa for bribing Ben-Hadad)—"Jehovah is gracious" or "He hath shewed me mercy."

Baasha (King of Israel)—"Boldness" or "Offensive" or "He who lays waste."

Ben-Hadad (King of Aram, or Syria, who was bribed by Asa to break his alliance with King Baasha)—"Son of the god Hadah."

Abijah (The father of Asa)—"Jehovah is my Father" or "Father of the sea."

INTO THE STORY

"Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. . . . He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands."

"The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, 'Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.' "

"Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the LORD's temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. 'Let there be a treaty between me and you,' he said, 'as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me.'

"Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. . . . When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. . . .

"At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: 'Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. . . . For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.'

"Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people."

"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him."

"There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife."

(2 Chronicles 14:2, 4; 15:1–4; 16:2–5, 7, 9, 10; 1 Kings 16:30; 21:25, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

If you were to teach the story of Asa to kindergartners, what would you tell them is the main lesson we can learn from it?

What does the story of Asa teach us about being fully devoted to God?

What do the examples of Ahab and Jezebel teach us about secularism and worldliness?

Asa made some big mistakes in his life and yet the Bible says: "Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life" (2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV). How do you explain this verse? If Asa allowed some idol worship to continue, and then he was involved in a shady deal with Ben-Hadad, how is it that he was "fully committed to the LORD all his life"? What comparisons might you make between King David and Asa? Are there any other characters in the Bible whose stories are similar to Asa's?

punch lines

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' " **(Matthew 16:24, NIV).**

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" **(John 15:8, NIV).**

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation' " **(Acts 2:40, NIV).**

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good" **(Psalm 14:1, NIV).**

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" **(Hebrews 13:8, NIV).**

further insight

"The true Christian will make God first and last and best in everything. No ambitious motives will chill his love for God; steadily, perseveringly, will he cause honor to redound to his heavenly Father."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 68

Sabbath

Read Romans 7:15.

Review the *What Do You Think?* section. Then summarize today's Bible passage in your own words.

Sunday

Read Matthew 16:24.

Review the story of Asa in the *Into* and *Out of the Story* sections of the lesson. How does his story intersect with the following teachings of Jesus?

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24–27, NIV).

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30, NIV).

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9.

Review the *Key Text* for this week and reflect on the following questions:

In what specific ways does God "strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him"?

What does it mean for me to commit my heart fully to God?

What were the consequences for Asa because he had done foolish things? What are some of the consequences I have experienced because of my foolish decisions?

Tuesday

Read Acts 2:40.

After pursuing other gods, Israel plummeted into apostasy. In the *Flashlight* section, Ellen White writes: "Nothing short of the miracle-working power of God could preserve the nation from utter destruction."

What modern-day idols (things as well as unhealthy or inappropriate relationships) steal our devotion from God? How do these idols lead to destruction? How is God at work today to give us grace and power to stay focused on Him and avoid destruction?

Wednesday

Choose your favorite text from the *Punch Lines* and rewrite it in your own words.

Thursday

Read 2 Chronicles 16:7–10.

The prophet Hanani spoke a strong word of rebuke against Asa. Asa was not receptive to this reprimand. Instead of humbly searching his soul and confessing his sin, he "was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people" (2 Chronicles 16:10, NIV).

How do you receive constructive criticism? Do you appreciate it when God sends a word of reproof to you through a friend or family member? Why or why not?

How might Asa's legacy be different had he humbly received Hanani's reproof? What can you learn from Asa's reaction to criticism?

Friday

Read 2 Chronicles 15:17.

The story of King Asa reminds us that God is still looking for followers who are "fully committed." In what way might the followers of Christ today be involved, but not committed. Ask yourself these questions:

Am I involved or committed?

What would it mean for me to totally sell out to God?

What is God's dream for my life that can be realized only by radical commitment?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 8.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.