

# Episode 2: Family Matters

## Historical Books:

The historical books cover about 1,000 years, beginning as the Israelite people enter into the promised land and culminating with the return to Jerusalem following a divided kingdom and near destruction of the people of Israel. Within these books,

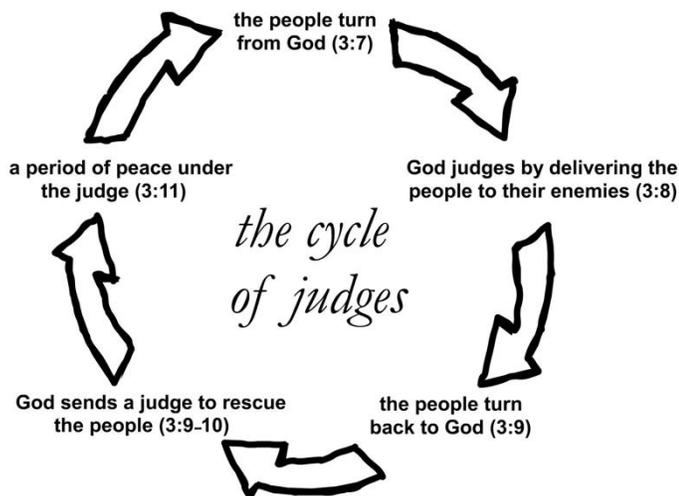
you will find the story of the rise and fall of King David, the breaking of a single kingdom into a northern and southern kingdom, and the period of exile and captivity because of the faithlessness of God's people. Through it all, there remains a common, consistent thread; God remains faithful to the promise made to God's people. The final three books in this collection, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah, tell the story of God bringing the people of Israel back to their homeland after captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple.



## Joshua:

Joshua is a story of violent conquest and fulfillment of God's promise to the people of God as they enter into the land they were promised. Joshua picks up the story where Deuteronomy ends. Chronicled within its pages are the conquests of God's people, the dividing of the land between the tribes of Judah (Jacob's Sons or Joseph's brothers). The book culminates in Joshua's farewell address and the directive to follow all the laws that they received from Moses.

## Judges:



The book of Judges is written in the time that Joshua has died, and the people of Israel are without a leader. With no one to give them direction, they are left to their own devices and quickly fall into a pattern of behavior that strays from God's covenant with God's people. (See graphic) Judges enter the story to help deal with the issues amongst the people and to protect and lead them in times of conflict. The book of Judges reminds the Israelite people what happens when actions, hate and unfaithfulness turn inward, causing their own destruction.

## **Ruth:**

Ruth recounts the story of a foreign-born, Moabite woman who lived during the time of the Judges when a famine spread across the land. Where death and loss, destruction and famine would take hold of God's people, Ruth turns the story to hope and a reminder of God's promise. (Ruth 1:16-17) Ruth, a foreigner, becomes the great-grandmother of King David.

## **1 & 2 Samuel:**

In the books of Samuel, we read about the rise and fall of Kings and Kingdoms. The book of Kings starts with the request from the people of Israel to instate a King (1 Samuel 8) and Samuel's proclamation that a king will do more harm than good. The books of Samuel follow the rise and demise of King Saul and King David, who led from different places. Saul follows his own heart, and David follows God's heart. While neither leader is perfect, there are other qualities of each that God uses. These books invite us to wonder and reflect how we live in a world with imperfect leaders and where God continues to remain faithful, often despite those moments where leaders fail.

## **1 & 2 Kings:**

In the opening chapters of 1 Kings, we hear the story of the ambitious King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba. It doesn't take long for the story to unfold, and Solomon kills Adonijah, the eldest living son of David's legitimate lineage. 1 Kings. 1 Kings paints a portrait of a leader bent on securing the throne and yet wise beyond his years in dealing with the affairs of God's people. (1 Kings 3:16-28- Dividing a baby in half). Solomon is credited for building an ornate temple in Jerusalem at the cost of the lives of his people, which ultimately leads to the rebellion and division of the Kingdom into the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdoms.



In 722 BC, the Assyrian army invaded Israel scattering the people in the northern kingdom, and the Babylonians scattered the land of Judah. By the end of 2 Kings, the people of God no longer inhabit their promised land. The people of God had been enslaved, scattered, and destroyed by their enemies.

## **1 & 2 Chronicles:**

The last book of the Hebrew Bible and gives a retelling of the entire story line up to this point. Beginning with the genealogies from Adam to David, it retells the positive elements of Israel's past and a hope for the promised post-exile rebuilding of God's temple and the promised messianic king. At the end of Chronicles, we catch a glimmer of hope as Persian powers come to be and release the people of Israel back to their temple in Jerusalem, returning them to their promised land. (2 Chronicles 36:23)

## **Ezra:**

In the book of Ezra, God's people are on the move back to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Ezra chronicles the rebuilding of the temple, the lineage of those who returned, and the prayers and reflections of the scribe Ezra as the work is going on. Ezra invites the people of Israel to remember their God and to remember the laws that Moses had passed down to them. He invites people to hear and bear witness to the faithfulness of God that was and is. "For we are slaves; yet in our bondage God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. (Ezra 9:9)

## **Nehemiah:**



Where Ezra chronicles the first two trips returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, Nehemiah follows the third trip following their exile in Babylon. Nehemiah was not a prophet or priest like Ezra but a simple layman who understood the importance of leadership within a community in order to preserve the remnant of the people of Israel left. Often

a book that points to leadership and leadership capacities, its insights also hold out hope that the people of God could work together to accomplish their goal. The task at hand was to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem while protecting themselves from their enemies, thus working towards the physical safety of God's people. Partnering with Ezra, Nehemiah worked towards rebuilding the spiritual awakening as well as the political and religious future of the people of God.

## **Esther:**

While Esther comes last in the order of historical books, the timeline for this comes in between Ezra and Nehemiah. Where the other two books hint at the connection of Persia to the people of Israel, Esther details how a simple Jewish girl became the queen of Persia and helped assist in restoring God's people along the way. While God is not explicitly mentioned in this book, one can easily identify the thread of God's faithfulness and the dedication to the promise God made.

### **Binge the Bible Weekly Reading Plan:**

Monday: Joshua 24

What word of promise do you hear in the words of Joshua?

Tuesday: Judges 2:6- 3:11

Judges is full of both promise and unfaithfulness. Promise that despite our best-efforts God still upholds God's end of the promise. How has this cycle, or pattern played out in the world today?

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 2:1-11

This prayer has become known as part of the Mary's Magnificat. The words point to a role reversal in the world. Those high will be brought low, and those lowly will be exalted. This theme plays out throughout the entirety of Samuel and Kings and the relationship to power and control. How do you see God working in the world either through or despite leaders?

Thursday: 1 Kings 12:1-24

Leadership is challenging. As we study history, we become more aware of how leaders shape the course of history and invite us into places where our faithfulness or faithlessness interfere with God's promise for the future.

Friday: Ezra 6:13-7:10

Ezra leads God's people back to Jerusalem and helps to rebuild the temple confronting and lifting up the things within God's people that lead them astray. How does history challenge and invite us to see the world with new lenses?

Saturday: Nehemiah 7:1-73

History helps us think about those who participated in the journey. We learn as much about the how as we do about the who. What has been your experience with the book of Nehemiah? What value do you see in this book?