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1 KINGS

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

The Kingdom Established — 1 Kings 1:1–2:46

Scripture Scope: 1 Kings 1:1–2:46 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

1 Kings — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Participant Study Edition)

Week 1: The Kingdom Established (1 Kings 1:1–2:46)

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- **The title:** In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings were one book. 1 Kings continues 2 Samuel without a break.
- **The setting:** About 120 years, from Solomon's accession (about 970 BC) to the death of Ahab and the reigns of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ahaziah in Israel (about 850 BC).
- **The main characters:** David, Solomon, Adonijah, Bathsheba, Nathan, Joab, Hiram, the queen of Sheba, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Ahijah, Asa, Omri, Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, Obadiah, Elisha, Naboth, Micaiah, and Jehoshaphat.
- **Its place in the Bible:** Kings explains to God's people, probably in exile, why the kingdom fell. Each king is measured by the standard of David and by loyalty to the LORD alone (Deuteronomy 12; 17:14–20). In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings).
- **The structure (three parts):**
  - Solomon's reign: its rise and its fall (chapters 1–11).
  - The divided kingdom (chapters 12–16).
  - Elijah and Ahab (chapters 17–22).
- **Why it matters:** The LORD keeps his promise to David, but the kingdom rises or falls by the king's heart toward the LORD and his word. Wisdom, the temple, and glory give way to idolatry, division, and decline, while the LORD's word through his prophets never fails. The book points beyond every failing king to Jesus, the Son of David and the one greater than Solomon.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of 1 Kings invites you to walk through the story of Israel's kings together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of 1 Kings and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. 1 Kings includes political executions, war, and violent judgments. The study retells those scenes briefly in its own words rather than printing or reading them in full, so the group can understand what happened without dwelling on graphic detail.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through 1 Kings:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week 1 Kings Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**The Kingdom Established** (1:1–2:46)	Adonijah's Bid and Solomon Anointed (1:1–53) / David's Charge and the Throne Secured (2:1–46)	The true Son of David, whose throne is established forever
2	**Wisdom from Above** (3:1–5:18)	Solomon Asks for Wisdom (3:1–28) / A Wise and Prosperous Kingdom (4:1–5:18)	Christ, greater than Solomon, the wisdom of God
3	**A House for the LORD's Name** (6:1–7:51)	The Temple Built (6:1–38) / The Palace and the Temple Furnishings (7:1–51)	The true temple, Jesus' body and his people
4	**The Glory Fills the House** (8:1–9:28)	The Ark, the Cloud, and Solomon's Prayer (8:1–66) / The LORD's Answer and Solomon's Projects (9:1–28)	God's glory dwelling with us; the one Mediator who prays for his people
5	**Splendor, Compromise, and a Torn Kingdom** (10:1–12:24)	Sheba's Visit and Solomon's Wealth (10:1–29) / Solomon's Turned Heart and the Kingdom Torn (11:1–12:24)	The King whose heart never turned; the kingdom that will not be divided
6	**The Sin of Jeroboam** (12:25–15:34)	Golden Calves and the Man of God (12:25–13:34) / Judgment on Jeroboam and the Kings That Follow (14:1–15:34)	The faithful lamp for David's sake; the true worship God seeks
7	**The LORD, He Is God** (16:1–19:21)	Ahab's Evil and Elijah's Drought (16:1–17:24) / Mount Carmel and Mount Horeb (18:1–19:21)	The LORD alone is God; the prophet who comes in Elijah's spirit and the One he announces
8	**The Word That Stands** (20:1–22:53)	Ahab's Wars and Naboth's Vineyard (20:1–21:29) / Micaiah's Word and Ahab's Death (22:1–53)	The Shepherd of scattered sheep; the righteous inheritance that cannot be stolen

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · 1 KINGS 1:1–2:46

Week 1: The Kingdom Established

Scripture Scope: 1 Kings 1:1–2:46 (ESV) • Focal Passages: 1 Kings 1:5–10; 1:28–40; 1:41–53; 2:1–4; 2:10–12 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: The Kingdom Established (1 Kings 1:1–2:46)

Passage 1 Kings 1:1–2:46

Opening

David is old and cannot keep warm. While he lies weak in his room, his son Adonijah declares, "I will be king," and throws a feast with Joab and Abiathar. Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba go in to remind the king of his oath that Solomon would reign. David acts at once: Solomon rides the king's mule to the Gihon spring, Zadok anoints him, the trumpet sounds, and the people shout, "Long live King Solomon!"

Before he dies, David charges his son to be strong and to walk in the LORD's ways. Then Solomon secures his throne, and the chapter closes: the kingdom was established in Solomon's hand.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	1 Kings 1:1–2:46 (David's old age, Adonijah's bid for the throne, Solomon anointed, David's charge and death, and the throne secured)
Focal Passages	1 Kings 1:5–10; 1:28–40; 1:41–53; 2:1–4; 2:10–12
Literary & Structural Anchor	The question "Who will sit on the throne?" is repeated again and again (1:13, 20, 27, 30, 35, 48; 2:12, 24), and the LORD's promise answers it. Adonijah exalts himself with chariots and runners, as Absalom did, and David had never corrected him (1:5–6). Nathan speaks at a turning point, as in 2 Samuel 7 and 12. Mule, oil, and trumpet publicly mark the true king. Adonijah and Joab grasp the altar (1:50; 2:28). The promise to David stands, but each king must walk in the LORD's ways (2:4). The word "established" frames chapter 2 (2:12, 46).
Big Idea	The LORD keeps his promise to David by establishing Solomon on the throne, and calls the king to walk in his ways.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Story:** Understand how Adonijah tried to seize the throne, how Solomon was anointed, and what David charged Solomon to do.
HEART	**Receive, Don't Grab:** Trust that the LORD gives what he has promised, and that true strength is found in keeping his word.
HANDS	**Walk in His Ways:** Take one concrete step to walk faithfully before the LORD with all your heart.

Opening Frame: Who Will Sit on the Throne?

2 Samuel ended with David buying a threshing floor and building an altar where the LORD's mercy stopped judgment (2 Samuel 24:18–25). The LORD had promised David a son on his throne and a kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Now David is old and dying, and the promise seems to hang in the balance. One son exalts himself and throws a feast to claim the crown, while the son the LORD chose waits in silence. A prophet and a mother step in, an old king makes a decision, and a new king rides to Gihon on David's own mule. Before he dies, David charges Solomon to keep the LORD's ways. The question for this week: will the throne be grabbed, or received from the LORD who promised it? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

> **1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question):** Think of a time you watched a leadership change in a family, workplace, team, or church. What made it go well or badly?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: From David to Solomon (1 Kings 1:1–2:46)

Passage 1 Kings 1:1–2:46

Entering the World of a Dying King and a Divided Court

1. Historical Background

David has reigned forty years. Amnon and Absalom are dead, and Adonijah is his oldest surviving son. David had sworn that Solomon, Bathsheba's son, would succeed him. Solomon reigned briefly alongside David before David's death.

2. Cultural Setting

In the ancient Near East there was no fixed rule that the oldest son inherited; the reigning king often named a successor, and rival princes fought for power. The Gihon spring, below the city of David, was a fitting public place for a coronation. Riding the king's own mule signaled the king's choice of heir. Asking for a former king's woman was a claim to his throne (2 Samuel 3:7; 16:21–22).

3. Literary Structure of 1 Kings 1:1–2:46

- **David in old age** (1:1–4)
- **Adonijah exalts himself** (1:5–10)
- **Nathan and Bathsheba** (1:11–27)
- **David's oath kept** (1:28–37)
- **Solomon anointed** (1:38–40)
- **The news reaches Adonijah** (1:41–48)
- **Adonijah spared** (1:49–53)
- **David's charge** (2:1–4)
- **Instructions on Joab, Barzillai, and Shimei** (2:5–9)
- **David's death** (2:10–12)
- **Adonijah's request and death** (2:13–25)
- **Abiathar banished** (2:26–27)
- **Joab's death** (2:28–35)
- **Shimei's death** (2:36–46)

4. Key Themes

The LORD's promise to David; self-exaltation; the prophetic word; the king under God's law; the throne established.

5. Theological Considerations

The promise to David is sure, yet each king must walk in the LORD's ways (2:4; compare 2 Samuel 7:14–15). Abiathar's removal fulfills the word against Eli's house (1 Samuel 2:27–36).

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Solomon's removal of rivals can be read both as the justice David requested and as political consolidation; the text allows both readings.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: The question "Who will sit on the throne?" comes up again and again in these chapters. Why does it matter so much in light of God's promise to David?

1.2 Q2: Adonijah gathered chariots and runners, just as Absalom had. What warning might the narrator be giving by echoing Absalom's story?

1.2 Q3: The book of Kings measures each king by the standard of David and by loyalty to the LORD. What do you think a good king looks like by that measure?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: Adonijah's Bid and Solomon Anointed (1 Kings 1:1–53)

Passage 1 Kings 1:1–53

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Summary of 1 Kings 1:1–4** — David was old and could not keep warm. His servants brought a young woman named Abishag from Shunem to attend him and care for him, though the king did not have relations with her.

- **Reader 1: 1 Kings 1:5–10** (focal passage) — Adonijah exalts himself, gathers chariots and runners, and holds a feast with Joab and Abiathar, leaving out Nathan, Zadok, Benaiah, and Solomon.
- **Reader 2: 1 Kings 1:11–27** (focal passage) — Nathan and Bathsheba remind David of his oath that Solomon would reign.
- **Reader 3: 1 Kings 1:28–40** (focal passage) — David keeps his oath; Solomon rides the king's mule to Gihon, is anointed, and the people rejoice.
- **Reader 4: 1 Kings 1:41–53** (focal passage) — The news reaches Adonijah; his guests scatter, and he grasps the horns of the altar until Solomon spares him.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **1 Kings 1:39:** There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!”
>
> **1 Kings 1:48:** And the king also said, ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted someone to sit on my throne this day, my own eyes seeing it.’”

Teaching Narrative: A Bid for the Throne and a King Anointed

1. A Weak King (1 Kings 1:1–4)

David's frailty creates a vacuum. Abishag is mentioned briefly; she is a young woman brought into the royal household to serve.

2. "I Will Be King" (1 Kings 1:5–10)

Adonijah exalts himself. The narrator notes that his father had never rebuked him.

3. The Prophet and the Queen (1 Kings 1:11–27)

Nathan, who once confronted David, now reminds him of his oath. Bathsheba speaks for her son.

4. An Oath Kept (1 Kings 1:28–37)

David swears by the LORD who redeemed him from every adversity and acts at once.

5. Long Live the King (1 Kings 1:38–40)

Mule, oil, and trumpet publicly mark the LORD's chosen king, and the city rejoices.

6. Grabbing Gives Way to Receiving (1 Kings 1:41–53)

Adonijah's feast collapses. David blesses the LORD for letting him see his successor. Adonijah clings to the altar and is spared for now.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

> **1.3 Q1:** Adonijah "exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king'" (1:5). What is the difference between grabbing a position and receiving what God gives?

1.3 Q2: The narrator says David had never displeased Adonijah by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" (1:6). What does this show about the cost of never correcting someone we love?

1.3 Q3: Nathan, who once confronted David about his sin, now speaks up again at a turning point. What does it take to speak up when something is going wrong?

1.3 Q4: When Solomon was anointed, "all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!'" (1:39). What made Solomon's kingship different from Adonijah's feast?

1.3 Q5: David blessed the LORD, who had "granted someone to sit on my throne this day, my own eyes seeing it" (1:48). What does it mean to see God keep a promise in your lifetime?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: David's Charge and the Throne Secured (1 Kings 2:1–46)

Passage 1 Kings 2:1–46

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: 1 Kings 2:1–4** (focal passage) — David charges Solomon to be strong and keep the LORD's charge as written in the Law of Moses.
- **Reader 2: 1 Kings 2:5–9** (focal passage) — David's instructions about Joab, Barzillai's sons, and Shimei.
- **Reader 3: 1 Kings 2:10–12** (focal passage) — David dies and is buried, and Solomon's kingdom is firmly established.
- **Summary of 1 Kings 2:13–46** — Adonijah asked Bathsheba to request Abishag as his wife. Solomon saw this as a claim to the throne and had Benaiah put him to death. Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood, fulfilling the word against Eli's house. Joab fled to the altar, and Benaiah put him to death there. Shimei was confined to Jerusalem; when he broke his oath and left, he too was put to death. So the kingdom was established in Solomon's hand.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **1 Kings 2:2–4:** “I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’
>
> **1 Kings 2:10:** Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.
>
> **1 Kings 2:12:** So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.

Teaching Narrative: A Father's Charge and a Kingdom Secured

1. Be Strong, Keep the Charge (1 Kings 2:1–4)

David's last words echo the LORD's charge to Joshua. Strength for a king means keeping the LORD's law, so that the promise will stand.

2. Unfinished Business (1 Kings 2:5–9)

David's instructions mix covenant kindness to Barzillai's sons with the settling of old accounts.

3. The Death of a King (1 Kings 2:10–12)

After forty years, David dies. The throne passes, and the kingdom is firmly established.

4. The Throne Secured (1 Kings 2:13–46)

Solomon removes Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei. The text allows us to see both justice and hard political consolidation.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** David told Solomon, "Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the LORD your God" (2:2–3). Why do you think David tied strength so closely to obedience?

> **1.4 Q2:** The promise was that David's sons would not lack a man on the throne "if your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart" (2:4). How can God's promise be certain and still call for faithful obedience?

1.4 Q3: David's last instructions included both kindness to Barzillai's sons and justice for old wrongs. What do you make of that mix?

1.4 Q4: "Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David" (2:10). How does the death of even a great king shape the way we read God's promises?

1.4 Q5: Chapter 2 begins and ends with the throne "established." What does it mean that the LORD, not only Solomon's actions, established the kingdom?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The True Son of David, Whose Throne Is Established Forever

Passage 1 Kings 2:12

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Solomon's throne, established as the LORD promised David, points forward to the true Son of David, who humbled himself and whose throne is established forever. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. The Throne of His Father David (Luke 1:32–33)

The angel told Mary that God would give her Son the throne of his father David, and that his kingdom would have no end.

2. Humbled, Then Exalted (Philippians 2:6–11)

Adonijah exalted himself. Jesus humbled himself, and God highly exalted him.

3. The King on a Donkey (Matthew 21:5–9; Zechariah 9:9)

Solomon rode David's mule to shouts of joy. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to the crowd's cries of blessing.

4. The Oath Fulfilled (Acts 2:29–36)

Peter preached that God swore to David to set one of his descendants on his throne, fulfilled when Christ was raised. David died and was buried; his Son lives and reigns.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **1 Kings 2:12:** So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: The angel said of Jesus, "the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David," and "of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). How is Jesus' throne different from Solomon's?

1.5 Q2: Paul writes that Jesus "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Philippians 2:8). How does Jesus' humility contrast with Adonijah's self-exaltation?

1.5 Q3: Peter said that David "both died and was buried," but that God raised up his Son (Acts 2:29–32). How does Christ's resurrection make God's promise to David sure?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	Adonijah grabbed for the throne, but the LORD kept his promise by establishing Solomon, and David charged his son to walk in the LORD's ways.
HEART	Jesus, the true Son of David, humbled himself and was exalted, and his throne is established forever.
HANDS	Faith receives what God gives, finds strength in keeping his word, and walks before him with all the heart.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Where are you tempted to grab for something rather than wait for what God gives?

1.6 Q2: David charged Solomon to "be strong" by keeping God's word. What is one practice that would help you keep God's word more faithfully this week?

1.6 Q3: Is there someone you love whom you have avoided correcting? What would loving, honest words look like?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, the LORD kept his promise to David by establishing Solomon on the throne, and David charged his son to walk in the LORD's ways.

Transition: The new king now has a throne. What will he ask of the LORD?

Week 2 Overview — Wisdom from Above (1 Kings 3:1–5:18): Movement 1, Solomon Asks for Wisdom (3:1–28), covers the LORD's offer at Gibeon, Solomon's request for an understanding mind, and the case of the two mothers. Movement 2, A Wise and Prosperous Kingdom (4:1–5:18), covers Solomon's officials, the peace and plenty of his reign, his famous wisdom, and his treaty with Hiram to build the temple. The Canonical Horizon traces Christ, greater than Solomon, the wisdom of God.

Focal Readings to Preview

- 1 Kings 3:3–15
- 1 Kings 3:16–28
- 1 Kings 4:20–34
- 1 Kings 5:1–12

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD our God, thank you that you keep every promise you make. Forgive us for the times we grab what we want instead of receiving what you give. Give us strength to keep your charge and to walk in your ways, as David urged his son. We pray for those who are caring for aging parents, and for those facing their own decline; give them patience, peace, and help. Thank you for Jesus, the Son of David, who humbled himself and whose throne is forever. Help us walk before you faithfully, with all our heart and with all our soul. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.