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CURRENT SERIES

Kingdom

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Welcome. Today we are on our fifth session, really working through the whole Bible. We're going from Genesis all the way to Revelation in 13 weeks. And today we're looking at the fifth one and it's going to be an incredible time to study God's word together today.



Max Anders wrote a brilliant book called *“30 Days To Understanding the Bible”*, which became the platform for some of what we’re doing here. I encourage you to get that book and read it. In the book he makes this statement: “If you want to be free to sail the seven seas, you’ve got to make yourself a slave to a compass.” We get that, don’t we? Now we don’t like it, but we get it. Because what we really would like as humans, every one of us in our heart of hearts, we desire the ability to experience total freedom. That would be freedom to do whatever we wanted to do and also freedom to control the consequences, but that kind of freedom is an illusion. It doesn’t actually exist. And so if you want to be free from the toothbrush, you make yourself a slave to the cavities. If you want to be free from the cavities, you make yourself a slave to the toothbrush. We get that, right? So along the way you have to choose who you are going to obey, what you’re going to follow, what you’re going to serve, understanding what the consequences of that would be.

And that’s part of what we’ve been looking at in the story of humanity as we started off in Genesis – in the beginning, our first session. We looked at this idea that God created Adam, but Adam rebelled against God, sinned, plunged the human race into sin, so God picked another individual, Abraham. God gave him the responsibility to raise up a family who would represent God to the nations. That was Abraham and the nation of Israel. And then we saw in the Exodus that God’s people, the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt and God used Moses as the key figure to bring them out of the bondage of Egypt through miraculous works, and then he gave them the law. And then Joshua in the Conquest took the people into the land of Canaan, they defeated their enemies, and they divided up the land so that they would have a place to live. And it

seems like the nation of Israel now has everything they need, right? Think about what they have - first of all they have God's presence. *Yahweh*, who introduced himself to Moses, "My name is I am." *Yahweh* introduces himself and then he shows them who he is through the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the plagues, the manna from heaven, all of the miracles that God shows himself and says "I am with you."

They also have God's word. At Mount Sinai he gave them the Law. Here is the moral law, the ceremonial law, the civil law, this is how you live, this is how you work, this is how you worship. So they got God's presence and his power, they got God's word, and now they have the Promised Land. They've got a place to live. You would think that they would have everything they wanted and from that place to be able to build a platform of a society of worshippers who could then take the good news and display it to all the nations of the world. That's what God was intending to do with them, but what happens? Instead of that, each person decides that they're going to do their own thing. They want a different kind of freedom. They don't want to embrace God so they embraced idols. They don't want to embrace his Word, so they embrace their own ideas. They don't want to embrace God's leaders, and so they're kind of doing their thing, and the nation of Israel goes into the Judges period where they sin, they find themselves being enslaved, they cry out to God, God raises up a judge - guys like Barak, guys like Deborah, guys like Sampson, people like Gideon that come along and help them out, and then they go right back to their old ways beforehand. And so before we start the Kingdom, which we're going to look at today we read a passage at the end of the book of Judges.

So if you will grab your Bibles we're going to be looking at several passages today. If you grab your Bibles, in Judges, the very last verse of the book of Judges, and it reads this way:

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

In the absence of someone to tell them what to do, everybody did whatever they wanted to do. In fact, by the end of the book of Judges, if you ever want to read just an incredibly bizarre story, go read the book of Judges. By the end of the book of Judges they have deteriorated into civil war to the degree that the whole tribe of Benjamin is almost completely exterminated. That's how bad it's gotten when they decide to do things their way. No king, everybody does what's right in their own eyes.

Well the book of Samuel opens with the conditions as they were. The priest at that time was Eli. Eli was a mediocre guy, but his sons were wicked. They would steal from people, they would sleep with the women that came to the

tabernacle to worship God. I mean they were just bad all the way around, and God says, "I'm going to deal with that." At the same time there's just a regular, ordinary family. And this family, the wife is barren – she can't have children. She cries out to the Lord and she says to the Lord, "If you will give me a child I'll give him back to you." And God gives her a child. She becomes pregnant, she has this son, Samuel. She brings Samuel to Eli, the priest, and says "Here, my son is going to live with you, he's going to help you. He's here, dedicated to the Lord. And Samuel grows up to be a great prophet of God. In fact, Samuel is respected, he helps the nation of Israel refocus their priorities on God, Samuel leads them into some battles where they defeat some of their enemies. Samuel is doing great, and then the people come to Samuel, toward the end of his life, and if you turn to Chapter 8 of 1 Samuel. By the way, this section that we're covering here, covers the books of first and second Samuel, first and second Kings, and first and second Chronicles. So six books of the Bible we're going to cover in the next 20 minutes. Watch this.

So what happens is, look at verse 1:

"When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of the firstborn was Joel, the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice."

So Eli's kids didn't do right and now Samuel comes along to replace them, and his kids are grown now and they're not doing right. Samuel is old and it seems like that one generation is having an impossible time passing on their faith to the next generation, and so the people come to him. And here's what happens:

"So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, 'You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'"

That's important to note because that's going to come back. We need a king because you're old and your sons are worthless, and we need a king that's going to lead us so we can be like all the other nations. So this thing that God has set up for them. Think about this because it's very significant. This thing that God has set up for them, this plan, where each individual would be able to actually look at the Law, read the Law, know what the Law says. That God would be personally involved with their lives so that they could follow him. They have a place to build a society and to send out the word to the nations about God. That's not good enough. We can't do this. We need some help. We need a king. We can't live in our own personal freedom, we can't live like a

kingdom of priests where everybody takes personal responsibility for their own actions. We've got to have somebody else tell us what to do. Seems kind of weird, doesn't it?

You spend your whole life trying to get people to quit telling you what to do, and yet there's some kind of comfort that people find in somebody else being responsible to solve the problems of the world. Samuel takes this personally. Notice what it says in verse 6:

"But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us,' this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.'"

God was their king. They were supposed to operate individually under God's leadership. God says "They're rejecting me." And he goes on to say:

"As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

And then he goes on to tell them if you read the rest of the chapter, basically he says "He's going to take all of your sons and he's going to make them run before his chariots. They will be his army. They will work on his work projects. He's going to take your daughters and he's going to make them perfumers and bakers in his house working for him. He's going to take a tenth of your land, a tenth of everything you produce." Taxes were a little lower then, right? "But he's going to take a tenth of everything you guys make and he's going to take it for himself, and he's going to take the best of everything. Do you really want that," and they said "Yes, we want a king because he will fight our battles for us." God you're not capable of fighting it. You didn't prove yourself in Egypt, did you? You didn't prove yourself at Jericho, did you? We need a king to fight our battles for us. And so this section of the kingdom takes over Israel's history from 1051BC to 586BC we have the Kingdom.

And so the main figure in the Kingdom here is David. And the storyline goes something like this. The storyline for this section, so you kind of have a framework for it: **David, the greatest king in the new monarchy, is followed by a succession of mostly unrighteous kings, and God eventually judges Israel for her sin, sending her into exile.** So this king thing is not going to work.

Now let me just pause here because I think we have the same issue. How many of you are thinking, "If we could just get the right person in the White House, America would turn back to God." That's the problem with us as Christians. We really believe that. We really do. And that's why we have been given the word of God; so we'll see, we'll learn from what happened in the past. Some of us are thinking, "If we just got the right President at the University of Texas or Texas A&M University they would become Christian schools." Some of us are thinking, "If we could just get the right employer in our business, then it would be a Christian workplace." Some of us are thinking, "If we could just get the right man living in our house, the right dad, the right father, the right husband, then everything would go right." You know what that does? That takes away responsibility. It's not your fault that the U.S. is not acting like a Christian nation. It's somebody else's fault. It's not your fault that the work environment that you're in does not reflect Christian values. That's your boss's fault. It's not your fault that the education system does not glorify Jesus. That's some president's fault or some college president or teacher's fault. It's not your fault that your family is not reflecting God. That's the husband's job, right? We have this tendency to believe that if we could just get the right person to tell us what to do, then we would do it. Guess who they had as their king? They had God as their king and they didn't do it. So now they think, "Well if we get a human king in there he'll do a better job," right? Be careful what you wish for because you might just get it.

So Samuel goes out and anoints Saul, and Saul is the right guy. Obviously he's the right guy - he's the best looking guy. He had the rock-hard abs. (congregation laughs) He is the tallest guy, the text says he stood head and shoulders above all the rest of the people. If we're going to have a king to fight our battles for us don't you think we ought to get the biggest guy, right? Like if you're going to have a street fight you're going to go get the big guy unless he's a Ninja, then you can take a smaller guy, but other than that, you're going to go get a big guy to fight with you. So they get Saul to be their king. And he looks humble at first, but obviously he's way over his head. And so in Chapter 13, the first major battle that he goes out to fight, he thinks he's really good. He gathers 3,000 Israelites, they're going to go fight the Philistines, and the Philistines show up with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 footmen, and more individual soldiers than you can count. And all of a sudden Saul goes, "Oh my goodness. What am I going to do." And so he calls Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice, bring the priest to offer a sacrifice, get God's blessing before we go. They get word back that Samuel is out of town and it's going to take him seven days to get here. Saul waits and on the first day his men start deserting, and on the second day more, and the third day more, and the fourth day more. So by the seventh day he's down to 600 men. And Saul says, "Bring the animals in here. I'll do it." And he cuts the throats of the animals, offers them as a sacrifice,

and while they're burning on the altar Samuel walks up. Couldn't wait to do it God's way, right?

He put expediency over obedience. Expediency over obedience and he begins the demise of his kingdom. It just keeps going like that from that point forward. Every time he gets in a jam he goes for expedience instead of obedience, and his kingdom starts to fall apart. The height of that moment takes place after God has already rejected Saul from being king. He says your kids are not going to sit on your thrown. It's not going to happen. This is the end of this dynasty. So in the midst of all of that, God sends out Samuel to anoint another person and sends him to a family where he picks the youngest kid who's still a shepherd boy to anoint as King David. And Saul's in the middle of another major battle. And so Saul is standing there - you've got the Philistine army is on one side, you've got the Israelite army on the other side, and out in the middle walks the biggest guy you've ever seen in your life. He's actually bigger than you've ever seen. And he walks out into the field of battle. His name is Goliath. He says, "We can settle this right here and now. Send out your biggest and best fighter. Send out your best fighter, and he and I will fight and if kill him then you guys will be our servants. And if he kills me --" And everybody's thinking "Well that would be uhhhhh." Who would that be? Saul right? Give us the king so he can fight our battles for us, right? He's the biggest guy. He's got the best armor. Send Saul out there. The only problem is that Saul is now the king and guess what the king gets to do? The king gets to do whatever he wants to do, and he doesn't want to go out there because he's going to die out there. Or that's what he thinks. So he sits in his tent and there's this stalemate, and David shows up to bring supplies to his brothers at the battle and he hears the guy talking. And he says, "Somebody should go do something about him. Why is nobody going to do something about him?" They say, "Well maybe you should do something." He said, "Okay, maybe I will." He goes down and picks up five stones out of the brook and he puts them in the only weapon he has, which is a slingshot. And he begins to advance toward Goliath. I want you to see what he says over in 1 Samuel 17. I want you to see the attitude of David as he advances toward the giant Goliath. In verse 45,

"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.'"

Who's the king? According to David it's the Lord. Why in the world did we ever pick this human who's sitting in his tent with his armor, shivering in fear. That's what you wanted, you wanted to do what everybody else does - get a king. David says, "There's one king and that king's going to show up here today." Don't tell me that David was a good slingshot thrower kind of guy or whatever you would call those people who throw slingshots. That he was a good slinger. That's not what this is about. David was just simply saying, "I'm taking God to the battle, and I'm not coming with anything else." And he didn't have anything. And what he did was he killed Goliath and that day there was an eruption of confidence in God that just spilled over the battlefield and all through the house.

And so David's kind of a hero. And the next day as the men are marching back into the city all the women come out with their tambourines and they're singing their songs, and their singing about how this great battle, how great Israel is, and all the things that happened, and they sing. Saul has slain his thousand, but David his tens of thousands. Ladies, don't do that. For whatever reason men have this really big problem called "ego." They tend to compare their accomplishments with other men, and it's just, I mean if you want to pick a fight on the way home, notice that the person that's driving next to your husband if you're married or your boyfriend or whoever, and just say, "Boy that person is a really good driver. Maybe you should learn something from him." (congregation laughs) Some of you are evil enough that you're actually thinking that right now. (congregation laughs) I wonder if I can get away with that, you know.

From this point forward Saul is fearful and he begins to try to kill David. And so the rest of the book of 1 Samuel is all about David fleeing from Saul, trying to stay away from him and Saul trying to kill him. So while the government is not running, Saul's out trying to get rid of David and this big conflict ensues. There's a lot to learn about how to deal with conflict in that story. So y'all want to read the rest of that. Finally Saul is wounded in a battle, he takes his own life, the tribe of Judah picks David to be their king and he rules over Judah for seven years while the rest of the clan of Saul hold the northern tribes. And finally after seven years they give it up. David takes over, and David at age 30 becomes the king and reigns for 40 years.

Now during this period of time, of the kings, on the world stage, between the 1051BC and 586BC the Mayan Empire is founded in the Americas, the first Olympic Games are run in Greece, you also have during this time Homer is writing the "*The Iliad and the Odyssey*," I know some of you have read that. During this period of time Rome, the city, is being founded, or the traditional

city of Rome is being founded. And so lots and lots going on in the world, but these kings are beginning to emerge.

David comes on the scene as the absolute greatest king of the nation of Israel. He has a heart and a passion for God, and the first thing David does as he becomes king of the United Empire is he goes to the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, he conquers it. He makes that the capitol. He brings the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant into the city and he tells God, "I want to build a permanent temple to you in the city." To which God says to him, "David you are a man of bloodshed. All the battles you've fought, all the people you've killed, all the conflict you've been involved in. I will not have my temple associated with the name of the man who has done as much as you have done. And so your son will be the one who actually builds the temple. And David spent the rest of his life putting aside preparations, money and materials to build the grandest temple, but never got to build it. God said to David, "Because you love me with your whole heart, I'm going to have someone sit on your throne from your family forever and ever and ever." Which is why in the New Testament we see clearly Jesus Christ comes from the line of David. You see how over 1500 years and 40 different authors writing 66 books of the Bible and the thing fits together, supernatural, miraculous, the nature of the Bible.

In the process of that David does great -- he extends the empire, solidifies the people, makes the worship of God a priority. But in the midst of that he's still a man - he's still a man, and he gets involved with Bathsheba, he has her husband killed, they have a child, he's confronted about that. Even though he repents about that the latter half of his reign is marred by conflict within this family that spills over into the rest of the nation of Israel including a civil war with his son Absalom. Finally after 40 years of reign David dies and his son Solomon ascends to the throne.

It appears that Solomon is going to finally be the king that establishes everything and makes it all work out. So everybody is excited about Solomon. Solomon comes to the throne and God appears to Solomon and says, "I'm going to be with you. Ask me whatever you want and I'll give it to you." And Solomon said, "Listen I'm just a kid. I don't have the wisdom of my father. I don't know how to lead these people. If you would be with me and give me your wisdom." And God is so happy with Solomon for asking for that. He said, "Since you didn't ask for long life, you didn't ask for military prowess, you didn't ask for wealth, I'm going to give you all of those things and wisdom." And God pours it on him. And Solomon becomes the greatest mind on the planet. He's an architectural genius. He's got the economic thing going - he starts trade routes really going all over the Mediterranean. The guy's bringing in gold and money like you haven't ever seen before. It's just unbelievable. He

sets up this governing district, sets up this great plan for how to lead the people. He's just - everything's going together right. Art and literature and economics and architecture and human government -- all of this, he's just doing an incredible job. And you think, "Well finally we got the right king in place, and if you get the right king in place then everything works because that's all we need, right? We get just one guy, one person in the right place and the rest of us will just all fall in line." But Solomon also has humanity as his curse.

I want you to see what happens in 1Kings 11. In 1Kings Chapter 11 it says:

"King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter - Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray."

Give us a king so that we can be like all the other nations. Well how does it work? Well here's how it works. If you're a vassal nation and you can get your daughter to marry the king of the powerful nation, then he won't go to war against you. He'll look favorably on you. And Solomon, as the king that's leading the whole area, everybody and their brother offers him their daughter as a wife. Seven hundred of these royal marriages. Again, we have expedience over obedience. Solomon is just doing what kings do, right? This is how you do business in the world today. This is how business gets done. This is how governments are formed. This is how things work. And so he's got a thousand women to keep up with. That's not a good thing people . . . it's just not a good thing. (congregation laughs) If you're fortunate enough to have one good woman, men, just one, that's all you can handle, okay? And Solomon does exactly the opposite of what David did. When David did wrong he repented, broken and lived with the consequences of his actions. Watch what Solomon does in verse 4:

"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed the Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab."

What did they do with the worship of the god Chemosh? They took their infant children out and as they prayed to the god they would lay their infant children into the fire in human sacrifice, and Solomon built a temple to Chemosh. We have archeological evidence that dates from the time of Solomon showing these little urns filled with tiny bones because Solomon is now actually participating in human sacrifice. The worst you can imagine. Just give us a king so we can be like all the other nations. And here they go. Just like all the other nations.

The rest of Solomon's life doesn't go well. He loses in battle, things aren't happening the way that they should. Finally he gets to the end of his life and he dies. His son Rehoboam comes to the throne, and here we move from the United Kingdom, the kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon, the time of prosperity, the time when the monarchy was working to the Divided Kingdom. And in the Divided Kingdom we're going to see civil war break out almost immediately.

So Rehoboam, the son, comes to the throne. When he lands on the throne he says, "Listen, I'm king now and I want to unite the clans again." He calls all the tribal leaders together, all the elders come together and they say to him, "Listen, okay we're happy to serve you, but you've got to lighten the load. I mean Solomon conscripted our kids. They worked in his fields and in his vineyards, they worked in his mines, they built his monuments, they fought his battles, they manned his sailing ships. You've got to give us a break. Can you lighten up the load?" And so Rehoboam did what you do - you go to your advisors. So he went to his dad's advisors, all of the old guys and said "What should we do?" And they said, "Hey these people have a point. The kingdom's not going well, you're not your dad, you don't have his charisma and wisdom. You probably ought to do some concessions here." He went to his contemporary advisors, the young kids that grew up with him running around the palatial palace, and said "What should we do?" and they said "Tell those people that you're the king and you're going to make it ten times harder than Solomon made it. Who do they think they are telling you what to do?" Rehoboam listened to his peers and he told them that and everybody went to their own tent, and they came back with a new king. His name is Jeroboam. And at that point in time the kingdom divided - 10 tribes to the north and the 2 tribes to the south.

So let's kind of see what this looks like on the map.



Here's the nation, and you can see that the top, the land for the two tribes to the south is almost as big, but there's a lot of desert in the southern part. And the land at the top, these are the two kingdoms and they're going to last for several years. We'll talk about that in just a moment.

Let me stop for just a moment of application. Who do you listen to young people? Who's got the best insight for you? Your peers, people your age, people that are around your age, or like old people? People my age. Like who do you listen to when it comes to making decisions about relationships, behavior and moral values - I mean, who do you listen to? See in Rehoboam's case he had a group of arrogant young people giving him wisdom. And he had a group of humble older people giving him wisdom. Now which is better - arrogant young people or humble old people? You say, "Tim that's a set-up. You sound like my dad. That's something my dad would say." Okay, let me change it for you. Let me make it fair. Who is it better to listen to - humble younger people or humble older people? Now think about that. Which of those two has the most life experience? Someone who's 18 or someone who's 38? Think about it. (a young person from the congregation yells out "38") I like that. (congregation laughs) It only makes sense because think about yourself. For those of you who are 18, 19, 20, 21, 28 - divide your age in half and think about what you've gained by way of experience in this second half. So what you knew when you were 9 and what you thought about the world, how you processed that. And now you're 18. Wouldn't you say that you've grown in

your capacity to see clearly by leaps and bounds over that period of time? So here's what's so cool. The cool thing about the family that God desired and intended, that he created, the church, was always intended to be intergenerational. Not all old, not all young, not all families with kids, not all singles. The power of intergenerational is huge. If you're a young person and you don't have any humble, older people in your life that you're asking life questions to and you're listening to you're missing out on what God intended when he developed the church. On the same hand, if you're an older person and you don't have any younger people that you're listening to, you're missing out on the energy and the idealism and the freshness of a younger generation. And we're supposed to come together. So God has designed it where we listen to one another and we value wisdom and experience, and we value idealism and energy. And when we put those together in a family, in an army we have something powerful.

Be careful that you don't isolate yourself like Rehoboam did, and he made a colossal, bad decision. That bad decision divided the kingdom, and what we see in the next division is two kingdoms that emerged from this.

First of all there's the Northern Kingdom that becomes the unrighteous kingdom. The first thing Jeroboam realizes is - in the set-up here since Jerusalem is in the part of the Southern Kingdom and you have to go there to worship, all the people are going to go there and they're going to realize, "What are we doing? We need to get back together." And so he set up altars, golden calf worship in various places so that the people wouldn't have to go back. And they began to actually institute idol worship into the Northern Kingdom. This

is the idol area, that altar there is in the province of Dan. He set that up. Cindy and I actually went there when we traveled to the Holy Land, the same place. There was a golden calf there. People



came and they offered their allegiance to the gods of Baal right there in that spot. So think about it this way. What we have here now is we have the Northern Kingdom that's going to last a little over 200 years before it goes into

exile, 20 kings and all of them are bad. Every single one of them. Leading the Northern nation into total idolatry until God brings the Assyrians in 722BC and carries them off into captivity.

The Southern Kingdom has 20 kings as well. Eight of them are reasonably good; 12 of them are bad. So they are the inconsistent kingdom. And they last a little bit longer to 586BC, and that's when the Babylonians come and that's when the book of Daniel and all of that - we'll go back and we'll look at that in a coming week as we look at the exile coming up in a couple of weeks.

It brings us all back to this: God has created you as an individual and you have, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you have what you need. You've got the Word of God, you've got the Holy Spirit, you've got the church, the believers to encourage and hold each other accountability. You've got a commission or A mission. So if we do not see righteousness and holiness and we don't see mission and we don't see good things taking place there's only one place to look. Start here (points to his heart). Don't worry about what's out there. Start here and then move to the circle of friends around you. Don't give up your freedom to the hope that some other human being is going to make it -- someday that you'll get a pastor of a church that's so good that you'll never sin again? It's just not going to happen. It's not going to happen. You've been called to be a priest. To reflect the glory of God through your life. Don't sell out to somebody else.

Let's bow our heads for prayer. Father, we just acknowledge that in our struggle against sin that so often we feel like we just need somebody to fix all of this. Father you have called us to trust you, to look to you, to lean on your Spirit, to bathe deeply in your word, to spend time in your presence, to seek you, and to let obedience trump expedience. Father I pray that our hope would be directed toward you, that we wouldn't follow the path of the nations. We wouldn't follow the path of Israel, but that we would follow the path of Jesus Christ. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.