

engage

Prepare to be shocked. In this issue of **engage**, we'll read the scandalous stories of Old Testament kings; we'll see a surprising view of sex in *Song of Songs*; we'll watch Jesus shaking the foundations of religion; and we'll tackle our sickening sins with Paul. Get ready for some shocking stuff.

*** DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: Read some shocking history in **1 Kings**; stamp on sin with **1 Corinthians**; see God's view on sex in **Song of Songs**; and walk in Jesus' footsteps with **Matthew**.

*** TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

*** REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **we smuggle Bibles with Brother Andrew**.

*** TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions our friends bombard us with. This time we ask: **Is Christianity only for weak people?**



*** ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we look at what the Bible says about **prayer**.

*** STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **What does the Bible say about homosexuality?**

*** TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you understand the Bible. This issue we see how the Bible uses **repetition** to teach us stuff.

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see the Bible at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say "**Read 1 Kings 1 v 1–14**", look up 1 Kings in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page 1 Kings starts on. Find chapter 1 of 1 Kings, and then verse 1 of chapter 1 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

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THIS SHOCKING ISSUE OF ENGAGE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

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1 Kings

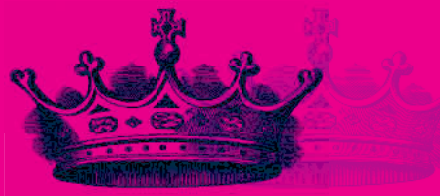
Ruling passion

If you think history is a snooze then 1 Kings is the book to wake you up. It's packed with power struggles, epic battles, heart-breaking drama and more twists and turns than a Hollywood thriller.

The action's set in the united kingdom of Israel, the nation God chose to be His very own. Then civil war breaks out and the kingdom splits in two — north (Israel) and south (Judah). The story is told through the two nations' kings. Some are good and some are bad. Some are really bad.

In 1 Kings, a good king submits to God and keeps His commands. He listens to God's spokesmen (prophets) and leads God people to do the same. He refuses to tolerate other gods.

David was a good king. God promised to make his son, Solomon, king after him. After a good start, Solomon turned bad. And after him, things got worse among God's people. Mostly their kings were terrible. God kept



sending prophets to show He was still in charge and to tell people to turn back to Him.

As you read this royal blockbuster:

- observe God in the driving seat of history
- notice how powerful His words are
- watch God not afraid to judge His people
- see God keeping promises He made centuries earlier
- listen to God calling His people to love Him back
- and see how the shocking history of God's people under bad human kings points to the need for a perfect King from God.

If you're a Christian, you know this King personally. King Jesus. You won't find a better king than Him — not among all the rulers of God's people that you're about to meet...



1

Son block

King David was old. And cold — he needed a human hot-water bottle. One of his sons, Adonijah, exploited his dad's old age to try to take over. But God wanted another of David's sons on the throne.

👁️ Read 1 Kings 1 v 1–14

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *Why was David's grip on power slipping? (v1–4)*
- ▷ *What did Adonijah do to exploit this? (v5, 7, 9)*
- ▷ *What did Nathan and Bathsheba do about it? (v11–14)*

Bathsheba was one of David's wives and Solomon's mum. Nathan was God's spokesman — a prophet. They saw Adonijah's plot and decided to do something about it. Verses 15–27 go into the details.

👁️ Read verses 28–40

- ▷ *What did David do?*
- ▷ *How did he make sure Solomon was accepted by people as their new king? (v38–40)*
- ▷ *What was Benaiah's prayer? (v37)*

At the start of the chapter, David seemed lifeless and useless but what a turnaround! David was decisive and made sure that Solomon would be

king, with God's approval.

THINK IT OVER

- ▷ *What gets you fired up and leaping into action?*

👁️ Read verses 41–53

- ▷ *What did David recognise about God's involvement? (v47–48)*
- ▷ *How did Adonijah react? (v50)*
- ▷ *What was Adonijah's only chance of survival? (v52)*

God had said Solomon would be king after David. God was in charge behind the scenes and He kept His word. As He always does.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that He's always in control. Ask Him to get you fired up and leaping into action over things that are important to Him.

➔ TAKE IT FURTHER

For a little more, try page 108.

2**Father's orders**

Solomon is now king of Israel. His dad, David, is old and nearing death, but he still has some important words of advice for Solomon.

 Read 1 Kings 2 v 1–4**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

▷ *What did David tell Solomon he must do? (v3)*

▷ *And what would be the results?*

v3:

v4:

David says that being a real man and having real strength means obeying God. If Solomon lived God's way He'd have success in everything he did.

Verse 4 is a massive one in 1 Kings. If Israel's kings stayed faithful to God and were careful to obey Him, then things would go well for them. Later, we'll find out the consequences of ignoring these wise words.

 Read verses 5–12

▷ *What must Solomon do with Joab? (v6)*

▷ *Why? (v5)*

▷ *What about the guys in v7?*

▷ *What promise had David made to foul-mouthed Shimei? (v8)*

▷ *But what would Solomon do? (v9)*

Tomorrow we'll see if Solomon took his father's advice and showed strength as God's king.

GET ON WITH IT

▷ *Which of God's commands do you need to take more seriously?*

▷ *Whose advice should you listen to more?*

▷ *What changes do you need to make to walk in God's ways?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Talk these things over with God right now.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Be strong and walk in God's ways.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Marching orders: go to page 108.



3

Enemy elimination

David had advised Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei for their crimes against God. Solomon also had to deal with his rebellious brother, Adonijah, who had promised to behave himself.

👁️ Read 1 Kings 2 v 13–25

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶️ What did Adonijah ask for? (v17)
- ▶️ Why did Solomon say no? (v22)
- ▶️ What was the outcome? (v23–25)

Adonijah sneakily used Solomon’s mum in his devious plans to get Abishag, who had been one of King David’s wives. Taking a previous king’s wife was virtually claiming to be king yourself — Adonijah was trying to take Solomon’s place as king. Solomon had warned Adonijah what would happen if he continued to be a bad lad and so he was killed.

👁️ Read verses 26–35

- ▶️ Why did rebellious Abiathar escape the death sentence? (v26)

- ▶️ Why was Joab killed? (v31–32)

👁️ Read verses 36–46

- ▶️ What deal did Solomon strike

with Shimei? (v36–38)

- ▶️ But what happened? (v39–40)
- ▶️ For what two reasons was Shimei killed? (v42–44)

These men had all disobeyed God and rebelled against God’s chosen king. They paid for it with their lives. Solomon was now in a very strong position as king. When Jesus returns to establish His kingdom, He too will wipe out His enemies. You can’t go against God and His King and survive.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Pray for people you know who openly speak against God and against King Jesus. Ask God to turn their lives upside down so they realise who’s the boss and who they must worship.

➔ TAKE IT FURTHER

To hear what Jesus said on this topic, turn to page 108.

4

Wise choice

King Solomon is now firmly in charge of God's people, Israel. But he's not most famous for his power. Solomon was well-known for his great wisdom — and here's how he got it.

 **Read 1 Kings 3 v 1–3**
ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▶ *What kind of king was Solomon? (v3)*

“High places” were worship centres away from Jerusalem where people made sacrifices to God. Later on, people started worshipping false gods at these places. But at this point they're OK-ish, but not ideal.

 **Read verses 4–15**

▶ *What was God's great offer? (v5)*

▶ *What was Solomon's surprising answer? (v9)*

▶ *What did God give him? (v12–14)*

▶ *Why? (v10–11)*

Solomon could have asked for any selfish thing — wealth, success, — but he asked for wisdom to serve God well. To those who long to live for God and serve Him, He gives them

far more than they ask for or deserve.

 **Read verses 16–28**

▶ *How does this bizarre story show Solomon's great wisdom?*

▶ *What effect did it have on the people? (v28)*

God kept His word and gave King Sol great wisdom. Everyone was amazed at Solomon's wisdom and knew that it was from God. The Lord gives all His people different abilities to serve Him with. If we use them, people will see what a great God we serve.

PRAY ABOUT IT

What can you ask God for that would help you live for Him more? Thank God for His great faithfulness and generosity to His people.

 **TAKE IT FURTHER**

More wise words on page 108.



5

Let there be lists

Loads of lists today. There are two lists of important people. Then there's a shopping list of the huge amount Sol's household ate everyday. And finally we have a list of the great and wise things Solomon did. Dig in...

Read 1 Kings 4 v 1–19

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▶ *What are the two different lists? (v2, 7)*

What's the point of all these names? Well, they show us more of the wisdom that God gave Solomon. He made sure that Israel was ruled properly. Being wise sometimes means organising and planning things so they run smoothly. Admin may be boring but it can help us serve God more effectively.

Read verses 20–28

▶ *How are God's people described? (v20)*

▶ *What did the nations around Israel do? (v21)*

▶ *What was life like for God's people during Sol's reign? (v24)*

God was keeping His promises to His people. They were now a huge, great

nation, living in their own land in peace. If they continued to obey God, the future would be awesome.

Read verses 29–34

▶ *How wise was Solomon? (v29–31)*

▶ *How did he use this wisdom? (v32–34)*

▶ *Where did it come from? (v29)*

Superb. God was reaching the world through Solomon. But Sol was far from perfect, as we'll see later on. God was being massively generous to a flawed human king.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that He gives us far more than we deserve. Thank Him for always keeping His promises. Thank Him for the best promise and best gift ever — sending Jesus to rescue us.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Feeling listless? Go to page 108.



6

Grand designs

And now it's time for three chapters full of tiny details about building and furnishings. Hooray! If you're a fan of home-makeover TV, then you'll be excited. For the rest of us it seems a snooze. But there's important stuff here.

Read 1 Kings 5 v 1–12**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- ▶ *What was Solomon's plan? (v5)*
- ▶ *Why could Solomon do what David couldn't? (v3–4)*
- ▶ *What was King Hiram's response? (v7, v10)*
- ▶ *What two things did God give Solomon? (v12)*

Now let's pick out some of the details from chapters 5–7.

- ▶ *Who built the temple? (v13–18)*
- ▶ *What did it look like? (6 v 14–18, 21–22, 29–30)*
- ▶ *What was the most important area? (6 v 19–20)*
- ▶ *How long did it take? (6 v 38)*
- ▶ *What else did Sol build? (7 v 1)*

- ▶ *How long did he spend on his own palace?*

Read 1 Kings 6 v 11–13

- ▶ *What great promise did God make to Solomon?*

In the middle of all the details about the temple and the palace, these verses show us what's important to God. He demands that His king and His people obey Him. The new temple was an impressive symbol of God living with His people, but He expected them to keep living for Him.

THINK IT OVER

- ▶ *What things in your life stop you obeying God?*
- ▶ *How can you see God at work in your life?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Talk to God about your answers and ask Him to help you to live His way.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

More design tips on page 109.



7

Park the ark

Solomon (and thousands of workers) have finished building God's temple. So it's time for God to check out His new place.

Read 1 Kings 8 v 1–9

would have to wait until Jesus came.

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Read verses 14–21

▷ *What big event took place? (v1–2)*

▷ *What promise did God keep? (v20)*

▷ *Where did the priests park the ark? (v6)*

This was a great moment. God's temple was complete and His ark was now in the temple. God was with His people. Awesome. And He had kept His promises to King David. Everything was looking good for God's people. For now.

▷ *What was in the ark? (v9)*

The ark was a box which reminded God's people of His agreement (covenant) with them. It symbolised God's presence with them. If they obeyed God, they'd stay in the land.

God always keeps His promises. The most incredible promise He made was to send His Son to rescue us. Jesus' death and resurrection have made it possible for us to have access to perfect, holy God.

Read verses 10–13

▷ *What happened? (v10–11)*

▷ *What was Solomon's summary? (v12–13)*

The great God who is everywhere chose to share His presence with His people. He was near, yet He was far — there was no open access for an unholy people to a holy God. That

PRAY ABOUT IT

You know what's on your heart today as you talk to God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

What are cherubim? Try page 109.



8

I'd like to thank...

It's speech time at Solomon's Building Awards Ceremony. But who will he thank? His mum? The 30,000 builders? Himself?

Read 1 Kings 8 v 22–30**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- ▶ *Who's the only one that Sol thanks and praises? (v23)*
- ▶ *What amazed Solomon? (v27)*
- ▶ *What does he ask God for? (v30)*

Solomon could barely believe that huge, all-powerful God would live among His people. But knowing how great and loving God is led Sol to ask God to remember His people and forgive them.

- ▶ *In what different circumstances?*
v31–32:
v33–34:
v35–36:
v37:
v41–43:
v44–45:
v46:

- ▶ *What reason did Sol give for God forgiving His people? (v57–60)*

Read verses 54–66

- ▶ *What else did Sol ask God for? (v57–60)*
- ▶ *What did God expect of Israel? (v61)*
- ▶ *How did the Israelites thank God for all He'd done for them? (v62–66)*

God has a big plan for His people — “that all people of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other” (v60). He wants us to tell people about Him. But God doesn't just care about the big plan: He cares for our daily needs too (v59).

PRAY ABOUT IT

Bring your everyday needs and worries to God. And also pray about the “big” things — that people will turn to Jesus. Pray for specific people who need to turn to God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Heart of the matter on page 109.



9

The golden age

King Solomon was at the height of his fame and Israel was experiencing a golden age. The second half of this chapter gives us the details. But before that, God spells out a word of warning.

Read 1 Kings 9 v 1–9

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *How did God respond to yesterday's prayer? (v3)*
- ▶ *What did He tell Sol to do? (v4)*
- ▶ *What would be the result? (v5)*
- ▶ *But what was the warning? (v9)*

We shouldn't take God's warnings negatively. God shows great love and kindness in reminding us what we need to do to please Him and the consequences if we don't.

Skim read verses 10–28

This section provides a snapshot of life in Israel during Solomon's reign. We get political details (v10–14) including King Hiram sending David 4 tons of gold for his building projects! We get a glimpse of the huge number of people involved in all this work (v15–24). Solomon continued to worship God and offer

the right sacrifices (v25). He also had an impressive navy and sea trade (v26–28).

Everything was going well for God's king and God's people. But it's often when life's going well that the devil attacks and we mess up big time. Solomon needed to listen to God's warning in v4–9. And so do we. Sometimes we can cruise through life enjoying it so much that we fail to notice we're no longer obeying God so much. Or He's slipped way down our priorities.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God to give you integrity of heart and a real desire to serve and obey Him. Thank Him that because of Jesus, believers now have the Holy Spirit to help them live for God.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Obey God or else.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

No *Take it further* section today.