



THE STORY



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Speaker: Paul McIlwraith
Scripture: The Story—Chapter 14-Rehoboam/Jeroboam

In 1892, Charles Henry Doerr began making and selling cookies from a small grocery store in Berlin, Ontario, which later became Kitchener. My hometown. By 1919, the C.H. Doerr Company was incorporated and grown into a significant cookie and candy making operation. But business success was met with family tragedy. Charles Doerr's son and daughter-in-law died during a Spanish flu outbreak in 1918, leaving Charles to raise his son's only child, Carl, his grandson.

At the age of 16, Carl was pulled from school to work in the family business and when his grandfather died in 1941, Carl took over the reins. In 1943, after surviving through the Great Depression, the company factory burned to the ground. Carl rebuilt and changed the family and company name to Dare, which was easier to pronounce for the customers.

Today, Dare foods has annual sales of \$300 Million and employs more than 1300 people in six facilities around the world, including 400 at its' head office in Kitchener. Its products, sold in 50 countries, include Breton Crackers, Bear Paw cookies, Wagon Wheel snacks, Melba Toast, RealFruit gummies and the annual spring treat, Girl Guide Cookies.

Not bad for something that started on a whim and a prayer over a hundred years ago. But, Dare cookies has been in the news and the court room the past few years. Those of you who read the business section or the Financial Post are probably aware of the situation. Lawsuits, squabbles, infighting, outsider influences, battles over money and inheritances have torn the Dare family apart. Over the years they have gotten further and further away from founder Charles Henry Doerr's original intention for a family run business and now they are in tatters. Oh, the product is still tasty, but, it has

come at a great cost. And, you have to wonder, was it worth it?

Welcome to North Park Church and happy New Year. It seems like it's been a while since I have been up here. I was away a few days over Christmas and then spent a week at school in Toronto to start the New Year. Last weekend, when I was greeting some of you in the foyer, I have to say, it felt good. I missed you. It was good to see you and be back where it feels like home. I hope you have that same feeling.

And I thought Matt did an excellent job launching us back into *The Story* last weekend. Just a reminder for those who may be just joining us. Last September, we set out on a grand adventure as an entire church. With the exception of small breaks at Christmas and Easter, it is a journey that will take us 31 weeks, from September 2017 all the way through to June 2018 and every age group and ministry area at North Park is involved in this endeavor.

We are studying, *The Story*. God's plan and purpose for humanity, and the world. And we are using as our resource, the book called, *The Story*, which is really just scripture. Genesis right through to Revelation is contained in this book. Arranged in chronological order it sets out God's story, what we have been calling the "*Upper Story*" and then our place in it, referred to as the "*Lower Story*".

I want to encourage those who have purchased a book to continue to read along with us each week and for those who don't have a book, it is not too late. You can still get one from the Welcome Kiosk and jump right into the text.

Today we find ourselves in 1 Kings 12 of the bible or Chapter 14 in your books. A chapter entitled. *A Kingdom Torn in Two*. Let me give you some background before we go to the text.

If you remember all the way back to the beginning in Genesis, God created the heavens and earth and then created humanity. His desire was to be in relationship with us. That we would trust and obey him and join him in the stewardship and care of his creation. But as we know, things went off the tracks pretty quickly. Adam and Eve chose to go their own way which introduced sin into the world, and humanity has been dealing with the consequences ever since.

But God did not and does not give up on us. He put a plan in motion almost immediately to bring his people back to him and it started with the building of a nation, Israel. And you know if you were with us throughout the fall, the early days of Israel were turbulent. There were good times when the people trust and obeyed God and there were times when they turned away, got themselves into trouble and cried out to God. Time after time, he heard the cries of his people and saved them. They had good leaders like Moses and Joshua and they had poor, many poor leaders like Saul. They had times of plenty and peace and times of famine and war. Throughout it all, God continued to remind them, *Trust in me, put your faith in me. Have no other gods but me. I created you, I know what is best for your life. Don't forget your roots and your history with me.*

Last week, Matt shared about a particularly good time in the history of God's people, under the leadership of Solomon. Solomon followed the Lord's commands and found favour with him and the nation of Israel was cohesive and at peace. God even had Solomon built the first temple dedicated to the Lord. But alas, it was not to endure. It seems Solomon too had his kryptonite, or his Achilles heel, the metaphor Matt used last week.

1 Kings 3:3 or page 176

*Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, **except** that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.*

That is an important word in this passage, **except**. Solomon loved God and obeyed God but he wasn't completely sold out. He wasn't 100%. There was a part that he held back, **except**.. he still participated in worshipping other gods. He was 90% with God, but there was still this 10% that tugged him in another direction.

Perhaps you know that feeling. You are 90% behind that decision at work but there is that 10% feeling that you are not sure. Or you are 90% certain of that answer you put down on that midterm exam but that 10% doubt causes you to rethink it. Or you are 90% sure of that marriage proposal you received over Christmas except, that 10% leaves some uncertainty. Have you ever felt like that?

In scripture, God tells us that he wants all of us. Not one day a week. Not 50%, not 75%, not even 90% of our devotion. He wants it all, all of us. In fact, he lays it out pretty clearly in the Old Testament book of,

Deuteronomy 6:5

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

All you heart, all your soul, all your strength. Love me with every part of your being. 100%. Solomon was committed, but not committed enough. Do you know what happens when that 10%, that **except**, is left to fester? It can grow. You leave the door open to a little doubt and it can lead to more uncertainty. Have you experienced this? Students, if you are 10% uncertain of a question on an exam, you start to overthink it don't you? You begin to wonder, what other questions may be wrong and you go back over the whole exam.

And I experience this feeling every time I am silly enough to venture out onto a large expanse of green space carrying a bag full of metal sticks, chasing a little white ball. I think some call it golf. I tee up my ball at the hole but then comes the decision of what club to use. I am 90% sure I can get there with a 5 iron but there is water in front of the green. I want to be sure that I clear that, so maybe I should hit a 4 iron. But if it is too much, I'll end up in the rough behind the green? Back and forth and the uncertainty grows and I end up blowing the shot.

Or when it comes to putting, I get down and look at the way the putt breaks but really I have no idea, it just looks good when I am down in this position. Looks like I know what I am doing, which I don't. I go back forth on where and how to hit the putt and I end up shanking it.

Solomon was 90% devoted to God. But, it is that 10% that leads to his downfall and ultimately, the fracturing of the nation of Israel. For Solomon it was revealed in his appetite. For among other things, women.

1 Kings 11:1-4

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ² 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. ³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 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.

Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines or mistresses. Polygamy was culturally accepted in this day but it was not sanctioned by God. In fact, he warned of its pitfalls.

Now I have a bit of a confession to make. No, it is not that I have more wives out there somewhere. It's this. Because of the way that I am wired as a male, it takes the better part of all of my energy and compassion, love and care to properly attend to the needs and concerns of just one woman, my wife. I can't imagine balancing the needs of 2 or 10. I can't even fathom 700. Guys, are you with me on that? I have a couple of friends that attend North Park who are married and one has four daughters, the other three daughters. In fact, the guy who has four daughters also has a dog, it's a she. I don't know how they do it. And this is in no way meant to demean women. We are just different and I would suggest that you women, probably feel the same way about us guys. It takes a lot of work and

attention to attend to the needs and concerns of the likes of us!

So, it is any wonder, that God warned his people about engaging in marriage with those who don't have the same faith and beliefs as you, especially multiple marriages. It has the potential to take your devotion away from him. What should be 100% becomes 90, 70, 50, until you wake up one day and realize you have forgotten your roots. You are actually worshipping other things, other gods. Do you see that?

Many of Solomon's marriages were actually for political reasons but he began to adopt other gods into worship in Israel, a terrible decision among many terrible decisions he made later in his life. Solomon's powerful and glorious kingdom could have been blessed for all time, instead it came to a pitiful end. Solomon had God's promises, answered prayers and guidance and yet he allowed sin to remain around him and it eventually corrupted him so much that he was no longer interested much in God. He forgot his roots.

Have you heard these words?

Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain.

Are those words familiar to you? They are the opening to *Psalms 127*. Pretty sound advice, would you agree? Do you know who wrote them? Solomon. Solomon began his life by laying a pretty solid foundation with God but didn't follow through in his later years. As a result, he lost everything. Maybe you know exactly how that feels. Maybe you sit here today and you can relate to Solomon. Your commitment to Jesus started 100%, then life got busy, it went to 90%, you started to let down the guard, you started to become apathetic to the things of God and began to worship other things. Your job. Material possessions. People. And before you knew it, you forgot your roots. You have little interest in the life that God has for you. And it has impacted your relationships, with your spouse, your children or friends. And that is where we find ourselves in Chapter 14. The Lord has become angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Him.

1 Kings 11:11-13, page 192

“Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.¹² Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son.¹³ Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.”

This is a pivotal point in the story of the nation of Israel because, God is going to tear it away from Solomon but, he must also stay true to the promise he made to David many years before. Do you remember it?

2 Samuel 7:16

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’”

How is God going to tear the Kingdom away from Solomon and still ensure that David’s line rules forever? Because Solomon is in David’s line. The answer? He divided the Kingdom.

Let me explain. God had already targeted a worthy candidate to replace Solomon as King. His name was Jeroboam. But after Solomon died, as was common in the culture, the people just automatically assumed that Solomon’s son Rehoboam would be their next king. The problem was that Rehoboam was greedy and had a lust for power just like his father had in his later years. And the people are so concerned Rehoboam will rule the same way, that a contingent of Israelites, led by Jeroboam, approach him with an ultimatum.

1 Kings 12:4 or page 194

“Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”

Just a short time into his reign, Rehoboam is a little taken aback but tells the people to go away for three days *and I’ll think about it and then come back and I’ll give you my answer.*

And Rehoboam does what any smart leader would do, he consults some people to get their opinion of what he should do. Who do you go to for wisdom? For advice? Maybe it’s someone who is experienced? Someone who has been there before? Maybe a mentor who has been through the trenches and knows a little something about life.

The text says, Rehoboam went to some elders who served as an advisory board when his father was king. Again, a pretty wise leadership move. Their advice to him?

1 Kings 12:7. Page 194

“If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.”

In other words, Rehoboam, you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. Be kind to these people, treat them well and down the road they will listen to you and do what you want. Sounds like good advice to me. Unfortunately, this is where Rehoboam’s smart leadership decisions end. He rejects the advice of these seasoned veterans and instead gathers his posse around him. The guys he grew up with, young men who lack the experience and humility to speak to this issue. These are the guys he should be calling for a pick-up hockey game not depending on them for sage wisdom. After laying out his predicament to them. Their advice?

1 Kings 12:11, page 194

Say this to the people, My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

How’s that for advice? This is nothing more than locker room bravado, adding fuel to the fire and Rehoboam lacks discernment so, he takes the bait. When the Israelites people returned to him three days later for his answer, he unleashes on them. *My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’*

Rejecting the wisdom of the elders, he chooses the path of the frat boys.

1 Kings 12:15, page 194

So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam

Just as the Lord had ordained, the northern tribes of Israel reject Rehoboam's leadership, rebel, split off and form their own rival Kingdom with Jeroboam as their king. God's Great Kingdom of Israel now becomes two. It splits, due to infighting, pride, stubbornness and sin. In this passage, Israel is fractured. Instead of one Kingdom there is now two. The southern Kingdom of Judah has Rehoboam in charge, a king in the line of David. And the new northern Kingdom, called Israel and its King is Jeroboam. As we have already seen, Rehoboam's leadership starts off disastrously for the southern Kingdom. Hopefully things look much better for Jeroboam, God's newly anointed King over the northern Kingdom. Let's see.

1 Kings 12:26-27 or page 196.

Jeroboam is also thinking and pondering things as he starts his new reign. He says,

"The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam."

Here is the dilemma Jeroboam is pondering so that you can track his thinking. When Solomon was King and the Kingdom of Israel was intact, he built the temple to the Lord in Jerusalem. All Jewish men from all over Israel were required to travel to the temple in Jerusalem three times a year to worship the Lord.

But, now the Kingdom is split and the temple is located in Jerusalem which is now in the southern Kingdom. That's Rehoboam's territory. Jeroboam is concerned that when his men from the northern Kingdom start making their triannual pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, that they will be influenced by Rehoboam and come back and kill him.

It would be kind of like if you had a girlfriend or boyfriend. Things are going well, but you know that periodically, they have to interact with a former flame in the work place or at school. Perhaps that would create a bit of insecurity in you, that if they see each other, things may pick back up and then you'll be dumped.

That is kind of how Jeroboam is feeling so, again as any good leader does, he got some advice and then makes a decision.

1 Kings 12:28

After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves.

Now I have to stop there. Is there anything in you that just feels like this is a bad decision? Jeroboam made two golden calves. Does that bring to mind another time in the bible when a golden calf was made and things did not go well for the people? Where is Jeroboam getting these advisors?! Probably the same place as Rehoboam. They are from his pick-up hockey team. No offense to those of you who play pick up hockey! But I can just picture them sitting around after a game, Jeroboam shares his dilemma. His buddies chime in, *Hey Jeroboam, here's an idea. Instead of having the people travelling all the way to Jerusalem and take the risk they will be lured into Rehoboam's leadership spell, why don't you do this. Set up a couple of temple satellite sites. Spread them around the northern countryside and why not, here's just a thought off the top of my head, make them out of gold in the shape of calves. Yeah, make the temples golden calves!*

Let me take you back in the history of the Israelite people. Way back to the second book of the bible, Exodus. Moses was their leader at the time and he had a direct connect with God. The people he was leading were grumblers. So, when Moses retreats to a mountain to meet with God, the people start complaining about him taking too long. You know, *taking too long* meeting with God! So what do they do?

Exodus 32:3-4

So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool.

Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

They made a golden calf and began to worship it instead of God. It became an idol and the text says that the Lord's anger burned against them.

Now, hundreds of years later, Jeroboam is thinking of repeating this mistake. The truth is that he made a lot of mistakes as King. He led the people of the northern Kingdom further and further into idolatry and further and further away from God. From this point on, the story goes back and forth between the North and South tracing the fate of both kingdoms.

Each one went on to have about 20 successive Kings and as each King is introduced in the biblical text, their reign is evaluated using three criteria.

1. Did they worship the God of Israel alone or did they promote other gods as well?
2. Did they deal with idolatry amongst the people?
3. Did they remain faithful to the covenant like David or do they become corrupt and unjust?

According to these criteria, the bible finds no good Godly Kings in the Northern Kingdom. They are 0 for 20. And the Southern Kingdom? It doesn't fare much better, the bible records only 8 of the 20 Kings were God fearing leaders. This is a dismal chapter in the history of God's people.

So what does this say to us today?

Do you know what the catalyst was for the family squabble at Dare foods? It was a marriage. One of the siblings married a person whose values were counter to the beliefs of the family and the way that they did business. It was a seemingly small thing, but it opened the door a crack, which led to another issue, then another and soon, there was a full out crisis. Today, the family is divided with no hope of resolution in the near future.

Early under Solomon's reign, the Kingdom of Israel was in its heyday. There was peace and prosperity.

1 Kings 3:3

*Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, **except** that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.*

Except. 90%. It was 90%, he gave 90% to God. Which may be a great score on a midterm but for God it is not good enough. He wants all of us because he knows the best life for us.

Solomon gave 90% to God but that left 10% he was devoting to something else. He left the door open a crack and the opening got wider and wider. One thing lead to another, he took his eyes off of God and it lead to his downfall. He finished poorly. God tore the Kingdom out of his hands and it had repercussions that caused misery for the people for generations.

At this the beginning of a New Year, 2018, have you considered lately the commitment you are giving to God these days? You know, God, your creator, the one who saved you, the one who gave you new and abundant life through his son Jesus Christ? Is it 100%? And in case you think this is a message about effort, about just trying harder like an athlete that says he is going to give 110%, it is not. It is the opposite. This is a message about resting. It is about trust and faith. Truly surrendering everything to Jesus. Let him take the reins of your life. Have you surrendered everything to him, your time, talent and resources? Have you surrendered your problems, concerns and worries trusting that he, the creator of life, knows better how to guide your life, then you do?

Or are you giving him 90%? Oh, you're mostly in, but there is still this thing on the side you are holding back, just in case. Is it 75%, $\frac{3}{4}$'s of yourself? 50%, $\frac{1}{2}$? Or is it even less than that? Here's is the thing, if it is anything less than a 100% surrender and commitment, you will be distracted. Other things will come up that take your attention away. You are divided. And do you remember what Jesus said about being divided?

Mark 3:24-25

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

There are some in this room today, who know how that feels. You are divided and things are starting to

fall apart. A crisis hits and maybe you are wondering, where is God? Have you ever considered that God hasn't gone anywhere? It's you that's moved. Away from him.

But here is the good news, the gospel. It is never too late to turn back to him, to surrender everything to him again. To remember your roots and return home to him.

Just before Christmas, we received this unsigned hand written note. It was placed on this music stand in the auditorium before a service. Perhaps this says best, the point I am trying to make. The person wrote this;

I grew up in this church. I remember being in Junior High surrounded by my peers who always seemed to have this whole church thing figured out. I grew up praying, singing, participating but never quite being able to find what the other kids seemed to have found, so I drifted away for a while.

I went to college, made some questionable decisions and choices. I got lost a few times. I went through some things that no one should ever go through.

Then came marriage. I thought, finally I had what I needed. Everything was right. This past spring my 1 year old shiny marriage was dealt a devastating blow, than another and another. My world was crumbling. I was broken and lost. I finally reached out to my mom, who told me about a friend of hers who seemed to have a special connection with God. I asked my mom to ask this woman to pray for me.

A couple of weeks later, my mom brought me to North Park. I sat in this building and felt a tinge of being home.

During the service, we were invited to come up to the front, write on a piece of paper at the foot of the cross.

My mom took my hand and asked I wanted to come up with her. As we stood up and turned around, there was the woman I had asked to pray for me. The three of us cried all the way to the front.

Before we went back to our seats, these incredibly strong women held me, prayed for me and with me.

Something changed that day. I've been back here more times since then. More times since Jr High and I've cried every time.

Last week, I experience another blow. A particularly cruel one. For some reason, I was drawn here. To sit in this room where you are now, to write this note. I am broken, I am not okay, but I am here.

Something told me to come here, to find some peace and comfort. I don't know why or how but in all of this chaos and pain, something amazing is happening. I am finding God. I am finding what I was never sure I would. I am scared and excited and confused but at least I now know, I am never alone.

Do you feel alone, today? It is never too late, to turn back to God. He is there for you, he is all we need. He may not take all of our problems away, but we are never alone and he will guide and direct us into the life that he has always wanted for us. What is holding you back? What are you holding on to? What is that 10%, that **except**, for you? Can you release it today, surrender it to him and turn your life fully, 100% over to Jesus? **Amen? Amen.**

Points to Ponder

THE STORY- Chapter 14

Rehoboam/Jeroboam: A Kingdom Torn in Two

With a friend, your family or in your small group, discuss the following questions.

1. In 1 Kings 3:3, it says “Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.”. Do you have an ‘except’ in your relationship with God? An area of your life that is a little more difficult to release control of? Discuss this idea of exceptions with your group.
2. Have you had a time in your life where you turned slightly away from God and eventually ended up further distant from Him? Share that experience and the things you learned from it.
3. Who do you listen to? Where do you go for advice? Share some good and bad experiences you have had when acting on the advice of others. What constitutes good advice?
4. Do you have a “golden calf” that you return to occasionally (something in your life that can take the place of God but is hard to let go)? What is it and why is it so hard to give up?

Prayer and Action Item

Pray for one another out of the key points that were discussed. Perhaps some of you have mentioned that you feel like you are in a place where you are giving less than 100% to God. Pray for each other, that you can release that 10% or 20% percent you are holding onto. Pray that you can surrender it to God and let Him guide and rule your lives completely.