



BEACH SAND DEVOTIONAL

1 KINGS 4: 20-21

“Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates . . . to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.”

EXPERIENCE

Have you ever sat on the beach and taken a pinch of sand between your fingers and tried to count the number of grains? Have you ever picked up a handful of sand and wondered how many grains were in your hand? Have you ever looked across a beach and wondered how many grains of sand were on the beach? Perhaps the best answer to the question of “how many?” is simply, an abundance! Sand is made up of an abundance of quartz crystals and ground up shells, that under closer observation are all pretty little “gemstones”—a bounty of tiny blessings. The sunbather who takes a moment to focus their eyes on the sand beneath them is blessed to enjoy a multitude of uniquely exquisite granules, all different in shape, size, and color.

Take a moment while you are on the sand beach to reflect on the bounty of tiny blessings in your own life.

As a father of four kids, the majority of my time at the beach is not spent in quiet observation of, or reflection upon, sand particles. I am much more prone to be playing with the sand. Our family has a strange custom every time we visit the seashore. We always build a sandcastle city at the ocean's edge as the tide is coming in. We pretend as if we can build redoubts and barriers that will somehow prevent the waves from destroying our kingdom of sand. There is a point at which the defenses are about to be overwhelmed when we frantically rush around making one last ditch effort to save the kingdom, but it never works. The tide wins every time, yet we never tire of engaging in this silly exercise from year to year.

CONTEMPLATION

The first biblical association that always comes to my mind with sand is God's promise to Abraham, that his descendants would be as many as the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17). God repeats this promised blessing to Abraham's grandson, Jacob (Genesis 32:12). Sand is used most often in the Bible as a symbol of great abundance. In the majority of cases, the emblem of sand as abundance is tied to blessings, as with Abraham. In 1 Kings 4:20-34, we observe King Solomon's reign as a partial fulfillment of the promised blessings made to Abraham. Verse 20 says: "[Abraham's people] were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy." They were blessed. In verse 24 & 25 we read that Abraham's people lived in peace and safety. In verse 29, Solomon was given wisdom beyond measure, "like sand on the seashore". God blessed Solomon. Additionally, as promised to Abraham, his offspring were a blessing to

all nations. People from all nations traveled to hear Solomon's wisdom (v.34). God abundantly blessed his people under Solomon's reign. The kingdom under Solomon was a glimpse of the good life. This passage reads like a happily-ever-after story.

Yet, Solomon and his people became more enamored with their blessings than with the source of the blessings. How easy it is to lose sight of the Lord Jesus amidst comfort and ease. Solomon's kingdom became divided immediately following his death, revealing that he had been doing a lot of building in vain—much like a family I know that consistently builds sandcastles too close to the incoming waves. Sand reminds me to count all the tiny blessings of life, but also to count the cost of becoming too enamored with those blessings rather than allowing them to point my heart to the Blesser. Our ill-fated sandcastle kingdoms remind me of Solomon's kingdom, but I am also reminded of a better kingdom to come, a kingdom that is ruled by a perfect King, a kingdom of true peace and safety, a kingdom made up of all tribes, nations, and languages, a kingdom that is everlasting. As I sit in the sand, I am reminded not to build my hopes for the day, the vacation, or the year ahead on anything less than the King of Kings. As Hebrews 12:28 says, "Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe."

PRAYER

Gracious God, I am grateful for the bounty of blessings in my life. However, I am more profoundly grateful for receiving in your son, Jesus, an everlasting kingdom. Stir in my heart a deeper reverence and awe of you O Lord. I desire on this vacation to offer to you the acceptable worship that you deserve. I confess the ways I have

foolishly sought to build sandcastle kingdoms of my own. I confess that I become all too easily enamored with the blessings of vacations and lose sight of you and your kingdom purposes. My vision of the true and eternal promised land becomes obscured by earthly comfort and ease. I pray that my time away would be spiritually rejuvenating. I pray that vacation becomes a staging ground for re-engaging life at home in a healthier way. Grant me a renewed vision of life lived to honor you foremost and to seeking your kingdom purposes. I ask it in Jesus's name and for Christ's glory. Amen.

CONFIRMATION

Sand is a striking emblem of great abundance in the Scriptures. Particularly the sand on the seashore, or sand of the sea, is used eighteen times to symbolize an innumerable multitude. Twelve of the eighteen times sand on the seashore is an image of blessed abundance. Sand is an emblematic reminder of God's abundant blessings to his people and his covenant faithfulness to his promises.

The Bible uses sand only once to symbolize an unstable foundation for building in Matthew 7:26. Jesus says that, "everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." Indeed, that was Solomon's problem, he knew the wise course of action, but he was unable to put his wisdom into practice when it came to his wives and concubines. In 1 Kings 11, the Bible says that King Solomon loved many foreign women and that he clung to them in love such that his heart was drawn to other gods and did not remain wholly true to the Lord his God. Though used only once, sand is a powerful emblem of a poor foundation. We should not entrust our lives to any other foundation other than Christ and his Word.

DO YOUR OWN BEACH SAND MEDITATION

- Sand on the seashore is often used in the Bible as a symbol of blessed abundance. How have you experienced blessed abundance?
- In a few instances the Bible uses sand on the seashore as an emblem of an abundant number of enemies or challenges, how have you experienced an abundance of challenges?
- As you see and experience beach sand in the future, what will you remember from this devotional? How has this meditation on beach sand shaped your perspective of sand and what sand communicates about God and the truths of God?