



Parkway Fellowship

FAMILY GAME NIGHT • CHUTES AND LADDERS • 2 CHRONICLES 14:1-12; 16:1-13 •
4/26/2020

MAIN POINT

Throughout life, we are given many opportunities that can draw us near to God or lead us away from Him. In pursuing nearness to God, we are to ruthlessly eliminate the things that draw us away and to keep our hearts fully committed to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is something that has occurred in your life that seemed like a bad thing at the time but actually worked out for good?

What about something that seemed good but actually turned out to be negative? How did you respond to each of these instances?

Today we are talking about “chutes and ladders” in our lives. Ladders are those opportunities to draw nearer to God, whether expected or unexpected and chutes are the things that threaten to lead us further away from God. We will be looking at the example of one Old Testament king who began with a ladder moment that drew He and all of Judah back toward God but fell into a chute when he did not remain fully faithful. Let’s consider what God might be teaching us regarding these moments in our lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CHRONICLES 14:1-4, 9-12.

What in these verses might we classify as “ladder” moments for Asa?

When have you unexpectedly faced a moment that gave you opportunity to draw nearer to God? How did you respond?

What things did Asa do to take these opportunities and to move all of Judah back toward right worship of God?

These verses begin with the death of Abijah. Abijah was an evil king who did not worship God. At his death, Asa became king and was given the choice to lead Judah further away from God or to change direction and draw nearer to Him. This passage wastes no time in showing that Asa did what was right in God’s eyes, destroying the objects of idol worship and leading the people back to worship of the one true God.

How did Asa display continued faithfulness before God in verses 9-12?

How would you say moments like the battle Asa faced in verses 9-12 reveal a person’s true character?

When have you had a moment like this with God? How did you respond?

The land experienced peace under Asa for sometime but eventually conflict began again as Zerah attacked with an army of one million. We may find it easy to remain faithful to the Lord in times of peace in our lives. Yet, our true colors will be shown in moments of hardship and trial. For Asa, he exhibited an going faithfulness before the Lord, trusting not in his military might but in the God who had sustained His people throughout history.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CHRONICLES 16:1-13.

How did Asa falter in faithfulness before God in these verses? What did he trust instead of God?

How easy would you say it is to lose focus on living faithfully before God? What things threaten this in your life?

What were the consequences of Asa’s unfaithfulness?

Despite Asa’s past experience with trusting God and seeing the fruit in remaining faithful to Him, Asa did not remain faithful. When attacked by the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Asa offered up silver and gold from the temple as a peace offering. Asa forgot God’s faithfulness to him and began to trust in his own wisdom in order to make peace in the land. Yet, the reality was that this would not lead to lasting peace, but further wars. Similarly in our lives, we may trust in things

that seem to bring peace or contentment, but if those things are not of God, they will eventually fail us and bring further hurt and destruction.

Verse 9 says that God will strengthen the hearts of those who are fully committed to Him. What might this look like in our lives?

When have you been strengthened by God as you sought to remain committed to Him?

How is He calling you now to recommit yourself to Him fully? What steps will you take?

We tend to focus on the big moments of life in regards to our relationship with God. Yet, it is often in the little things that we display our trust and faithfulness to Him or apart from Him. Despite many moments of faithfulness, Asa's heart ultimately turned away from God and he never returned to full faithfulness. We should take this as a warning and seek to eliminate anything that is detracting from full faithfulness to God that we might be fully committed to Him.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is God calling you to ruthlessly eliminate from your life to draw near to Him?

Who or what holds great influence in your life? Does this influence lead you further toward God or away from Him? Read 2 Chronicles 15:16. What is God showing you about that person or thing's influence in your life? What do you need to do?

How does living fully committed to God give us opportunity to share the hope of the gospel with others? How does living this way help us to recognize these opportunities more often?

PRAYER

Close in prayer thanking God for the opportunity to know Him and draw near to Him. Ask Him to show you the things that draw you away from Him that you might ruthlessly eliminate these and seek full commitment to Him.

COMMENTARY

| 2 CHRONICLES 14:1-12

14:1 In light of the single event of Abijah's life that the Chronicler highlights, Abijah received a neutral death notice. He was buried on Mount Zion in the vicinity of David's tomb. The line of succession passed on to his son Asa.

Asa: Third king of Judah; son of Abijah; devoted to God, but closed himself off from God at the end of his life. The years given for the kings' reigns make it clear that at times there was some overlap, when the father had already elevated his son as co-regent with him, just as David did with Solomon for a short while (1Ch 29:22). Thus, the ten years of peace could include the latter years of Abijah's reign and the first years of Asa's reign.

14:2-3 Asa receives high praise from the Chronicler. He removed all the objects of idol worship and exhorted the people to obey God. High places were places of worship to various gods. Many, but not all, were pagan. Frequently sites for idolatry are called "high places," as in this passage (11:15); but the expression is also used for places dedicated to the Lord, the true God. Asherah poles were dedicated to the Canaanite goddess Asherah. The Canaanites believed that Asherah was the wife of the high god El and the mother of the main god Baal. She was a goddess of sexuality, and worshipping her by venerating sacred poles was supposed to produce fertility for crops and animals.

14:4-5 Seeking God is referred to about twenty-five times in Chronicles. It involved total dependence on the Lord and expressing that dependence in prayer and worship.

14:6-7 Encouraged by the time of peace, Asa set about redoing the fortifications throughout the land. He showed greater understanding than Rehoboam of the value of these fortifications. He told the people that they still owned the land because they had sought the LORD. Without the Lord's protection, the walls would be useless.

14:8-10 Asa's army was even larger than that of Abijah; the four hundred thousand warriors had grown to five hundred eighty thousand. Unfortunately, this huge number still put him at a disadvantage when Zerah the Cushite (an Ethiopian) came calling with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. Instead of concealing himself behind his newly built fortifications, Asa and his smaller army marched out to confront Zerah in the vicinity of Mareshah, a town in western Judah.

14:11 Asa knew the odds were against him, but he had evidently learned from his father's success against Jeroboam's army. He cried out to the LORD for help. The king believed the outcome of the battle would not be determined by a mere mortal.

14:12 Once again, it was the LORD who won the battle, with Asa and his army serving as his instruments.

| 2 CHRONICLES 16:1-13

16:1 Baasha: Third king of Israel; began his own dynasty; defeated by Asa of Judah. In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam's son Nadab had been replaced by Baasha, who decided to go to war against the southern kingdom. The first step in his strategy was to block access to Jerusalem by fortifying the town of Ramah. Baasha had also formed an alliance with Ben-hadad, king of Aram in Damascus. This meant that once Asa was cut off from the outside world, it would be an easy thing to capture Jerusalem.

16:2-6 Asa emptied the treasuries of the temple and bribed Ben-hadad of Damascus to break his treaty with Baasha of Israel. The king of Damascus not only complied willingly, but even sent his soldiers into Israel to compensate themselves for the plunder they missed by not attacking Jerusalem. Asa was able to destroy Baasha's blockade and assert his dominance over his northern border area again.

16:7-9 Asa made a serious misjudgment in thinking that the Lord would be pleased if he did God's work for him. Rather than reaping praise for his diplomatic achievement, Asa was rebuked for his actions by Hanani. This prophet reminded the king that God wanted Asa to depend on him and not on his own cleverness or on help from pagans. After Asa defeated the superior forces of the Cushites and Libyans he should have known that God rewards devotion with deliverance.

16:10 This was more than Asa could handle. His ego had been bruised, so he put the prophet Hanani in prison and abused other people. He had forgotten his earlier assertion that a mere mortal could not hinder God (14:11).

16:11-12 The glorious reign of Asa, who had acted for God so effectively, came to a sour end. When he developed a serious disease in his feet, he avoided turning to the Lord and sought healing by physicians instead. His sin was not in turning to physicians, but in failing to ask God how he should proceed and to rely on God for the outcome (Jr 17:5).

16:13-14 Nevertheless, Asa received a glorious burial. The reference to ointments and spices may indicate that his death was due to diabetes, which could have brought on gangrene in his feet. The great fire was a tribute of honor from the people (see 21:19).