

Sphere of Influence

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 August 2026

Preacher: Joe Shenk

[0:00] Yeah, good morning. Thank you, Mike, for sharing. I believe it went real well with what I have to share.

! It's down a little different line, but I believe it went real well. Ultimately, Jesus is our example and is the one we turn to as an example.

I was a while back, I was reading through the book of Kings, 1 and 2 Kings. If you want to, y'all can go ahead.

If you want to, turn to 1 Kings 15, that's where I'm going to be starting. And I feel like this morning, I don't have a lot of necessarily specific answers, but I want to stir us up to be thinking is more what I want to do.

And maybe afterwards, maybe y'all have some thoughts. But, yeah, I believe that ultimately the Holy Spirit can witness to each one of us and give us answers and clarity in these things here that I want to look at.

[1:21] But, yeah, as I was reading through the book of Kings, of course, 1 and 2 Kings, of course, one of the things we always see is the ups and the downs with the kings.

You'd have the good king would come in and then they would have, ultimately, somebody would, another king would come in and they would serve the idols and stuff again.

But I wanted to, specifically something here stood out to me, and maybe y'all have been pondering on this from before. I don't know, but stood out to me and just made me, I've been thinking and pondering on this for a while.

And 1 Kings 15, I'm going to be starting at verse 9. And a lot of these names here are kind of big names, whatever.

I probably won't get them all right, and that's fine. In the twentieth year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, reigned Asa over Judah. And forty-one years reigned he in Jerusalem.

[2:26] And his mother's name was Maekah, the daughter of Abishlom. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father.

And he took away the Sidonites out of the land and removed all the idols that his father had made. And also his mother, even she he removed from being queen, because she made an idol in a grove.

And Asa destroyed her idol and burned it by the brook of Kidron. But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.

You know, we see here, even his mother, for having an idol, he removed her as queen. But it just, it made me ponder on this.

But then the high places, he didn't remove them. He destroyed the idols. But the high places were not removed.

[3:30] But it records here that his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. And there again, I don't know, you know, I've been pondering on this.

We do know the frailty of mankind. I guess that's maybe part of what it's bringing out here, the frailty of mankind.

But the, why to me that he didn't remove his, and this is something that I'll bring up more, I plan to bring out later more, our sphere of influence there.

Mike was talking about, you know, being disciples. And this, our sphere of influence, where it can go. So, I want to, and to us, to look at, and like I said, I'm going to look at some more kings here.

We've got different ones more to look at. Because it's mentioned several different times. That's what really caught my attention. Where are there, can there be high places in our life, in our own lives, that we need to tear down, that need to be torn down?

[4:39] 2 Kings 12. 2 Kings 12, starting in verse 1.

2 Kings 12.

Here again, you know, it made me stop and ponder, as I was reading through this. You know, he did that, which was right in the sight of the Lord, it says.

Personally, I'm guessing it's more taken that it was personal. But where, what could, what could the changes have been to the children of Israel, if he had tore down these high places, and had done away with them?

He was king. To me, ultimately, as I look at this, I look at it, you know, he was king. He could have tore those places down. And we'll see later, when it did happen.

[6:02] But, in his sphere of influence, how could he have changed this with the children of Israel?

Because it says here, in verse 3, the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. You know, that wasn't taken away. And I know, you know, he couldn't have made the people, made their hearts right toward God.

But his, the influence to me that he could have had. And this is what I want to, to be looking at in ourselves, in our own lives, especially in our households.

I guess that's what I want to, want us to stop and think about. Are there things, are there high places that, you know, as we're serving God, our heart is toward God.

[7:02] But is there, to me, what I see this, is what I see this, and there again, I'll be interested to hear other thoughts. But they, it was kind of a blind spot, maybe you could say, to these kings.

And do I have them in my life? Because another one here is in chapter 14, 2 Kings chapter 14.

And, Amaziah, which different place in the scripture, this is the one, yeah, they call him Isaiah.

I'm not sure why, but, oh no, this isn't, this isn't who I was thinking of.

That's a different one. But anyway, in the second year of Josiah, the son of Jehozabab, king of Israel, reigned Amaziah, the son of Joash, king of Judah.

[8:02] He was 25 years old when he began to reign, and reigned 20 and 9 years in Jerusalem.

And his mother's name was Jehoadan of Jerusalem. And he did that was right, was right in the sight of the Lord.

Yet, not like David his father, did he according to all the things of Joash his father did. How be it, what makes a distinction there, yet not like David his father, but he did according to Joash his father.

How be it the high places were not taken away, as yet the people did sacrifice burnt incense on the high places. Again, we see here where another king there, that he didn't take down the high places. He himself didn't offer sacrifice or idols, but the people did. And then in chapter 15, Azariah, this is the one I was talking about.

Azariah was 16 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name, Jehoali, I don't know, of Jerusalem.

[9:22] And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. Save the high places were not removed. The people sacrificed burnt incense still on the high places.

And then in verse 5, it says, And the Lord smote the king so that he was a leper unto the day of his death. And just reading that right at first, I was like, it made it almost sound like that he smote him as a leper because of him not tearing the high places down because it talks about it there in verse 4, about he didn't take the high places down.

But then I was looking over in 2 Chronicles. I cross-referenced it. And this, I don't quite understand why that it calls him Uzziah, most of the Uzziah.

2 Chronicles 26, it's calling him Uzziah over here. And when I was reading it, one of the things that really jumped out to me in 2 Chronicles here was in verse 5.

And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, that was the priest, who had understanding the visions of God. And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

[10:47] You know, we see right here that directly, that as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. And this is something that I, for all of us, on down in the chapter, he became a great king.

He was a mighty king. And in verse 16, it says, But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.

For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

And then, in verse 19 there, it talks about, And then he was wroth with the priests, and leprosy rose up on his forehead before the priests.

And then he had to live with leprosy, you know, all the rest of his life. And it just stood out to me there that when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.

[11:53] And, you know, I thought for myself, you know, is that me? Am I, where am I at with my life?

Am I thinking? Am I feeling? Because we see a lot of people nowadays that, to hear them talk, they feel pretty good about where they are.

And we do, we want to be close to God, but we want to have an humble opinion of ourselves as far as where we are in our walk with God. And then, And then, in 1532, then this would be his son, began to reign, Jotham.

And he was 35 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 16 years. I'm going to skip over some of these names.

And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. He did according to all his father Uzziah had done. Howbeit the high places were not removed, the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places.

[13:08] And then we'll go here to a very much of a contrast, 2 Kings 18.

2 Kings 18. Is Hezekiah. Not came to pass in the third year of Hoshion, son of Elan, king of Israel, that Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abby, the daughter of Zechariah.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places. He broke down the images. And he cut down the groves and break in pieces the brazen serpent Moses had made.

For unto this day the children of Israel did burn incense on it and called it Neshtim. And he trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah nor any that were before him.

[14:31] And that really stood out to me here too about the, I don't know if I'd kind of known, I guess in the back of my mind, but recently here, when I was looking at this, stood out to me about the serpent that here, that Moses had made in the wilderness.

Here was something that God had used miraculously, the serpent, or the image of it, had used this miraculously to save the children of Israel.

And I'm guessing they had kept it, I would think, they had kept it as something for the people to remember, to remember this great, the way God had saved them from the snakes.

But here, he ended up, he broke the serpent into pieces, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense unto it.

Here was something to be, to remember a specific time that God had really come through for them. And here the people were burning incense.

[15:56] and, and, basically, I guess, worshipping it. And, but here, he came through and he tore that down, he cut that all to pieces.

And, then it does say, how that here, it makes a comment that he was, so that there would, there was none like him among the kings of Judah nor, either before or after him.

So, there, there was a, it makes note of that. But, anyways, what I wanted to think more of, like I say, in our, our own sphere of influence, where I have influence, what am I doing?

Am I, um, am I doing things to, uh, um, tear down anything that could be a high place, that could lead to something else?

Um, you know, my sphere of influence isn't out in the public. I can't go tear down a beer joint because that can lead somebody to drinking.

[17:09] I can't go tear down, you know, an, an abortion clinic or whatever. But, in this whole thing, it, it, it made me think some too about, if I can keep my thoughts together, but, about how that, you know, the, the Bible does tell us that, that, um, God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able.

But then, and this is going down just a little different of a track, but, I wanted to bring this in. But then, how that, we, sometimes put ourselves outside of that.

I just, um, heard, a, a guy here, just recently, and he was, um, praying, and, asking God, uh, for safety for these, um, monster truck drivers that, all they were doing was, it was pure entertainment, you know, purposes, and then he's asking God for protection on them, and, it just struck me as a little bit, like, where, where are we today?

Are, are we, where are we at with this? We, we, we want something like that that's just entertainment, and then we want to call down, ask God's protection. protection, if one of the drivers get hurt, did God fail?

Um, what, what are we calling protection on? I guess for me, the way I look at that is it's a little like, I, there's this guy down at the beer joint that I say I'm gonna go witness to, and yeah, I'm gonna drink with him some, so that I can witness to him better, but I'm gonna pray that God doesn't allow me to get drunk.

[18:54] There's, there's so many things here that, that we see in today's world that it doesn't quite make sense where people are going with things, and I guess that's what I just want us to, and for myself, um, to wake up to with this, uh, what I'm wanting to talk about, I mean, where I'm wanting to get our attention on the high places.

What, whatever it is there, because for all of us it's gonna be something different. Uh, for, for some of us, maybe it's, it's, uh, you know, like entertainment with our, um, with our electronic devices. Whatever it can be that leads us outside of God, like, like, uh, um, Mike was talking about being disciples of Jesus, followers of Jesus.

Ultimately, Jesus is our ultimate answer, but that's where I want each one of us to, let the Holy Spirit, uh, prompt us through the next week or weeks, that, where, where we're, um, where we're at with, is there anything in our lives that can be, uh, considered high places that, that need, uh, torn down.

um, I want to go back and, and look a little bit here at Solomon yet, um, but first of all, I'm going to read, um, some verses in Psalm 78 that proved to me, or that, whatever, affirmed that God wasn't pleased with these high places.

[20:35] Psalm 78, I'm going to start in verse 51, and he smote, this is the, uh, Psalm is speaking, he smote all the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacle of Ham, this is when they're coming out of Egypt, and he made his own people go forth like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

He led them on safely so that they feared not, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies, that was the Red Sea he's talking about, and he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.

He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not his testimonies, but turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers.

They were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. So, there is God talking specifically there about his displeasure with their high places.

And I'm going to talk just briefly, I know it changes, it's changing just a little bit, but I want to talk just briefly here about, because of course I had read, as I was reading through 1 Kings, I read about Solomon, and 1 Kings 11 is where it talks about Solomon here, and it's just, to me, he's a very, I don't know how I say, my mind just goes and goes when I think about Solomon and trying to comprehend a man with such wisdom, you know, God gave him wisdom and wealth, and then we see where he's at right here in chapter 11.

[22:37] Let's read here some. But King Solomon loved many strange women together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Amorites, Edomites, Zedionites, and Hittites, of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, ye shall not go in unto them, neither shall they come in unto you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.

Solomon clave unto these in love. So God had told them, you know, Solomon would have known these things that God had told them to not go to them, but Solomon clave to these in love.

And he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines, and his wives turned away his heart.

Young guys, y'all, make sure you're really listening here this morning.

But also, it's not just that, you know, that is true, very much true in that. But also, the young girls, that y'all aren't this kind of women, that you grow up to serve God and be faithful. The wife has so much to do with the home and the way the house goes. And the wife has very, as you can see here, Solomon proved it, very much pull on the way a guy goes. [24:02] And it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milkan, and the abomination of the Amorites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord. It's not just at the point where there's just a gray area here. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. [25:04] You know, here we have David, King David, a man after God's own heart, and following after God, and then you see the repercussions of this.

Solomon, not only did his heart turn away from God, here he is in verse 7, he's building high places. The very thing that God doesn't want, and the very thing that we see, like I was going through, the very thing we see with those other kings that they didn't tear down, here Solomon was, after King David, here Solomon was building these high places.

Not only did he allow his wives to worship idols, but he was building these high places. And what God thought of that and what it did to the kingdom is here in the next couple verses. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, which appeared unto him twice. That's another thing that just never ceases to amaze me and just made me rethink again here as I read this.

You know, I've always been one to think, if I could have been back here and seen Jesus, face to face or just like Solomon, it says he saw, or God came to him, I don't know in exactly what way, but God came to him twice.

[26:28] We have the word of God, we have, actually we have the Holy Spirit now that they didn't have, though it would come to them at times, but that they didn't have but we do now. God came to him twice and look where Solomon ended up.

You know, to me, especially as a young boy growing up, I was like, boy, it would be so much easier to follow God and to know that I'm doing right and everything.

If I could have just heard Jesus say it right there and seen Jesus, but God appeared to him and had commanded him concerning this thing, God had specifically commanded him that he should not go after other gods, but he kept not that which the Lord commanded, that wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, forasmuch as this is done of thee and thou hast not kept my commandment and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee and will give it to thy servant.

There was results that came, there was things that happened from this. The kingdom was torn into two then, there was Judah and then there was Israel as we were reading all the kings that I was reading from were kings of Judah that I read the different ones there, but there was specific things that happened because of Solomon following, falling away like this and I guess that's what I want to go back to with us and are we, have we, are we open to tearing down any high places that could be or are in our lives that directly can influence our sphere of witness, especially our children.

I guess that's to me the biggest, the biggest thing. We can't, we can't make our children be godly, we can't make them, but am I allowing things that would help eventually to lead them away like high places that they can see that they don't think matches up in my life with what I'm saying a little bit like what Mike was talking there earlier.

[28:48] I can talk all day long but am I living it out? And so, my voice is about going but, so that's what I wanted us to, to get and I hope I've got that across that, that what can there be in my life, in your life that are high places?

Are we open to the Holy Spirit that He can come and, and, and nudge us in these things? I'm not, from what, it's not like as though that I think our hearts have to be cold and away from God for there not to still be things.

It says these people, their heart was after God but they had blind spots. They had, we're human, we are human beings but I believe God can show us and can change us when we, that's the conclusion I came to from just studying and meditating on this, that God, we have the Holy Spirit now within us and God can change us and mold us that we can be, like Mike said, more, better disciples and more Christ-like and that would be my desire for each one of us this morning. Thank you. Amen.