



“This is the Story...”

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Week 17: Watch Over It Anyway

1 Kings 8

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/qka-thB4hk>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God gave the people a new leader, Joshua, and through miraculous works brought the people into the promised land. Once there, they had to learn again how to be God’s people. They missed the mark a lot, and God sent judges to guide them. Ordinary people showed creativity and steadfast love in the way they continued the story of the people of God. God called a young boy, Samuel to be a bridge between the people and God. Prophets like Samuel would continue to try to keep the people faithful to God in the time of the kings, beginning with Saul and David.

- **Key verse:** 1 Kings 8:27

Tell the story: David wanted to build God a temple - a permanent house. God’s response was that God didn’t really need a house, but if the people really wanted to build one, the builder would need to be someone who wasn’t a warrior-king like David. So the job of building the temple fell to Solomon, David’s son, the third king of Israel. The temple was made with many materials, by many skilled artisans. It took seven years to build. And when it was finished, the people gathered to dedicate it. Even though this great and beautiful temple had been built, Solomon reminded the people that it is not possible to contain God in a house. It is a house of worship, but it is not where God lives.

- Read 1 Kings 8. Or if you want a shorter section to read, try 1 Kings 8:1-6, 12-27, 41-43, 65-66.
- Read page 99 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - In 1 Kings 8:31-53, notice the variety of examples Solomon gives of ways that this temple might be a symbol of God’s presence. Do you hear echoes of other stories you know?
 - Notice verses 41-43. What promise/covenant does this remind you of? How is the story continuing?
 - Notice verses 46-52. There is some foreshadowing here!
- **Background information:**
 - There is a wealth of online information about the layout and design of the temple. If you are intrigued by this, look it up and explore it further!
 - Solomon’s words in verses 41-43 can be read as a reminder of the inclusiveness of God’s love. They can also be a reflection of Solomon’s attitude toward surrounding nations. Whether in taking wives or trading, Solomon tended not to be an isolationist. In fact, he did a lot of trading with one particular king, King Hiram, to build the temple.

- **Conversation starters:**

- The temple is a big deal. It would be the central gathering place and a center of identity. But it is complicated. God is clear that God will not be confined to a building. If you are reading this in the midst of a pandemic, how does this strike you?
- This dedication is described as happening in October during Succoth, or the Feast of Tabernacles/Festival of Booths. During this festival, the people gathered in Jerusalem and lived outdoors to remember God's provision in the wilderness. It was a good time to hold the dedication, because it was a time that the people would be gathered anyway. But consider, was there some irony in a dedication of a structure like this during a festival that celebrated the simplicity of God's provision when the people lived in impermanent tents and God led by a pillar of fire and cloud? Wrestle with this.
- What might be the political benefits to Solomon in the building of this temple?

Microsong: "Watch over it anyway" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/nsyzgXqFyBU>)

Does God need a temple to live here on earth? The universe could not contain God, much less this place; watch over it anyway!

Let Your name be here. Listen and forgive. Bring justice and save us. Provide like You promised.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Ui9eQY4LFC4>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and flood
and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ohhh ohhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses. *Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them.* Ohh ohhh.

The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"

Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God. God is One, only God!"

Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.

God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.

Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.

Corruption in the temple, then God sends Samuel.

God gives them a prophet, They ask for a king

Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets

God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!