

Explore the Bible: Drifting Away

June 6, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible Lesson for June 19 focuses on 1 Kings 11:1-13.*

It was my first visit to the beach, and I was very excited. My youth group had just finished a great week on our mission trip in South Texas, and it was time to have a little fun in the sun. The morning started great. We built a couple of sandcastles, tossed the Frisbee, and played in the crashing waves. While playing in the waves, without warning, the undertow began to strengthen. Suddenly, some of us were caught up in it. Like me, many in our youth had never experienced swimming in the ocean, much less what to do when one gets caught up in an undertow.

Soon, my brother and I were drifting further and further from the shore, and instantly we were in deeper water and in severe trouble. It became harder to gasp for air, and drowning became a real threat. It is a sobering moment when you realize that your life could be over within minutes.

Miraculously, one of our youth group members, an expert swimmer, reached us, saved us, and took us back to shore. That young man helped about eight students drifting away from shore, caught up in a strong undertow. After that harrowing experience, most of our youth group decided to stay on the beach for the rest of the afternoon.

In our passage of Scripture this week, King Solomon—who began his reign over Israel with such great integrity and spirituality, following in the ways of Yahweh—soon began to falter and slowly drift away from Yahweh. The problem started when he started to intermarry with women from foreign nations, who eventually brought their foreign gods.

Disregarding God's Commands (1 Kings 11:1-3)

What seemed like good politics and a way to keep his kingdom in good relations with the other pagan nations, Solomon began to marry the daughters of foreign royalty. However, according to the scriptures, these marriages were more than political stability. Solomon loved these pagan women with lustful desire.

Sadly, God had addressed this issue of marrying pagan women in his commands to Israel in times past. Solomon is making some justifications for his disregard for God's commands. Whenever we begin to make accommodations, compromise or have a blatant disregard for God's commands, trouble is not too far ahead.

Drifting Away (1 Kings 11:4-8)

Scripture records the result of Solomon's decision to marry pagan women. Like swimmers caught in an undertow in the ocean, Solomon began to drift further and further away from God. Under the influences of his wives, Solomon began to worship false idols, and then he started to build shrines for them and high places to offer sacrifices to them. Solomon did evil in the sight of Yahweh by not remaining loyal to him, and unlike his father, David, Solomon did not reconcile his sin before Yahweh.

Drifting away from God can occur subtly in our own lives. Small compromises with outside influences begin the erosion of our relationship with Yahweh. Soon, we can encounter ourselves far from Yahweh, struggling with the consequences of our decisions that separated us from him. Be mindful and watchful of the influences around us.

Consequences (1 Kings 11:9-13)

Compromises made in our spiritual walk can result in some severe consequences. For Solomon, as a result of letting his heart drift away from

Yahweh, Yahweh would tear the kingdom of Israel from him and give it to their servants. And yet, despite Solomon's sin, Yahweh still honors the faithfulness of David and decides against ripping the kingdom from Solomon during his lifetime. Included in this consequence is also the grace of Yahweh. He tells Solomon that he will not tear all the kingdom apart but rather keep a remnant; one tribe would be spared. This one tribe would be the tribe of Judah, from which our Messiah would come.

No one likes consequences. Many times, I've been the parent to give out consequences through discipline. What is unique about consequences and discipline within a relationship is that they are always given through the context of love. If I did not love my son, I would not hold him accountable for anything; his decisions, good or bad, would not interest me. But because I love my son, I care about his life and how he should live. Our father in heaven is no different. He has set the commands and principles in place that we should walk in them. Let's strive to live close to Yahweh, never drifting away from him. Let's stay accountable to him and our community of faith.

Dr. Joe Rangel is the associate dean of the School of Christian Studies and teaches Christian ministry at Wayland Baptist University.