



THE WAY OF
KINGS

ANCIENT WISDOM
FOR THE MODERN MAN

NATHAN CLARKSON



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INTRODUCTION

Created to Be Kings

We men were created to be kings. To rule the dominions we've been given with truth, justice, and love. To bring life to the land we live in and prosperity to the inhabitants who exist inside its walls. To fight evil when it crosses our borders and to diplomatically connect and support our neighbors and allies in the battles of this world.

We were made to be kings. But something has gone wrong.

Somewhere down the line we began believing we were made to be *the* king. To decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. To use our power and prowess for our own selfish gain. To hoard our wealth at the expense of others and to steal what is not ours. To not sacrifice for the ones we love but to hide and live in fear instead.

Because while we were given a throne, we wanted to sit on *the* throne. But only when the King of Kings rules over us, only when we allow the Lord of all to have authority over our rule, will the kingdoms he has entrusted to us succeed.

Through the following pages, I want to help you like others have helped me to become a more whole and integrated man. In

Introduction

addition to stories and thoughts, I will offer you practical tips, recipes, workouts, plans for kicking addictions, reading lists, style insights, dating advice, and road maps to following your dreams. I want to inspire your mind and heart so you can claim the life of the king God made you to be.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

In the past, when a king was nearing the end of his reign, he would often write letters to the incoming king. This was a way for him to pass on the things he had learned and discovered in his years to better serve and guide the new king as he took on the responsibility of ruling a domain.

We see this practiced in countless royal lines, and we see it in Scripture in places like Proverbs, where King Solomon wrote to his sons in hopes of imparting his knowledge, beginning many of his chapters with “My son . . .”

This book, too, was written as a collection of essays from an older king who has gained hard-earned wisdom and experience to a younger king who is beginning his journey.

Each chapter is broken down like this:

Essay. At the beginning of each chapter is an essay on a particular aspect of being a king, specifically a king under God and over the domain he has given us to rule in our lives. It offers a few thoughts and insights into things relevant to our walks as men of faith in a modern world.

King's Questions. After each essay are questions. These questions are designed to personalize the words and lessons in a way that will connect to us in our own lives.

Scripture Reading. Next is a Scripture passage to give us insight into what the Bible has to say on the subjects covered. We can ingest the Word of God in a way that speaks directly to the issues we might be facing.

King Tip. Lastly, at the end of each chapter is a life tip that has something to do with the subject explored in the essay. The tips offer fun activities, educational bits, recipes, how-tos, short stories, dating advice, questionnaires, book lists, and more.

This book can be read alone to receive solo encouragement or enjoyed by a group—a Bible study, a men's group, or two friends learning and growing together.

It can be read once daily to complete a forty-one-day guide (including the afterword) to beginning your journey to becoming king, or it may be read once weekly spread out over a year.

1 A Man after God's Own Heart

I've always had an affinity for King David. Being a pastor's kid, I knew all the prominent figures in Scripture, from Adam to Paul. And as amazing as each of these people were—as influential and important as their lives were—I felt like because of the struggles I faced and my mind/personality, I couldn't totally connect to their stories. But right in the middle of 1 Samuel, the book in Scripture where David's story is told, was where I often found myself drawn to as a young boy.

David, like me, was wild at heart. He had a proclivity for getting in trouble, running his mouth, and picking legendary fights with fabled foes. But in his heart, he desired to be good, to do what was right, to own his mistakes, and to be God's. He was a character I could connect with.

My mom always said I was out of the box. She said I was larger than life, just like David. And reading his story showed me how God used this flawed but dedicated man, not because David was perfect but because of the choice he made over and over again to turn his heart toward God. That gave me hope that God could do the same for me.

Despite David being quoted, admired, and regarded as a good man by many, he was deeply imperfect and broken. David stole another man's woman and even had her husband murdered.

So how is it that we still laud this man for his faith and character? Why is it that men who were more consistently moral are less known? How is it that God chose David's line to be the one through which he entered the world?

The Bible describes David as “a man after [God's] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). In the Psalms, we read David's raw, heartfelt, and unfiltered prayers to God. And while you'd think that in writing about himself he would put a positive spin on his life, ignoring the broken and bad and highlighting his more honorable accomplishments, instead he stands before God in his prayer naked, baring all, acknowledging his need for God's presence and the devastating mistakes that took him from it. In the Psalms, David calls to, petitions, and cries for God and his mercy, love, forgiveness, and friendship—not as a man who thinks he has earned it but as a child who calls out to his Father in need and want. A king with armies, women, might, and fame comes before God as a child: weak, in need, and begging.

I don't know for certain, but I wonder if this is why David is seen as a legendary man of God. Perhaps it wasn't his good or bad works that set him apart. Maybe all along the thing that God so loved was David's heart, which was turned toward his Creator in humility and desire—a desire above all things that existed on both his best and worst days.

I have tried to be good and will continue to do so, but I have also been bad and will continue to be bad. Living a life of purpose and having a story worth telling will never be about me being enough. It will be about choosing to be a man after God's own heart and kneeling before my Creator with all my good, bad, and ugly, realizing I need him—my Savior, Father, and friend.

Being the man I ought to be won't come from the things I do or don't do; instead, it will come out of a relationship with my Creator. A heart after God's own.

KING'S QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to you to be a man after God's own heart?
2. Are you a man after God's own heart, or do you want to be one? If so, why?
3. What's keeping you from feeling like or becoming one?



Scripture Reading

Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.
But they delight in the law of the LORD,
meditating on it day and night.
They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

But not the wicked!
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.
They will be condemned at the time of judgment.
Sinners will have no place among the godly.
For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1

KING TIP #1

Adventure Pack Checklist

Going on any adventure, quest, or camping trip takes careful planning, and perhaps the most important thing to contemplate is what to take with you. You can take only what you can carry, but one of those items might just be the thing that saves your life or makes the trip epic. Below is a list of things every adventurer should consider taking.

1. *Large backpack and bedroll/sleeping bag.* This goes without saying, but I said it anyway.
2. *One pair of sturdy pants.* Wearing a pair of sturdy pants will save room in your backpack, and they will last through whatever the adventure throws your way.
3. *One change of shirt/underwear/socks.* When one gets dirty, wear the clean one. Switch off if necessary.
4. *Reusable water bottle.* Water is the nectar of life, and a reusable bottle will ensure you will always have enough and can refill as needed.
5. *First aid kit.* You hope you won't need first aid, but it's better to have the kit and not need it than it is to need it but not have it.
6. *Ranger scarf.* The possibilities for this small item are endless. It can be used as a bind, sun guard, or tourniquet.
7. *Knife.* You will always have a need for a knife. You can choose between a folding or a fixed blade, both of which have their pros and cons, but bring one no matter what!
8. *Notepad.* Whether you are a poet, an artist, or just a jotter, a notepad will be necessary to write down important things like directions or just thoughts when the batteries on your digital devices die.

9. *Nonperishable food.* Whether it's canned beans, a bag of nuts, a pile of dried meat, or all three, food that doesn't go bad could be a lifesaver on your quest.
10. *Fire starter.* Having the ability to build a fire will make any cold night you spend in the wilderness much more bearable. Magnesium and flint are both good for starting fires. But be careful and follow local laws!
11. *Hand sanitizer.* Clean those hands!
12. *Disposable camera.* A disposable camera means no batteries to worry about and no selfies to scroll through but still all the ability to document your adventure.

2 Royal Blood

I remember looking through the pages of our family history as a kid. One of my relatives had put together a book bound in red leather that detailed my ancestry. The names and dates went back years and years. And close to the end of the book was a revelation that has changed how I see myself and the world. I found recorded evidence that I am a descendant of royalty. Though the lines have split and turned, I discovered that I was, in fact, related to kings. This might seem like an antiquated piece of useless trivia to some, but to my young heart, it meant something powerful: I had royalty in my blood and bones, and with that knowledge came the realization that my actions mattered. I was part of something bigger than myself.

In Romans 8:17, the apostle Paul writes, “And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.” This means that regardless of our earthly bloodlines, or lineage, if we are in communion with God, we are heirs and descendants of the most powerful, important, and long-lasting kingdom—the kingdom of heaven.

God has not just begrudgingly accepted us to live as lowly workers or slaves of his kingdom. Rather, because of his offer of adoption, because of his gift, we have been invited into a spiritual bloodline of royalty. When we allow God to rule over us, we are given the right to be part of the royal family and to rule with him as kings.

Realizing we are royalty isn't simply a fun little thing to discover in an ancestry test. Discovering we are royalty will change everything about us. It will put us in a context where our choices matter more than we've ever realized before. Embracing our royalty will transform how we see ourselves, taking our self-perception from one of self-loathing, insecurity, and low status to one of healthy self-love, confidence, and importance. It will help us see who we truly are, who we were meant to be, and what we were created to do.

We are royalty not because of something we've done but instead because of the lineage and inheritance that has been given to us.

No matter who you are—your financial or professional status, what you look like, where you're from, or what you can do—you have been offered a bloodline of royalty from the King of Kings himself. Will you take up your crown?

KING'S QUESTIONS

1. How does it feel to know you've been invited to a royal lineage?
2. Would accepting royalty change how you live? Why?
3. Do you truly believe we were made to be kings?



Scripture Reading

The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet.”

The LORD will extend your powerful kingdom from
Jerusalem;
you will rule over your enemies.
When you go to war,
your people will serve you willingly.
You are arrayed in holy garments,
and your strength will be renewed each day like the
morning dew.

The LORD has taken an oath and will not break his vow:
“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

Psalm 110:1–4

KING TIP #2

Essential Manners Every King Should Know

There are a few manners that every man should know and practice, whether he is at a fancy party or just out and about. Having these manners will set you apart as a man of value and help others feel valued at the same time. They will also help you build important relationships and cause others to feel important.

1. *Shaking hands.* A handshake conveys a lot about a person. When shaking hands, make sure to reach out with confidence, grasp firmly (not enough to cause pain), and release after one short squeeze.
2. *Making eye contact.* Looking people in the eye can change your entire reputation. It conveys confidence and lets the person you are talking to know they are being heard. Make sure that when you are talking to someone, you look the person opposite you in the eye, breaking occasionally for thought or to look at another person.

3. *Saying please and thank you.* Saying please and thank you is something everyone should've learned as children but many still don't practice. Saying please when asking for something and thank you when something is given to you can make you infinitely classier, and both of these things give honor to others.
4. *Offering to help.* Offering to help is an essential way to show you are a man of class. It doesn't have to be with grand gestures: even offering to wash dishes, carry something heavy up the stairs, or get something off the top shelf will drastically affect people's perception of you and is a small way to show the goodness inside of you.
5. *Displaying proper table manners.* There is an endless number of arbitrary table manners you can learn, but the ones that ensure you are a man of class include putting your napkin in your lap, waiting for the host to eat before you start, using your utensils and not your hands, not making bodily noises at the table, and accepting seconds if offered.

3 The Crown and the Cross

It's an amazing feeling to realize we're royalty—our name has power and we have been given influence over the world and circumstances around us. The saying "I feel like king of the world" is a common one that aptly describes the everyday feeling when life is under our control and going our way as a result of our decrees. But there's another part of accepting a crown that isn't as popular. There's a part of becoming a king that doesn't look like the triumphant, comfortable, leisurely life we often envision.

The cross.

The God of heaven came to earth. The Creator of everything in the universe stepped away from his throne in heaven and into our midst to save us, love us, and establish a new kingdom on earth: the kingdom of heaven. Jesus talked about this often in his thirty years here on earth. He talked about this new kingdom while performing miracles, teaching, healing, loving, and he also talked about it as he was lied about, tortured, betrayed, and on his way to be crucified. Jesus was and is King, but his reign came with a cross—one he took willingly.

Every crown comes with a cross; every reign comes with a responsibility.

Scripture tells us, “When someone has been given much, much will be required in return” (Luke 12:48), but what does that mean in the context of the kingdom God has asked us to help rule? What does that look like practically in the world? For Jesus it meant taking up his crown and receiving glory but also being killed by the ones he loved. Maybe for you it’s taking on a new and more prominent position but also more stress and bigger responsibilities. Maybe it’s the decision to get healthy that comes with the hardships of exercising and self-control. Maybe it’s dealing with your mental illness but having to face the difficulty of opening up to a mentor or therapist. Maybe it’s finding a wife but also accepting the difficulties of unconditionally loving and taking care of a family.

God has offered each of us a crown, but with it comes a cross. He does not force us to take either, but should we want to reign with him, should we want to take our place as royalty, it will also require sacrifice.

When Jesus tells us, “My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light” (Matt. 11:30), his words can ring hollow. This life can often feel so, so heavy—almost too heavy for us to bear. But perhaps Jesus knew what we often forget: that yes, the yoke or cross is light not because it isn’t heavy but because of his sacrifice.

Like a yoke on his back, Jesus carried the cross on which he would die. It was a weight as heavy as the world, but one he bore knowing it couldn’t compare to the glory of the crown he would wear as he defeated death. It’s in this story that we find the God who modeled for us both wearing his crown and bearing the cross.

KING'S QUESTIONS

1. Are you willing to accept both the crown and the cross?
2. As a result of following God, what have you found in your own life that is a crown?
3. As a result of following God, what have you found in your own life that is a cross?



Scripture Reading

The LORD is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever.

Psalm 23

KING TIP #3

Mastering the Art of Conversation

The art of conversation, whether with important figures, friends, or colleagues, can set you apart, give you influence, and enable you to connect with the people around you in powerful and effective ways. Here are a few tips to becoming a master of the art of conversation.

1. *Be a good listener.* When you learn how to actively listen and really hear the people around you, you will be able to stay engaged in the conversation. The person you are talking to will also probably feel seen and valued.
2. *Ask a lot of questions.* Questions are the secret fuel to any great dialogue. Though most people think they should state things, asking questions will allow you to keep the conversation going and people engaged. Who doesn't like being asked questions about themselves?
3. *Have an opinion.* Sharing your point of view can be scary. You may worry you might not come across well or sound smart/good enough. But it's only when you find the confidence to share how you see the world and the other person that others feel they know you! The secret is sharing humbly and kindly.
4. *Think about your body language.* Though silent, body language speaks volumes. No one wants to talk with someone who looks bored, disinterested, or closed off. Making eye contact, nodding your head, uncrossing your arms, leaning in, and even offering the occasional "hmm" will affect those around you in a powerful way.