

POLITICS AND  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

KINGS



PRESIDENTS

TIMOTHY R. GAINES &  
SHAWNA SONGER GAINES

## ENDORSEMENTS

“In a sad world where the people of God are crawling into bed with political parties . . . this is a refreshing book. Tim and Shawna have revisited the timely text of 2 Kings and heard the fresh story of the kingdom of God . . . With elections always around the corner, I highly recommend this for congregational reading and political reality.”

Dan Boone

President, Trevecca Nazarene University

“It’s no secret that politics divides not only our country but also our churches. *Kings and Presidents* is a relevant, timely, and important book. We seem to be confused about politics on the one hand yet adamant on the other that our particular political view is right or even distinctively Christian. Tim and Shawna challenge us to think differently about politics, beginning with the assertion that as followers of King Jesus, our citizenship is in the kingdom of God. If you are Christian and care (or even wonder) about politics, this book is for you!”

Ron Benefiel

Center for Pastoral Leadership  
Point Loma Nazarene University

“Tim and Shawna have penned a love letter for the churches—and the churches would be wise to read it! With biblical and theological insight, no less than thoughtful pastoral wisdom, they demonstrate the possibilities of grace and reconciliation when we see the kings and kingdoms of this world through new eyes.”

Jeffrey W. Barbeau

Associate Professor of Theology, Wheaton College

# KINGS



# PRESIDENTS

POLITICS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

TIMOTHY R. GAINES AND SHAWNA SONGER GAINES



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OF KANSAS CITY

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For our parents, who have long walked to the rhythms  
of the kingdom and faithfully taught us its ways:

Gordon Gaines

Marilyn Gaines

Debie Songer

Rob Songer

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# THE PATTERN OF TWO WORLDS

## 2 KINGS 2:7-15

THERE ARE CERTAIN CONVERSATIONS that stick with you. One of those conversations we had was with Jim. Jim had been a committed member of the church for more than eight decades. One Sunday, just before the service started, Jim walked down the aisle and took his seat. When we asked him how he was doing, he took a moment to consider his answer. He looked around at the people, listened to the music the worship band played, and responded: “You know, I’m ninety-two years old. I’ve been at this church a long time, and I’ve been on this earth a long time. These days, when I come to church, I’m not even sure where I am.”

Jim’s experience at church was one of disorientation. The church Jim loved and served had become nearly unrecognizable. Babies he’d looked upon lovingly in the nursery were now grown and had children and grandchildren of their own. The choir loft had been replaced by a drum cage, and the pastor didn’t sit on the platform or wear a suit; sometimes she even wore jeans! The people in the pews talked about things that were unfamiliar. The church Jim knew had faded into the recesses of his memory. As familiar forms and styles

of worship were replaced with newer expressions, there was a sense, by those who had been oriented with the old, of being displaced. Jim had always been a beloved part of our community, but it was harder and harder for him to see precisely where he fit in to this place and people he called his church.

## STEPPING INTO THE STORY

Jim is not the only one to ever feel displaced and disoriented by the world, and even the church around him. The book of 2 Kings opens in a setting of great and terrible disorientation. The people of Israel have been in the Promised Land God gave to them for generations. They have built homes, raised children, planted fields, buried loved ones, worshiped in the temple.

And then come the Babylonians. When the Babylonians come, they bring utter desolation to the northern kingdom of Israel. The Israelites have seen war and destruction before. What is so uniquely awful about the Babylonian style of war-making, though, is that they carry away many of the people of Israel from the Promised Land. The place God covenanted with their ancestors to give them—the hills and valleys where the people of Israel have dreamed of living and dying—is taken from them, and the uprooted Israelites are replanted far away in Babylon. As this Babylonian displacement is occurring, they are told they can still go about some of their practices. They can still have their priests and read scriptures about their God. Essentially, they are told to go about life as usual. The problem is that nothing is usual anymore.

In the midst of this disorientation and discomfort of displacement, God lays it on the heart of one Israelite scholar to write a history of the people of God. This history will give them their bearings in the midst of deep disorientation. This history will remind them who they are—but more importantly, whose they are—in a land where nothing is familiar and nothing belongs to them.



If we read 1 and 2 Kings carefully, we see that these books aren't like normal history books. Most histories tell the stories of who was in power at a particular time and what that ruler did with the power. In a normal history, you spend a lot of time talking about the coronation of kings. Most histories develop around who won wars or who got rich or who gained land while footnoting at whose expense these gains were made. History, we have learned, is written by the victors. But this author of 2 Kings gives an awful lot of attention to losers. There are a lot of powerless people who seem to show up in this history. It's as if this author is writing about a different kind of kingdom altogether, almost as though this history describes a parallel universe.

In the opening chapter of 2 Kings, the writer spills a lot of ink to tell a story that would be downright peculiar in most history books. This author doesn't seem to want to recount stories about kings doing celebrated things or achieving distinguished accomplishments in the way other history books are written. Rather than recounting the king's glorious victories on the battlefield or testifying to his wise and prosperous reign, the first chapter of this history is filled with the folly of kings doing things like dying, falling through lattices, and throwing themselves at the mercy of a strange, hairy old man.

Then, chapter 2 takes great care to detail the passing of a garment of clothing from one prophet to another. It doesn't take us long to deduce where the real power lies here. It is not with the befuddled kings, though they sit on thrones and lead armies. Rather, this history demonstrates that the real power is that of God working in and through the humble, faithful servants of the Lord. Apparently, it is more important for the identity of the people of Israel that they remember the transition of these prophets than hear the tales of coronations and battle victories. And even in the midst of great disorientation, this history carefully orients us around what matters: the Spirit of God leading the people of God through the work of faithful servants.

Even though he doesn't wear a crown, Elijah is a household name in Israel. His showdown with Jezebel and the prophets of Ba'al have made him somewhat of a hero to the devoted worshipers of Yahweh. That episode established him in Israel's memory as a paragon of faithfulness at a time when faithfulness seemed to be in short supply among Israel's leadership. At the same time of Elijah's ministry, Israel experiences a spate of questionable political leadership. The kings in those days are many things, but faithful they are not. And so, though Israel may have bumbling idolaters for kings, at least they have Elijah. Elijah serves God faithfully during the reign of wicked and faithless kings. He speaks for God when the kings are faithless. When Elijah speaks, it is as if his words pierce the clouds of unfaithfulness that have descended around Israel in the reign of faithless kings. The power and Spirit of God clearly rest upon this prophet who is really leading Israel in ways the kings could not begin to understand, and Israel comes to trust that in a deep way.

Everyone knows Elijah. But no one knows Elisha. Elisha is the son of a farmer, and a very young man who has not yet spoken for God. Imagine, then, what it might be like to learn that the prophet of Israel—the one who speaks for God when kings turn away from righteousness, the one who feeds the poor when famine starves them, the one who defends the weak when foreign armies oppress them, the one upon whom the Spirit of God rests—has been taken from them. Imagine the feelings of disorientation and chaos that accompany losing the one constant, faithful person who spoke for God and unified the people in the midst of chaos and change.

Elisha is not ready to let go of Elijah either. But he senses that change is coming, so he takes up the position of Elijah's shadow, relentlessly following Elijah wherever he goes. Even when Elisha is told to stay behind, he follows anyway. Finally, Elijah turns to this shadow and asks him what he wants. Elisha's answer is bold: "A double portion of your spirit" (2 Kings 2:9). At first, the answer is shocking. What arrogance is afforded to youth! It sounds as if Elisha is saying,

“I want to be twice the prophet you are.” But in historical context, Elisha is making the same request an eldest son would ask of his father. In ancient Israel, fathers divide up their possessions among their sons. Whatever the father has earned throughout his life goes to his sons. But the eldest son, the primary heir of the family, receives a double portion of whatever the other sons receive. And so when the young, unknown Elisha comes to the great prophet Elijah with this request, we might interpret his response in these words: “Could I be a son to you? I do not share your DNA, but if you’re willing, could I call you my father? Would you make me your heir and allow me to inherit the legacy you have built? Not your money or your land, but your spirit, the power of your faithfulness to a holy God.”

Shortly after Elisha makes his request, Elijah is taken up into heaven in a scene that would put even the most opulent Las Vegas show to shame. Whisked away in a vision of wind and fire, Elijah disappears from sight, and—like a son grieving a father who has died—Elisha is left standing alone in the dark. Almost by instinct, Elisha cries out, “My father! My father” (2 Kings 2:12). Then, walking over to where Elijah’s cloak fell on the ground, he picks up the only tangible reminder of the man he hoped would call him son, and silently drapes himself in the great prophet’s garment.

There are certain people who can be easily identified with clothing that sets them apart from others. Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire founder of Facebook, is often pegged as one of the most poorly dressed people in the world. Rather than “looking like a million bucks”—which Zuckerberg has, many times over—a drab, gray, hooded sweatshirt over a drab, gray t-shirt has become a ubiquitous and recognizable staple of his wardrobe, even when he is courting donors or sitting in important business meetings. It’s not even that he just happens to have one favorite shirt that he wears often. In a recent Q&A, he was asked about his familiar attire. His response? He doesn’t have just one shirt he wears all the time. He actually has

a closet full of the same kind of shirt.<sup>6</sup> He goes on in the article to explain why he dresses so modestly when he could afford Armani, but the point is, people see the sweatshirt and know that is Mark Zuckerberg. Without it, he's just another guy on the street.

In many ways, this familiarity is what takes place as Elijah passes his cloak on to Elisha. In the days of Elisha, many people only had one cloak. They may have had many sets of inner clothing, but the outer garment—the cloak—was what made someone recognizable from a distance. Some translations of 2 Kings refer to this garment as a mantle, which is where we get the phrase “passing the mantle.” The mantle was a highly functional piece of clothing. It was a shield from the windswept sand, a barricade against the sun's powerful heat, and at night, when the temperatures dropped, it could keep people warm. The cloak was far more than a fashion accessory; it was a necessity.

When we hear Jesus teach his disciples that they should give up their cloak when asked for a shirt, we begin to see the magnitude of that teaching. Mantles were one of those things necessary for survival. It also said a lot about who you were. If you were rich, you probably had an ornate and decorated mantle while the poor had plain mantles. The point, of course, is that your mantle said a lot about who you were, and where you came from, and it eventually became a highly recognizable part of the way people knew you. When someone was a long way off, before you could make out their facial features, you could recognize their mantle and know who they were.

With this in mind, let's imagine the scene of the company of prophets who are gathered at the banks of the Jordan that day. They've seen Elijah, their prophet of the most high God, and the young, unknown Elisha walk to the bank of the river. They've seen Elijah take off his cloak and tap the waters of the river. They've seen the waters

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6. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/11217273/Facebooks-Mark-Zuckerberg-Why-I-wear-the-same-T-shirt-every-day.html>. Accessed January 2, 2015.

of the river recede, opening a pathway of dry ground for both Elijah and Elisha to walk across, and they've seen the two men walk away from them until they can't be seen any more. They wait and they wait and they wait—until they see the water of the river begin to recede once again. They see a pathway of dry ground appear, and a man walking toward them across the newly created corridor. They squint to try to see the man's face, but his mantle is far more recognizable. It is the mantle of Elijah, the prophet of the most high God. And as the man draws near and they begin to make out the features of his face, they realize this isn't the great prophet but the young unknown who now bears the mantle of Elijah. It probably doesn't take them long to understand what this means: The same spirit that has been Elijah's now rests on Elisha. A better way to say it, perhaps, is that there is a continuity to God's faithfulness that doesn't stop from one generation to the next.

Now, it's good to be honest about how amazing the story of Elijah being taken into heaven is. And it's well and good to stand in awe at the spectacle of wind and fire. But we also want to be sure that the meaning of what's taking place here isn't swept up in the spectacle. While it's true that this story contains elements of Elijah being honored for his faithfulness, and while it's true that there are hints of God's power to reclaim a prophet, the message we don't want to lose is the story of God's unyielding faithfulness to speak from one generation to another. It is the story of the continuity of a God who does not leave or abandon God's people in a time of change.

Remember, when this story is first written down, the people of Israel are being ruled over by foreign kings in a foreign land. Children are born who have never set foot in the Promised Land, never worshiped in the temple. This story is indeed more important than the coronation of kings because this story reminds them that—even without Elijah, without the Promised Land or the temple, even with all they have lost—the faithfulness of God remains. Just as the man-

tle of Elijah is not lost but passed to Elisha, so the Spirit of God continues to be upon them; God's voice will still speak.

## STEPPING INTO THE KINGDOM

In the same way this story is the word of God for the people of Israel living in exile, this story becomes the word of God for us today. Our context has changed, but change is a constant. In the face of constant change, this story becomes a fantastic reminder of God's faithfulness in the midst of political changes, and is a good jumping-off point to begin to understand the way 2 Kings illuminates how the world of the kingdom understands political life differently than the world of kings.

Politically, we see this changing of the guard each election cycle. You may have noticed how divided the United States becomes in regard to a leadership change. Up until the election night of 2012, statistical averages showed that about half the country wanted to see a change in leadership and the other half were happy with the current leadership, or at least preferred it to the alternative. Our congregation reflected the statistical averages for evangelicals. However, those statistics are changing. Evangelicals are not nearly as homogeneous as they were in the 1990s. Especially among young evangelicals, there is greater and greater political diversity. Within our congregation there were faithful followers of Jesus Christ on both sides of the political aisle. Some hoped for change. Some longed for continuity. But together, both groups made up the body of Christ. More than that, God was going to be faithful in the midst of continuity or change; the church would continue to be the church, and the people would continue to be faithful. For this, we gave thanks to God.

Just before the election, the circus came to our town. An actual circus would probably have been more entertaining and lively, but the arriving spectacle was *Air Force One* landing at our local airport so that President Obama could dedicate a nearby monument to Cesar Chavez. We happened to be in that part of town that morn-

ing and decided to drive over to witness the big event. We spotted a wonderful woman from our congregation who had seen every presidential visit to town since the Nixon administration, and we took our place on the sidewalk beside her.

As we waited for the plane to arrive, we also witnessed a lot of broken humanity. People carrying signs lined both sides of the street and both sides of the political spectrum, all determined to be seen by the president, and for the clever slogans scrawled across their signs to impact his decision-making. At one point, a lively conversation between two men nearby almost came to blows. These grown men had a disagreement about which candidate should occupy office after the election, but their discourse was fractured. As we backed away from potential physical harm, we watched as the conversation escalated in volume and vehemence. Then, after the plane landed, the president boarded a car, and his motorcade went speeding out of the airport—in the opposite direction of the sign holders. The two men looked at each other, seeming to realizing their respective messages would never be received by the other—or by the president—and they sheepishly turned away, signs in hand, and silently parted company.

In the face of an impending political change, these two men demonstrated just how beholden they had become to the world of kings. Here's a part of what we saw: These men were desperate in the face of change. They each needed the change to go their way. They both probably had good reasons for their positions, but the larger story was that they were desperate for change to go their way because all they had to hold onto in this time of change was the possibility that their guy would win. There wasn't a hope beyond the winner of that election, and it showed in the way these men nearly began to bludgeon each other. That kind of desperation fractures relationships, setting people against one another, and that dynamic is simply the way life works in the world of kings. In that world, if you are going to have hope in the face of change, your hope lies only in your

guy ascending to the throne. Your hope will lie solely in the fact that you be on the winner's side.

Consider what 2 Kings might be telling us about this kind of political vision, though. At the outset of Elisha's ministry, a disruptive change of leadership, a destabilizing and disorienting shift, are overshadowed by a larger theological reality: The same God who spoke through Elijah is still going to speak through Elisha. The goodness in Elijah's leadership wasn't actually found in Elijah at all; it was in the way Elijah cloaked himself in God's faithfulness. And now, Elisha wears that same cloak.

Right away, 2 Kings seems to suggest that the continuity of good leadership has a lot more to do with God's faithfulness than it does with winners and losers. It seems to remind us that the story of God doesn't need to advance upon the backs of victors. Instead, it advances upon the backs of those who are willing to cloak themselves in faithfulness to God.

In fact, even in the story of Elijah and Elisha, it is the mantle—the representation of God's anointing—that remains, even when the man wearing it disappears. The passing of the mantle doesn't mean that Elisha won the election for head prophet, beating out Elijah for the chance to wear the cloak. Rather, Elisha's donning of the mantle means that he is covered in God's grace. And when he comes back through the waters, it is the mantle and not the man that the other prophets recognize and respect.

We want to be careful here not to compare the prophetic mantle to a political office. We've heard many people say, throughout different presidencies, "I respect the office even if I don't respect the person." The mantle in this story is not a political exploit or national icon. It is a prophetic symbol of God's presence, an icon of the world of the kingdom. In fact, this mantle is being passed while kings are being deposed. The presence of God rules over and above political offices. And while kings and kingdoms come and go, God's faithfulness remains.



But the differences between the mantle and the political office are precisely the point. They *are* different from one another. They operate according to a different rhythm of life, a different kind of logic, and that is what we are supposed to see. If you were to read through 2 Kings 1, the whole chapter is consumed with the transition and succession of kings. What will happen if the king is injured? What will happen if the king dies? Who will take the king's place? What will happen in the interim? Who will be the winner in the transition? Who will be the loser? What will that mean for the people? As we encounter chapter 2, however, the message becomes clear: The mantle of the prophet is incredibly different from the crown of the king. The mantle of the prophet says to us that the same God who spoke through one prophet will speak through the next. In other words, in the world of the kingdom, we don't need to fear times of disorientation and transition as those in the world of kings do. No matter who picks up the mantle and puts it on, it will be the same God speaking through that person. And if that is truly the case, leadership isn't about winners and losers because whoever is in the position to speak will be telling the same story as the person before.

We need to be able to recognize these differences between the world of kings and the world of the kingdom. And as we begin to notice them, we need to ask in which world we most readily live. We need to ask which world we truly believe will make a difference. We need to ask which world can actually deliver hope beyond the anxiety of the election cycle and the fear of regime change. We need to ask ourselves how each way of viewing political life can bring about things like justice and reconciliation.

We should also remember that 2 Kings was compiled in a time of incredible political disorientation. Those who hear and tell the stories of Elisha are the same ones who wrestle with what is coming next, or what the next change in political leadership will mean for them. And that can create a fair amount of anxiety. When Elisha emerges from the Jordan River, then, cloaked in the same mantle

that Elijah wore, it sends a signal to those who are reading between the lines in the midst of political disorientation: *Remember which world you live in.* Remember that the world of kings will always be based on who has won, and how the winner writes the story. But also remember that in the world of the kingdom of God, God's faithfulness is passed from one leader to the next. Remember that leaders are not determined by who wins but by on whom the Spirit of God rests. And if you're going to live in the world of the kingdom, follow those leaders. There will be hope there.

Of course, this is not a dismissal of political leaders. It is right and good to desire that our political leaders have the virtues that God calls forth to transform the world. We should long to see leaders who defend the poor, the widow, the orphan. We should crave political leaders who are selfless and compassionate, outraged by injustice and steady in crisis. But the ability of these leaders to enact any kind of true transformation depends on the hand and blessing of God, not the other way around.

Because we desire the transformation of the world, we reject a kind of escapism where politics don't make any difference to us. We don't suggest that we can simply stand by and watch the world crumble around us, because that is not consistent with people who are called to abide in God's kingdom. In 2 Kings, and lots of other places in Scripture, God uses political rulers for God's purposes, so we aren't saying that political rulers are unimportant. Rather, the faithfulness of God is that which captures our hope and imagination far more than the outcome of the latest election. Second Kings opens a tale of two worlds for us. In one world, the story is written according to who wins and who loses. In the other world, the story is written according to God's faithfulness. And we are hopeful that encountering these two worlds, seeing the patterns of life in each and the ways they work, will cause us to rejoice when justice is enacted wherever we see it. We simply need to be aware that the worlds operate differently from one another, and that we may not be able to

expect things like the establishment of God's kingdom from a world that works according to a different logic.

For this reason, as the election drew near in 2012, we encouraged our people to participate, to become educated about the local and national propositions and candidates, to engage the political process. But we also talked with them about what it might mean to be handed one of those "I Voted" stickers, and to be sure that, when we affix that sticker to our chest, it doesn't hide the cross. After all, the cross has bought us our inheritance.

As a brief aside, let's talk for a moment about this dynamic as it is unfolding in the church. As statisticians are busy drawing political lines along state borders, race, and gender, the category of age has become increasingly important. Youth will always have a different view of the world they have newly engaged. But especially recently, young people vote based on a different value system than their parents and grandparents. This change is true of young evangelicals as well. A party's stance on abortion and gay marriage are not the only religious issues young voters see on the ballot.

Perhaps you have had a lively conversation with someone of a different generation who sees the world and politics through a lens that doesn't always make sense to you. Perhaps you have had a lively, even difficult, conversation about God, salvation, heaven and hell, and our place in the mix. It doesn't take a statistician to tell us that there is a marked difference in the worldviews of younger and older generations. This difference, along with all the change in society and the world around us, can leave the generations of church members who have served God faithfully for years wondering to whom they will pass the mantle. Whom can they trust to carry on the work of the church and the practices of the kingdom?

Churches across North America have seen a great deal of discontinuity from one generation to the next. As we pick up this story in 2 Kings 2 and see the seamlessness with which one prophet goes on

to glory while another puts on the mantle, many of us are left dumbfounded. How can this be so?

Sometimes, when we begin to be convinced by the way of life in the world of kings, we Christians have been all too ready to adopt the story we have been told about young people. Looking at popular culture, we've accepted the idea that young people need to go through a time of searching and "finding themselves," which includes questioning and exploring. We assume it is natural and perhaps even right for young people to leave the church temporarily in order to find themselves. Let's be honest: It can be really frustrating to be around a twenty-year-old who is "figuring things out" and has seemingly rejected everything we hold dear. And perhaps as the church we have been guilty of abandoning them to their self-exploration. Averse to having our authority, practices, and virtues questioned, we let them find answers in a world that will tell them they can be victors, kings, and conquerors just by being themselves. Hopefully, we know that our identity is found in Christ, our selfhood is covered in God's presence, our desires are surrendered to the coming kingdom. But we have no way to speak this word into the lives of young people unless we are willing to be uncomfortable and even disoriented alongside them.

The story of Elijah and Elisha should be quite convincing for a people who seek to make their home in the world of the kingdom and to live according to the patterns of that world. Those patterns go something like this: While generations change, while leaders come and go, the faithfulness of God doesn't leave a faithful people. Young adults do not need to leave the church so long as the church is willing to trust in the faithfulness of God. If we are willing to trust that God will be just as faithful to the next generation as God was to the previous generation, it may do us well to be willing to offer our mantle to the next leaders.

In the story of Elijah and Elisha, it's important to note that Elisha isn't interested in making a name for himself. He isn't trying to draw

out the distinctions between himself and the one who came before. Rather, he is far more pleased to be seen as in continuity with Elijah. When Elisha puts on the cloak, you can see that it's the same God who was powerful and mighty through Elijah. Elisha is not looking to build himself a kingdom, to prop up his kind of church or life or politics. In the changing of the guard, God is glorified, not the prophet. And this is entirely different from the way things work in the world of kings.

Some researchers suggest that as many as 90 percent of young people will leave the church after they graduate from high school. As more books, articles, and blogs continue to be written on this dynamic (and there are many), it seems as if a story is being written that suggests that this is simply the way it has to be. But what if the people of God took seriously this continuity issue? We may begin to see a new face under the mantle, but the good news is that we can trust that the mantle is the same and that God's faithfulness will truly endure from generation to generation.

What if we began to be formed so deeply by the patterns of the world of the kingdom that we began to tell a different story ourselves as we live out life together in the church? How much confusion do you think there is between worlds in the church? How often do the patterns of the world of kings come spilling into the life of the church, causing us to measure the story of the church's life according to winners and losers?

But what if our life as the church told the story of the kingdom instead? What if the people of God were so deeply formed by life in the world of the kingdom that they woke up the morning after an election and, no matter what the outcome, were first inclined to offer praise to God for God's faithfulness that has sustained generation after generation and will continue to do so for generations to come? Such an outcome is definitely a possibility for a people who have been deeply formed by the long arc of God's faithfulness through history.

The reality of God's faithfulness will be there four years from now, or four hundred years from now.

THE RECOUNT	
The World of Kings:	The World of the Kingdom:
Fears times of change and discontinuity	Sees God's faithfulness from generation to generation
Believes the story is written according to who wins and who loses	Believes the story is written according to God's faithfulness
Considers leaders to be the ones who are able to overpower their opponents	Considers leaders to be the ones upon whom the Spirit of God rests

THIS BOOK MAY NOT BE THE KIND OF THING  
YOU CAN DISCUSS IN POLITE COMPANY.

**HOW DO WE DEAL WITH IT?** What if a faithful approach to politics wasn't simply about who was going to win the next election? How might our political hope change when we encounter a God who offers us a different kind of kingdom?

God isn't asking the church to be politically uninformed, apathetic, or even bi-partisan. On the contrary, God is asking us to be faithful citizens of the kingdom—a kingdom of surprising hope where the majority of God's work to save the world will be done.

In *Kings and Presidents*, authors Tim Gaines and Shawna Songer Gaines help us recast our political hope by challenging the claim that history is written exclusively by the powerful. Through a careful study of 2 Kings, we will find that trusting in God's faithfulness is plenty political, and it has real implications for our communities, the world, and the kind of political hope we can find in it all.



Tim and Shawna Gaines used their time as co-pastors of Bakersfield First Church of the Nazarene to seek distinctly Christian approaches to pressing contemporary issues, and to apply those responses in faithful and creative ways in the local church setting. Tim now serves as assistant professor of religion at Trevecca Nazarene University. Shawna is a frequent speaker, author, and blogger. Her work can be accessed at [shawnasongergaines.com](http://shawnasongergaines.com).



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