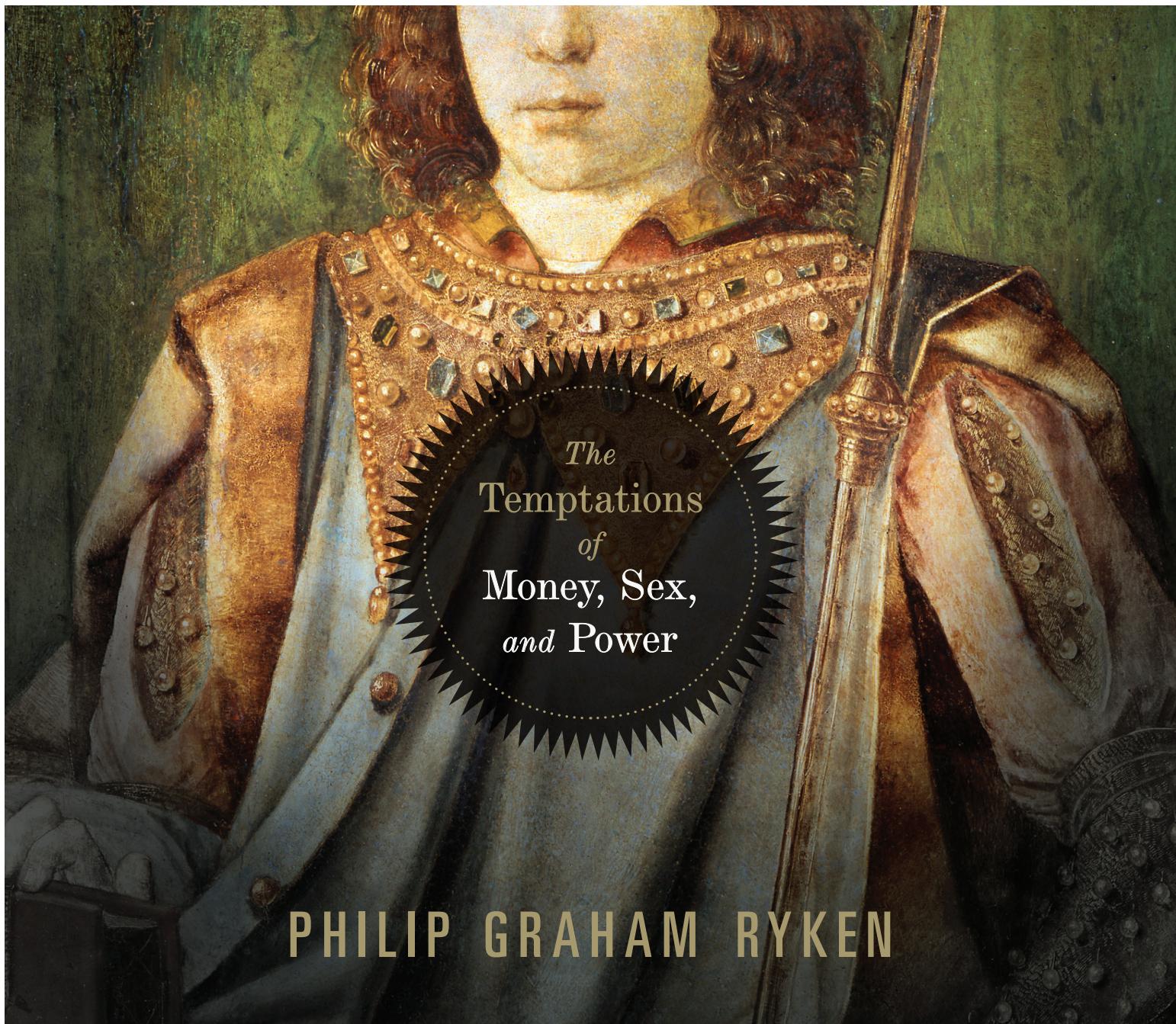




KING SOLOMON



PHILIP GRAHAM RYKEN

LEADER'S GUIDE

Leader's Guide to

K I N G S O L O M O N



PHILIP GRAHAM RYKEN

Leader's Guide Answers

by Buz Graham

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NOTE TO LEADERS

This guide is intended to equip you with helpful material for individual or group study. There is more in each chapter than you can cover in one hour of group discussion. It is not expected that every word be read or every point made.

Buz Graham
Director of Congregational Care
Christ Presbyterian Church
Nashville, Tennessee

Leader's Guide to "King Solomon: The Temptations of Money, Sex, and Power"

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LONG LIVE THE KING!

We've all seen pictures of the glorious coronation of Queen Elizabeth II or previous monarchs. In recent history, the blood lines are usually undisputed and the next monarch in line rises to power peacefully. But in Solomon's day, when the Israelite monarchy was brand new, there was a scramble for power when a monarch died. Things were up for grabs, and other members of the royal family could make a play for the throne. That's what was happening at the beginning of 1 Kings, when King David was near death.

1) Think back to pictures you've seen of coronations. What are some of the necessary props and ceremonies of a coronation?

- A royal head
- A crown for the royal head
- Someone (a churchman) to crown the regent
- Words to confer authority and responsibility; oath by the regent
- Citizens of the kingdom
- Oath of royal subjects to loyalty and homage
- A grand setting, finery, pageantry, ceremony, music
- A parade

Check out Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 on YouTube and the New York Times:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORMN48SdQJE>
<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0602.html>

2) Read 1 Kings 1:32–53. Just before these verses, in 1 Kings 1:5–10, Adonijah son of Haggith set himself up as king. Beginning in verse 32, we see what David did when he found out what Adonijah had done.

³²King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king. ³³And the king said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ ³⁵You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for he shall be king in my place. And I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.” ³⁶And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, “Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say so. ³⁷As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.”

³⁸So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David’s mule and brought him to Gihon. ³⁹There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!” ⁴⁰And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.

⁴¹Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, “What does this uproar in the city mean?” ⁴²While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, “Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news.” ⁴³Jonathan answered Adonijah, “No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king, ⁴⁴and the king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

And they had him ride on the king's mule.⁴⁵ And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise that you have heard.⁴⁶ Solomon sits on the royal throne.⁴⁷ Moreover, the king's servants came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.' And the king bowed himself on the bed.⁴⁸ And the king also said, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted someone to sit on my throne this day, my own eyes seeing it.'

⁴⁹Then all the guests of Adonijah trembled and rose, and each went his own way.⁵⁰ And Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar.⁵¹ Then it was told Solomon, "Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon, for behold, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" ⁵² And Solomon said, "If he will show himself a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth, but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die."⁵³ So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and paid homage to King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house." (1 Kings 1:32–53)

What does David's response to Adonijah's efforts to usurp the throne tell us about David?

- David was old and cold, feeble and impotent, but he was not dead yet! The text makes much of his diminished physical capacity, but nothing in the text suggests senility. His mind was still sound.
- His whole being—heart, head, and hands—were quickened by faith in God's promise and zeal for God's kingdom. David was to the end of his days "*a man after [God's] own heart*" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).
 - He responded to the reminder of God's promise of an everlasting kingdom through Solomon (1 Chron. 22:8–10).
 - He was aroused to decisive action against Adonijah's threat to that promise.
 - He deployed three godly men of strategic, symbolic importance to see to the anointing of Solomon as king: Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the king's representative.

3) What signs did David arrange to show that Solomon was the new king (see vv. 32–35)?

- *David's own royal mule.* Riding a mule or donkey was an ancient symbol of royal office.
- *Anointing.* He was anointed just as Israel's first two kings had been anointed (Saul in 1 Samuel 10:1 and David in 1 Samuel 16:13). It is important to note who anointed Solomon: Nathan, God's prophet, and Zadok, God's priest.
- *Parade, trumpets, celebration.* The new king was publicly displayed and joyously, noisily celebrated by the people.
- *Enthronement.* He was seated on David's royal throne and acclaimed as king by Israel's leaders.

4) What did Benaiah pray for Solomon in verses 36–37?

- Benaiah asked God to be with Solomon as he had always been with David.
- Further, he asked God to "make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

What did his prayer show about his heart response to Solomon's kingship?

Benaiah's prayer revealed:

- His acknowledgement of God's unfailing faithfulness to David. God had *always* been with David.
- His recognition that God's blessing extended to him personally (and to all Israel) through David the King. Benaiah refers three times to David as "my lord the king . . . my lord the king . . . my lord King David." Notice the personal pronoun *my*.
- His expectation that God would likewise be with Solomon and extend God's blessing through Solomon to Benaiah personally and to all of Israel.
- His desire for the continuation and growth of David's kingdom as a display of the rule of David's God in the world of men and nations. He saw it as the expansion of God's kingdom.

5) When the people of Israel saw Solomon on David's mule and saw the anointing by the priest and heard the trumpet, they had no doubt who David thought the next king should be. According to verses 39–40, how did they respond? What does their response tell us about their hearts?

Their Responses	Their Hearts
They shouted “Long live King Solomon!”	... celebrated his rule over them.
They went up after him.	... longed to be near him, to follow him.
They played pipes.	... overflowed with music.
They celebrated with great joy.	... delighted in the royal office and the man.

“The earth was split by their noise” (v. 40)—it sounded like an earthquake!

6) Jesus is the ultimate king of Israel, and his story has many parallels to the coronation scene in 1 Kings 1. Read Matthew 21:1–11 and Matthew 27:27–31, then fill in the chart below with the similarities and differences you see between these two stories.

¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
 humble, and mounted on a donkey,
 and on a colt, the foal of a beast of
 burden.’”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” (Matt. 21:1–11)

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gath-

ered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ³⁰And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. (Matt 27:27–31)

	Solomon's Coronation	Jesus's Triumphal Entry
Mode of Transportation	mule	donkey
Anointing	God's prophet and priest	God the Holy Spirit
Reaction of the Crowd	adoration, celebration, joy	adoration, celebration, joy
Celebration of Crowning	a royal crown of honor	a crown of mockery

7) In this chapter we noted one key difference between Solomon's coronation and the ascent of Jesus to his throne in heaven. What is so unique about Jesus's exaltation? What had to happen first, and why?

Jesus's exaltation was infinitely higher than Solomon's which prefigured it. Jesus was exalted (Phil. 2:9) to the everlasting throne of David (Isa. 9:6–7), which is a heavenly throne at the Father's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Ps. 110:1). Jesus's exaltation (his return to his rightful, royal, eternal place at God's right hand) was preceded by his incarnation (Phil. 2:5–7) and his death (Phil. 2:8). He had to condescend to become a man and to suffer humiliation and death at the hands of his enemies as payment for sins of his people. The king had to give his life as ransom for his subjects.

8) Like the people of Solomon's day and the people of Jesus's day, we have a choice to make about who our king will be. If we choose Jesus for our king, what are some effects this will have on the way we live our lives?

- We will want Jesus to rule as king in our hearts, in our homes, and in our churches.
- We will exalt and adore him by finding satisfaction in him above all earthly pleasures and pursuits.

- We will pray and work for the increase of his kingdom.
- We will worship him with serious exuberance in the company of his people.
- We will love him by loving others.

Have you made that choice?

Answers will vary according to participants.

9) When Adonijah learned that Solomon had been anointed king, he realized that his own reign was over. What did he do (v. 50)?

He feared Solomon and took hold of the altar, i.e., he took refuge at the altar in the tabernacle court.

Why did he do this? (See Ex. 21:12–14.)

¹²Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. ¹⁴But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.
(Ex. 21:12–14)

Adonijah had attempted to hoist himself onto David's throne which was set apart for Solomon. Now that Solomon was firmly seated there, Adonijah faced his own choice with regard to Solomon's reign as king—submission or rebellion. He had not committed manslaughter (per Exodus 21:12–14), but he

feared reprisals for his attempt to usurp the throne. He sought refuge with the only thing he thought might possibly save him, and he pleaded for his life. This was at best an expression of true repentance and submission, at worst a resentful heart concealed by thin veneer of remorse for his unfortunate circumstances.

10) How would you describe Solomon's response to Adonijah in verses 52–53?

He accepted Adonijah's pledge at face value and laid before Adonijah a clear choice by which his character and his life would be judged. If Adonijah showed himself a worthy man, he would live. If he was found to be wicked, he would die.

What character traits does he show here?

- a) fairness—by communicating clearly what was expected of Adonijah
- b) righteousness and justice—by attaching high cost to rebellion
- c) mercy—by allowing Adonijah the opportunity to live as a worthy man

11) What lessons has God laid on your heart as you have meditated on this story of Solomon's ascent to the throne and looked at the contrasting responses of Adonijah and those who supported the rule of Solomon? How will you respond to your king?

Answers will vary according to participants.

PUTTING THE KINGDOM FIRST

Any time a new politician comes to power, he or she has to choose how to deal with opposition. In the case of a newly elected president, he simply makes a few comments about how his opponent ran a good race. The election is over, and it is clear who the winner is. The losing candidate poses no threat to the new president and has to wait for another opportunity to run for office. In the case of ancient monarchies, there were usually continued threats to the throne. The one who lost the throne did not usually give up without a fight. Once Solomon's kingdom was established, he had to decide what to do with the enemies who were still threatening his rule within the kingdom—Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Abiathar	<i>uh BIGH uh thahr</i>
Abishag	<i>AB ih shag</i>
Adonijah	<i>ad oh NIGH juh</i>
Benaiah	<i>bee NIGH uh</i>
Jehoiada	<i>jih HOY uh duh</i>
Joab	<i>JOH ab</i>
Shimei	<i>SHEM ih igh (eye)</i>
Zadok	<i>ZAY dahk</i>
Zeruiah	<i>ZER uh IGH (eye) uh</i>

1) When do you think revenge is appropriate and justified in a political setting?

This question intends to engage participants in thought and discussion. It calls for an opinion. The answer is not found in the book.

- When crimes have been committed.
- When the stability, security, or strategic purpose of the nation is at stake.

- When the general welfare of the citizenry is threatened.

What crimes might warrant imprisonment? What crimes might warrant the death penalty?

Appropriate measures to protect the nation, any nation, would be determined by the law or custom of the land. These will differ from nation to nation, from age to age, from culture to culture. What was appropriate or acceptable (i.e., lawful) in Solomon's tenth-century BC theocratic monarchy may differ from our twenty-first-century American democratic republic. In any case, when capital crimes have been committed, the criminals may justly be punished by death. Imprisonment or other limitations of freedom may be appropriate as long as they are effective for the protection of the nation. If limitation of freedom proves ineffective, a stronger response is warranted as deterrent; if limitation of freedom is violated, a stronger response is warranted as punishment.

2) Read 1 Kings 2:12–46.

¹²So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.

¹³Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, “Do you come peacefully?” He said, “Peacefully.”

¹⁴Then he said, “I have something to say to you.” She said, “Speak.” ¹⁵He said, “You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel fully expected me to reign. However, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother’s, for it was his from the LORD. ¹⁶And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me.” She said to him, “Speak.” ¹⁷And he said, “Please ask King

Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.”¹⁸ Bathsheba said, “Very well; I will speak for you to the king.”

¹⁹ So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right.²⁰ Then she said, “I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you.”²¹ She said, “Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as his wife.”²² King Solomon answered his mother, “And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah.”²³ Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, “God do so to me and more also if this word does not cost Adonijah his life!”²⁴ Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today.”²⁵ So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he struck him down, and he died.

²⁶ And to Abiathar the priest the king said, “Go to Anathoth, to your estate, for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because you shared in all my father’s affliction.”²⁷ So Solomon expelled Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

²⁸ When the news came to Joab—for Joab had supported Adonijah although he had not supported Absalom—Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and caught hold of the horns of the altar.²⁹ And when it was told King Solomon, “Joab has fled to the tent of the LORD, and behold, he is beside the altar,” Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, strike him down.”³⁰ So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, “The king commands, ‘Come out.’” But he said, “No, I will die here.” Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, “Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.”³¹ The king replied to him, “Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him, and thus take away from me and from my father’s house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause.”³² The LORD will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more

righteous and better than himself, Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah.³³ So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever. But for David and for his descendants and for his house and for his throne there shall be peace from the LORD forevermore.”³⁴ Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and put him to death. And he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.³⁵ The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in place of Joab, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.

³⁶ Then the king sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, “Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever.”³⁷ For on the day you go out and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die. Your blood shall be on your own head.”³⁸ And Shimei said to the king, “What you say is good; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do.” So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

³⁹ But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei’s servants ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. And when it was told Shimei, “Behold, your servants are in Gath,”⁴⁰ Shimei arose and saddled a donkey and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants. Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.⁴¹ And when Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned,⁴² the king sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die?’ And you said to me, ‘What you say is good; I will obey.’⁴³ Why then have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the commandment with which I commanded you?”⁴⁴ The king also said to Shimei, “You know in your own heart all the harm that you did to David my father. So the LORD will bring back your harm on your own head.”⁴⁵ But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.”⁴⁶ Then the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck him down, and he died. (1 Kings 2:12–46)

At the opening of this story, Adonijah goes to Bathsheba requesting that she ask Solomon if he can have Abishag for a wife. What can you tell about Adonijah from this request?

In 1 Kings 1 we read of Adonijah's attempt to claim the throne of David and how David thwarted Adonijah through the efforts of committed and able allies executing a well-conceived plan to establish Solomon on the throne. Fearing Solomon, Adonijah's *initial response* was to petition Solomon for his own safety. He begged for his life. Solomon spared Adonijah's life and left Adonijah with terms to ensure his safety from punishment—"if he will show himself a worthy man." These terms also included a warning: "if wickedness is found in him, he shall die" (1:52). Solomon ordered him, "Go to your house." All Adonijah had to do was to go home and sit still and stay quiet.

Now, in 2:13ff we see Adonijah's *subsequent response* which reveals his wickedness and unworthiness.

- He petitioned Solomon by maneuvering through Bathsheba rather than by direct appeal. Was this cunning or cowardice or something else?
- He declared that "the kingdom was mine, and all Israel fully expected me to reign" (v. 15). He based his request for Abishag on the premise that he had been deprived of something that was his and that all Israel expected. Solomon's mercy by sparing his life was not enough; he deserved something more. Doesn't this reveal dissatisfaction with the life he was mercifully granted and a persistent sense of entitlement to more?
- He gave verbal acknowledgment that the turn of events demonstrated that God had given the kingdom to Solomon (v. 15), but his request revealed that he cherished his own plan for the throne above God's plan. This is not seeking "first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33).
- His request for Abishag, King David's last concubine, was reasonably construed as a play for the throne. Adonijah's older brother Absalom had tried the same ploy to strengthen his position in his attempt to usurp David's throne in 2 Samuel 16:21–22. Perhaps Adonijah's desire for her was simply because she was exceptionally beautiful (see 1 Kings 1:3–4), but he had to know how his request for her would be understood. Was he a colossal fool, or was he making a subtle play for the kingdom . . . or, for that matter, a brazen play for the kingdom?

For background, note these cases which give added insight into the dynamics of harem politics:

- When Saul was king, Abner, one of Saul's relatives and military leaders, took one of Saul's concubines as a grab for power (2 Sam. 3:6ff).
- When David was anointed king over Israel, he was given Saul's house and Saul's wives as part of the transfer of power (2 Sam. 12:8).

What words would you use to describe his character and actions?

Selfish, insubordinate, ungrateful, brash, and foolish

3) Why do you think Bathsheba went along with Adonijah's request?

Was Bathsheba _____?

- a) a naive, good-natured woman easily manipulated by a passionate, clever man and unaware of the potential consequences of such a request?
 - b) a woman who was sympathetic to Adonijah's sincere desire for Abishag and thought the couple a good match?
 - c) a wounded woman who was glad for any opportunity to rid the court (the harem) of her husband's last concubine?
 - d) a politically savvy woman, devoted to her son's interests, who knew better than Adonijah how his request would be interpreted and how strong the reaction would be?
 - e) (fill in the blank) _____
-

The Scriptures record what she did but not why she did it. As with many human decisions, her motives may have been complex. The story in 1 Kings 1 demonstrates Bathsheba's influence with David the King and her partnership in political intrigue with Nathan. She wielded the power of considerable influence in these affairs of national interest. She lived in the palace. She had witnessed, and perhaps participated in, the struggles for ascendancy among David's sons. She had survived the open rebellion of Absalom, which divided the court and the nation. She surely understood harem politics and the implications of Adonijah's request.

NOTE: Don't lose sight of the fact that these players in political intrigue, Bathsheba and Nathan along with Zadok and Benaiah, were God's instruments to put the right man on the throne. Their actions had not

only national but eternal consequences in the fulfillment of God's plan in redemptive history.

What things might you be tempted—or have you been tempted—to do for the sake of your child that are outside the boundaries of God's will?

This question suggests the possibility that Bathsheba was acting for her child “outside the boundaries of God's will.” If, indeed, she knew better than Adonijah the danger in his request, should she have tried to save him from his own folly? Whether or not she acted “outside the boundaries of God's will,” the study question is still worth pondering—what has tempted me to sin for the sake of my child?

4) Why did Adonijah's request make Solomon so angry?

Solomon had made Adonijah's survival a matter of his own choice, to play the worthy man or the wicked man. He saw Adonijah's request as wicked, not worthy. He saw the request as another power play amounting to high treason.

What was Adonijah really asking for?

By all appearances, he was making a bid for position and power that was not rightfully his.

5) In this chapter, we considered some reasons why Solomon's killing Adonijah may have been necessary. How would you support the viewpoint that he was right to have Adonijah executed?

Adonijah's actions demonstrated his unwillingness to submit to Solomon's God-appointed kingship over Israel, and, by extension, his refusal to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (see Matt. 6:33). His passion is self-exaltation; his sin is pride and unbelief; his crime is treason.



FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Refer back to 1 Kings 1:5–6.

⁵Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king.” And he prepared for

himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. “His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, ‘Why have you done thus and so?’” He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom. (1 Kings 1:5–6)

What in Adonijah's upbringing might lead to his poor outcome?

David's failure in fatherly discipline. David never risked displeasing his son by asking him to account for his choices or his actions. An indulgent father produced a self-exalting son.

What should we learn from David's failure?

Parental indulgences, such as

- not questioning a child's behavior, actions, attitudes, and choices,
- unwillingness to displease a child, and
- sacrificing a child's lifelong strength of character for his momentary happiness

rarely build strong character, nor do they teach wisdom.

How do we indulge our children to their detriment?

Answers will vary according to participants.



**6) What crimes had Abiathar committed?
(See 1 Kings 1:7.)**

Abiathar had backed Adonijah's bid for the throne.

Why did Solomon spare Abiathar despite his crimes?

Abiathar had a long history with David, going back to the days when David was pursued by Saul (1 Sam. 22:20–23; see also Mark 2:25–26). It is noteworthy that David's instructions to Solomon regarding the conspirators do not include Abiathar (1 Kings 2:5–9). Though Solomon stated that Abiathar deserved to die, because of his past association with David and his service as a priest, Abiathar's life was spared. However he was sent away from Jerusalem and removed from

the priesthood, which fulfilled a prophecy of Samuel against the descendants of Eli in 1 Samuel 2:27–36.

7) What crimes had Joab committed?

(See 1 Kings 2:5, 32.)

Before discussing Joab's crimes, first recall who Joab was:

- David's nephew, the son of David's sister Zeruiah (see 1 Chron. 2:15–16)
- A key military leader in David's kingdom.

As with the others who conspired with Adonijah, Joab's action could be construed as treason. He aligned himself with a self-appointed king rather than the God-appointed king. But there was more.

Deep in Joab's past were other crimes that now came due. Heeding David's instruction, Solomon commanded Joab's execution to "take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause" (v. 31). As the commander of David's army, Joab had killed in cold blood two men who were his rivals, Abner and Amasa. Though he did this without David's permission or knowledge, the guilt of the crimes put a stain on David's reign. Read the stories in 2 Samuel 3:26–30 and 2 Samuel 20:9–10.

Also, Joab was one of the few who knew the secret of David's affair with Bathsheba and the plot to have Uriah killed in battle. Joab was Uriah's commander in the field of battle (2 Sam. 11:14–17). He possessed information which could be used to undermine David and Solomon.

8) When Joab was accused of these crimes, he ran and grabbed the horns of the altar, as Adonijah had done, in an effort to throw himself on the mercy of God. In this case, it didn't save him. Why was his life not spared? (See, e.g., Gen. 9:6.)

According to Solomon, Joab shed blood without cause (1 Kings 2:31). He was guilty of a capital crime.

What principles does this illustrate about sin?

Sin brings destructive consequences on the sinner. This proverbial truth is expressed throughout Scrip-

ture. Consider these examples from Proverbs 21 as they might apply to Joab:

The violence of the wicked will sweep them away,
because they refuse to do what is just.
(Prov. 21:7)

¹⁵When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous
but terror to evildoers.

¹⁶One who wanders from the way of good sense
will rest in the assembly of the dead.
(Prov. 21:15–16)

Of course, justice is not always perfectly brought to completion in life on earth, but when it is, the guilty have no standing for complaint. Thanks be to God that the guilt of our sin is covered by Jesus's blood payment, and we do not now, nor in the life to come, have to bear the ultimate consequences for our sins.

9) Read Shimei's story in 2 Samuel 16:5–13.

⁵When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. ⁶And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. ⁷And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! ⁸The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood."

⁹Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." ¹⁰But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" ¹¹And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjamite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him so. ¹²It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." ¹³So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. (2 Sam. 16:5–13)

What crimes did he commit?

In the past (2 Sam. 16), Shimei's wrong was to despise David's rightful claim to the throne in place of Saul. He accused David of murder, cursed his reign, and stood in open defiance of David's God-given kingship.

In the present text (1 Kings 2), Shimei's crime is violation of the terms of his parole with Solomon (vv. 42–43). Here is the storyline: In 1 Kings 2:8–9 David reminded Solomon of Shimei's curse on his reign and of his own oath not to kill Shimei. But he warned Solomon of Shimei's disloyalty and instructed Solomon to kill him. Solomon heeded David's warning by confining Shimei to Jerusalem on threat of death if he disobeyed (1 Kings 2:36–37). Shimei accepted these terms with a solemn oath (1 Kings 2:38). In time he violated his oath, and Solomon had him put to death (1 Kings 2:39–46).

What sins of the heart were involved in these actions?

- Disloyalty to and defiance of God's appointed leader for his people, which amounts to disdain for the authority of God's kingdom.
- Disobedience to his own solemn oath to Solomon and to the Lord (1 Kings 2:43).
- Greater desire to preserve his possessions than to pursue the purposes of God.

10) Shimei's punishment was declared in verse 36. What happened when he broke the agreement?

Solomon summoned Shimei, asked him to explain why he had broken his oath (v. 43), and commanded Benaiah to strike him down (v. 46).

11) Each of the men that Solomon executed had one thing that he refused to give up for the kingdom of God. List the things that Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei refused to give up to God.

Adonijah refused to give up his desire for the throne, as well as his desire for Abishag as the means to leverage it away from Solomon. Joab refused to give up his lust for position and power, even to the point of two violent murders. Shimei refused to give up two servants, which he valued more than his solemn oath to God and king.

12) Is there one thing that is keeping you from giving everything to the kingdom of God? What are you clinging to so tightly that it has become an idol for you? What steps will you take to put God in his rightful place on the throne of your heart?

This question intends to move the student to personal application of the truths encountered in this study.

13) Where in this passage do we see both judgment and mercy at work?

This chapter is about how Solomon dealt with his political enemies. Dr. Ryken observes (on page 30 of *King Solomon*), “We are not talking here about men who merely disagreed with Solomon’s policies but about men who wanted to take his very throne.” Further, he quotes Dr. Davis, “The security of the kingdom requires the elimination of its enemies. The kingdom must be preserved from those trying to destroy and undermine it.”¹

With this in mind, consider the merciful judgments of Solomon:

- *To Adonijah.* Rather than killing him, Solomon paroled Adonijah to his own house (1 Kings 1:53) until Adonijah abused Solomon's mercy with another play for the throne; then he received judgment.
- *To Abiathar.* Rather than death or imprisonment, Solomon expelled Abiathar from the priesthood and exiled him to his own estate (1 Kings 2:26–27).
- *To Shimei.* Rather than killing him, Solomon confined Shimei to Jerusalem and accepted his oath of obedience, until Shimei broke his vow.

What can you learn about these doctrines from this story?

Romans 2:1–10 speaks of God's judgment. In the middle of the passage, verse 4, it mentions God's “kindness and forbearance and patience” and states that “God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.” Kindness and forbearance and patience are expressions of God's mercy. To those who repent and do well

¹Dale Ralph Davis. *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly: An Exposition of the Book of First Kings* (Fearn, Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 31.

and “seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (v. 7). On the other hand, judgment is in store for the “hard and impenitent heart” that does not respond in repentance to God’s mercy (v. 5).

Solomon reflected God’s heart by extending mercy to his enemies that they might repent and commit to his kingship. When his mercy was ignored or abused, his judgment followed to exact justice on unrepentant hearts.

¹Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such

things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. (Rom. 2:1–10)

S O L O M O N ' S W I S H

Many fairy tales center around the idea of the main character being granted a wish. It's fun to imagine such a fantastical scenario, but that's not what real life is like—except for one man, Solomon, who was asked what one wish he would like to have granted by God. Can you imagine what must have run through his mind when God asked what he most wanted? It would have been easy for Solomon to make a hasty wish that he later regretted. The saying “be careful what you wish for” has become a popular way of warning people that some of the things we think we want turn out not to be good for us in the long run. Let's look at Solomon's wish and see how it turned out over the course of his life.

1) If you could have one wish granted, what would it be? How do you think you would have answered that question five or ten years ago?

This question intends to engage participants in thought and discussion. It calls for personal reflection. The answer is not found in the book.

2) Read the opening of the story of Solomon's wish in 1 Kings 3:1–4.

¹Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. ²The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD.

³Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and

made offerings at the high places. ⁴And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. (1 Kings 3:1–4)

NOTE: “Made a marriage alliance” (1 Kings 3:1) is the same Hebrew word used in Deuteronomy 7:3 where God prohibits the children of Israel from intermarrying with the pagan inhabitants of the Promised Land across the Jordan:

³You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. ⁵But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. (Deut. 7:3–5)

Why did Solomon marry Pharaoh's daughter? What did he hope it would do for him personally and politically?

Down through the ages unions of this type were made between royal families for commercial, political, or military advantage in the interest of national security. By marrying Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon positioned Israel prominently in international politics. (Or maybe he simply found her an irresistible woman.)

How did this actually turn out for him?

Solomon's alliance with Pharaoh lasted for at least twenty years of Solomon's forty-year reign. (1 Kings

11:26, 40–41 records a development which suggests a deterioration of the alliance when Solomon’s enemy Jeroboam took refuge in Egypt under a new pharaoh and a new dynasty.) For a time, Solomon’s marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter appears to have provided favorable results politically. In the long run, however, alliances of this kind led to Solomon’s spiritual decline and to Israel’s disintegration as a united kingdom.

3) Read 1 Kings 11:1–8.

¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:1–8)

These verses show a pattern in Solomon’s life of allowing women to turn his heart away from God. What can we tell about Solomon’s priorities from the marriage choices he made later in life?

1 Kings 3:3 records that the young “Solomon loved the LORD.” Dr. Ryken (on page 44 of *King Solomon*) points out that “Solomon is the only man in the entire Bible who is said to have ‘loved the Lord,’ in so many words.” (And, by the way, 2 Samuel 12:24 records Solomon’s birth with the declaration that “the LORD loved Solomon.”)

1 Kings 11:1–3 reveals another lifelong love—“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. . . . Sol-

omon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines.”

Solomon’s priority of many foreign women was problematic in two ways, either of which alone was (and is) sufficient to bring spiritual ruin: *many* women and *foreign* women.

Regarding *foreign* women, God had given clear command to his covenant people Israel, including the king:

¹⁰And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. . . .

¹²Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. . . . ¹³lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whored after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁴and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whored after their gods and made your sons whored after their gods.” (Ex. 34:10–16)

³You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. (Deut. 7:3–4)

Regarding *many* women, God had given specific command to the king of his people Israel:

¹⁵You may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, “You shall never return that way again.” ¹⁷And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. (Deut. 17:15–17)

David’s final instructions to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:2–4 included the strong admonition to keep the Lord’s commandments:

²I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, ³and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, “If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.” (1 Kings 2:2–4)

Clearly Solomon did not maintain the superior priority of “walking in his ways and keeping his statutes” (v. 3).

What problems did these choices lead to?

Solomon’s many foreign wives “turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God” (1 Kings 11:4). He went after these other gods and built places for their worship. “So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD” (1 Kings 11:6).

Seven hundred God-fearing wives would be problem enough for one man, but when some of the harem are “foreign women” who live for other gods . . . !

What warnings are there for us as we read about Solomon’s choice of wives and the results of his choices?

Two warnings:

a) *Against being unequally yoked.* The New Testament term for Solomon’s sin is found in 2 Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?” Solomon was unequally yoked with unbelievers. He gave away his heart to wives whose hearts belonged to other gods, false gods.

In Solomon’s folly, as well as in the New Testament precept, there is clear warning to us *and to our sons and daughters* against marriage of a believer with an unbeliever.

NOTE: The issue is not inequality of race or ethnicity or culture; it is a matter of inequality of faith and devotion. See Dr. Ryken’s comment, top of page 47 in *King Solomon*: “The Bible fully supports the union of two people from different ethnic backgrounds, but it condemns the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever.” Solomon’s own great-great-grandmother was Ruth, a woman of Moab, who converted to the faith of her Jewish mother-in-law saying, “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16), and later married Boaz (Ruth 4:13). Ruth, the converted Moabitess, appears in Jesus’s genealogy in Matthew 1:5.

b) *Against multiple yokes.* We must also address the problem of polygamy. In our culture we readily sense the ethical and practical problems entailed in polygamy, though it is still common in some cultures. Scripture reveals that it was a common practice among the patriarchs and through the times of David and Solomon. As with being *unequally yoked*, having multiple yokes was contrary to God’s will from the beginning. We learn this from Jesus’s own commentary on Genesis 1–2 recorded in Matthew’s Gospel:

“He [Jesus] answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.’ (Matt. 19:4–6)

4) At the start of Solomon’s reign, the Israelites were worshiping God at the “high places.” Throughout the Old Testament, this term refers to pagan worship and idolatry. (For more background on this topic, read Deut. 12:2–6.)

²You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. ⁴You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. ⁵But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your

tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, "and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. (Deut. 12:2–6)

Why do you think God commanded his people to stay away from the high places?

The Canaanites were pagan people who were conquered by the children of Israel when they entered the Promised Land. The high places were locations consecrated by the Canaanites to the worship of their gods. Israel's God, jealous to protect the hearts of his people, wanted them to destroy the false gods, and to stay away from the many places set aside for their worship. In contrast to the Canaanites who worshiped many gods in many places, Israel was to worship the one true God in the one place he chose. Deuteronomy 12 is an exposition of the second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:4–5).

Why do you suppose God's people were tempted to this kind of worship?

- It was a means to establish peace and to cultivate allies for military or economic security.
- It appealed to their baser instincts. The Canaanite idols were plentiful, accessible, tangible, sensual, and made by man in man's image.

What were the consequences?

The consequences were syncretism, divided hearts, spiritual ruin, and ultimately national downfall. The role of God's people as light to the Gentiles, as a witness to the one, true, and living God, was dimmed.

5) Read 1 Kings 3:5–15.

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."

⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. ¹⁴And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

¹⁵And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. (1 King 3:5–15)

NOTE: Solomon was at Gibeon to offer sacrifice because the tabernacle, including the altar, had been located there since the time of David or earlier. (David had moved the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.)

- "And [David] left Zadok the priest and his brothers the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon." (1 Chron. 16:39)
- "And Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon, for the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. (But David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.)" (2 Chron.1:3–4)

We are told that Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of his father, David. Solomon was a lot like us. He loved the Lord, as every Christian does. But he also had some other loves in his life—sinful passions that had the power to destroy his spiritual leadership. What “loves” do you have in your life that might be dangerous, and what are the dangers inherent in the pursuit of these things?

Answers will vary according to participants.

6) What can we learn about Solomon’s view of himself and his relationship with God from his prayer in 1 Kings 3:6–8?

Solomon refers to himself as “your servant” three times. He is humbled before the Lord:

- by his father David’s walk with the Lord “in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart” (v. 6)
- by God’s “great and steadfast love to your servant David my father” because of David’s walk (v. 6)
- by the throne given to him by God as an extension of God’s “great and steadfast love” for David (v. 6)
- by the transforming truth that the Lord, the God of David, is “my God,” too (v. 7)
- by his own lack of skill in leadership, the meaning of the idiom “I do not know how to go out or come in” (v. 7)
- by the sheer magnitude of his responsibility for “a great people, too many to be numbered or counted” (v. 8)

7) What principles can we draw from Solomon’s prayer?

- We are *drawn* to prayer
 - by God’s “great and steadfast love” (v. 6)
 - by God’s generosity—“Ask what I shall give you.” (v. 5)
- We are *driven* to prayer
 - by our burden for the kingdom of God and the people of God
 - by our inability to serve without God’s gifts of wisdom and talents

How might we imitate his example in our own prayers?

- Acknowledge the manifestations of God’s great grace: his steadfast love, his faithfulness, his generosity, his nearness, his patience, etc.
- Petition for the welfare of God’s people and God’s kingdom rather for our own personal interests.
- Aim to please God as Solomon’s prayer “pleased the Lord” (v. 10).

What aspects of his prayers are we most likely to leave out of our own intercession?

Answers will vary according to participants.

8) The heart of Solomon’s prayer, his greatest wish, is found in 1 Kings 3:9. What can we learn about true wisdom from his prayer?

True wisdom is a gift from God. God granted it to Solomon because he asked for it. “For the LORD gives wisdom: from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6).

9) In the New Testament we get another picture of what wisdom looks like. Read James 3:17 and list the characteristics of true wisdom.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17)

- pure
- peaceful
- gentle
- reasonable
- merciful
- results in good fruit
- impartial
- sincere

10) In 1 Kings 3:10–14 we see that God was pleased with Solomon’s request and gave him not only wisdom but also some other gifts that Solomon had bypassed in his quest for wisdom. What significance do you see in God’s promises to Solomon in these verses?

Solomon’s prayer “pleased the Lord.” God’s pleasure was with what Solomon requested as well as what Sol-

omon did *not* request. Notice the unrequested things God gave Solomon, and how he gave each one. God gave Solomon:

- a) *Wisdom*: Solomon's lone request. God gave him unequaled wisdom for leadership and governance.
- b–c) *Riches and honor*: Though not requested by Solomon, God also gave him fortune and fame beyond comparison with any other king. Notice, these are given without condition: "I also give you what you have not asked, both riches and honor" (v. 13).
- d) *Protection*: "the life of your enemies" (v. 11), one of three things *not* mentioned by Solomon but identified by God. Through human instruments (Nathan, Bathsheba, David, Benaiah, Zadok, and Solomon himself), God had already provided protection against threats to Solomon's reign (Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, Shimei). Moreover, Solomon's reign of forty years (1 Kings 11:42) enjoyed God's protection, though the kingdom divided and fell after Solomon's death.
- e) *Long life*: Not requested by Solomon, God offered this with a condition: "If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments" (v. 14). God even gave him an example to follow: "as your father David walked."

Why do you think God gave Solomon these additional blessings?

God intended to invest the king of his kingdom with greatness—wisdom, wealth, and honor. Such greatness was given to Solomon as a prototype of the ultimate King who will reign on David's throne forever. Jesus identified himself with Solomon's greatness in Matthew 12:42 where he declared, "Something greater than Solomon is here."

11) Solomon later wrote, "Wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her" (Prov. 8:11). In what ways is wisdom better than long life or wealth or power?

Long life, wealth, and power are gifts of God's grace. Yet without wisdom from God to govern their use, such gifts are squandered, neglected, misapplied, or abused.

How does it change a person's life to have the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" that are hidden in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:3)?

The true knowledge of the ultimate meaning of human existence is found only in light of the identity and redemptive accomplishment of Jesus Christ. Insight into the character of God and his relationship with his creation is found only by looking to the person and work of Jesus. The nature and eternal destiny of the human soul, the grounds on which we differentiate between good and evil, the wisdom of God's ways in the world, as well as the pathway to reconciliation with him, are all tethered to Christ. If we know him, we know them.

.... Knowledge of Christ is to be honored and valued above all else. Is that not how we would treat any treasure that we discovered? The knowledge and wisdom that we find in Christ, and in Christ alone, are not to be treated casually or flipantly or presumptuously. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:4–6) is a treasure of infinite worth and value. Ponder it deeply. Pray for it daily. Plunder its riches. Protect it from defilement. Penetrate its mysteries. Prize it above all earthly worth, all human wisdom, all fleshly gain.

In simple summary: There's nothing you could ever hope to know about God, his will and his ways, that you won't find in Jesus. And you'll find it only in Jesus. He alone is the treasury of divine wealth and wisdom.¹

"My [Paul's] goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, *in order that* they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:2–3, NIV)

How does this knowledge of Christ come? Through brotherly love in the Church. In other words, depth of understanding is facilitated when believers' hearts are bound together in love. This means that mere intellectual comprehension of the mystery of Christ will not bring full understanding of the mystery, for understanding also comes through the love of Christians for another.²

12) How can we gain the true wisdom that comes from God? Are there specific actions you can take to seek wisdom (see Prov. 1:7; 2:1–12)?

¹Sam Storms, *The Hope of Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 154.

²R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1989), 54.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
(Prov. 1:7)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
(Prov. 9:10)

¹My son, if you receive my words
 and treasure up my commandments with you,
²making your ear attentive to wisdom
 and inclining your heart to understanding;
³yes, if you call out for insight
 and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴if you seek it like silver
 and search for it as for hidden treasures,
⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD

 and find the knowledge of God.
⁶For the LORD gives wisdom;
 from his mouth come knowledge
 and understanding;
⁷he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
 he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
⁸guarding the paths of justice
 and watching over the way of his saints.
⁹Then you will understand righteousness and
 justice
 and equity, every good path;
¹⁰for wisdom will come into your heart,
 and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
¹¹discretion will watch over you,
 understanding will guard you,
¹²delivering you from the way of evil,
 from men of perverted speech. (Prov. 2:1–12)

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Almost every time we pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news, we are bombarded with tales of injustice. Good parents lose their children in divorce while less fit parents gain full custody. Defenseless people are abused or murdered. A man is released from prison after serving forty years for a crime he did not commit. And the list goes on. We hear these stories and yearn for the day when all will be made right, when justice will prevail. In the days of King Solomon, Israel has the privilege of living under the authority of a king who was the wisest person who ever lived. But how would his wisdom measure up when put to the test? And would a wise king be enough to enable the nation to experience true and lasting justice?

1) Tell about a time when you were forced to make a judgment, but it was hard to discern the truth about the situation. How did you make your decision? In retrospect, do you think you made the right choice?

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) Read 1 Kings 3:16–28.

¹⁶Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷The one woman said, “Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. ¹⁸Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. ¹⁹And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead.

But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne.” ²²But the other woman said, “No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours.” The first said, “No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine.” Thus they spoke before the king.

²³Then the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; and the other says, ‘No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” ²⁴And the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” ²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.” ²⁷Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.” ²⁸And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. (1 Kings 3:16–28)

What factors made it difficult to determine which of the two women was telling the truth?

It was a classic case of one person’s word against another’s. There was no third-party testimony available to corroborate either woman’s story—no one who had witnessed the events, and no one who could identify either baby boy.

3) How did Solomon mete out justice in this situation? How did he show mercy at the same time?

Solomon devised a plan based on a universal reality: a mother will make any sacrifice to save her child. Solo-

mon's plan was a ruse with the appearance of an equitable, legal compromise, but at the horrible cost of the baby's life. His intent was never to harm the child, but to stage an ordeal that would reveal each woman's heart by her own words. Solomon's plan hinged on his ability to draw out revealing testimony from the women themselves, and to discern the truth from it. This kind of wisdom is precisely what Solomon had requested and received from God: "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). The Hebrew phrase for "understanding mind" literally means "a listening heart." The success of Solomon's plan was dependent on his ability to listen and discern.

Solomon's judgment was just and merciful to the *first woman*; it preserved the life of her son and restored him to her. The innocent were protected. As for the *second woman*, Solomon's justice thwarted her evil plan. We do not know if she was crushed by the king's justice or spared by his mercy. We know mother and son were reunited, but the scriptural record does not reveal if the second woman received punishment or mercy for the accidental death of her son or for her wrongful attempt to take the first woman's son.

4) Based on each woman's reaction, what words would you use to describe each one's character?

- First observation: both women were prostitutes. This alone reflects each woman's character, though no other circumstances are given for either woman's life.
- Beyond that, the character of each woman was revealed in a moment of crisis concerning her son.
 - The first woman's character was revealed by her selfless willingness to sacrifice her most precious possession, her son, and her most precious identity, her motherhood, in order to save her baby's life.
 - The second woman's character was revealed by her reaction to her son's accidental death. She resorted to deceit and child abduction as a solution to her loss.

5) The baby's mother was willing to give up her child to save his life. What kinds of sacrifices are women today sometimes faced with, related to their children?

All good mothers (and fathers) make sacrifices to do what is best for their children. For example, in extreme cases, mothers trapped in poverty or in destructive lifestyles have given up their children for adoption in order that the children may have better lives.

6) Read the description of a worthy king in Psalm 72:1–4.

- ¹Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- ²May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
- ³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the
people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
- ⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the
people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor! (Ps. 72:1–4)

In the story of the two prostitutes, how does Solomon live up to this description of a worthy king?

- v. 1—Solomon petitioned God for "a discerning mind, a listening heart" for the purpose of governing his people in justice and righteousness.
- v. 2—He judged his people with righteousness, even the poorest of his people, in this case, a prostitute and her infant son.
- v. 4—He defended the poor prostitute and gave deliverance to her needy child. He thwarted (crushed?) the oppressor, the second woman.

In what ways does he fall short?

In the story of the two prostitutes, it is difficult to find a shortfall to Solomon's rule. Indeed, by the story's placement in the text immediately following Solomon's prayer for wisdom, it is intended to demonstrate that God had invested Solomon with precisely what he had requested, wisdom for the rule of God's people, "an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). Solomon's brilliant judgment in this case led the whole nation to recognize the divine source of his wisdom: "And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice" (1 Kings 3:28).

7) The Bible tells us that people stood in awe of Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 3:28). Yet we know that Jesus is greater than Solomon (Matt 12:42). In what ways is Jesus greater than Solomon in the way he demonstrates justice and mercy? (See also Luke 4:18.)

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (Matt. 12:24)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed.
(Luke 4:18)

As much as people revered King Solomon, we should stand in greater awe of Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God. Stand in awe of the justice he will display at the final judgment, when every wrong will be righted. Tremble at his judgments. God will judge every sin as it deserves. But also stand in awe of God's mercy for poor and needy sinners—the people Jesus knows by name and did everything to save.

Marvel at his wisdom in providing such a simple solution for the most difficult dilemma of all—the problem of our sin. . . . Jesus solved that dilemma by dying on the cross and taking the sword of divine justice in his own side, so that our guilt was paid for in blood and we could receive the mercy of God (Rom. 3:26). The crucifixion is God's simple solution—simple for us, however costly it was for Christ—to the problem of how to atone for sin while at the same time preserving the mercy and justice of God. It is the best of solutions for the worst of problems (*King Solomon*, pages 70–71).

8) One description of the justice that will come at Christ's return is in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." How does this reminder of the coming judgment offer both a warning and a comfort?

Though we know Christ the King will judge and condemn those who are not his own, i.e., those *not* chosen, called, regenerated, justified, and set apart, this passage

refers to his judgment of each individual believer's life, i.e., "what he has done . . . whether good or evil." We are alternately comforted and horrified when we contemplate our lives. Every righteous impulse and every uncharitable word, every silent prayer and every secret sin, every act of kindness and every selfish deed will be brought to light for us to acknowledge and for him to judge. Who among us is not sobered and discomfited by this prospect? We must take refuge and comfort in Christ, for whatever Paul is describing, we who are in Christ need never fear condemnation: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The purpose of this judgment is not to determine entrance into the Kingdom of God but the reward or status within it. The believer's eternal destiny is not at issue; the gain or loss of eternal reward within that kingdom is.

9) Read the prophet Isaiah's description of the coming Messiah in Isaiah 11:2–4.

²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the
LORD.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the
earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his
mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the
wicked. (Isa. 11:2–4)

What words and images are used there to describe the justice of Christ?

- v. 2—He is anointed to execute perfect justice with "wisdom and understanding" (judicial and governmental attributes), "counsel and might" (strategic and military terms), "knowledge and fear of the LORD" (religious and moral qualities).
- v. 3—He perceives the truth hidden beneath surface appearances.
- v. 4a—His judgments are righteous and equitable for all, even for the poor and the meek who are often deprived of justice.

v. 4b—His spoken pronouncements are authoritative for sentencing and powerful for enforcing judgment upon the wicked.

In what ways did Jesus fulfill Isaiah's words?

- He was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at the inauguration of his kingdom.

¹⁵And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:16–17)

- He knew the affections and motivations of a man underneath what could be seen or heard of him. For example:

Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” (John 1:48)

And [Jesus] needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. (John 2:25)

¹⁷The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” (John 4:17–18)

⁶¹But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? . . . ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) (John 6:61, 64)

²¹After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” . . . ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. (John 13:21, 26)

³⁴Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me” . . . ⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord,

how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” (Luke 22:34, 61)

- He effected justice, especially for the poor and the defenseless. For example:

¹But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” (John 8:1–11)

¹⁵And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons . . . ¹⁷and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Mark 11:15, 17)

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” (Luke 19:8)

- He satisfied justice against our sin, justice required by his own divine holiness

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Pet. 3:18)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21)

⁸Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (Rom. 5:8–9)

- He prophesied his ultimate judgment of sinners, the redeemed and the unredeemed.

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9:26–28)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Pet. 3:18)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . .”

Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire.” (Matt. 25:31–34, 41)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Cor. 5:10)

Also, see question 8.

- 10) Sometimes it seems that justice and mercy are at odds with one another. Yet in Scripture these two virtues are inextricably linked. How is Jesus able to perfectly express both of these attributes at the same time? (See Isa. 30:18 and Rom. 5:6–11.)

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. (Isa. 30:18)

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:6–11)

His justice requires death in payment for sin; his mercy pays the price with his own life on behalf of sinners.

11) Describe a time when you received either mercy or justice. What did this experience teach you about God?

Answers will vary according to participants.

12) How can you work toward bringing both justice and mercy into the world?

By exercising justice and mercy, especially in places and in ways

- where they are currently absent or distorted
- where they can restore brokenness and reestablish truth, beauty, and wholeness
- where they will bring surprising blessing
- where they can be linked to the good news of the Redeemer who reigns

Specifically?

Answers will vary according to participants.

What spheres of influence do you have in which you can express these complementary aspects of God’s character?

Your family, your church, your community, your company, your school, etc.

T H E P E A C E A B L E K I N G D O M

Many children start out life with the idea that the world is a safe and secure place. They have few worries as long as Mom or Dad is nearby. Unfortunately, soon enough the worries come. The world is full of unknown situations and growing responsibilities. When we become adults, we often try to recapture that feeling of peace for ourselves and our families, if only for a few fleeting moments. We strive to create moments that whisper to us of the eternal peace we will experience in God's kingdom. There was a time in Israel's history when God's people experienced the joy of living under God's blessing. The Israelites under Solomon's rule enjoyed a time of peace and prosperity that foreshadowed in a limited way the peace we will fully experience when we are under God's rule and blessing in heaven. It is a relief to come to passages like this one, where all was right and good in the peaceable kingdom.

- 1) Tell about a time in your childhood when you felt that all was right with the world.

Answers will vary according to participants.

- 2) Read 1 Kings 4:20–28.

²⁰Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy.²¹Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

²²Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal,²³ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.²⁴For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the

kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him.²⁵And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.²⁶Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.²⁷And those officers supplied provisions for King Solomon, and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month. They let nothing be lacking.²⁸Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds they brought to the place where it was required, each according to his duty. (1 Kings 4:20–28)

What words would you use to describe Solomon's kingdom?

Happy, respected, peaceful, safe, prosperous, well-led, influential, powerful

3) Why do you think such precise details about Solomon's kingdom were included in this account?

The details were included to impress the reader with the peace and prosperity, the security and scope of Israel under the wisdom-invested reign of Solomon.

What are we supposed to infer from this description?

We might infer God providing a preview, a pointer to the kingdom of God in its ultimate and eternal perfection under the rule of the Messiah seated on David's throne.

What might you expect to happen next?

One might expect the Messiah's eternal kingdom to be ushered in from Solomon's reign. But what followed

was not an upward climb into eternal glory but instead a decline and the division of the kingdom. Though his reign was glorious, Solomon's disobedience to God's commands sowed the seeds of decline for Israel. The Scripture reveals the faithfulness of God to his covenant with Abraham and David. It provides a vision for the ultimate and inevitable coming of a greater king and kingdom. This vision will invest and inspire God's people with hope against all adversity in all ages until it is established by Christ.

This text is ecstatic over the fidelity of Yahweh, which should stir our joy, for this interim fulfillment under Solomon provides a sample of Yahweh's dependability for all his yet-to-be-fulfilled promises.¹

4) One of the details in 1 Kings 4:20–28 is the number of Solomon's horses (see v. 26). Read Deuteronomy 17:16, Isaiah 31:1, and Psalm 33:16–17. What was the problem with Solomon's large cavalry? What potential problems could it create?

1 Kings 4 is a description of the glories of Solomon's kingdom, very positive in tone, intended to impress the reader and to point to the perfected glories of the Messiah's eternal kingdom. In this context, the mention of Solomon's many horses serves to exemplify the wealth and might of Solomon's Israel. Though wonderful and glorious, Solomon's reign was flawed. This detail reveals a possible failure of Solomon to obey and trust in God's instruction to kings.

a) The Law of Moses, which Solomon knew but did not heed, articulated God's clear prohibition of the acquisition of many horses.

Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You shall never return that way again."
(Deut. 17:16)

b) The prophet Isaiah and the psalmist reveal the heart of a king who disregards the Law precisely at this point. His large army is a source of pride and an

object of misplaced trust for national security. Solomon, it seems, trusted in military strength rather than in God for national security and prestige.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help
and rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they are many
and in horsemen because they are very strong,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult the LORD! (Isa. 31:1)

¹⁶The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

¹⁷The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.
(Ps. 33:16–17)

What similar temptations does our society face?

Aren't our temptations the same as Solomon's? Do we sometimes find ourselves trusting in military strength to defend our national interests? Do we trust in the strength of our economy to protect and preserve our way of life? Is our trust in medical science to heal our diseases? Great blessings from God—e.g., military might, economic strength, medical technology, political power, etc.—must never replace God as the solitary object of our hope and trust. Even when God uses these things for our benefit, his sovereign grace is the sole source and his sovereign purpose is the sole cause of protection, provision, wealth, healing, etc.

5) The earthly realities of the splendors of Solomon's kingdom point to the spiritual realities of Christ's coming kingdom, when we will feast with him at "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9). In what ways have you experienced Jesus as the bread of life, the King who invites us to his banqueting table?

This question points us to two distinct yet related culinary metaphors:

a) Jesus uses the first metaphor, "the bread of life," to describe himself and to offer himself to his people as the source and the giver of life both ultimate and eternal.

³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever

¹Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly: An Exposition of the Book of First Kings* (Fearn, Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 49.

believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.” . . .

⁴⁴“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. . . . ⁴⁷Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:35–39, 44, 47–51)

- b) The second metaphor portrays life in Christ as a banquet, a glorious event of celebration and fellowship and pleasure. At the banquet we may see Christ not only as the host but also as the feast itself. Our union with Christ—communing with him, partaking of him—is eternal life.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” (Rev. 19:9)

Or, to put it another way, how has Jesus blessed you?

Answers will vary according to participants.

- 6) If Solomon’s kingdom is a type or picture of the kingdom of God, giving us an inferior earthly picture of a greater spiritual reality to come, what can we learn about God’s kingdom from the description of Solomon’s kingdom? What are the similarities between Solomon and Jesus? In what ways is Jesus’s kingdom superior to Solomon’s?

The glory of Solomon’s kingdom—its expanse, wealth, beauty, security, and peace—derives from the God-given wisdom granted to Solomon for the rule of his people. From the place of Solomon’s kingdom in the history of redemption, we *look back* to God’s covenant promises, and in Solomon’s kingdom

we see fulfillment. But we also *look forward* and see greater fulfillment, ultimate and complete, in Christ’s kingdom.

People. “as many as the sand by the sea” (1 Kings 4:20)

- Promised to Abraham

I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. (Gen. 22:17)

- Fulfilled in Christ

And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal. 3:29)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (Rev. 7:9)

Dominion. “from the Euphrates . . . to the border of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:21)

- Promised to Abraham

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” (Gen. 15:18)

- Fulfilled in Christ

²⁰He [the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:20–21)

Peace and Rest. “And he had peace on all sides around him. And Judah and Israel lived in safety.” (1 Kings 4:24–25)

- Promised to David

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And

violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly.
(2 Sam 7:10)

- Completed in Christ

³They will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Rev. 21:3–4)

Blessing. “People of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” (1 Kings 4:34)

- Promised to Abraham

In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 22:18)

- Fulfilled in Christ

¹³Christ redeemed us. . . . ¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:13–14)

Throne. “So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.” (1 Kings 2:12)

- Promised to David

¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ . . . And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Sam 7:12–13)

- Fulfilled in Christ

³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. (Luke 1:31–32)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (Matt. 25:31)

Temple. “He began to build the house of the LORD. . . . So Solomon built the house and finished it.” (1 Kings 6:1, 14)

- Promised to David

¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name. (2 Sam. 7:12–13)

- Fulfilled in Christ

²⁰Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:20–22)

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (Rev 21:22)

The reign of Solomon completes the reign of David. . . . David won the victories on which Solomon’s peaceful reign was established. . . . Together, David and Solomon picture the Lord’s king. David, the royal warrior, is succeeded by Solomon, the prince of peace. . . . David bears not only the agony of battle, but also the reproach of those who betrayed and disobeyed him. Solomon brings in the kingdom in which peace is founded on stern justice. David foreshadows the longsuffering of Christ’s humiliation. Solomon typifies Christ as the Judge, who ushers in the Kingdom by judging justly. Christ’s rule as the Prince of Peace is grounded in the perfect justice of his judgment. The fulfillment is, of course, far richer than the foreshadowing.²

7) Israel experienced peace during Solomon’s reign, but it was temporary; only Jesus can bring lasting peace. Read Ephesians 2:14 and Philippians 4:7.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. (Eph. 2:14)

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:7)

In what ways does Jesus bring us peace?

First, Jesus gives *peace with God*: “Therefore, since we

²Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1988), 166–167.

have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

Second, Jesus gives us *peace within ourselves*: Philip-pians 4:7 echoes the words of Christ in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

Third, Jesus gives us *peace with each other*: Ephesians 2:14 teaches that the people of God, though different in many ways (e.g., Jews and Gentiles), are one in Christ; we are no longer divided by our natural hostilities. Christ has broken down the walls that divide us from believers who are ethnically, culturally, racially, and economically different from us. Our distinctives are not obliterated; rather, in Christ they are sanctified and subordinated to our shared union with Christ as the basis for Christian unity. When we read of "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9), we should expect that ultimately our ethnic distinctions will be perfected and perpetuated for the glory of Christ in the new heaven and the new earth.

8) Consider a time in your life when you experienced peace that you knew could only come from God. What were some of the tangible results of God's peace? What did the experience teach you about God?

Answers will vary according to participants.

9) What aspects of the kingdom Jesus promises us are most meaningful to you?

Answers will vary according to participants.

10) Read 1 Kings 4:29–34.

²⁹And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, ³⁰so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding

nations. ³²He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. ³⁴And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29–34)

What does this description tell us about the source and nature of Solomon's wisdom? What evidence does the writer offer to prove how great Solomon's wisdom was?

- The *source* of Solomon's wisdom: God himself.
- The *superiority* of Solomon's wisdom: "beyond measure", surpassing the wisdom of entire nations, wiser than all other men.
- The *scope* of Solomon's wisdom: "breadth of mind," excelling as naturalist (both flora and fauna are mentioned), poet and songwriter (1,005 songs), philosopher (3,000 proverbs), builder, statesman, ruler, administrator, and judge.
- The *spectacle* of Solomon's wisdom: people of all nations came to hear.

And though it is not stated in this passage, consider Solomon's words of wisdom, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Prov. 9:10).

- The *starting point* of Solomon's wisdom: the fear of God.
- The *substance* of Solomon's wisdom: the knowledge of the Holy One.

11) What can we learn from Solomon's example that we might apply to our own search for wisdom?

Review Solomon's prayer. "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" (1 Kings 3:9).

- He prized wisdom, desired it, and asked God for it above other desires.
- His purpose was for righteousness and justice—to discern between good and evil.
- His interest was for the good of God's people and the advance of God's kingdom—in order to rule God's people well—not for his own personal interests.

INSIDE SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

King David longed to build the temple. He yearned to worship God in his house, as evidenced by the words he penned in Psalm 27:4: “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.” David wished to honor God by building God’s house and giving the Israelites a place to worship him. But God prevented David from building the temple, promising that David’s son Solomon would build it instead. And when Solomon began working on God’s house, he spared no expense. Solomon’s temple truly was one of the most magnificent structures ever built.

1) What is the most spectacular building you have ever visited? Describe how you felt as you looked at its beautiful architecture and experienced its grandeur.

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) Read 1 Kings 6:14–22. As you read this description of Solomon’s temple, try to picture what you are reading.

¹⁴So Solomon built the house and finished it. ¹⁵He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar. From the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood, and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. ¹⁶He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the walls, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place. ¹⁷The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. ¹⁸The cedar within the house was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers. All was cedar; no stone was seen. ¹⁹The

inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ²⁰The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar. ²¹And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. ²²And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold. (1 Kings 6:14–22)

a) Solomon’s temple was so glorious that some have tried to explain it away as an exaggeration, yet reliable modern scholars agree that there is no reason to doubt that this account is historically accurate. What details in this description stand out to you?

- *Symmetry.* The Most Holy Place was a perfect cube 20 x 20 x 20 cubits (1 cubit = approximately 1 ½ feet).
- *Fine Wood.* Walls lined with cedar, floors of cypress.
- *Gold, Gold, Gold.* It covered everything!
- *The Place for the Ark of the Covenant.* The law of God’s covenant people had a place.

b) What can we infer about God’s character from reading all these details of the temple?

The multifaceted superlatives of God’s character are summed up in his holiness. The otherworldly glory of his holiness is expressed in these and other earthly representations: the sheer perfection of his holiness in the symmetry of the Most Holy Place; the exquisite beauty of his holiness in the fine wood paneling, beautifully carved; the dazzling richness of his holiness in

the gold which covered everything; the abundant grace of his holiness communicated through the covenant. And these are just a few.

Shall I call holiness an attribute? Is it not rather the glorious combination of all his attributes into one perfect whole? As all his attributes proceed from the absolute, so all again converge and meet in holiness. As from the insufferable white light of the Absolute they all seem to diverge and separate into prismatic hues, so they seem again to converge and meet and combine in the dazzling white radiance of his holiness. This, therefore, is rather the intense whiteness, purity, clearness, the infinite luster and splendour of his perfect nature. . . . All of his attributes are glorious, but in this we have a combination of all into a still more glorious whole.¹

c) What implications does God's attention to beauty have for the way we live as his image bearers? How can we share in and express God's beauty?

First, we can reflect God's beauty in every aspect of our lives. We can sanctify every thought, word, and deed as acts of worship, delighting in the beauty of his holiness, the splendor of all that sets him apart. Note these calls to worship from David, Solomon's father and king:

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (1 Chron. 16:29 KJV)

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (Ps. 29:2 KJV)

O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. (Ps. 96:9 KJV)

Second, we can appreciate beauty wherever we find it, acknowledging God as the source and owner of all truth and all beauty.

d) The glory of Solomon's temple was appropriate, since God is worthy of all the splendor and beauty humans could amass and more. Does your worship—

¹ Joseph LeCoute, "Religion and Science," (1874), quoted in Charles H. Spurgeon, "Psalm the Ninety-Sixth" in *The Treasury of David*, s.v. verse 6.

private or corporate—express your understanding of God's worthiness?

Answers will vary according to participants.

How can we worship in a way that magnifies God's worthiness and beauty?

Consider Dr. Ryken's words on page 94 of *King Solomon*:

The God worshiped at Solomon's temple is a glorious God. He is the King of all kings. Now his royal glory is displayed in Jesus Christ, the greater Solomon of the kingdom of God. . . .

If our God is such a glorious king, then we—of all people—ought to give him the royal honor and obedience that he alone deserves. We should bring him gold to proclaim the coming of his kingdom around the world and to build up his spiritual temple in the church. Even though our money is hardly equivalent to his priceless majesty, and even though it belongs to him already, he will graciously receive it as our royal tribute—the gold we bring to our King.

We also have something even more precious to offer our King: a life surrendered to his service. Our service is not really worthy of his majesty, any more than our money is, but it is the best we have to offer, so we bring it. We should offer Jesus the treasure of our hearts, enthroning him as our king. We should offer him the worship of our mouths, praising him as our glorious God. We should offer him the work of our hands, feeding the poor and healing the wounded because Christ is our king.

3) Read the description of the inner sanctuary in 1 Kings 6:23–36.

²³In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. ²⁵The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. ²⁶The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. ²⁷He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house. And the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one touched the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; their other wings touched each other

in the middle of the house.²⁸ And he overlaid the cherubim with gold.

²⁹ Around all the walls of the house he carved engraved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms.³⁰ The floor of the house he overlaid with gold in the inner and outer rooms.

³¹ For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.³² He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. He overlaid them with gold and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

³³ So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, in the form of a square,³⁴ and two doors of cypress wood. The two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding.³⁵ On them he carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the carved work.³⁶ He built the inner court with three courses of cut stone and one course of cedar beams. (1 Kings 6:23–36)

a) What were the most notable features of this chamber?

- *Cherubim*. Two magnificent statues
- *Fine Wood*. Cedar walls, beautifully carved
- *Gold, Gold, Gold*. That covered everything!

b) How did the layout of the temple emphasize God's holiness? What implications did this have for the Israelites?

The Most Holy Place, sometimes called the Holy of Holies, was a 20-cubit cube at the end of the temple nave which was 30 cubits in height. With this 10-cubit difference in height, the Most Holy Place could possibly have been elevated above the floor of the nave as a kind of throne room. It contained the ark of the covenant as the seat of God's presence, the mercy seat of Exodus 25:17–22. So, while the Most Holy Place provided for God's presence with his people, his presence is set apart from the temple nave and the court, demonstrating his holiness. This design illustrates both his immanence and his transcendence, his nearness and his otherness.

What did this holy God require of his people? Refer to Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 16 for context.

In Deuteronomy 6, God requires his people:

- To fear him (vv. 2, 13, 24) by keeping his law and serving him. This *fear of God* is not a slavish fear which strives to placate God's wrath and win his favor by law keeping and charitable service. Rather, the fear of God is an admiration and reverence for God which overflows in obedience and service as joyful tribute to his glory.
- To love him (v. 5) with all our being. Love of God and fear of God are not two disparate or conflicting responses, but rather two facets—along with faith, obedience, hope, joy, trust, pleasure, etc.—of the whole-hearted, full-orbed devotion God deserves from his people. We see them together in Deut. 10:12, “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

In Leviticus 16, God requires the cleansing of his people from their sin. The proximate means for this cleansing is prescribed by God in the annual day of atonement. “For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. . . . And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins” (vv. 30, 34).

NOTE: In his death, Christ, the Lamb of God, provides the ultimate sacrifice and fulfills once for all what the Levitical Day of Atonement prefigures. The author of Hebrews makes clear that the blood of bulls and goats is not sufficient payment for the sins of men; only the blood of Christ could pay that debt, and on the cross he paid for the sins of all of God's people for all time. However, through the Levitical sacrifices God applied Christ's sacrifice, though future, as actual payment for the sins of his people, and through the Levitical sacrifices God assured actual forgiveness for all who participated in faith.

c) The Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies was the earthly copy of God's throne room, complete with cherubim. From the description of these angelic creatures in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 22:8–9, what can you tell about their position and function in God's kingdom?

And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isa. 6:3)

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” (Rev. 22:8–9)

The Scriptures identify by name two ranks of angelic beings, seraphim (as in Isa. 6:3) and cherubim (as in Gen. 3:24 and 1 Kings 6:23ff, Heb. 9:5). One often-mentioned function of cherubim is as attendants to or bearers of the throne of God. The Lord was characterized as the one “who is enthroned on the cherubim” or “above the cherubim” (e.g., 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16). Thus, in earthly representations of God’s heavenly throne, i.e., in the Most Holy Place of Moses’s tabernacle and of Solomon’s temple, images of cherubim occupy prominent places at the seat of God’s presence.

d) In the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and he could do so only once a year. But when Jesus died, the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying that through Christ’s death we have access to the very throne room of God. Read Hebrews 9:24–26 and 10:19–22.

²⁴For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb. 9:24–26)

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let

us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb. 10:19–22)

List all the things these verses tell us that Jesus has done for us.

On behalf of his people:

- Jesus condescended to take on human flesh. He is our brother redeemer, our covenant representative.
- Jesus sacrificed himself once for all time to pay for our sin. He is our spotless substitute, our once-for-all-time sacrificial lamb.
- Jesus entered into heaven itself, into the presence of God. He is our perfect high priest, always living to intercede for us at the right hand of the Father.
- Jesus gained for us our own access to the holy, heavenly place “by the blood of Jesus . . . through his flesh.” We have union with him in his death and his resurrection. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. . . . For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:1, 3)

e) On a practical, day-to-day level, what does it mean to you that you have direct access to the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ? (e.g., see Rom. 8:26–27.)

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26–27)

Note also that Hebrews 4–10 first, extols Jesus as the Great High Priest, superior to all priests who came before, and second, expounds the surpassing, eternal worth of Jesus’s priestly ministry, including some day-to-day, practical applications for the believer (marked in *italics* below).

- 4:14–16: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us *hold fast our confession*. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to

sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then *with confidence draw near* to the throne of grace, that we may *receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*.

- 7:22, 19, 25: Jesus [is] the guarantor of a better covenant . . . [in which] a better hope is introduced, through which we *draw near to God*. . . . He is able to save to the uttermost those who *draw near to God* through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.
- 9:11–14: When Christ appeared as a high priest . . . he entered once for all into the holy places . . . by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. . . . The blood of Christ. . . . [will] purify our conscience from dead works to *serve the living God*.
- 9:15: He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.
- 10:10, 14–15, 17: We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit [speaking through the prophet Jeremiah] . . . adds “I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more.”
- 10:19–25: Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus . . . *let us draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . . *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope* without wavering. . . . And let us consider how to *stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together . . . but encouraging one another*.

f) Read 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Cor. 3:16–17)

What are the practical implications of the truth that believers are now the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, Paul writes of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. He even refers to *the individual believer’s body as a temple* for the Holy Spirit.

¹³The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? . . . ¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:13–15, 17–20)

In 1 Corinthians 3, however, Paul’s topic is the church rather than the individual Christian, and he refers to *the church as God’s temple* (see also 2 Cor. 6:16, Eph. 2:21), the dwelling place for God’s Spirit. The Corinthian church had lost sight of this truth: “Do you not know . . . ?” Campbell Morgan clarifies this blessed truth, as well as Paul’s application of it, to the disputes and divisions in the church in first-century Corinth . . . and in the twenty-first-century *everywhere*:

Do you not know that the Church is the sanctuary, the place of Divine manifestation, and the centre of Divine activity? The ark with the overshadowing cherubim was the throne of government, as well as the place where the glory of God was manifested. Do you not know you are that? Have you forgotten that? That is the great truth about the Church. . . .

Do you not know? There could have been no divisions in that church at Corinth, or there can be none anywhere if that truth has been, and is known, or remembered. The lost sense of the marvel of the Church as the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit is what has alienated us, and caused our divisions, and paralyzed our powers. It has caused our divisions and disputings. . . . Oh, for a practical rediscovery of this fact that the Church is the sanctuary of the living God!²

²G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1946.), 65–67.

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS

Experts predicted that in 2010 Americans would spend \$270 billion on home improvements. It seems we are constantly looking for ways to improve the appearance and function of our homes, make them larger, or even start over with new homes. Sometimes we make these choices with little consideration of how God views them. But the Bible demonstrates that God cares about where we live and how we spend our money. He desires that our homes serve a ministry purpose. One of the earliest commentaries we have on home building was the construction of Solomon's house, which took place around the same time as the construction of the temple.

1) If you had the money, what is one home improvement you wish you could make right now?

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) Read 1 Kings 7:1–12.

¹Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house.

²He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Its length was a hundred cubits and its breadth fifty cubits and its height thirty cubits, and it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. ³And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. ⁴There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers. ⁵All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers.

⁶And he made the Hall of Pillars; its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them.

⁷And he made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the Hall of Judgment. It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.

⁸His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage.

⁹All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court. ¹⁰The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. ¹¹And above were costly stones, cut according to measurement, and cedar. ¹²The great court had three courses of cut stone all around, and a course of cedar beams; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD and the vestibule of the house. (1 Kings 7:1–12)

What were the similarities between Solomon's house and the temple (which is described in 1 Kings 6 and 7:13–51)?

- similar structural design (7:12)
- primary building materials were stone and cedar (7:12)

What differences do you notice?

The Lord's House	Solomon's House
built over seven years (6:38)	built over thirteen years (7:1)
one building	five buildings
no iron tools used on the quarried stones (6:7)	saws used on the stones (7:9)

There is a difficulty in comparing and contrasting the house of the LORD and Solomon's house because of the lack of information provided about Solomon's house. Perhaps the most significant difference for us to consider is in the biblical account of the buildings rather than in the buildings themselves.

- *Eighty-eight verses* are given to describe Solomon's *temple* (6:1–38, 7:13–51): the nave; the inner sanctuary; side chambers; the foundations, walls, floors, ceilings, windows, and doors; the various furnishings and accessories of worship found in the inner sanctuary, the nave, and the outer courtyard. Recorded for all these spaces and furnishings are dimensions and details about construction and decoration.
- Only *twelve verses* are given to describe Solomon's *palace complex* (7:1–12): five buildings; the names of three; the dimensions of two; the uses of three (one for pronouncing judgment, two for residences); and a few details about windows and doors, stone foundations and cedar beams. There is nothing recorded of interior décor or furnishings for the royal residences or for the halls of government. Not even the throne is described here (though its description appears in 10:18–21).

It is important not to miss the author's emphasis. Note Dr. Ryken's comment on page 107 of *King Solomon*: "Even for all its splendor, Solomon's palace receives only brief mention. As far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, this is all it deserves, because Solomon's house was not nearly as important as the house Solomon built for God. By deemphasizing Solomon's palace, the Bible is keeping things in their proper priority."

3) What are some possible reasons that it took Solomon thirteen years to build his own house but only seven to build the temple?

- When building began, perhaps Solomon's preparations for the temple were more complete than for his palace.
- Perhaps materials and labor were more plentiful for the temple project than for the palace.
- The temple is smaller, perhaps no more than half the size of the buildings of the royal palace.
- The building of the temple should have been Solomon's focused priority. Look at God's covenant with David recorded in 2 Samuel 7:4–17. It concludes with covenant language concerning

Solomon. Central to God's intent for Solomon's reign is the building of the temple: "When your [David's] days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. *He shall build a house for my name*, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12–13).

What might this say about his priorities, both good and bad?

³⁸He was seven years in building it [the house of the LORD].

^{7:1}Solomon was building his own house thirteen years. (1 Kings 6:38–7:1)

In two contiguous sentences the author of 1 Kings reports the lengths of the two building projects, the Lord's house and Solomon's house. In some translations these sentences are joined with a conjunction for connection and contrast: *but* (KJV), *however* (NIV), *now* (NASB). Some Bible scholars see this as revealing the priorities of Solomon's heart, i.e., a greater interest in his own comfort than in God's worship.

The temple, even including the courtyard, is relatively much smaller than the palace. Some may view this also as a reflection of Solomon's misplaced priorities. However, it is important to understand that the palace complex housed much more than the royal residence; it was also the seat of Solomon's government.

Nothing else in the text hints that Solomon's priorities were amiss. Indeed, the description of the temple in 1 Kings 6–7 makes it abundantly clear that Solomon built an exquisite house for God, one which God was pleased to inhabit (see 1 Kings 8:10–11).

4) Read Jeremiah 22:13–15.

¹³Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice,
who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing
and does not give him his wages,
¹⁴who says, "I will build myself a great house
with spacious upper rooms,"

who cuts out windows for it,
paneling it with cedar
and painting it with vermilion.
¹⁵Do you think you are a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him. (Jer. 22:13–15)

What are the potential pitfalls of having an extravagant house? What temptations can it present?

- It can be a means for self-indulgence or self-promotion or conspicuous consumption.
- It can become an idol.
- It can take priority over more important things.
- It can divert our financial resources from use for benevolent or eternal purposes.
- It can be a source of pride.
- It can take so much time to maintain—time which might otherwise be invested in other things: spiritual life, service, or relationships.
- It can provide too much space for unhealthy separation and isolation among family members.

NOTE: *Though this leader's guide offers ideas for consideration, questions 5 through 10 call for personal reflection and application which only the individual student can answer for him- or herself.*

5) Read Psalm 127:1–2.

¹Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
²It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Ps. 127:1–2)

Do you think your home reflects the priorities extolled in this psalm?

What have you chosen for your home because of the message it conveys or the function it serves (e.g., a particular room layout, piece of furniture, or work of art)?

6) Do you find yourself more often content with your living situation or striving after the next gadget or home improvement? What helps you to be more content? What makes you less content?

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:11–13)

7) What factors make your living situation a distraction from what is truly important in life?

How can your home be a tool for the gospel rather than a distraction? What are some things you can do to keep the right priorities in this area?

A home can be a gospel tool

- when its members reflect the love of Christ to each other and to all who come there
- when its inhabitants engage in personal and family worship there
- when believers gather there for fellowship, prayer, study, and worship
- when unbelievers are welcomed there to meet the Savior

8) Is there something about your living situation that you think you should change after thinking about how people's homes reflect their priorities?

9) There is a connection between what we spend on our homes and what we spend building the house of God through gospel ministry. Our giving usually reflects our true priorities. Are you satisfied with what your giving says about what is truly important to you? What is one thing you'd like to change in the area of your stewardship?

Here's an outline of biblical instruction for God's people on the importance of giving.

- a) Give to the Lord *first*—“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce” (Prov. 3:9). Does this mean God's check should be the first one written each month?
- b) Give *generously*, or better stated, give *sacrificially*—Jesus taught his disciples about giving by the example of the poor widow: “And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his

disciples to him and said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in everything she had’” (Mark 12:42–44).

- c) Give the *tithe*, and be sure to qualify that as God does in Malachi 3; the Lord urges his people to bring the *full tithe*. It was at a time when they were stretched thin financially. He exhorted them, in fact he stunned them—he called giving less than the full tithe *robbing God*, and he identified it with a deeper problem of spiritual drift. God challenged his people to test his commitment to their welfare. The covenant-making, covenant-keeping God condescended to be tested by his covenant-breaking people. The test was this: “Bring the *full tithe* into the storehouse. . . . Test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down a blessing until there is no more need” (Mal. 3:10).
- d) Give *cheerfully*—“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). This cannot mean that you give less and less until you find an amount you can be cheerful about. This is God’s invitation to delight in him with first priority, sacrificial tithes and offerings.

10) Jesus gives us a good perspective on life in John 14:2–3, where he reminds us that this world is not our true home: “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” How can this truth become more of a reality in your day-to-day life? What difference will it make in how you live when this perspective becomes embedded in your heart?

For the true believer, the last seven words of this promise must be the most heart-filling, life-giving part: “Where I am you may be also.” Being in the presence of Jesus must be our most compelling desire for heaven: more than the absence of pain, disappointment, and all the ravages of sin; more than reunion with family and friends; more than heaven’s beauty and glory.

And, if this is true for the believer’s future life in heaven, it must also be true for his or her present life on earth. The believer realizes union with Christ from

the moment of his or her new birth. Think of all those verses that tell us who we are and what we have “in Christ.” And this “all things new” life in Christ reorients the trajectory of his or her life and transforms every desire. This is the essence of the gospel offered by Christ and embraced and proclaimed by Paul.

²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. (Phil. 1:21–24)

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:1–3)

The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there?¹

The worst this life can shove down our throats, but with the nearness of Jesus, is heaven on earth. The best this life can give, but without Jesus, is a living hell.²

A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that *the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. . . . Aim at heaven and you will get earth “thrown in”: aim at earth and you will get neither.*³

¹John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 15.

²Ray Ortlund, quoted in Justin Taylor, “The Critical Question for Our Generation,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), August 22, 2011, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2011/08/22/the-critical-question-for-our-generation/>.

³C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 104.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE GLORY

Sometimes when loved ones die or move away, we walk through the places they used to inhabit and miss them. Their absence is most keenly felt in the places where they used to live. Somehow those places seem empty without our loved ones' filling them with their voices, their fragrances, their very beings. It was something like that for Solomon when the temple was finished. It was a sight to behold, a building fit for Yahweh. There was just one problem—God wasn't there. Solomon needed to bring the ark of the covenant—which contained the mercy seat, the place where God dwelled—and put it in its permanent home in the Most Holy Place. All of redemptive history had led up to this moment, when God would dwell with his people. God's glory was about to fill the temple.

1) Identify an experience you've had or something you've seen that you would describe as *glorious*. What comes to mind when you hear that word?

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) Read 1 Kings 7:51–8:4.

⁵¹Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

^{8:1}Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. ²And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the

month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.³And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. ⁴And they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. (1 Kings 7:51–8:4)

What details in this passage lead you to believe that this was an important event in Israel's history?

- Leaders from the national, tribal, and family levels were assembled.
- Valuable items dedicated by David were brought to the temple.
- The ark of the covenant, the mercy seat of God, was brought into the temple.

3) The people who were assembled for the task of bringing the ark of the covenant were the elders and priests. In the New Testament we see more evidence that God calls specific men to lead in worship and church life. Read 1 Timothy 3:1–13.

¹The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

⁸Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹²Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:1–13)

**List some qualifications for leadership in the church.
Why are these qualifications so important?**

Leadership in the church, as in any human organization, is one key to its success and its durability. The New Testament provides for an office of leadership in the church and gives qualifications for church leaders. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 Paul identifies this office with the terms *overseer* and *elder* and with lists of qualifications for those who lead, teach, and shepherd the church. Peter also identifies this office with instructions on how to lead well.

⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁶For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁷but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁸He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5–9)

¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet. 5:1–3)

The office of *deacon* is set out in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 (see also Acts 6:1–6) with a list of qualifications. The role of the deacon is one of service and support for the members and the ministries of the church.

4) Christian husbands and fathers are called to be worship leaders in their own households. What are some practical ways that a man can do this?

From Ligon Duncan, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi:

My own answer is you start family worship as soon as possible, as soon as one is married, and continue it after children come along, no matter how young the children are (and the younger the better). The point is not for the youngest children to be able to comprehend (or even to sit still during it!). The point is to impress upon them, by paternal example the priority of God and his word in all of life. They learn this, even if they comprehend nothing in the reading, praying and singing, simply by seeing a father pausing day after day to read the word with his family.

Here is what I said in *Give Praise to God*:¹

“Now there is a whole host of practical questions and problems that come to mind once we determine to begin family worship. How long should it last? It should be regularly brief, as little as ten minutes when the children are very young. Gradually, it will run a little longer as they grow older and conversations strike up. Don't kill it by trying to go too long. Pace yourself. Regularity and repetition is the key. When should we do family worship? When it works—morning/breakfast, suppertime or bedtime are the three most common times.

“... There are dozens of potential hindrances: a lack of discipline, a lack of sense of the importance of family worship, a lack of experience of family worship in one's own upbringing, and more. But above all, there is the enemy of idealism. You have this picture of a Puritan family sitting around the table attentively and reverently reading the whole book of 1 Chronicles at a sitting, singing half the Psalter from memory, and praying for ninety minutes, and then you look around your table and your wife is rolling her eyes, your two-year-old is throwing leftover spaghetti around the kitchen, your eight-year-old is making faces at her sister, and your teenager would rather do calculus.

¹Ligon Duncan, *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reformed Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 324–326.

Don't let the gap between the ideal and the reality stop you! Those inattentive children will grow up and thank you for persevering, and the memories of a father who loved them enough to make that kind of an effort will etch a permanent affection in their hearts.”²

What are some barriers that prevent men from fulfilling this God-given role?

- a lack of self-discipline or intentionality or well-formed habits
- a lack of understanding of the importance of family worship
- a lack of experience in family worship
- a lack of training for leading family worship
- consideration of other pursuits, even lesser things, as more important
- fear of failure

5) Read 1 Kings 8:5–9.

⁵And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. ⁶Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. ⁸And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. ⁹There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. (1 Kings 8:5–9)

How did the people of God celebrate the coming of the ark of the covenant to the temple?

- They assembled together with Solomon, the elders of Israel, and the priests (vv. 3, 5).
- They sacrificed countless sheep and oxen (v. 5).
- They stood (v. 14) for Solomon's blessing unto the Lord (vv. 15–21), his prayer of dedication (vv. 22–53), and his benediction upon the assembly (vv. 55–61).

²J. Ligon Duncan, “QA: Family Worship and Unattentive Children,” *Miscellanies* (blog), August 10, 2007, <http://spurgeon.wordpress.com/2007/08/10/family-worship-with-little-children/>.

- They sacrificed animals (an incredible number!) as peace offerings before the Lord (vv. 62–63).
- They feasted for eight days (vv. 65–66).

Even though our worship services today are rightfully centered on Christ and do not include the temple or the ark, what principles can we draw from this passage about how we should worship?

- Gathering for corporate worship is important.
- Bringing offerings is an act of worship.
- Worship focuses on the glory, rule, and redeeming grace of God in covenant with his people.
- Worship embodies deep reverence and exuberant celebration in community.

6) Read Leviticus 16:15–16.

¹⁵Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. ¹⁶Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. (Lev. 16:15–16)

Why was blood sacrifice a necessary part of worship in the Old Testament? What did it accomplish? What was it unable to accomplish; i.e., why was it ultimately deficient in meeting its goal?

The sins of the people, their uncleannesses and transgressions, required payment by death, the shedding of blood. God demanded the regular sacrifice of clean animals, i.e., bulls and goats. By itself, the blood of bulls and goats is not sufficient payment for the sins of men, but God applied through tabernacle/temple sacrifices the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, though future, to atone for all the sins of all of God's people for all time. Hence, the temple sacrifice assured actual forgiveness for all who participated in faith.

Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by

those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein He was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever.³

For God's covenant people, the temple sacrifice

- demonstrated in dramatic and repeated fashion the high cost of their sin. "But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year" (Heb. 10:3).
- declared that the penalty for their sin could be paid by a substitute, and would be paid in full by a perfect substitute, even one yet to come.
- applied to believers the effectual blood atonement of Christ, the Lamb of God, communicated through the sacrifice of mere animals. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.' . . . And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:4–5, 10).
- drew them into worship in awe of God's grace and mercy alongside his righteousness and justice. God's grace provides what his righteousness requires.

7) Read Hebrews 9:11–14, 22.

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. . . .

²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Heb. 9:11–14, 22)

³ Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.6.

Why do we no longer offer blood sacrifices?

Blood sacrifices are no longer offered because the need for blood payment has been satisfied in the sacrifice of the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Focus on verse 12: "He entered *once for all* into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but *by means of his own blood*, thus securing *an eternal redemption*." Notice how the writer of Hebrews uses this "once for all" phrase repeatedly with reference to Christ's death, making clear that his atoning sacrifice is finally and completely satisfactory "to put away sin" (Heb. 9:26).

- Hebrews. 7:27—"He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this *once for all* when he offered up himself."
- Hebrews 9:26—"For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared *once for all* at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."
- Hebrews 10:10—"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*."
- Hebrews 10:1–3—"For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year."

What details from temple worship does the writer of Hebrews allude to as being fulfilled in Christ?

Along with Hebrews 9, read Hebrews 7:23–26 and consider the chart from Justin Taylor and The Gospel Coalition.⁴

²³The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵Consequently, he is

⁴Justin Taylor, "Differences between Jesus and the Levitical High Priests," *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), April 26, 2011, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2011/04/26/differences-between-the-jesus-and-the-levitical-high-priests/>.

able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (Heb. 7:23–26)

Differences between Jesus and the Levitical Priests

Reference	Difference	Levitical High Priests	Jesus the High Priest
7:23–24	quantity	many priests	only one priest
7:23–24; 9:12	duration	temporary	permanent, eternal
7:27; 9:12	frequency	sacrificed daily	sacrificed once for all
7:26–27	quality	sinful sinners	holy, innocent, unstained
7:26–27	focus	offered sacrifices also for themselves	offered sacrifices only for others
7:27; 9:11–14	object	offered sacrificial animals	offered up himself
9:11–12	sphere	entered a man-made tent	entered a greater and more perfect tent
9:11–12	means	entered by means of the blood of goats and calves	entered by means of his own blood

8) Christ was our once-for-all sacrifice for sin, but we are called to make sacrifices of our own. Read Romans 12:1–2.

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1–2)

What are the sacrifices that God requires of us?

One noun—*bodies*—and three adjectives—*living, holy, acceptable*—are used here to describe our sacrifice. Further, our bodily sacrifice is an act of spiritual worship. Worship is an inward, spiritual response that compels outward, bodily expression.

We think of *sacrifice* as the giving away of something of extreme value. There is an element of that in biblical sacrifice, but the primary point is not that we should lose something but that we should express something. The whole principle of giving to God is an expression of worship.⁵

Man is recognized as being essentially spirit. He possesses his body, and is able to offer it. The difference between the body and the spirit is that between the sacrifice and the one who offers. Man as worshipper is a spirit. His sacrificial symbol of worship is his own body, which he is called upon to present to God; and the apostle declares that this act is of the nature of spiritual worship.⁶

The individual believer is at once priest, sacrifice, and altar; he immolates himself to the Lord,—living, yet no longer to himself. . . . He [the Lord Jesus], in the days of His flesh, served men, ordinarily only through His sacred body; walking to them with His feet; touching them with His hands; meeting their eyes with His; speaking with His lips the words that were spirit and life. As with Him so with us. It is only through the body, practically, that we can “serve our generation by the will of God.” . . . We look, we speak, we hear, we write, we nurse, we travel, by means of these material servants of the will, our living limbs.⁷

To present my body as living sacrifice is to commit it and to employ it, in its parts and in whole, to serve Christ, which includes serving others in his name. In addition to the physical body, all components of human life must be sacrificed in service for Christ: intelligence, personality, talents, passions, hopes, dreams, etc. Such service of the physical body and the spiritual person manifests in two directions:

- positively, what I must be and do in attitudes and actions as transformed by a mind renewed in Christ and discerning of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.
- negatively, what I must not be at heart, what I must not do in mind and body, in order to avoid and resist conformity to this world.

Regarding the body as instrument for worship, consider also from Paul:

⁵R. C. Sproul, *Romans*, St. Andrew’s Expositional Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 406.

⁶G. Campbell Morgan, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 187.

⁷Handley C. G. Moule, *The Expositors’ Bible: The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 326.

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:19–20)

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Rom. 6:12–13)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col. 3:5)

Is there one specific area where you feel God calling you to sacrifice right now? What next steps will you take to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in this area?

Answers will vary according to participants.

9) What happened when God's glory filled the temple in 1 Kings 8:10–13?

¹⁰And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

¹²Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ¹³I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.” (1 Kings 8:10–13)

What attributes of God come to mind as you read this description?

God's immanence and God's transcendence.

God came down and filled the temple. He was with his people. The reality of his presence was made visible by the cloud filling the temple. God had come near. He had chosen and directed Solomon to build the temple as a permanent place for his habitation among his people. And now he had arrived to occupy that place. He was there with them as he had been with their ancestors in the tabernacle. At such proximity, how

could they not be both filled with comfort and struck with awe? This is his immanence, his nearness.

At the same time, the cloud which evidenced his presence also veiled his presence. In fact, the cloud was so thick as to interrupt the ministry of the priests. God was there; no one doubted it. But no one could really see him. There is more to him than his people can comprehend. There is a certain hiddenness about him because he is not like us. He is God, and we are not. This is his transcendence, his otherness.

Solomon knew that God was beyond reach; he quoted from a psalm of David: “He made darkness his covering” (Ps. 18:11). Yet he also knew that God had called him to build a house on earth where God could dwell among his people. He knew both truths: God is transcendent and God is immanent. He is other than us, but he has come down to be with us. The glory and mystery in these attributes comes even more clearly into view in Christ: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory” (John 1:1, 14).

10) John Piper defines God's glory as “the radiance of his holiness, the radiance of his manifold, infinitely worthy and valuable perfections” and the “going public of his infinite worth.”

WHAT IS GOD'S GLORY?

Wow. That's a good question, because we talk about it endlessly, don't we? And we should know what we're talking about. And yet it is very difficult to define. I'll make a stab at it.

The reason it is so important is because in the Bible I don't know of any truth that is more fundamentally pervasive than God's zeal to be glorified, which means his zeal for us so to think, so to feel, and so to act as to make him look as glorious as he is. We don't add to his glory.

So we want to make God's glory shine. We want to make it visible. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). So the goal of my life should be to so live that when people know me well enough, they would say, “God is glorious!” Not “John is glorious,” but “God is glorious!” (Which is probably

why God lets us sin as much as he does. But that's another question.)

What is it? I believe the glory of God is the going public of his infinite worth. I define the holiness of God as the infinite value of God, the infinite intrinsic worth of God. And when that goes public in creation, the heavens are telling the glory of God, and human beings are manifesting his glory, because we're created in his image, and we're trusting his promises so that we make him look gloriously trustworthy.

The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God is what I mean by "glory," and I base that partly on Isaiah 6, where the seraphim say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—"and you would expect them to say "holiness" and they say "glory." They're ascribing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—"and when that goes public in the earth and fills it, you call it "glory."

So God's glory is the radiance of his holiness, the radiance of his manifold, infinitely worthy and valuable perfections.⁸

As you think about the places you inhabit—your workplace, the family car, the grocery store, your church—how can you bring a greater reverence for God's holiness into those places? What things can you do to "go public" with God's worthiness as you go about your daily life?

Every Christian must identify the specific things he or she can do in daily life to bring glory to God. All the specifics will flow out of a core vision for the glory of God and his or her own joy as God's creature and as God's child. John Piper sums up this vision in his now famous dictum "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." We "go public" with God's worthiness as our supreme satisfaction with him shines through in all that we do—in big things and in little things.

How can you encourage others to glorify him (Matt. 5:16)?

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:16)

⁸John Piper, "What Is God's Glory?" Desiring God, accessed February 16, 2013, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/what-is-gods-glory>.

- performing acts of kindness and generosity
- putting the interests of others above our own
- giving without expectation of return
- loving and doing justice, mercy, and truth
- worshiping and ministering in Christian community
- absorbing the Scriptures carefully and prayerfully
- walking humbly before God and men
- _____

11) The apostle Paul tells us that God's people are being built into "a holy temple in the Lord" and a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21–22). In what ways do we now experience God's presence filling our church buildings, homes, etc.?

²¹In [Christ Jesus] the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:21–22)

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (1 Cor. 3:16)

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4–5)

In 1 Kings 8 we learn that God's glory filled the temple in the form of a cloud. In the New Testament we see the church as the dwelling place of God on earth; i.e., not the church building made of mere bricks and mortar, but the church made of flesh and bones, the people of God, "living stones built up as a spiritual house," "a holy temple in the Lord." We experience the presence of Christ through the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit when we gather in his name. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I [Jesus] among them" (Matt. 18:20).

What outward evidence might we see of God's mysterious glory?

The Holy Spirit is the one who seals believers in Christ, regenerates them as "living stones," joins them together into "a holy temple in the Lord," and fills the

temple—church and individual believer—with divine presence and power as the earthly seat of God’s mysterious glory, as was the Temple in the days of Solomon. One evidence of this glory is the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer and in the corporate life of the church or the family. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23).

These virtues reflect the character and attributes of God. In the individual and the community marked by them, they will stand out in compelling contrast to the life which has only unregenerate flesh to animate it. “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Gal. 5:19–21).

This outward evidence of God’s glory, i.e., the fruit of the Spirit, can be obscured by flesh-driven behavior. Therefore, this passage in Galatians 5, which contrasts life in the spirit and life in the flesh, begins with an *imperative*, directing the believer how to *live for Christ*:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16)

The passage concludes with an *indicative*, reminding the believer of the gospel reality of his or her *life in Christ*:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal. 5:24)

The imperatives are possible because the indicatives are true. God commands us to live *for Christ* because he has given us life *in Christ* to manifest his glory in our lives, our homes, our churches, our relationships, and our ministries.

S O L O M O N ' S C H O I C E

In the early 1990s, the question “What Would Jesus Do?” (WWJD), could be seen on bracelets, billboards, and even lunchboxes. Many Christians used this phrase as a way to help them make the right choices in every part of their lives. Some argued that the movement became too commercialized or made Jesus out to be little more than a good moral example, but at the heart of the WWJD fad was a profound truth. In every moment, we have the choice between God’s way or our own way. Salvation is a one-time event in our lives, but it is lived out—or not lived out—in the daily decisions of life. God presented to Solomon the same choice that Moses presented to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 11:26–28—a series of “if . . . then” statements: if you obey, then blessings. If you disobey, then curses. This is the same choice we have every day of our lives, in both big and small decisions, from choosing a job or a spouse to choosing how to react to a small frustration in the checkout line at the grocery store.

- 1) What major crossroads have you come to involving a choice between God’s way and the wrong way? What did you choose, and how did it turn out? What little decisions have you made in the past week that you felt were a choice between God’s way and the wrong way?

Answers will vary according to participants.

- 2) Read 1 Kings 9:1–9.

¹As soon as Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king’s house and all that Solomon desired to build,²the LORD appeared

to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.³And the LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. ⁴And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules,⁵then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’⁶But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.⁸And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’⁹Then they will say, ‘Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.’”
(1 Kings 9:1–9)

In the choice God set before Solomon, we see the choice each of us has every day—God’s way or our own way. What blessings did God promise if Solomon chose God’s way?

If Solomon chose God’s way, God promised to establish Solomon’s “royal throne over Israel forever” (v. 5).

How have you seen blessings follow obedience in your own life?

Answers will vary according to participants.

3) What did God promise would happen if Solomon chose disobedience (vv. 6–9)?

If Solomon and/or his successors prove faithless, the people will lose their place in the land and the temple will become exhibit A of the disaster. Royal faithlessness (v. 6) will bring judgment on the people (v. 7)—though the people will certainly ape royal apostasy (v. 9). . . . Yahweh wants to impress Solomon with the high cost of apostasy. Infidelity will bring the loss of *turf, temple, and throne*. The first involves the loss of land (v. 7a) and the eclipse of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15); the second involves the loss of the sanctuary and the visible means of grace just climaxed under Solomon's regime (vv. 7–8); and the third (implicitly from vv. 4–5) will entail the loss of kingship and the eclipse of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7). Only a fool would flirt with faithlessness.¹

In addition to the loss of territory, temple, and throne, note the threat of loss of *national reputation* in vv. 7–9. “Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples” as the nation that had been given everything by their God and squandered it through their own folly. Don’t miss Dr. Davis’s point that the king’s disobedience would lead to national disobedience and national disaster.

NOTE: Solomon’s disobedience and its temporal consequences notwithstanding, we must not lose sight of God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:4–16).

Yahweh’s promise to David is *indefectible*:

- Death (i.e., David’s death) does not annul it (vv. 12–13). As Yahweh promised Abraham’s seed the land (Gen. 12:6–7), so he promises David’s seed the kingship.
- Sin (i.e., the sin of David’s son or descendants) cannot destroy it (vv. 14–15). Yahweh is going to be dealing with sinful kings but he will not allow sin to have dominion over his dominion! Any individual Davidic king may meet disaster

because of his infidelity, but that will not overthrow the promised endurance of the Davidic dynasty.

- Time will not exhaust it (v. 16). It remains forever.
- Let death, sin, and time do what they will, they will never frustrate Yahweh’s kingdom plan through David’s dynasty-house. I want you to sense the *inevitability* in the promise.²

So, both things are true: Solomon’s disobedience will prove disastrous personally and nationally, and God’s covenant stands forever.

4) What kinds of consequences follow disobedience in our world today?

The same kinds of consequences occur that have followed disobedience in all ages: self-deception, self-destruction, shame, and spiritual leanness.

Do you think those are punishments or just natural consequences? Is there a difference?

Sin by any name—disobedience, unbelief, pride, impurity, idolatry—has built into it the mechanisms for judgment for the one who chooses it. From the outset, sinful attitudes and actions have natural, logical outcomes that flow from them, always as unintended, unwelcomed consequences to the sinner as well as to others. In Romans 1:18–32, Paul reveals this as God’s way of judgment against the ungodly: “God gave them up to” the very thing that they had chosen (vv. 24, 26, 28). Those who deny God, dishonor God, and ignore God put themselves unwittingly into a spiral of self-destruction for which they have only themselves to blame.

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him

¹Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly: An Exposition of the Book of First Kings* (Fearn, Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 96.

²Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Diversity* (Fearn, Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1999), 92–93.

as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools,²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore *God gave them up* in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason *God gave them up* to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, *God gave them up* to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.³²Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom. 1:18–32)

Even God's own people make sinful choices which entail unintended consequences. For example, in Numbers 32 Moses gave God's specific instruction to two tribes of Israel. The instruction promised blessing as a result of obedience and warning for disobedience: "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure *your sin will find you out*" (Num. 32:23). From this example we are reminded that sins, once born, take on monstrous lives of their own, beyond the control of the sinner, but not beyond his responsibility.

NOTE: In Christ, God pays the sinner's debt and breaks sin's power over him. For the believer, sin's ultimate, eternal consequence is averted. Even in our temporal lives, we know that God mercifully protects us from the horrible consequences of the many sins we commit,

though perhaps not all. And yet, we must not take his mercy for granted. His mercy is extended to us in patience and kindness not to condone our sin but for the purpose of leading us to forsake our sin: "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

5) In Philippians 2:12–13 Paul tells believers, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Though it is hard to fully understand, this verse makes clear that our salvation is *both* something that God works into us *and* something that we work out. What are some of the choices Solomon was called to make as he worked out his salvation?

Solomon's choices:

- To believe or not believe the promises of God
- To obey or disobey the commands of God
- To follow or forsake the ways of his father
- To select counselors and advisors
- How to deal with rivals and opponents
- To choose a spouse
- What kind of home to build
- How to manage people
- How to work in the world of government and business

What choices are we called to make?

We face the same categories of choices in our lives. We may not bear the responsibility for an entire nation as Solomon did, but our choices affect those we care about—wives, husbands, children, extended family, church family, neighbors, employees, professional colleagues, etc.—just as surely as Solomon's choices did.

In what ways is following after Jesus a one-time decision and in what ways is it a daily choice, such as the one Solomon faced?

ONE-TIME DECISION

There is a particular moment in the Christian's life when the eternal and sovereign will of God is actualized in time as God applies Christ's saving work of redemption to the sinner. The sinner, by his will, must respond in faith and repentance to the work of God initiated in his life. How this happens—how God

saves sinners—is commonly known as *the order of salvation* in which the sinner is:

1. *Foreknown*, i.e., chosen as an individual to whom God will extend the grace of salvation.
2. *Predestined* to conformity to the image of God's son and to adoption as his child and heir.
3. *Called* by God according to his eternal, predestined purpose in election.
4. *Regenerated* by the Holy Spirit; given spiritual life and thereby enabled to respond to the Giver of life.
5. *Converted* through his response of faith and repentance to the offer of Christ in the gospel. This is the one-time, human decision by which the believer begins to follow Christ.
 - a) *Faith* in the redemptive work of Christ applied personally to the sinner as his sole basis for right standing before God.

The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace.³

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

- b) Repentance, turning from loving sin to loving Christ

By it [repentance unto life], a sinner . . . so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.⁴

Now what was the sort of “hole” man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor. . . . This process of surrender . . . is what

Christians call repentance. . . . It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years.⁵

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation. (2 Cor. 7:10)

6. *Justified* by the imputed righteousness of Christ received by faith.
7. *Adopted* into God's family.

DAILY CHOICE

Proceeding from this transformative event which includes the believer's one-time decision, following Jesus consists in lifelong transformation involving daily commitment and daily choices to participate with the work of God in his life.

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

Providentially, the believer has all he needs to animate his new life in Christ: the Word of God for instruction on how to live it and the indwelling Holy Spirit for the power to live it. The *order of salvation* proceeds as the believer is:

8. *Sanctified* by the joint work of God and the believer himself. What God works in, the believer works out.

¹²Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12–13)

Sanctification is the lifelong process of the believer being conformed to the image of Christ. It is a work of God in him; he is not left to sanctify himself. It is also a work of the believer himself. He is empowered with new life for the conscious and deliberate engagement of his whole being—thoughts and words, attitudes and actions, desires and choices—to obey God's Word and to enjoy God's purposes for him moment by moment, day by day. The pervasive gospel *indicatives* of Scripture tell us of our new reality, our new identity, which is fixed in our union with Christ. The abundant *imperatives* of Scripture instruct us how our

³Westminster Confession of Faith, XIV.2.

⁴Westminster Confession of Faith, XV.2.

⁵C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 44–45.

whole being must be volitionally active in the process of sanctification.

¹³Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:13–16)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:2)

²²To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22–24)

9. *Preserved* by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to persevere in sanctification.
10. *Glorified* in the full and final redemption of the whole person—body and spirit—into the image of Christ.

UNION WITH CHRIST

The believer’s union with Christ is the relational reality that underlies the entire outworking of his redemption, which the order of salvation outlines step by step.

NOTE: For amplification of these points, see the addendum at the end of this chapter.

6) Read John 10:27–29.

²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. (John 10:27–29)

What promise does Jesus make in these verses?

The promise is eternal life. For Jesus’s sheep, this promise provides great comfort, security, and assur-

ance, for it is grounded not on our performance but on God’s sovereign grace. We are Jesus’s sheep because the Father has given us to him. Jesus knows us, and because we are his sheep, we hear his voice and we follow him. We will never perish because we are secure in Jesus’s hand and in the Father’s hand. Our security is in his grip on us, not in our grip on him.

How has this promise affected your life at those times when you have made wrong choices?

It reassures me that I am secure in his hand. It humbles me and leads me to repentance.

7) Read 1 Kings 9:10–28.

¹⁰At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king’s house, ¹¹and Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

¹²But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. ¹³Therefore he said, “What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?” So they are called the land of Cabul to this day. ¹⁴Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.

¹⁵And this is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer ¹⁶(Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife; ¹⁷so Solomon rebuilt Gezer) and Lower Beth-horon ¹⁸and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, ¹⁹and all the store cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. ²⁰All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—²¹their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day. ²²But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves. They were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, his chariot commanders and his horsemen.

²³These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work: 550 who had charge of the people who carried on the work.

²⁴But Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her. Then he built the Millo.

²⁴Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar that he built to the LORD, making offerings with it before the LORD. So he finished the house.

²⁶ King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷And Hiram sent with the fleet his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸And they went to Ophir and brought from there gold, 420 talents, and they brought it to King Solomon. (1 Kings 9:10–28)

Based on the evidence, which choice do you think Solomon made? Defend your answer with specific verses from the text.

In this passage, the biblical author recorded Solomon's execution of his kingly duties without judgment of his choices. It reads as a list of national accomplishments—foreign relations (vv. 10–14); labor for building, for administration, and for defense (vv. 15–23); commerce (vv. 26–28)—and it concludes with an affirmation of Solomon's faithfulness in worship. Pursuit of these goals was a good choice. The writer of 1 Kings provides a favorable report on Solomon's considerable achievements in nation building, as well as a defense of his methods, for example vv. 21–22. The overall tenor of 1 Kings 1–10 is that of a good report. God's Israel is portrayed as a witness to God's glory, a light to the nations.

However, within the good report are recorded certain choices and actions by Solomon which appear to us as failures or compromises—the seeds of disobedience. Of course, the writer sees these things, too, though he withholds words of condemnation until chapter 11 where the seeds of disobedience bear fruit in personal apostasy and dynastic disintegration. The seed of disobedience visible in this passage is Solomon's accumulation of much gold (v. 28). Similarly, in previous passages, we noted Solomon's choices to marry outside the faith (1 Kings 3:1) and to accumulate many horses

(1 Kings 4:26). It is hard to reconcile these choices with God's clear instruction for Israel's kings in Deuteronomy 17:14–17: "When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you . . . you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. . . . Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold."

Solomon's good choice was to build a nation that bore witness to the glory of its God. This was a purpose worthy of Solomon's life, and many of his choices in pursuit of this purpose were good and right and obedient to God. In pursuit of these well-chosen goals, however, Solomon made certain choices which were not good, not right, and not obedient to God's Word, and these choices led to personal and national ruin. We see in this example how even the noblest of strategic goals are undermined by poor choices made in pursuit of those goals.

8) What actions did Solomon take that put him in a position to choose obedience?

- He asked for and received from the Lord wisdom for governing the people (1 Kings 3:9–12).
- He built a house for the Lord which the Lord blessed by filling it with his presence (1 Kings 6:10–11).
- He led his people in devotion to the Lord (1 Kings 8:54–61).
- He worshiped by making sacrifices as he ascended the throne (1 Kings 3:4), at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:62–63), and in the years following, three times annually in faithfulness to the covenant.

What choices did Solomon make that might have tempted him to disobey God?

- He took foreign wives and accommodated their pagan gods.
- He acquired many horses and chariots on which he might rely for security instead of relying on the Lord.
- He undertook the building of cities and armies on a scale that required forced labor.

9) Since choosing God's way is a daily, even minute-by-minute, decision, how can you keep making the correct choice?

- Know Christ.

²May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (2 Pet. 1:2–3)

- Learn and live the Scriptures as the revealed will of God.

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

- Keep praying.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thess. 5:16–18)

- Avoid sin.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

- Never violate conscience.

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

- Don't follow the wicked and foolish.

Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the
wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers. (Psalm 1:1)

- Live in community with God's people.

²⁴Stir up one another to love and good works,

²⁵not neglecting to meet together. (Heb. 10:24–25)

- Engage the world with wisdom.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. (Col. 4:5)

Think of a situation you often face where you have to make a choice. What practical steps can you take to ensure that you choose obedience?

Answers will vary according to participants.

10) As hard as we try to choose wisely, in our weakness and sin sometimes we make the wrong choice rather than the right choice. What should we do when that happens? As you reflect on the sinful choices that you have made recently, use Psalm 51 as a guide for repentance.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

- ⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud
of your righteousness.
¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice,
or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God,
you will not despise.

¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
¹⁹then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.
(Psalm 51)

Psalm 51 is David's moving record of how he repented when confronted with his sin. Consider Dr. Boice's outline of this psalm as David's helpful, step-by-step guide to repentance:

- (1) cry for forgiveness (vv. 1–2)
- (2) confession of sin (vv. 3–6)
- (3) appeal for cleansing (vv. 7–9)
- (4) desire for inward renewal (vv. 10–12)
- (5) promise to teach others (vv. 13–17)
- (6) concluding prayer (vv. 18–19)⁶

⁶James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 424.

A D D E N D U M

Amplification of Question 5 The Order of Salvation

ONE-TIME DECISION

There is a particular moment in the sinner's life when the eternal and sovereign will of God is actualized in time as God applies Christ's saving work of redemption to the sinner. The sinner, by his will, must respond in faith and repentance to the work of God initiated in his life. How this all happens—how God saves sinners—is commonly known as *the order of salvation* in which the sinner is:

1. *Foreknown* by God, chosen by God as an individual to whom he will extend the grace of salvation. To foreknow means more than simply to foresee; it means to select, to love beforehand.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. (Rom. 8:29)

Romans 8:29 does not say that God foreknew what certain of his creatures would do. It is not talking about human actions at all. Rather it is speaking entirely of what God does. . . . The object of divine foreknowledge is not the actions of certain people but the people themselves. In this sense foreknowledge can only mean that God has fixed a special attention upon certain people or has loved them in a saving way. . . . Foreknowledge means that salvation has its origin in the mind of God, not man. . . . Foreknowledge means to fix one's love upon, or to elect.¹

¹Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless be-

fore him. *In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption* as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. (Eph. 1:3–5)

It is here that the phrase “in love” becomes important to our point. Romans 8:29 says that God predestined us having foreknown us; our verse [Ephesians 1:5] says that God predestined us “in love.” These two are synonymous, for God foreknew us in the biblical sense—he loves us.²

2. *Predestined* to be conformed to the image of his Son and to be adopted as children and heirs. If foreknowledge determines who is chosen by God, predestination indicates the end for which they are chosen, i.e., conformity to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29) and adoption through Christ as children and heirs in his family (Eph. 1:3–5).
3. *Called* by God according to his eternal, predestined purpose in election.

The action by which God makes his people the partakers of redemption is that of summons. . . . The summons is invested with the efficacy by which we are delivered to the destination intended—we are effectively ushered into the fellowship of Christ. There is something determinate about God's call; by his sovereign power and grace it cannot fail of accomplishment.³

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is

²Richard D. Phillips, *What are Election and Predestination?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 22.

³John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1955), 91.

thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.⁴

Those whom he [God] predestined he also called. (Rom. 8:30)

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Cor. 1:9)

Note that:

There are two kinds of call in Scripture. The first is external, general, and universal. It is an invitation to all persons to repent of sin, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. . . . The second kind of call is internal, specific, and effectual. It not only issues the invitation, but also provides the willingness or ability to respond. . . . The effectual or specific call comes through the general call. In other words, it is through the preaching of God's Word by evangelists and ministers, and through the telling of the good news of the gospel by Christians everywhere, that God calls sinners.⁵

4. *Regenerated* by the Holy Spirit; quickened from death in sin to spiritual life and thereby enabled to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience to the Giver of life.

Regeneration is the beginning of all saving grace in us, and all saving grace in exercise on our part proceeds from the fountain of regeneration. We are not born again by faith and repentance or conversion; we repent and believe because we have been regenerated.⁶

If it were not the case that in regeneration we are passive, the subjects of an action of which God alone is the agent, there would be no gospel at all. For unless God by sovereign, operative grace had turned our enmity to love and our disbelief to faith we would never yield the response of faith and love.⁷

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused

us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Pet. 1:3)

5. *Converted* through faith and repentance, the necessary human responses to the gospel of Christ. *This is the one-time, human decision by which the believer begins to follow Christ.*

6. *Justified* by the imputed righteousness of Christ received by faith.

We are back to what God himself does. Justification is his act, not ours. It is the judicial function by which God declares sinful men and women to be in a right standing before him, not on the basis of their own merit—for they have none—but on the basis of what Jesus Christ as done by dying in their place on the Cross.⁸

Justification does not mean that God *makes* the sinner righteous. It means God *declares* him righteous or pronounces him to be righteous when he is not. In order to be just in justifying the sinner, God constitutes or counts him as righteous by imputing to his account the righteousness of Christ. It is a judicial act of God. God is therefore pleased and right to accept into his favor sinners who are invested with Christ's righteousness by virtue of their faith in Christ. The sinner is justified by faith, and his faith is the sole instrument by which he receives justification.

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21–26)

¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith, X.2.

⁵ Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 137–138, 142.

⁶ Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 103.

⁷ Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 100.

⁸ Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 150.

man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:18–19)

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. (Rom. 4:5)

⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Phil. 3:8–9)

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)

7. Adopted into God's family as a child and heir.

Adoption, like justification, is a judicial act. However it differs from justification in that justification concerns our standing before the bar of God's justice, while adoption has to do with our being brought into God's spiritual family, with all the blessings that entails. Adoption brings us all the benefits of sonship, including the right to approach God in prayer. It assures us of God's love and protection. It contributes to our assurance that we have been saved.⁹

¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12–13)

He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. (Eph. 1:5)

⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Gal. 4:6–7)

⁹Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 151–152.

DAILY CHOICE

Proceeding from this transformative event which includes the believer's one-time decision, following Jesus consists in lifelong transformation involving daily commitment and daily choices to participate with the work of God in his life. "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" (Luke 9:23). Providentially, the believer has all he needs to animate his new life in Christ: the Word of God for instruction on how to live it and the indwelling Holy Spirit for the power to live it. The *order of salvation* proceeds as the believer is:

8. *Sanctified* by the joint work of God and the believer himself. What God works in, the believer works out.

9. *Preserved* by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to persevere in sanctification. The believer is preserved by the call of the Father and the indwelling of the Spirit that he may persevere in sanctification awaiting the fulfillment of all things. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, secures the believer's eternal life, and the believer *perseveres* in following the Good Shepherd.

²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (John 10:27–28)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6)

10. *Glorified* in the full and final redemption of the whole person, body and spirit, into the image of Christ. At a point in time, the people of God will realize the consummation of God's redemptive purpose to make all things new—the new heaven and new earth inhabited with redeemed and perfected people restored in resurrected bodies and enjoying the glory of the reign of Christ forever.

⁵²Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:51–52)

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet. 3:13)

¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom. 8:16–17)

UNION WITH CHRIST

The believer’s union with Christ is the relational reality that underlies the outworking of his redemption, which the order of salvation outlines step by step.

Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. All to which the people of God have been predestined in the eternal election of God, all that has been secured and procured for them in the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption, all of which they become the actual partakers in the application of redemption, and all that by God’s grace they will become in the state of consummated bliss is embraced within the compass of union and communion with Christ.¹⁰

Union with Christ embraces the wide span of salvation from its ultimate source in eternal election of God to its final fruition in the glorification of the elect. . . . It underlies every aspect of redemption both in its accomplishment and in its application. Union with Christ binds all together and insures that to all for whom Christ purchased redemption he effectively applies and communicates the same. . . . We do not become *actual* partakers of Christ until redemption is effectively applied. . . . It is by the effectual call of God the Father that men are made partakers of Christ and enter into the enjoyment of the blessings of redemption. Only then do we know the fellowship of Christ.¹¹

When Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being “in Christ” or of Christ being “in them,” this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts.¹²

The apostle Paul uses “in Christ” and “in him” language to refer to the believer’s union with Christ. We see this more than 160 times in Paul’s letters, for example:

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us *in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons *through Jesus Christ*, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us *in the Beloved*. ⁷*In him* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹*In him* we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.¹³*In him* you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:3–14)

¹⁰ Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 170.

¹¹ Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 165.

¹² C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 49.

S O L O M O N A N D T H E Q U E E N O F S H E B A

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her friends are disappointed when they find out that the great Oz is just an ordinary man behind a curtain. They had been led to believe that he was the answer to all their problems, but then they saw for themselves that he was not all he was cracked up to be. Life is often like that. We hear great things about people but then are disappointed when we meet them and discover that they are merely flawed humans like us. But there was one person who surpassed his great reputation—King Solomon. The queen of Sheba had been led to believe to believe that King Solomon was larger than life. He was purported to be the wisest and wealthiest man of the time, and she couldn't quite believe it. So she set out to see for herself and discovered that he was even greater than he was rumored to be.

1) Think back to your childhood and describe a time when you didn't believe something you were told until you saw it for yourself, or a time you did believe what you were told only to find out later you had been duped.

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) For what questions have you diligently sought out answers? How do you go about finding answers to your most pressing questions?

Answers will vary according to participants.

3) Read 1 Kings 10:1–13.

¹Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. ²She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels

bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. ³And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. ⁴And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁵the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her.

⁶And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, ⁷but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. ⁸Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! ⁹Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.” ¹⁰Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

¹¹Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a very great amount of almug wood and precious stones. ¹²And the king made of the almug wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers. No such almug wood has come or been seen to this day.

¹³And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon. So she turned and went back to her own land with her servants. (1 Kings 10:1–13)

What words would you use to describe the queen of Sheba?

- Wealthy
- Powerful
- Intelligent, eager for knowledge and understanding
- Perhaps even spiritually hungry
- Restless to see for herself the glory of Israel's God revealed through Solomon and his kingdom. "Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD" (v.1).

4) What question did the queen have, and how did she go about finding the answer (vv. 1–3)?

"She told him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her." The queen exhausted the inquisitiveness of her expansive

intelligence and imagination. She held back nothing. Surely she did not travel so far with such a load of treasure just to play riddle games. Surely she sought Solomon's answers to the most profound questions common to all people about life itself: its source, its purpose, its destiny.

5) What conclusions did the queen of Sheba reach, and how did she act on those conclusions (vv. 4–12)?

- Solomon's wisdom was deeper, his kingdom was grander, his God was more gracious than she could have imagined. His entire way of life was breathtaking!
- She honored Solomon for his wisdom and prosperity; she gave him her treasure as a tribute.
- She praised Solomon's God for his covenant love for Israel and his desire for Israel to know justice and righteousness.



6) Read Psalm 72:10–11, 15. Find verses from 1 Kings 10:1–13 that illustrate specific answers to Solomon's prayers in this Psalm.

Psalm 72:10–11, 15

- ¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!
¹¹May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!
¹⁵Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him! ...
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day! ...

1 Kings 10

- ¹¹the fleet of Hiram [king of Tyre], which brought gold from Ophir
²[The queen of Sheba] came with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones
¹⁰Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold.
⁹Blessed be the LORD your God!



7) If Solomon's wisdom caused the queen of Sheba to honor him and give him great gifts, how much more should the wisdom of God cause us to worship him!

To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom. 16:27)

God is wise in Himself. . . All God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure

as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined.¹

The wisdom of God is unique and perfect—not created, not derived, not learned; it is eternal and unbounded. His wisdom is part of his essence. The psalmist linked God's wisdom with his greatness and

¹A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1961), 60–61.

his power, each attribute perfect. “Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure” (Ps. 147:5).

God’s wisdom cannot be frustrated. . . . for it is allied to omnipotence. . . . Infinite power ruled by infinite wisdom is a basic biblical description of the divine character. . . . Wisdom without power would be pathetic; power without wisdom would be frightening; but in God boundless wisdom and endless power are united, and this makes Him utterly worthy of our fullest trust.²

Solomon’s wisdom was not absolute as is God’s, but God gave Solomon wisdom as no man had ever possessed, and he used it to God’s glory and for the good of his people. Solomon’s reflection of God’s glory, imperfect yet dazzling, lit up his world with *fame concerning the name of the LORD*.

The queen of Sheba was rendered breathless by Solomon’s wisdom and Solomon’s court. These bore witness to her of the glory of Solomon’s God and his grace toward his people Israel. She recognized:

- Solomon’s wisdom, as a gift of God for the just and righteous rule of Israel, was given out of love for his covenant people.
- Solomon’s court, with all its happiness and harmony, its beauty and efficiency, was the effect of God’s gift properly stewarded.

The queen of Sheba’s story illustrates what God had always intended for Israel, i.e., to be a light to the Gentiles. She was drawn from afar to the light of God’s glory manifest in his people flourishing under the rule of a glorious king. Solomon shines as a type, a preview of the Messiah of whom Paul wrote: “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). Jesus himself acknowledged Sheba’s tribute to God and identified himself as the greater Solomon: “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). Her praise for the wisdom of God as revealed in Solomon stands as a judgment on others of Jesus’s day and of our day who fail to acknowledge Christ as the embodiment of

God’s wisdom, love, justice, and righteousness. “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9).

What are some practical ways we can imitate the queen of Sheba’s response to Solomon in our response to Christ?

1. Go to the greater Solomon and tell him all your hard questions, all that concerns you, all that you need. “And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind” (1 Kings 10:2).
2. Expect to find the answers you need. Believe Jesus for them. Commit to obey them. “Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden . . . that he could not explain to her” (v. 3).
3. Bless Jesus for his grace in your life. “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you” (v. 9).
4. Give Christ tribute from your treasure. “Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold” (v. 10).
5. Tell others how Christ has blessed you. Report what you have seen of God’s glory. “So she turned and went back to her own land with her servants” (v. 13). Do you imagine she kept silent after all she had witnessed, all she had experienced? It took her breath away! Don’t you think she went home and shared the glories of Israel’s God with her own people? With everyone!

8) **The queen of Sheba honored Solomon in a manner appropriate to his worthiness and position. If we want to worship God in a manner that is appropriate to his worthiness and position, it’s helpful to look at Scripture’s specific instructions about what kind of worship honors God and what kind doesn’t. In Isaiah 29:13–14, God lists specific complaints about the Israelites’ worship.**

¹³And the Lord said:

“Because this people draw near with their mouth
and honor me with their lips,
while their hearts are far from me,
and their fear of me is a commandment
taught by men,
¹⁴therefore, behold, I will again
do wonderful things with this people,
with wonder upon wonder;

²J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 80.

and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.” (Isa. 29:13–14)

What was wrong with their worship? What are the consequences of false worship?

Their worship had degenerated to lip service only. Mere lip service mocks God. True worship rises from a sincere and humble heart.

They were saying all the right things, doing all the right things. They feared God. But their fear of him—even this interior dimension of worship—was only a doctrine taught by human instruction. It was just an idea, a concept in their minds, a catechetical answer, not a Spirit-imparted awareness transforming their hearts. Beneath the beautiful observance, they were using the worship of God as a mechanism for avoiding God, for controlling God, for setting limits on God.³

God answers mock religion, lips-only religion, with a wonder, a miracle. He removes from the leaders of mock religion—i.e., their wise men, their discerning men—the very wisdom and discernment that equips them to lead. Thus lip-service worshipers are left to be led by wise men void of real wisdom.

9) Read Romans 12:1–2.

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1–2)

What kind of worship does God desire?

The kind of worship God desires:

- Worship that rises from a heart of gratitude for the *mercies of God*. There is no approach to God except on the basis of his mercy. The phrase “mercies of God” comprehends all Paul

has put forth in Romans 1–11 to explain what God has done to save sinners.

- Worship which is *spiritual* and *corporal*. Worship is an inward, spiritual response to God which compels outward, bodily expression. It is an activity of the heart which drives the *mind* and the *body* to avoid sin and do good. Such use of the body is here likened unto a *sacrifice* which is living, holy, and acceptable to God.

- *Living*—not dead as the bulls and lambs and turtledoves offered in Solomon’s temple, but alive from the dead, alive in Christ.
- *Holy*—dedicated for God’s use, set apart for God’s pleasure, sanctified by the Holy Spirit dwelling within.
- *Acceptable to God*—“pleasing to God” (NIV). This includes the element of faith: “And without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6).

What benefits are promised to us if we worship God in this way?

- Transformation of life and deliverance from conformity to this world.
- Discovery of the good, acceptable, perfect will of God.

10) Is it possible to worship God properly even if you are struggling with questions about his character or provision?

God does not reject the sincere seeker nor refuse the honest inquirer. Consider how the queen approached Solomon: “And she said to the king, ‘The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it’” (v. 6–7). She came with doubts, but with an earnest desire for truth. Solomon typifies Christ in his dealing with her: “And Solomon answered all her questions” (v. 3). One might say Solomon extended to the queen Jesus’s invitation from the Sermon on the Mount: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:7–8).

³Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 163.

How might you worship while still being honest about your questions and doubts?

Like Sheba, bring your honest questions, your nagging doubts, your earnest concerns to the King. But also like Sheba, bring a willingness to receive, an openness to instruction and correction, a humbleness to learn and to obey . . . and bring a readiness to praise the King of Kings as he gives you all you need.

The true worshiper brings with his questions a pre-determined commitment to receive, accept, and obey God's answers, whatever they may be. This principle is clear from Jesus's warning to some dubious worshipers of his own day: "About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?' So Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. *If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know* whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority'" (John 7:14–17).

What are some biblical examples of people who doubted God and yet kept on worshiping him?

On pages 146–147 of *King Solomon* Dr. Ryken points to Job and to Thomas as examples of true worshipers grappling with honest doubts.

NOTE: God may not give you all the answers you want, but he will surely give you all the answers you need.

11) Spend some time in prayer praising God for specific instances of his wisdom as displayed in creation, redemption history, and your own life. Pray also for the wisdom and the heart to respond to his wisdom and grace in worship, generosity, and childlike trust.

S I C T R A N S I T G L O R I A M U N D I

Most of us would like to have a little more money. Some people diligently seek promotions at work or spend time every day trading stocks or even buying lottery tickets. Turn on the TV anytime after 10:00 p.m., and you'll get bombarded by get-rich-quick schemes. But how will we know when we have enough? Very few people have the self-control to determine how much they need to live on and then give the rest away. It seems that the more we have, the more we think we need. Even Solomon, as rich a man as ever lived, didn't know when to stop accumulating.

1) Name some celebrities who have gained great wealth only to have it all stripped away seemingly overnight. What materialistic excesses have you seen in the lives of the super rich?

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) Read 1 Kings 10:14–22.

¹⁴Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, ¹⁵besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land. ¹⁶King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels of gold went into each shield. ¹⁷And he made 300 shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. ¹⁸The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold. ¹⁹The throne had six steps, and the throne had a round top, and on each side of the seat were armrests and two lions standing beside the armrests, ²⁰while twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of

it was never made in any kingdom. ²¹All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. ²²For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. (1 Kings 10:14–22)

Try to imagine the glories of Solomon's kingdom as they are described here. What features would you most like to have seen?

- Solomon's temple
- Solomon's throne
- The House of the Forest of Lebanon with five hundred shields of gold
- Solomon's fleet

3) People admired Solomon's wisdom even more than his wealth. Read 1 Kings 10:23–25.

²³Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²⁴And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. ²⁵Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. (1 Kings 10:23–25)

How did people express their admiration for Solomon's wisdom?

They came to see him. They came to hear him. They brought gifts of all kinds.

Do people today seem to place the same value on wisdom that they did in Solomon's day? What evidence can you give to support your answer?

Solomon was an international personality known for his wealth but pursued for his wisdom. It is difficult to identify a cultural icon of our day whose renown and allure is for his wisdom. Beauty? Yes. Talent? Yes. Lifestyle? Yes. Outrageous behavior? Yes. Wealth? Yes. Athletic ability? Yes. Political power? Yes. Wisdom? No one comes to mind.

4) Read Job 28:12–17, 28.

¹²“But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
¹³Man does not know its worth,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
¹⁴The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’
and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
¹⁵It cannot be bought for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed as its price.
¹⁶It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.
¹⁷Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.

²⁸And he said to man,
‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”
(Job 28:12–17, 28)

In what ways is wisdom more valuable than gold?

Two thoughts:

- a) Gold is valuable because it is beautiful and rare—hard to find, mine, and refine (Job 28:1–11). By comparison, Job says, wisdom is even more rare and harder to find (v. 12). And, of all the wonderful things that gold can buy, wisdom is not among them. Wisdom stands outside the reach of gold’s buying power, and wisdom’s value eclipses the value of gold.
- b) Wisdom is important to all people, regardless of their wealth, as a guide to living for the best and highest goals, for experiencing true happiness, and for the glory of God. For those who have little gold, wisdom can transform the *little* into enough for successful living. For those who have much—much gold, much talent, much influence, much knowledge—wisdom protects and

guides the proper and beneficial use of these resources. Without wisdom, however, those who possess much gold tend to become possessed by it, gripped with greed, self-indulgence, waste, or abuse. Without wisdom, wealth tends to deplete life rather than to enrich life.

How does the fear of God make us wise?

Wisdom’s source is God himself. Wisdom starts with reverence for him, standing in awe of his glory, trusting that he knows what he is doing, and deliberately seeking to enjoy his glory and obey his Word. Christ has become to us wisdom from God (1 Cor. 1:30). Fear of God and faith in Christ go hand in hand.

5) Read Psalm 19:7–10.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
⁸the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb. (Ps. 19:7–10)

In what ways is the Word of God more valuable than earthly treasure?

This passage from the pen of David describes God’s Word in six statements with six different nouns (identities) and adjectives (qualities) and verbs (functions). Each statement gives its own insight into what Scripture is and what Scripture does. All that Scripture is—its identities and its qualities—transcends all earthly treasure. And what Scripture does, money cannot buy.

Identity	Quality	Function
law	perfect	revives the soul
testimony	sure	makes wise the simple

Identity	Quality	Function
precepts	right	brings joy to the heart
commandment	pure	enlightens the eyes
fear	clean	endures forever
rules	true and righteous	enriches and sweetens life

Note also that this is not an exhaustive list of descriptions of Scripture; there are still more (see also Psalm 119).

Does the way you spend your time show that you truly believe this?

Would the measurement of my time reveal how I value other things more than the Scriptures: work, TV, books, food, sports, music, friends, hobbies, politics, fun, _____?

In what ways might your life be different if you truly acted as though the Word of God were more valuable than any earthly treasure?

My life might make more of a difference, like humble heroes of old, for example:

- Like Ezra, I might study and do and teach what God's Word says from a settled heart. And I might find that God's hand is on me. "For the good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (Ezra 7:9–10).
- Like Joshua, I might meditate daily on the Scriptures with care to obey them. And I might find the keys to successful living. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Josh. 1:8).
- Like Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, I might devour God's Word and taste joy and delight as found nowhere else. "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).
- Like Josiah, the young king, I might be surprised by the power of Scripture rediscovered and read

aloud as a catalyst for revival and reform in my own life first, and then in my family, my friends, my business, my church, and my school. "And Shaphan read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes" (2 Kings 22:10–11). "Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. . . . And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. . . . And all the people joined in the covenant" (2 Kings 23:1–3).

6) Read 1 Kings 10:26–29.

²⁶And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁷And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. ²⁸And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. ²⁹A chariot could be imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150, and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria. (1 Kings 10:26–29)

What did Solomon do with his wealth?

In the immediate passage, Solomon acquired valuable commodities, built a large military, and engaged in arms trade (i.e., chariots and horses) with neighboring nations. In earlier chapters we recall many wonderful and worthy things Solomon did with his wealth.

- He built a beautiful temple for the worship of God.
- He built a royal residence and a seat for government.
- He built cities, fleets, and armies.
- He led the nation Israel into a golden age as a "light to the nations."

Do you think these are the right priorities? Why or why not?

From our study, I would say Solomon's life goals were to govern the people well, to build the temple, and to provide a shining and inviting witness among the nations to the glory of Israel's God, the only true God.

These were worthy goals, and in 1 Kings 1–10 the writer clearly intends to impress the reader with the successes of Solomon's kingdom. However, because we know wealth is a snare, we may wonder if some of Solomon's priorities were given to excess. A sovereign nation needs an army for defense, but what size army was large enough? A nation needs a healthy treasury, but when do adequate reserves tip over into obscene opulence? A nation needs a prosperous economy, but is arms trade the best fit for God's "light to the nations"?

7) Read Ecclesiastes 5:10–12.

¹⁰He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹²Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. (Eccles. 5:10–12)

What problems can wealth sometimes create?

- greed
- valuing money more than people
- fixation on the temporal and neglect of the eternal
- erosion of reliance on the Lord for comfort, security, fulfillment
- self-indulgence
- loss of sensitivity to common, human need
- idolatry of the wealth itself or of things it can buy
- _____

What is one area in which you feel wealth could become an idol for you? What are some specific ways you could prevent idolatry in this area?

Answers will vary according to participants.

8) What are some ways we can use our wealth to honor the Lord?

- Acknowledge that wealth is the Lord's to withhold, to grant, or to take away.
- Earn, buy, save, and give responsibly as a good steward of what God has provided.
- Give to the Lord first (Prov. 3:9–10).
- Live simply rather than indulge needlessly.

- Bring tithes and offerings faithfully to the church according to biblical principle.
- Give generously, even sacrificially, to worthy works of charity and service.
- Provide for the needy (James 2:15–17).

9) What are some warning signs that our priorities—the things we spend our time and money on—may be out of step with God's priorities?

- Preoccupation with the need for more money or more things money can buy.
- Readiness to spend on needless stuff; reticence to spend on needy people.
- Working to secure the future without also asking God and trusting God to provide it.
- Giving to God from what is left over rather than as a first priority.

How can our saving, spending, and giving help us guard against wealth becoming an idol?

See the answer to question 8.

10) How does being in a Christian community help you work on issues of idolatry, wealth, and priorities? How might you be able to help others consider these topics even as you think about them in your own life?

Christian community provides:

- encouragement to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24)
- biblical preaching for instruction and exhortation
- oversight and care from constituted leaders
- mutual accountability for faithful obedience
- opportunity for participation in Christian service and witness
- hospitality and hope for those weary with the world

11) If you are not satisfied that your actions and attitudes reflect God's view of money, what is one change you're prepared to make to bring things into better alignment with Scripture? Even if your overall lifestyle does reflect the values you think God wants you to have, is there anything you can do to become an even better steward of the resources God has given you?

Answers will vary according to participants.

A ROYAL TRAGEDY

One of the best things about a good book is that it arouses our emotions. We come to identify with the characters: when they are sad, we are sad; when they are happy, we rejoice with them. We might even come to hate some characters in the book and be glad when they receive their well-deserved punishment. But some books play with our emotions in unexpected ways. It might be hard to tell which characters we are supposed to sympathize with, and when we finish, it might even be hard to determine whether we actually enjoyed the book. The Bible contains many different genres of story. Many of them have a happy ending, with the bad guys getting their due and the hero learning from any mistakes he made. But in this chapter we're considering a story that is more of a tragedy—the sad story of King Solomon.

1) Would you rather read *Hamlet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? When you are choosing a book to read or a movie to watch, do you find yourself more often choosing comedies or tragedies? What do you prefer about that genre?

Answers will vary according to participants.

2) In literature, the tragic hero is a person of high social standing who is understood to be representative of general humanity and possesses something that we can call greatness of spirit, yet also exhibits a tragic flaw. What are some characteristics that qualify Solomon as a tragic hero?

- wise, virtuous, devout
- highly successful as a ruler and builder
- international renown

- polygamist
- divided heart
- polytheist, idolater
- divided nation

3) Read the beginning of Solomon's story in 1 Kings 3:3–15.

³Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. ⁴And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” ⁶And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right,¹²behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none

like you shall arise after you.¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.¹⁴And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

¹⁵And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. (1 Kings 3:3–15)

With such a great beginning, it’s hard to imagine how Solomon could have faced a tragic downfall. When we find ourselves thinking that we or someone we admire could “never fall into *that sin*,” we are underestimating the lure of sin. What warnings does the Bible offer about this kind of thinking?

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Cor. 10:12)

When I think “I could never fall into that sin,” then I have deceived myself, and I have lost sight of several truths about the power of sin and the vulnerability of self:

- a) The human heart is naturally disposed to sin. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9).

²God looks down from heaven
on the children of man
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.

³They have all fallen away;
together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one. (Ps. 53:2–3)

- b) Temptation to sin is a constant threat from within. “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desire*. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin” (James 1:14–15). Notice that temptation is not sin, but unchecked it will lead to sin. Remember God’s depiction of sin lying in wait, ready to pounce on Cain. “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it” (Gen. 4:7). The crouching sin was not an external influence; it was Cain’s own anger.

c) Temptation to sin is also a threat from without. “Take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people” (2 Pet. 3:17). “Do not be conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2), or as paraphrased by J. B. Phillips “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.”¹

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (1 John 2:15–16)

- 4) The reality is that the choice for or against the kingdom of God comes to us every day in every choice we make about anything at all. Give some examples of choices you’ve had to make recently that reflect this truth, perhaps as you interacted with people at work, as you decided how to spend “down” time, or as you considered a particular purchase.

Answers will vary according to participants.

- 5) What are some ways we can protect ourselves against having a tragic downfall in our own lives?

- a) Preach the gospel to ourselves and to each other continually. Christ has broken sin’s power by his death and resurrection. Therefore we can resist sin’s grip because, united with Christ in his death, we have died to sin, and united with Christ in his resurrection, we have been raised to walk in newness of life.

²How can we who died to sin still live in it?³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if

¹J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 332.

we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Rom. 6:2–13)

b) Guard the heart.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov. 4:23)

c) Take the way of escape from temptation. God always provides one.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

d) Maintain community of encouragement, accountability, and grace.

¹³Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (1 Thess. 5:13–15)

6) Read 1 Kings 11:1–8.

¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his

heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:1–8)

What were Solomon's tragic flaws? What sinful actions and attitudes led to his downfall?

In our study thus far, through 1 Kings 10, the biblical writer has accounted for Solomon's reign in wholly positive terms. His account, however, includes clues in which we readers may have seen things that cause us to question Solomon's character.

- Was he ruthless and unnecessarily violent in dealing with his political rivals?
- Was he excessive and self-indulgent in his lifestyle?
- Was he oppressive toward his subjects?
- Was he greedy for gold?
- Was he consumed with sexual appetites?
- Was he driven by lust for political or military or commercial power?

Of all possible flaws, the writer identifies one as *the* tragic, fatal flaw—“his heart was not wholly true to the Lord” (v. 4). Solomon fell from a divided heart—his heart was turned away after other gods. Note the word *heart* is used five times in vv. 2–4. The choice of sin or devotion is always a matter of the heart.

Early in his reign, “Solomon loved the LORD” (1 Kings 3:3). By chapter 11 his love for the Lord was displaced by another love—“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women.” Rather than giving heed to the word of his God, Solomon gave in to the wants of his wives. But love for his many foreign wives was not the worst of the matter; that merely opened the door to far deeper sin, the sin of *idolatry*—“his wives turned away his heart after other gods.” The writer even lists

the names and ethnic identities of several false gods to which Solomon turned his devotion.

7) Each of us has a tendency toward certain sins, based on our past or our emotional makeup or our personality. Give some examples of besetting sins, things that can trip us up, over and over.

- Envy
- Anger
- Resentment
- Pride
- Critical spirit
- Prejudice
- Lust
- Laziness
- Addictions of all kinds
- Greed
- Fear
- Worry
- _____ (*fill in the blanks*)
- _____
- _____

What are some strategies for dealing with these sins?

- a) Take all sin seriously. Beware especially the power of *the sin(s)* which easily capture you over and over. “Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us” (Heb. 12:1 NASB).
- b) Don’t underestimate sin’s power to do harm. “There is no health in my bones because of my sin” (Ps. 38:3). “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).
- c) Don’t overestimate your own power to resist it, control it, or manage it. “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).
- d) Be prepared. Strengthen yourself with divine resources.
 - Make firm resolution not to sin. “I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules” (Ps. 119:106).
 - Meditate on God’s Word. “The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip” (Ps. 37:31).
 - Pray for God’s strength. “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Matt. 26:41).
- e) Partner with others for encouragement and accountability and help. “Bear one another’s

burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!” (Eccles. 4:9–10).

- f) Rely on God’s power to endure and God’s provision to escape the lure of sin. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13).
- g) When you fall, be quick:
 - in grief to confess. “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps. 51:3–4).
 - in faith to receive cleansing. “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. . . . Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Ps. 51:1, 2).
 - in humility to repent. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10).

8) It’s important to examine our lives and recognize the seeds of sin that might lead you into a huge problem. What specific steps can you take to make sure habitual sins are rooted out of your life before they lead to tragedy?

- Make a firm commitment to walk in the ways of the LORD by obeying his Word. This was the exhortation of David to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:3: “Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.”
- Follow up that commitment every day, every hour in all matters large or small.
- Learn the ways of the LORD through daily Bible study and prayer and through the encouragement and accountability of Christian community.
- Respond to the wise counsel of godly people. For example, Nathan gave a wise and courageous rebuke to David regarding his sin (2 Samuel 12), and David repented. Later, Nathan warned the aged David of Adonijah’s attempt to seize the throne and assisted in the coronation of Solomon as king (1 Kings 1:11–40).

- Take sin seriously, even the “little sins,” the compromises, and the indulgences. Note Dr. Ryken’s quote (*King Solomon*, page 180) from Mark Dever, “A small difference in trajectory can make a big difference in destination. . . . Sin often begins with what may feel like a minor concession—maybe an allowance for this shortcoming or a brief indulgence for that desire. But that simple change of trajectory can set you on a course to a deadly destination.”²
- Confess sins and forsake them as soon as they are evident. David’s psalm of confession, Psalm 51, provides a helpful pattern to follow. (See chapter 9, question 11.)
- Deal with sin where it is rooted, in the heart. Merely changing outward behavior does not go deep enough.

9) We read in 1 Kings 3 that the Lord gifted Solomon with wisdom, yet Solomon’s story shows that he didn’t always act wisely. How can you reconcile Solomon’s spiritual gift with his foolish sins?

Spiritual gifts, though given by God, do not trump the sinful affections of the heart. As Dr. Ryken affirms (*King Solomon*, page 182), “Even the greatest spiritual gifts will not keep us from sin if our hearts turn away from God.”

10) What does Solomon’s folly teach us about the misuse of spiritual gifts?

On the other hand, a sinful heart will trump the gifts of God. Again from Dr. Ryken, “The [spiritual] gifts of God never operate independently or automatically but always according to the affection of our hearts. . . . When our hearts turn away from God, even the gifts that he has given will be used against him.”

How have you seen spiritual gifts diminished or abused by someone whose heart has turned away from God?

Answers will vary according to participants.

11) At the end of his life, Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes what he had learned. Read Ecclesiastes 12:13–14.

¹³The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Eccles. 12:13–14)

What advice does he leave us with at the end of his life?

Solomon leaves us with essentially the same advice he received from his father, David, in 1 Kings 2:3 (see the answer to question 8), “Fear God and keep his commandments.”

What does this tell us about all Solomon learned from his mistakes?

Ecclesiastes is generally attributed to Solomon in his old age, after his fall into folly and infidelity and idolatry. This admonition is the conclusion to the book and the culmination of its message of the realities and the vanities of life apart from God.

Solomon’s purpose [in Ecclesiastes] is to warn his son—and subsequent readers—away from self-centeredness and life apart from God by recalling the many ways he attempted to find meaning and happiness during his own years of straying from God, and by showing the folly of every such course of life. He recounts his initial intention to find the wisdom he would need in order to serve the nation of Israel as a responsible king. Though he began well, he drifted from that course into self-indulgence and faithlessness, flitting from one diversion to another, hoping to find some lasting happiness in the things of this life. He details his many works and activities, none of which brought him any peace or lasting satisfaction and reflects on them in the light of his return to the Lord in old age. The book stands as a warning to those who hope to make sense out of their lives apart from God.³

²Mark Dever, *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 293.

³T. M. Moore, *Ecclesiastes: Ancient Wisdom When All Else Fails* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 10.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

Few things are more frustrating to parents than giving their children specific warnings of what will happen if they break a certain rule and then having them do it anyway. “If you don’t finish mowing the lawn, you won’t be able to go out with your friends later.” Or, when the stakes are higher, “If you use drugs, you can’t live in this house.” Parents don’t want to have to punish their children, but when children disobey, of course loving parents must discipline them. God the Father was in a similar situation with King Solomon. The king had been warned of what would happen if he disobeyed, and now the time had come for God to follow through, even though it broke his heart.

- 1) Describe a time from your childhood when your parents’ discipline was especially effective in keeping you from repeating a wrong action?**

Answers will vary according to participants.

- 2) Read 1 Kings 11:9–11.**

⁹And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. ¹¹Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.” (1 Kings 11:9–11)

- Why was God angry with Solomon? What had Solomon done wrong? (Look back at 1 Kings 11:1–10.)**

Verse 9 accounts for God’s anger: Solomon’s heart had turned away from the LORD, and he had gone after other gods. Solomon had turned from God in spite of the clear admonition of the Scriptures, of his dying father King David, and of God himself in two appearances. He had not kept covenant with God (v. 11).

- 3) Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, praises God for his character and provision—including his anger. Read Psalm 90:7–11.**

⁷For we are brought to an end by your anger;
by your wrath we are dismayed.

⁸You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.

⁹For all our days pass away under your wrath;
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

¹¹Who considers the power of your anger,
and your wrath according to the fear of you.
(Ps. 90:7–11)

How is God’s anger part of his perfection?

Now the wrath of God is as much a Divine perfection as is His faithfulness, power, or mercy. It *must be* so, for there is no blemish whatever, not the slightest defect in the character of God; yet there *would be* if “wrath” were absent from Him! Indifference to sin is a moral blemish, and he who hates it not is a moral leper. How could He who is the Sum of all excellency look with equal satisfaction upon virtue and vice, wisdom and folly? How could He who is infinitely holy disregard it? . . . The wrath of God is His eternal detestation

of all unrighteousness. . . . It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. . . . God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty.¹

God's wrath is the legal judgment against opposition to his rule, and the moral reaction against threats to his creation, but it is also the personal response against offense to his character. With God, sin is a personal matter. ("Against you, you only, have I sinned" [Ps. 51:4]). And yet, unlike most human anger, God's divine wrath is never petty, never unfounded, never unjust. God's anger is consistent and persistent against sin, evil, and all who oppose him as the sovereign of the universe.

God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. God is only angry where anger is called for. Even among men, there is such a thing as righteous indignation, though it is perhaps rarely found. But all God's indignation is righteous. Would a God who took as much pleasure in evil as he did in good be a good God? Would a God who did not react adversely to evil in His world be morally perfect? But it is precisely this adverse reaction to evil, which is a necessary part of moral perfection, that the Bible has in view when it speaks of God's wrath.²

Do you ever praise God for his anger? Why or why not?

Answers will vary according to participants.

4) Do you see in your life any of the same sins Solomon committed? Which of his sins are you most tempted to commit?

Answers will vary according to participants.

5) Read 1 Kings 11:11–26.

¹¹Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant." ¹²Yet for the sake of

¹A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975), 83.
²J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 136–137.

David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.¹³However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen."

¹⁴And the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. He was of the royal house in Edom. ¹⁵For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, he struck down every male in Edom¹⁶(for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom). ¹⁷But Hadad fled to Egypt, together with certain Edomites of his father's servants, Hadad still being a little child. ¹⁸They set out from Midian and came to Paran and took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house and assigned him an allowance of food and gave him land. ¹⁹And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.²⁰And the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh. ²¹But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country." ²²But Pharaoh said to him, "What have you lacked with me that you are now seeking to go to your own country?" And he said to him, "Only let me depart."

²³God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master Hadadezer king of Zobah.²⁴And he gathered men about him and became leader of a marauding band, after the killing by David. And they went to Damascus and lived there and made him king in Damascus.²⁵He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, doing harm as Hadad did. And he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria.

²⁶Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also lifted up his hand against the king.(1 Kings 11:11–26)

What were the consequences of Solomon's sins? How were these consequences appropriate for his transgressions?

In 1 Kings 11:9ff, we see Solomon's sin taken by God as personal offense, personal rejection of a cove-

nant-bound son to whom God had appeared twice. In his covenant with David, God used covenant, father-son language to characterize his relationship with David's son. God foretold to David that this son would build God's house, would commit iniquity, and would be disciplined but not rejected.

¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.¹⁴I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,¹⁵but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Sam. 7:12–16)

In 1 Kings 11:9–11 God expressed his anger in strong words with clear consequences for Solomon's dynasty. The question is: what was the nature of these consequences? Were these the words of divine condemnation or fatherly discipline? Was their purpose to curse and condemn, or to chastise and correct? For believers in all ages—for all under God's covenant—the curse and condemnation was placed on Christ, the believer's atoning substitute, and God's anger issues forth in loving discipline designed to chastise and correct. Such is the case with Solomon. God judged and chastised Solomon's sinful folly on a national scale. The peace and unity and strength of Solomon's kingdom gave way to discord, division, and decline. All but a few of Solomon's successors followed his folly in idolatry and apostasy, and God disciplined Israel and Judah through tremendous hardships of defeat, destruction, and deportation. But he did not forsake them. Eventually he restored a remnant and through it sent the Redeemer King for the eternal throne promised to David.

NOTE: While God's anger chastises the sins of his people, in justice God's wrath curses and condemns all those not covered by the sin-bearing Son.

6) Solomon was experiencing the hard discipline of his loving Father. Have you ever been disciplined by

God? How have you seen God use the logical consequences of sins in your life to help you see the error of your ways?

Answers will vary according to participants.

7) The writer of Hebrews encourages his readers to accept God's discipline in their lives. Read Hebrews 12:3–11.

³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives."

⁷It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:3–11)

Why should we be thankful for God's discipline?

We should be thankful because God's discipline:

- demonstrates his love for us (v. 6)
- confirms our true sonship (v. 7–8)
- is for our good, for our holiness (v. 10)
- trains us in righteous living (v. 11)
- yields a pleasant and peaceable outcome (v. 11)

What makes it difficult for you to accept God's correction?

Answers will vary according to participants.

What are some practical ways you can respond better to God's discipline in your life?

Start where the author of Hebrews starts:

- a) *Look to Jesus.* Consider how Jesus endured hardship (v.3) and take heart.
- b) *Go to Scripture.* "Have you forgotten . . .?" (v. 5). He quotes Solomon from Proverbs 3:11–12.
- c) *Regard God as Father.* God appeals to you here as Father to beloved son (v. 6).
- d) *Look for growth in character.* God's good intention is to improve you, not your circumstances (v. 10).
- e) *Pray.* Pray a lot.
- f) *Reinterpret.* View difficulties as discipline divinely designed for your development rather than disaster demonically devised for your downfall.

8) God is a holy God who gets angry at sin, but he is also a merciful God who deals with his people gently even while he punishes sin. How did God show Solomon mercy even in the midst of his punishment? (See 1 Kings 11:12–13, 34–36.)

³⁴Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes. ³⁵But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you, ten tribes. ³⁶Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. (1 Kings 11:34–36)

Solomon's sin fell under God's judgment. The sentence was pronounced; the kingdom would be torn from him and given to another. In the latter days of Solomon's reign, three rivals rose up against him, Hadad from the south, Rezon from the north, and Jeroboam from within. The prosperity and security of his golden age began to crumble. However, in carrying out the sentence, God showed Solomon great mercy, though not because of Solomon, but for the sake of David, God's beloved servant. For David's sake the sentence was deferred from Solomon himself. Solomon was allowed to rule as long as he lived. Once he died, ten tribes were taken from his son Rehoboam

and given to his adversary Jeroboam. Solomon's dynastic legacy continued over the tribe of Judah only.

9) Read Psalm 103:1–14.

Of David.

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
²Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
³who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
⁴who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and
mercy.
⁵who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
⁷He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
⁸The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
⁹He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who
fear him;
¹²as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions
from us.
¹³As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who
fear him.
¹⁴For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:1–14)

List all the mercies of God that are extolled in these verses. Which of these acts of God are most meaningful to you?

The mercies of God (from this passage alone!):

- Forgiveness of my sins, all of them. He saves my soul.
- Healing of my diseases. Healing of body as well as soul always comes from God.
- Life spared from the brink of death. He protects me from danger far more than I realize.

- A crown of love and mercy. He has brought me into his royal family.
- Good things. He satisfies my desires.
- Youth renewed. Eagle-like vigor and freedom are mine.

10) Think back to God's discipline in your life (see question 6). How did you see God's mercy in that situation? How has God been tender toward you, even while correcting you?

Answers will vary according to participants.

11) What one or two truths or principles have most impacted you in this study of Solomon's life and the temptations of money, sex, and power?

Each student must answer this for himself or herself, but here are a few ideas.

- Keep God's Word. Follow the ways of the godly. Solomon received this as the dying instruction of David his father and as the direct admonition from God in two personal appearances.
- Set the heart on the right affections and the mind on the right priorities. This is important at all ages, but the younger the better. Given carte blanche from God, the young Solomon chose well. He asked for wisdom rather than wealth or long life or other things. This priority of Solomon pleased God and set the trajectory for his great success as a kingdom builder.
- Once the right priorities are set, stay true to them in the daily decisions of which a lifetime consists. The life of obedience is not determined only by a dramatic, one-time commitment but also by the daily decisions of faithfulness.
- God gives his people spiritual gifts. He gave Solomon wisdom unparalleled among men. God's gifts endow the recipient with powerful talents and skills. When the gifted one's heart is wholly God's, his or her gift is a great asset for God's glory and for his or her happiness. But, when the heart turns away from God, that same talent can be employed to oppose God's purposes. The inevitable effect is spiritual decline. The heart, not the giftedness, is the hinge on which real success and failure turn. Guard the heart.

- Maturity and old age alone are no protection against failure. Solomon's compromises in youth led to failure in old age. His glorious beginnings with God and great accomplishments for God were undermined by years of gradual compromise and finally gave way to godless influences.
- Believers are kingdom seekers. "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:16). In Solomon's golden kingdom we have a fleeting glimpse—pale and brief by comparison—of the glorious kingdom of the greater Solomon. This hint of ultimate glory ignites us to anticipate the fulfillment of God's glorious purposes, to admire the grandeur of Christ's coming kingdom, and to serve the King in joyful obedience.
- The rise of Israel under Solomon provides God's people of all ages a glimpse, a foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ in its ultimate and eternal glory. We see the king invested by God with unparalleled wisdom and wealth, and the kingdom basking in unprecedented prosperity and peace. For a moment in time, Solomon's kingdom was a light to the Gentiles showing forth the greatness of God, a blessing to the nations as God had promised Abraham. But Solomon sinned by turning to idols and leading Israel into national infidelity and, by consequence, into decline, division, and defeat.

In Solomon, believers through the ages are pointed to Christ. (1) The glory of Solomon's kingdom, though mere shadow of things to come, should fill the kingdom seeker with hope and eager anticipation of the ultimate and eternal reign of Christ in the new heavens and new earth. (2) The failure of Solomon reminds us that a king "greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42) is needed—and He has come!—as Redeemer to rescue all those chosen for glory and as Ruler to provide perfect justice, peace, and pleasure for all who adore the Lamb upon the throne.

How has your time in 1 Kings 1–11 affected your daily life?

Answers will vary according to participants.