

"WHERE STRONG MEN ARE VULNERABLE!"

SOLOMON: A WISE MAN WHO FAILED TO FINISH WELL.

WHEN GOD GAVE SOLOMON THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOR WHATEVER HE WANTED, SOLOMON PLEASSED THE LORD GREATLY BY ASKING FOR WISDOM. GOD LAVISHED ON SOLOMON "A WISE AND DISCERNING HEART," WHICH SURPASSED THAT OF ANYONE WHO'S EVER LIVED (1 KINGS 3:12). GOD ALSO GAVE SOLOMON GREAT WEALTH AND HONOR.

UNFORTUNATELY, SOLOMON ULTIMATELY MISUSED THESE GREAT GIFTS AND LOST HIS KINGDOM AS A RESULT. THIS STUDY WILL HELP YOU LOOK AT THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU AND DISCERN HOW YOU CAN USE THOSE GIFTS WISELY, FOR GOD'S GLORY, AND NOT IN WAYS THAT WILL LEAD TO SELF-DESTRUCTION.

SCRIPTURE: 1 KINGS 3 AND 11

PART 1

A MAN'S WORLD

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE WORD *SOPHOMORE* MEANS? YES, IT REFERS TO A PERSON IN THE SECOND YEAR OF POST-ELEMENTARY SCHOOLING. BUT LITERALLY IT'S A COMBINATION OF TWO GREEK WORDS, *SOPHIA* (WISDOM) AND *MORON* (FOOL). IT MEANS "A WISE FOOL"!

SOUNDS LIKE AN OXYMORON, A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, DOESN'T IT? BUT IT'S NOT. FOR MANY SOPHOMORES (AND OTHERS OF US), A LITTLE BIT OF KNOWLEDGE IS A DANGEROUS THING, LEADING US TO ASSUME WE'RE SMARTER THAN WE ARE. FOR OTHERS, THEIR KNOWLEDGE MAY TRULY BE GREAT, BUT WITH GREAT KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT CAN COME GREAT TEMPTATION. THEIR WISDOM CAN LEAD TO FOLLY. THEY'RE WISE FOOLS.

THIS STUDY IS ABOUT ONE OF THE WISEST MEN OF ALL TIME—SOLOMON. BUT HIS GREAT WISDOM DIDN'T PREVENT HIM FROM MAKING SOME FOOLISH AND DESTRUCTIVE DECISIONS. HIS STRENGTH BECAME HIS DOWNFALL. THIS STUDY WILL LOOK AT WHERE HE WENT WRONG AND HOW WE CAN LEARN FROM HIS MISTAKES.

ONE OF THE APPLICATIONS WE CAN TAKE AWAY FROM THIS SIMPLE OBJECT LESSON IS THAT WE'RE MOST AT RISK WHEN WE'RE MOST FULL OF OURSELVES.

PART 2

A MAN'S WORD

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE MAN WE KNOW AS SOLOMON AND SEE WHAT HE FILLED HIMSELF WITH.

READ 1 KINGS 3:1–15.

- [Q] MOST OF THIS PASSAGE IS A DREAM SEQUENCE. WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THESE VERSES THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN, FROM A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW, WHY SOLOMON MIGHT HAVE SUCH A DREAM?**
- [Q] IN THE DREAM, GOD ASKS SOLOMON, "WHAT DO YOU WANT?" WHY IS THAT AN IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR EVERY LEADER—INDEED, EVERY MAN—TO ANSWER?**
- [Q] SOLOMON ANSWERS BY ASKING FOR WISDOM. GIVEN HIS SITUATION, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE *OTHER* ANSWERS HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO ASK FOR?**
- [Q] IN THE DREAM, GOD IS PLEASED WITH SOLOMON'S ANSWER. FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHY WAS IT A GOOD ANSWER?**

READ 1 KINGS 3:16–28, THE FAMOUS STORY OF SOLOMON'S WISDOM BEING TESTED. COMPARE IT WITH OTHER EXAMPLES IN 1 KINGS 5:1–7 AND 10:1–9.

- [Q] WHAT DID SOLOMON'S RESPONSES REVEAL ABOUT THE KIND OF WISDOM GOD HAD GIVEN HIM?**
- [Q] EVEN AS SOLOMON WAS STARTING OUT VERY WELL AS A KING, DO YOU SEE ANY HINTS OF WHAT WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO HIS DOWNFALL?**

READ 1 KINGS 11:1–13.

[Q] WHAT DID SOLOMON DO THAT CAUSED GOD TO CONDEMN HIM?

[Q] HOW COULD SUCH A WISE MAN DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

[Q] HOW MIGHT SOLOMON HAVE BEEN LIKE THE BALLOON AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS STUDY?

[Q] WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED TO SOLOMON'S WISDOM?

PERHAPS SOLOMON'S WISDOM EVAPORATED; PERHAPS IT DIED OF NEGLECT. MORE LIKELY IT BECAME CORRUPTED, JUST AS MANY OF GOD'S GOOD GIFTS CAN BE MISUSED BY PEOPLE FOR THEIR OWN SELFISH PURPOSES.

PART 3

A MAN'S WORK

[Q] HOW HAVE YOU SEEN A PERSON'S GREAT STRENGTH BECOME HIS DOWNFALL?

[Q] WHAT IS ONE STRENGTH OR GIFT THAT YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN THAT MIGHT WIND UP LEADING YOU INTO TEMPTATION? THESE COULD BE TRAITS, SKILLS, RELATIONSHIPS, A POSITION, OR POSSESSIONS.

[Q] HOW CAN YOU MAKE SURE YOUR STRENGTH REMAINS IN GOD'S SERVICE INSTEAD OF BEING DIVERTED INTO SELFISH OR SELF-DESTRUCTIVE DIRECTIONS? (SEE THE ANECDOTE IN THE LEADER'S NOTES BELOW.)

PRAY TOGETHER AS MEN THAT YOU WILL ASK WISELY FOR WHAT GOD WANTS TO GIVE YOU, AND THEN USE THE GIFTS HE PROVIDES IN THE WAYS THAT HE INTENDS.

ARTICLE

SOLOMON

A MAN WHO FAILED TO FINISH WELL.

Solomon had everything going for him when he was crowned king. Like a genie in a bottle, God asked solomon for his greatest wish. And because solomon asked for wisdom, God granted that wish and gave solomon riches, honor, and a long life.

Solomon's wisdom soon became evident. He won recognition for the decision he made in a custody battle between two women (1 King 3:24–25) as well as how he handled the stumper riddles of the queen of sheba (10:1). Solomon wrote 3,000 wise sayings and 1,005 songs (4:31–34). Kings from every nation sent ambassadors to learn from him (4:30).

Solomon also became rich. Along with getting 25 tons of gold a year from regular sources, he took in more from traders, merchants, arabian King, and governors. Gold was so abundant in the kingdom that silver was almost worthless (1 King 10:21).

God wouldn't allow David, solomon's father, to build a temple for God; that honor was reserved for Solomon (1 King 6–7), and he did a great job. Solomon's temple was the crown jewel of the jews for almost 400 years.

Solomon was an effective leader; he beat back enemies who challenged his leadership and consolidated israel's tribes into one. His kingdom ran from the Euphrates River (in the north) to the Egyptian River (in the south), and from the sea-of-sand (Arabia) to the Mediterranean sea.

Yet for all his wisdom, riches, learning, and power, Samson did not finish well. His excesses did him in. His building programs (1 King 5–7) crippled his people with taxes and work. Even worse, his extravagant collection of women (1,000 wives and concubines) eroded his devotion to God. Solomon built shrines to their gods (11:5–8), where they could burn incense and offer sacrifices. He even joined them in worship. The result was that God, "who is a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5), became so angry with Solomon that he tore the kingdom away from "the wise man" and gave most of it to a servant (1 King 11:11).

Solomon asked for wisdom, but he wasted it. His extravagant acquisitions bankrupted his devotion to God, who had given him everything.