LESSON 5

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY 03 2024

Scripture Story: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 5.

confessions of a foolish wise man

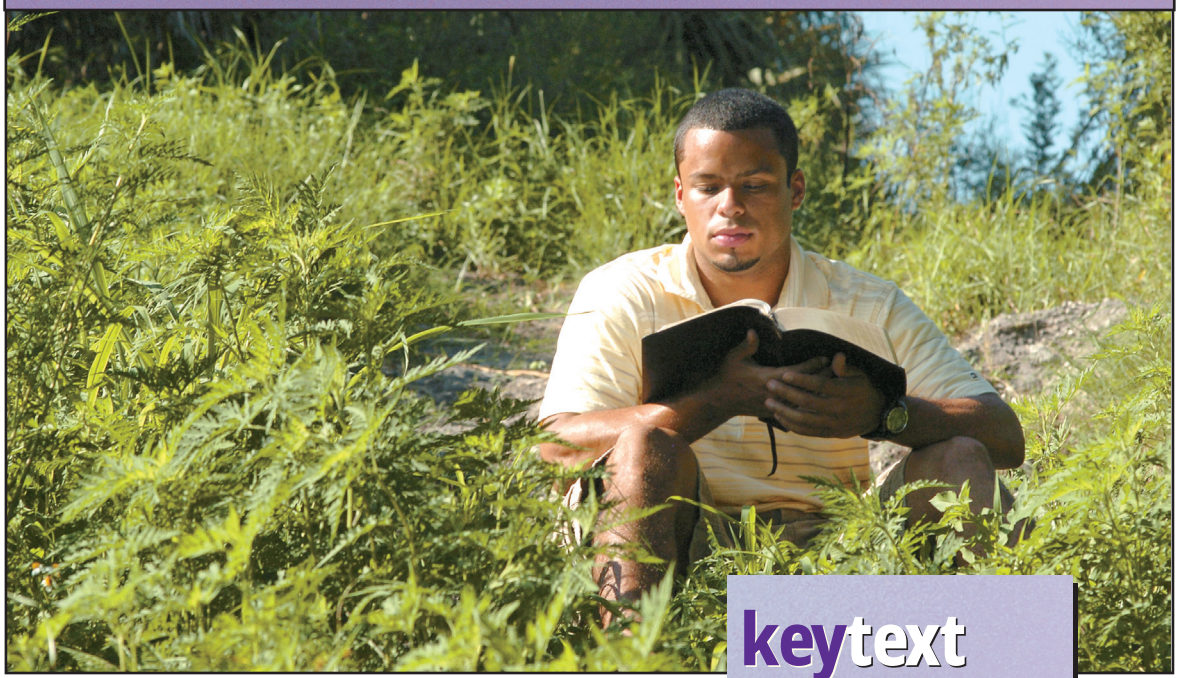


Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

flashlight

"By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. . . .

"Yet the Lord forsook him not. By messages of reproof and by severe judgments, He sought to arouse the king to a realization of the sinfulness of his course" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 76, 77).

"Solomon's repentance was sincere; but the harm that his example of evil-doing had wrought could not be undone. . . . Though the king confessed his sin and wrote out for the benefit of after generations a record of his folly and repentance, he could never hope entirely to destroy the baleful influence of his wrong deeds" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 84).

key text

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.' "

(Ecclesiastes 12:1, NIV)

what do you think?

Number from 1 (meaning it's the most important reason) to 10 (the least important reason) why you think people find confession and repentance difficult to do.

____ They don't believe they'll be able to stop committing the sin.
____ They're afraid of what others might think.
____ They feel guilty for what they did.
____ They don't want to feel humiliated.
____ They fear being viewed as hypocrites.
____ They're afraid of punishment.
____ They don't feel the Bible teaches that confession and repentance are all that important.
____ They don't want to stop doing what they're doing.

Which of the following individuals do you think is the most prideful? Why?

____ Josh is constantly showing off his latest electronic toys.
____ Lawrence ignores his friends when a cute girl walks by.
____ Rebecca keeps reminding you that she has a 4.0 grade point average.
____ Benito constantly bullies other students in the dorm.

did you know?

In 1842 the first bathtub was denounced as a "luxurious and democratic vanity." Boston made it unlawful to bathe, except on doctor's prescription. In 1843 Philadelphia made bathing illegal between November 1 and March 15.

And yet, how many Christians have adopted a similar schedule of spiritual cleansing? Many of us would rather endure the stench of our unconfessed sins than come clean before God!

INTO THE STORY

"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 4:29, 30, NIV).

"I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 2:1, NIV).

"King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon" (1 Kings 10:23, 24, NIV).

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good" (Ecclesiastes 9:18, NIV).

"There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler: Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones" (Ecclesiastes 10:5, 6, NIV).

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'—before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

"Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

" 'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Everything is meaningless!' "

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."

(Ecclesiastes 12:1–8, 13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

How is it that the wisest man in the world could make such foolish choices in life?

If Hollywood were to produce a movie based on the life of Solomon, what would you suggest to use as a title?

What does Solomon's repentance teach us about God?

Is it possible to be as successful as Solomon and remain fully humble and dependent on God? Explain.

In your opinion, what is the most important lesson we can learn from Solomon's story?

Read through a random selection of the Proverbs; then write a few proverbs of your own.

punch lines

"Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them" **(Psalm 62:10, NIV).**

"The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them" **(Proverbs 20:7, NIV).**

"What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" **(Matthew 16:26, NIV).**

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" **(Hebrews 10:24, 25, NIV).**

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. "Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud" **(Proverbs 16:18, 19, NIV).**

further insight

"Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 23

Sabbath

Read 1 John 1:9, 10.

Read through the *What Do You Think?* section and then reflect on the following questions:

- Which is easier—to confess or conceal wrongdoing? Why?
- What does God think about the practice of confession?
- How can confession bring a person closer to God?
- Why do people try to hide wrongdoing?
- What are the dangers of failing to confess sins?

Compare your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section with that of your friends and discuss:

What is the most common number 1 ranking for failure to confess sin?

What reasons, besides the ones listed, might people give for not practicing confession?

Explain any connection you see between pride and the unwillingness to confess and repent of sin.

Sunday

Read 1 Kings 10:23, 24.

Review the Bible verses that describe Solomon's quest for meaning by pursuing wisdom, pleasure, and wealth. Why do you think these pursuits failed to quiet the innermost longings of his soul?

What things of the world are you pursuing that are failing to fill the innermost longing of your soul?

Monday

Read Ecclesiastes 12.

Review the *Key Text* for this lesson. What does it mean for you to "remember your Creator"? Solomon urges you to do this before you get old. He gives some very vivid and colorful illustrations of getting old. Draw lines to match the words of Solomon to the aging ailment that he is describing. Check your answers with the key following.

Words of Solomon	Ailments of Aging
1. ". . . the grinders cease because they are few"	A. Failing eyesight
2. ". . . those looking through the windows grow dim"	B. Loss of hearing
3. ". . . people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint"	C. Phobias and paranoia
4. ". . . people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets"	D. Teeth rot and fall out
5. ". . . the almond tree blossoms"	E. The get-up-and-go got up and went
6. ". . . the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred"	F. Death
7. ". . . the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well"	G. Hair turns gray

Answer key: 1-D; 2-A; 3-B; 4-C; 5-G; 6-E; 7-F

Tuesday

Read Matthew 6:24.

The quote in the *Flashlight* section highlights the hard lesson that Solomon learned about "the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good." Pray about how earthly things influence you. Ask a mature Christian about how to not get caught up in the earthly things that many teens are getting caught up in, such as materialism, poor choices of friendship, premarital sex, alcohol, drugs.

What "master" are you serving?

Wednesday

Carefully read the *Punch Lines*. Contained in these verses you will find profound principles for enjoying a better life. Read the texts over and over until you have them deeply entrenched in your mind. Then apply the verses and use them today as an experiment in humbly walking with God.

Thursday

Read Matthew 16:26.

Review the life of Solomon, then ask yourself: *From what aspect of Solomon's story do I need to learn the most?*

Friday

Read Proverbs 16:18, 19.

Ellen White offers this commentary on Solomon's life: "Not only to the youth, but to those of mature years, . . . the life of Solomon is full of warning. We see and hear of unsteadiness in youth, the young wavering between right and wrong, and the current of evil passions proving too strong for them. In those of maturer years, we do not look for this unsteadiness and unfaithfulness; we expect the character to be established, the principles firmly rooted. But this is not always so. . . .

"From such examples we should learn that in watchfulness and prayer is the only safety for both young and old. . . . One may for many years have enjoyed a genuine Christian experience, but he is still exposed to Satan's attacks. In the battle with inward sin and outward temptation, even the wise and powerful Solomon was vanquished. His failure teaches us that, whatever a man's intellectual qualities may be, and however faithfully he may have served God in the past, he can never with safety trust in his own wisdom and integrity" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 82).

Questions to consider:

- What is the state of my character?
- Am I watchful and prayerful each day?
- How can I trust in God rather than in my own wisdom and integrity?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 5.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.