CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY 13 2024

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 1.

wise beyond his years



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flashlight

"The language used by Solomon while praying to God before the ancient altar at Gibeon reveals his humility and his strong desire to honor God. He realized that without divine aid he was as helpless as a little child to fulfill the responsibilities resting on him. He knew that he lacked discernment, and it was a sense of his great need that led him to seek God for wisdom. In his heart there was no selfish aspirations for a knowledge that would exalt him above others. . . . Solomon was never so rich or so wise or so truly great as when he confessed, 'I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in' " (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 30).

key text

"I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings."

(1 Kings 3:12, 13, NIV)

what do you think?

Which of the following proverbs do you think people struggle with more? Which ones might you struggle with?

1. "Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways" (Proverbs 3:31, NIV).
2. "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:11, 12, NIV).
3. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NIV).
4. "Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues" (Proverbs 17:28, NIV).

did you know?

Archaeological discoveries have confirmed the existence of such later kings as Ahab and Hezekiah. Yet little archaeological evidence of Solomon's reign has been discovered (though areas such as the likely site of Solomon's temple have not been thoroughly excavated). Solomon's story includes about the only biblical reference to any seafaring on the part of Israel.

The book of Kings credits Solomon with some 3,000 proverbs, though only a few are preserved in the Bible, and many of the Bible's proverbs are credited to others, such as the mother of King Lemuel, an otherwise unknown ruler. The proverbs are grouped into sayings such as "Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked" (Proverbs 10:6, NIV) and advice such as "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness" (Proverbs 23:4, NIV).

INTO THE STORY

"Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

"The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'

"Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

" 'Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?'

"The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.' Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream.

"He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court."

"The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy."

(1 Kings 3:3–15; 4:20, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and what he hadn't asked for—riches and glory—were added as well. What do you think might have happened if he'd asked God for material things instead of wisdom?

God blessed Solomon's reign with wealth, yet many of his proverbs warn against the dangers of riches. Are financial blessings necessarily a sign of God's favor for His followers today? How should we relate to money as Christians?

Solomon was fascinated by all kinds of science and natural things. What can the natural world tell us about God? (See Psalm 33:5 for one idea.)

After Solomon returned to Jerusalem, he threw a party for his people! What does this say to you about the role of celebration in the Christian life?

How would you define "wisdom"? How is it a "tree of life" as Proverbs describes?

punch lines

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" **(Proverbs 1:7, NIV).**

"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" **(Proverbs 2:6, NIV).**

"Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" **(Proverbs 4:6, 7, NIV).**

"Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor" **(Proverbs 15:33, NIV).**

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" **(Matthew 6:33, NIV).**

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" **(James 1:5, NIV).**

further insight

"Those who today occupy positions of trust should seek to learn the lesson taught by Solomon's prayer. The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 30

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 15:33.

This week's *What Do You Think?* looks at some words of wisdom from Proverbs. Today's reading from Proverbs states: "Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor" (Proverbs 15:33, NIV). How does devotion to God develop wisdom? What's the relationship between humility and wisdom?

Sunday

Read 1 Kings 4:29–30.

The book of 1 Kings describes Solomon as both wise and intelligent, curious about everything around him. Though God doesn't guarantee us material wealth if we follow Him, life usually works better, and we can spare ourselves much pain when we follow God's principles.

Read this week's *Out of the Story*. What are some ways we can become more wise? How do we tell the difference between wisdom and foolishness? In what situations is wisdom particularly necessary?

Monday

Read Proverbs 9:10.

This week's *Key Text* is God's promise to Solomon after he asked for wisdom above anything else God could offer. If someone looked at your priorities, what would they think is most important to you? Do your actions live up to what you believe in? If "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10, NIV), how can you make following God more central in your life?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 23:11, 12.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation addresses the idea of true greatness. Today, as throughout history, people think greatness means possessions, power, or personality. We imagine greatness to mean the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the home we live in, the money we make, the influence we wield, or the attention we command. Solomon's story reminds us, however, that true greatness is rooted in selflessness.

Solomon's number one goal was to serve his people. Looking back at how Israel's two previous kings had tripped over their own importance, forgetting their obligations to God and citizens, Solomon knew that ruling a troubled nation was too great to handle on his own. With such a humble heart, Solomon became the greatest of earthly kings. It was only as he forgot his commitment to God that things began to fall apart.

Jesus came to show us how to serve others, telling us that whatever kindness we do for someone in need, we're doing for Him. Everything we do should be for God's glory—but that requires humility. How can we keep the perspective in today's Bible verses in our everyday lives?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 6:33; Proverbs 2:6–8; 4:6, 7.

Have you ever faced a situation through which you knew you couldn't make it without God's help? If so, how did God make the difference for you?

How does the picture of God in today's Bible verses make you feel? When you look at the tragedies in the world around you, affecting even faithful Christians, do you feel as if God is as trustworthy as these verses describe? How can you reconcile such a Bible promise with the reality that God allows bad things to happen to some of the best people?

The book of Proverbs sometimes personifies wisdom as someone with whom the reader can have a protective relationship. What does this tell you about how ancient cultures valued wisdom?

Thursday

Read Luke 14:7–14.

Solomon described himself as like "a small child" as he faced the enormous challenge of becoming king. Is it possible to be too humble? What role does self-confidence play in a successful life? How does someone balance self-confidence and humility? In what ways is it important for us to be self-confident? In what ways is it important for us to be humble?

How might true humility affect our career and social standing?

Friday

Read James 1:5.

Think of someone you know whom you would describe as wise. Why do you think they are? What situations have they handled particularly wisely? What can you learn from their life that can help you to make wise decisions? How does asking God for wisdom help us in line with today's Bible passage?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 1.

**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.