

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JANUARY27 2024

the wise and foolish king

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 11.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

No Bible character had a better start in life than Solomon. Raised the son of a wealthy, respected king, he stood to inherit riches beyond his wildest dreams, not to mention a good name. His father was not perfect, but when shown his wrongs, he righted them.

Solomon at first felt the weight of his responsibility as king. That explains his request to God for wisdom, his careful construction of the Lord's temple, and the awesome prayer that highlighted the dedication of that temple. But something happened to Solomon after these accomplishments.

Solomon's tremendous wealth, international prestige, and relative national peace meant that he had time to indulge in unwholesome interests. He formed alliances with surrounding nations against God's will, and sealed each of them with a marriage. Almost imperceptibly Solomon's heart began to leave God. He worshiped the gods of his wives and concubines, and forsook the God of the universe.

The rise and fall of Solomon teaches several lessons, but none more important than the dangers of unfettered prosperity and wealth. Solomon believed that his immense learning and wisdom could overcome the pull of beautiful women, foreign gods, and unmatched wealth. He was sadly mistaken. He had forgotten that the source of his blessing was God.

Whether in times of famine or plenty, God's people must always put Him first in their lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God's blessings are always given for His glory and not our own. *(Know)*
- Experience the peace that comes through obedience to God's commands. *(Feel)*
- Commit to never allow anything or anyone to occupy God's place in their lives. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Nature of Humanity, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 7

"Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20;

Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:4; 4:7, 8, 11, 20.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Ask them to discuss their answers. Point out to them the things in life that they feel they "must have." Bring this discussion around to what they might "sell out" in order to keep Jesus in their lives.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is quite grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin.

"First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood.

"Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more—until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!

"It is a fearful thing that people can be 'consumed by their own lusts.' Only God's grace keeps us from the wolf's fate."—Chris T. Zwingelberg at www.bible.org. (Accessed 12/01/2022.)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but he was also one of the weakest because of his inability to rule his own passions. He was a person with an outsized desire for opulence and grandeur, and this desire engulfed his life much as the taste of fresh blood leads to the wolf's death. It didn't have to be that way for Solomon, and it certainly does not have to be that way for us.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- If you were to summarize the main thrust of this passage for a friend, what would you say?
- Place a *checkmark* by each turning point in the story.
- *Underline* each place in the passage where you see the grace of God.
- *Circle* the minor characters in the story and note the role that each plays in relationship to Solomon.
- What picture of God do we see from this passage? What one word would you use to describe God, as He is seen in this passage?
- What is different in this passage between God's anger and that of humanity?
- What kinds of idols do we worship today? What must we do to keep from falling into their traps?
- How does Solomon's example with women inform you in your relationships with the other gender?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Daniel 4:28–32; Mark 10:17–31; Matthew 6:20; John 15:1–6.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. We can learn much from the gods whose worship Solomon introduced to Israel. One of the gods to which he built a temple was Chemosh, the war god of the Moabites. Wikipedia states that the name Chemosh means destroyer, subduer, or fish-god. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chemosh was an

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

More Visual Learning

Many students learn better when they can actually see something related to the lesson, and not just hear it.

Consider bringing to class a timeline detailing the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, beginning with Saul. If possible, make special note of the idolatry begun under Solomon and how long it took before these sinful practices were abolished.

Share this timeline with the students as a way of demonstrating to them the effect that Solomon's worship habits had on the nation of Israel. It can be argued that Israel never fully recovered from what Solomon did.

"ancient West Semitic deity, revered by the Moabites as their supreme god. Little is known about Chemosh; although King Solomon of Israel built a sanctuary to him east of Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:7), the shrine was later demolished by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:13)." The temple to Chemosh remained in place for more than 300 years before Josiah destroyed it.

2. Another god that Solomon introduced to the people is Ashtoreth, the moon goddess of the Phoenicians. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the worship of this goddess did not just occur among the Hebrews. The Greeks called her Hera, the Romans referred to her as Juno, and the ancient Egyptians called her Isis. She was referred to as the Queen of Heaven by those who worshiped her.
3. By far the most detestable god worshiped in Israel during the reign of Solomon was Molech. Human sacrifices were offered to him, mainly firstborn children. The god possessed hollow metal arms that were outstretched. The arms were heated from the inside. Firstborn children were placed on the heated arms of this god and slowly burned to death. Molech was also worshiped in ancient Carthage, where at one time about 200 little boys were sacrificed in hopes of saving that city from a siege. Young King Josiah destroyed this temple and its worship (see *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, p. 205; *Encyclopedia of Gods*, p. 168).
4. The apostasy that Solomon's reign ushered into the life of Israel can be summed up by 1 Kings 11:5, 6: "He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David

cornerstoneconnections

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

his father had done" (NIV). As is often the case, apostasy rarely gets better with time and indulgence, and that is as true today as it was during biblical times.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask each group to come up with three ways that Solomon could have impacted Israel and the surrounding world had he not sinned.

Close by making the point that just as one person's sin has the power to corrupt many, acts of righteousness also have the power to lead many to God. Jesus proved this truth.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

King Solomon's life was the stuff of dreams. He had an adoring public, beautiful women constantly around him, the best clothing money could buy, important friends and well-wishers. He had it all. Yet none of it was enough to satisfy Solomon.

Foreign alliances led to national spiritual ruin, love of opulence left the citizens of Israel in financial ruin due to the heavy taxes he levied on them to support his lifestyle, and his indulgence of lust left him spiritually bankrupt.

Perhaps it was an act of mercy that God pronounced judgment on Solomon while he had an opportunity to change his life. Had God not told him that the kingdom would be taken from him, Solomon might never have changed. So even in God's justice there is love and mercy.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 11.
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Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

keytext

"The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command."

(1 Kings 11:9, 10, NIV)

flashlight

"Had Solomon continued in humility of mind to turn the attention of men from himself to the One who had given him wisdom and riches and honor, what a history might have been his! But while the pen of inspiration records his virtues, it also bears faithful witness to his downfall. Raised to a pinnacle of greatness and surrounded with the gifts of fortune, Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 68).

what do you think?

Imagine that your parents are going to take one of the following items away from you. On a scale from 1 ("Gotta have it") to 4 ("No sweat without it"), rank the items in order of importance to you.

a. Money
b. Cell phone
c. Internet access
d. Freedom to hang out with friends

INTO THE STORY

"King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

"On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

"The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. So the LORD said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.' "

(1 Kings 11:1–13, NIV)

did you know?

Did you know that Solomon built temples for the worship of heathen gods in addition to the temple he built for the true God? What's more, he didn't just build them in some obscure place, safely out of sight; He built them on a hillside opposite Mount Moriah, the exact spot where he had built a magnificent temple for God (see *Prophets and Kings*, p. 57).

OUT OF THE STORY

What parts of this passage are most striking to you?

_____
_____
_____

What parts of the story are new to you?

_____
_____
_____

Who is the main character of this Scripture?

_____
_____
_____

Circle some of the other characters playing a role in this passage?

Underline what you believe is the main point of the passage.

Number each portion of the passage where you see an important lesson to be learned.

_____
_____
_____

In spite of David's sin with Bathsheba, this passage says that David "followed God completely." What does this tell us about what God values in His children?

_____
_____
_____

What does this passage say to you about self-discipline in the choice of a life partner? How can that choice influence our relationship with God?

_____
_____
_____

What are some biblical examples of people who made wise decisions in their choice of a life partner?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression" **(Psalm 19:13, NIV).**

"I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens" **(Ezra 9:6, NIV).**

"The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: 'Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets' " **(2 Kings 17:13, NIV).**

"But the LORD is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one" **(2 Thessalonians 3:3, NIV).**

"Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways" **(Psalm 25:8, NIV).**

further insight

"He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 30

Sabbath

Read 1 Kings 11:11.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What item would you most hate for your parents to take from you? Now, think of all the different things that Solomon stood to lose as a result of disobeying God. What would you say is the thing he most hated to lose:

_____

_____

What judgment did God pronounce upon Solomon? If you were Solomon, how would you have reacted to such an awesome statement from God?

_____

_____

Sunday

Read 1 Kings 11:1–13.

Read this week's *Into the Story*. Pay close attention to verse 2. God gave His people what specific command?

_____

_____

What would happen to the people of God if they did not obey this command?

_____

_____

What did Solomon do? How far did he go in breaking God's command?

_____

_____

As the most important earthly figure in all of Israel, how do you think his example impacted the nation?

_____

_____

Monday

Read 1 Kings 11:9, 10.

After careful thought, I am quite sure the wise person would not want to have God angry at them. After all, He is the all-powerful Creator, and we are created beings. He is the source of our breath, our very life. And yet, according to the *Key Text*, wise King Solomon did the very things that called out God's righteous anger.

Read the *Key Text* closely. Why did God become angry with Solomon? The Bible says that Solomon's heart "had turned away from the LORD." In your own words, write what you think God was saying here:

_____

_____

Is it possible for your heart to be turned away from God, even though you are a Christian?

Tuesday

Read Ezra 9:6.

Read this week's *Flashlight*. Ellen White says that "Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell." Explain what you believe she means by these statements.

Solomon became dizzy:

_____

_____

Lost his balance:

_____

_____

Fell:

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read Matthew 12:31, 32.

Check out the *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson. Does the sorrow for sin catch your attention in Ezra 9:6? What about the promise of protection in 2 Thessalonians 3:3?

What do you think is the "great transgression" or sin that David was afraid of in Psalm 19:13? What do you think continued willful disobedience and rejecting the guidance of God's Holy Spirit leads us to?

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Proverbs 12:4.

Most people who read the life of Solomon focus on the number of wives (700) and concubines (300) that he had. But the numbers are not of utmost importance. It is the impact that they had on his worship and allegiance to God that was most unfortunate.

What does this say to you about the importance of your choice of a boyfriend/girlfriend or life partner and how it impacts your relationship with God?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read 2 Kings 17:13.

We can be fairly certain that God did much to warn Solomon to change his behavior. Is God warning you to change something in your life before it's too late? What might that be? Why not surrender it to God right now in prayer? Ask Him to make you willing to be made willing to have Him take it from you.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

**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.