

SOLOMON

Have you encountered God, yet pursued knowledge, possessions, might, money, or pleasure apart from Him to satisfy your desires? No one in history did this like Solomon.

Who was he?

Solomon was the Son of David and Bathsheba; named Jedidiah, which meant “loved by the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:24-25). He became Israel’s third King who led its most prosperous 40 years (1 Kings 11:42), renowned as the wisest man who ever lived before Christ (1 Kings 4:31).

What did he do?

Intimate Encounters with God

Solomon encountered God who appeared to him twice (1 Kings 3:5-15; 9:1-9; 11:9). In his first encounter: God offered Solomon everyone’s dream: “Ask for whatever you want me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5). Due to the conflict he would experience as king, Solomon asked for a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:9), and God granted that request (1 Kings 3:12). In Solomon’s second encounter, God responded to Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple (2 Chronicles 6:24-25, 36; 7:14). Despite those intimate encounters with God, Solomon pursued life apart from Him in at least five arenas that remain a risk for us today.

King Solomon pursued...

(1) Earthly knowledge for the sake of contentment (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18)

Contentment means “held together.” We think that if we are smart enough, we can hold it all together, and we often end up on autopilot apart from God.

Solomon offered wise advice to many world leaders who traveled to meet him (1 Kings 4:34). He authored Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and two Psalms (72, 127). The king spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). He described plant life (1 Kings 4:33) and taught about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish (1 Kings 4:33). Yet, he still pursued knowledge apart from God. One millennium later, James compared two kinds of wisdom: Godly and worldly. The former is selfless. The latter is selfish (James 3:13-16).

Street Smarts for the Restoration Road

Read the Bible daily, perhaps a chapter in Proverbs that correlates with the date of the month. Allow the wisdom of Scripture to grow your selfless heart and never lord it over others.

(2) Possessions for the sake of significance (Ecclesiastes 2:4-8a)

Significance includes the word, “sign.” In essence, significance says, “Hey, look at me.” Sometimes, we think that possessions will bring us significance.

Solomon constructed the temple in seven years (1 Kings 6:38); however, he invested thirteen years to build his palace (1 Kings 7:1). He constructed the wall around Jerusalem (1 Kings 3:1), built a fleet of ships (1 Kings 9:26), and developed many cities (1 Kings 9:15-18). The fact that kings and queens sought out his advice was evidence of his renown. He was a formidable leader. The community of Israel was climbing the ladder of socio-economic power, proving Solomon’s influence to even the harshest of skeptics.

Street Smarts for the Restoration Road

Ask yourself a simple question about your possessions: “*Do I own the stuff, or does the stuff own me?*” Remember to trust in the Giver, not the gifts.

(3) Military might for the sake of control (Ecclesiastes 4:13-16; 8:2-10)

Control means “to roll against.” When seeking control, we roll our will against others.

Solomon ruled over God’s people (1 Kings 1:35), whom he overtaxed and drafted into the military, as he steamrolled foreigners into forced labor (1 Kings 9:20-23). He constructed 4,000 stalls for chariot horses and collected 12,000 stallions and mares (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26). This cut against God’s desire (Deuteronomy 17:15-16) for a theocracy where He would rule (1 Samuel 8:7). To keep control of his borders, Solomon also built strategic fortress cities (Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer) (1 Kings 9:15-18).

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Whereas, you probably do not have a military army at your disposal, you most likely have enlisted many friends and acquaintances into a social one. This becomes convenient when relational challenges come your way. In your interpersonal conflict, beware of powering-up in relationships. Avoid rallying the troops around your selfish cause.

(4) Money for the sake of security (Ecclesiastes 5:10-20; 7:12)

Security connotes “safety, refuge, or a sanctuary.” Oftentimes, we seek security from money.

Solomon was wealthier than any other king on the planet (1 Kings 10:23). “The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents” (1 Kings 10:14). This is the equivalent of 49,950 pounds, or about 25 tons. Solomon’s annual income in gold alone exceeded \$1.2 billion in today’s value.

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Too often, we buy into the empty promise that financial security will someday allow us to enjoy our wealth. Unfortunately, someday never comes because financial security doesn’t exist. Instead, enjoy life as you go.

(5) Pleasure for the sake of gratification (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3, 8b-11)

Pleasure is defined as “enjoyment, delight, amusement, bliss, or happiness.” Too often, we seek happiness apart from God. Solomon sought pleasure from wine, women, and song.

Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1) and took on a total of 700 wives and 300 concubines who led him astray (1 Kings 11:3). This act violated God’s plan (Deuteronomy 17:17), but Solomon raised his debauchery to another level when he built temples to their deities (1 Kings 11:7-8, 33). His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord who divided his kingdom (1 Kings 11:4-13). His love for God turned love for worldly pleasure became legendary (Nehemiah 13:26).

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Solomon’s pursuit of pleasure for the sake of gratification is relevant today in terms of intimate relationships. If you parent a teenage girl, help her determine by whom, what, where, why, and how she wants to be pursued, *before* there’s ever an emotional connection. Let your teen know that you will measure the success of any relationship by answering these questions: “Does it improve your relationship with God, your parents, your siblings, or your friends? Does it improve your grades or extracurricular activities?”

What can we learn?

Life apart from God is meaningless. A divided heart led to a divided kingdom. It’s the first sin. It’s the wide gate. It’s love of this world. King Solomon pursued earthly knowledge for the sake of contentment, possessions for the sake of significance, military might for the sake of control, money for the sake of security, and pleasure for the sake of gratification apart from God, the only One who could truly satisfy His desires.

David’s first (Proverbs 4:3-9) and last (1 Kings 2:1-4) words to Solomon were to keep God’s commands. Even God Himself repeated this same charge to David’s son (1 Kings 9:3-9). It’s no wonder that Solomon’s Last Will and Testament of Ecclesiastes summarized:

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into

judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Conclusion

God is always faithful, but we are not. That’s why we need Christ to pursue life with God (Psalm 127:1), bringing us in *communion* with Him (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and *community* with others (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Christ never fails. When we surrender to Him, He will be with us, always.



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