

Intro

Good morning, Christian Life!

How many of us are grateful for coffee this morning?

Speaking of coffee, if I may for a second just say that one of my favorite things to do is grab coffee with people. Some people don't drink coffee, I pray extra for those people. But there is something cool about sitting face to face with someone, no phones, no distractions, and wonderful hot coffee. The conversations a setting like that brings out is something that is becoming rare. You learn so much about someone when you get face to face with them.

It probably won't come as a shock when I say I am on the younger side of life. Some of my favorite people to grab coffee with are people who have lived a lot more life than me. The average age of some of my best friends is like 70. What I have found from grabbing coffee with someone with a lot more experience than me is that I learn things without even asking for it. Through simply listening you catch so much gold. I can recall many times where I have been with Robert Collier or Bill Morgan and two hours have gone by without either of us minding. One of the best times I can remember was when I had coffee with a guy named Dhruv (younger than me) and had the blessing of seeing him give his life to the Lord. I have countless more examples that come to my mind. Needless to say, times with people over coffee hold a special place in my life.

I often wonder what it would have been like to grab coffee with some of the most influential people throughout history. What could you learn from coffee with MLK or Winston Churchill? Probably a lot.

Today, we're in the second week of our 7 Kings Series and I want us to imagine that this is our Sunday to grab coffee with a king. Specifically, King Solomon. What could we learn from the life, the accomplishments, and failures of King Solomon? Probably a lot.

Throughout this morning, I want us to imagine that an old King Solomon was sitting across the table from you and was just speaking into you...answering your questions about life.

Who is Solomon?

I have to imagine one of the first questions we would ask in a situation like this is, "What's your story?"

For Solomon the answer to that question is a unique one. Solomon was the third King of Israel (it goes Saul, David, and then Solomon). He reigned on the throne for about 40 years through the years of 970-930 BC. Solomon is the second son of King David and Bathsheba. The Prophet Nathan called him Jedidiah, which means beloved of the Lord.

He had a rather interesting ascent to the throne. We'd be here all day if we detailed all that happened but the gist of it is that in 1 Kings 1 we see David's oldest surviving son, Adonijah,

make a strong claim towards his dying father's throne. There were some rallies and a fake coronation feast and everything. What stopped this from happening was the prophet Nathan and Bathsheba reminding David that he had actually promised the throne to Solomon. Solomon, quickly secured the throne with a little bit of bloodshed (typical)...talk about family drama.

We'll unpack these more in just a second but Solomon is famous for several reasons. Throughout his reign, he was an avid builder, foreign policy maker, thinker/writer - known for his wisdom, and he amassed an absurd amount of wealth. All said, he was truly a brilliant king.

Now, before we dig into his accomplishments, I want to put this up here for you guys to take a picture of/reference later:

Extended Reading:

2 Samuel 12:24-25 - Birth of Solomon

1 Kings 1-11 / 2 Chronicles 1-9 - Parallel Biographies

Solomon's Writings in Scripture:

Proverbs - Main Contributor

Ecclesiastes / Song of Solomon / Psalms 72 & Psalm 127 - Author

Solomon's Accomplishments

If our first question was, "What's your story?" then our second question would likely be, "What are some of your biggest accomplishments?"

In 1 Kings 3, we see one of the more famous stories about Solomon.

1 Kings 3:4–15 ESV

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." 6 And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. 7 And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. 9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have

not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. 14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

15 And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

Here we see the “origin story” of what became one of his biggest distinctions as a leader. His wisdom drew the attention of many and was used mostly well during his reign. One of the ways this wisdom came out was through his prolific writing.

All said, we are told in 1 Kings 4:32 he wrote 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs throughout his lifetime.

1 Kings 4:32 ESV

32 He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.

David brought unity throughout the 12 tribes of Israel and Solomon built off of that by establishing Israel as an organized state with 12 districts that helped to distribute the tax burden throughout the nation. Although Solomon, was a little excessive in his taxation.

Another thing that Solomon is known for is the building of the first temple. This was something that David first wanted to do but Solomon was actually the guy who got it done (1 Kings 5-6). The temple took seven years to build and required 156,000 workers. In modern measurements the temple was 90ft long, 30ft wide, and 45ft high but it was overlayed with gold walls and furniture so it was...expensive.

In 1 Kings 8, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the temple and Solomon prayed a prayer of dedication that showed the heart after God He had as a king. At this point in time, the people of Israel were overjoyed because it seemed as if the successor to David was almost as great as David himself.

Solomon's Failures

At this point we may say, “Ok, King Solomon, we’ve heard about your life and heard about some of your top achievements...but what would you say are some of your biggest mistakes?”

The answer can undoubtedly be found in 1 Kings 11

1 Kings 11:1–8 ESV

1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in

love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

These wives that he took were political in nature. This was a part of his foreign policy. Besides the obvious, the problem with this situation truly stemmed from the foreign nature of these relationships. The women that Solomon married were practitioners of pagan religions and Solomon allowed that to compromise his strong dedication to the Lord that we saw just a few chapters sooner with the building of the temple. Solomon's marriages led to what is known as syncretism, which is essentially the blending of practices from different schools of thought.

In other words, syncretism could look like replacing a core tenant of Christianity with a new age practice because it fits with the current culture better. Thankfully, that never happens today.

This compromise lead to the Lord raising up enemies against Israel. You can look at that and go, "how cruel" or we can take a look at the context and go, "well, yeah God said he would do that"

1 Kings 9:6–9 ESV

6 But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8 And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' 9 Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the Lord has brought all this disaster on them.' "

I mean, logically, if we are to get mad at God doing what He said He would do, then it's like robbing a bank and getting mad that we get arrested. The law is pretty clear. Don't rob banks. Decisions have consequences; some more longstanding than others.

What We Can Learn from Solomon

At this point in time, we've drank most of our coffee and we are nearing the end of our time with King Solomon. Before our time is up, we would likely ask the King, "In light of everything you have told me today, can you give me three of your best pieces of advice?"

1- Where You Come From Doesn't Tell The Whole Story

It should not be lost on us that Solomon is ultimately a product of David's affair with Bathsheba. Its a rather disturbing story but it is well known that David manipulated his authority in order to be with Bathsheba, who was married to a general in David's army. David got Bathsheba pregnant and then had her husband killed in battle. In the end, David married Bathsheba. Now this child who Bathsheba was pregnant with ended up passing away as a newborn and Solomon is their second child. Solomon would not have been born had David not initially pursued Bathsheba.

Does that mean David was justified? Absolutely not. Does that mean we can cheapen grace and do whatever we want because God can just redeem it? No. But, I do think this does paint a powerful picture of God's redemptive power. Especially when we realize that this is ultimately the family lineage that the Lord chose to have Jesus born into.

Your parents may have made some serious mistakes. You may be the product of a less than ideal arrangement. That doesn't have to be your identity and it doesn't have to shackle you to a life of victimhood. At the end of the day, just because you come from some wack scenario it doesn't mean God won't do something with you. If God is going to do something with your life, God's going to do something with your life.

No amount of messed up could ever get in the way of something that God wants to do. The mistakes of your ancestors don't HAVE to be your mistakes. In Christ, there is hope for a new path. Our God specializes in making sense of the broken pieces that we call life.

2- Keep Your Fear of the Lord

In one of his most well known works, King Solomon gives us another guiding principle.

Proverbs 1:7 ESV

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

In this verse, fools are people who reject the need to learn, or are people who reject the need to practice what is known to be right. In other words, to constantly pursue some new revelation or insight while rejecting already concrete truths would be considered foolish. On the flip side, fear of the Lord is the beginning or foundation of all knowledge. What this communicates, is that in principle, making sense of this life is not possible apart from recognizing the fingerprint of God on everything and allowing Him to be your lens.

Fear doesn't mean afraid it can be said that fear of the Lord is essentially a fear of a life without Him. When we know who He truly is, we do not ever want to be separated from Him.

I have heard this concept described as a bonfire. You sit close to the bonfire for warmth, and especially if its cold you don't want to be too far away. But there is a boundary you can't cross otherwise you will burn. You have a reasonable fear or respect of what would happen if you got too close to the fire. You don't treat a bonfire casually. In the same way, you don't treat God casually. There is an appropriate way to approach Him.

There is a respect and awe in which we see God in that draws us into obedience.

At one point in time, Solomon understood this so well that in his building of the temple, he used golden nails (50 shekels of gold in total or about \$45,000 in today's money). It isn't that God demands the extravagant but it is that Solomon saw no other way than to give the Lord His best even in the hidden places. Now how does this Solomon end up giving his heart to so many foreign gods just a little while later? I may suggest that the answer is in chapter 10 of 1 Kings. So chronologically this is after the temple and before the big fall of the foreign women.

1 Kings 10:28–29 ESV

28 And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. 29 A chariot could be imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150, and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

Now what do horses have to do with anything? In fact, quite a bit, as this is a direct violation of the original law of Moses regarding kingship. Deuteronomy 17:14-20 details what Israel should do if the desire for a king were ever to be voiced. This section is what that king should look like. The gist of it is that King of Israel should rule differently than other kings. We know historically that the Israelites DID in-fact demand a King later on and that this section of law would have been known to them. The thing I want us to really see is right here in verses 16-17.

Deuteronomy 17:16–17 ESV

16 Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' 17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

For today's purposes let's not get lost on the specifics of the law yet see that Solomon was living in a direct compromise for something that HE would have KNOWN was not lawful in the eyes of God. To me it seems clear how Solomon fell so far from grace...small compromises over a long time add up to big compromises.

When the Lord becomes a convenient cultural add-on to our lives, we lose our fear (our awe) of Him. When we lose our awe of Him, it is easy to drift. It is imperative that we do not lose sight of who God actually is, it's sad how easily we drift in our awe of Him. The human weakness is in constant need of the saving grace of Jesus. May God help us to keep our fear of Him.

3- Find Your Meaning In The Lord

It could be argued that this last point is the entire message of Ecclesiastes. This book is interesting in that, there is some scholarship to suggest this was written by an old King Solomon as a reflection on his life. It is fascinating nonetheless. A central point of this book is that if we find our meaning in anything other than the Lord then it is meaningless.

If we look at things with human eyes, Solomon had the dream. He had power, he had land, he had no shortage of love, and by reasonable estimation he was the richest man in HISTORY. With modern studies putting his net worth at around 2.1 Trillion. The current richest man is Elon Musk with a 329 billion net worth, this puts Solomon a little more than 6 times richer than Musk.

Just to further put the ridiculousness of that number into perspective:

A million seconds is around 11.5 days

A billion seconds is 31.7 YEARS

A trillion seconds is 31,709.8 YEARS

In the eyes of man, Solomon lacked nothing. Yet at the end of his life he said it was all vanity. It will all pass away anyway. None of this is to say that we should not strive to improve or increase or not work hard. But it is to get us to consider if that is what we derive our ultimate meaning from? When God is pursuit, all other things fall into proper balance and place.

Outside of God there is we either become the authors of truth or we slip into nihilism, which says that life is entirely meaningless.

The concluding words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes sum this up perfectly

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 ESV

13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

At this point, our coffee is likely cold or long gone. Let's stand together.

As we stand together, I want us to linger on the reality that some of us may be compromising in small ways. Are any of us in here trading horses? At one point in time, perhaps during the fast, we were building with golden nails but today we have fallen cold, lost our awe, and are now slipping into small compromises. Be sure that those small compromises will inevitably grow into a monster that you can not contain.

The beauty of the Gospel is that repentance is a gift to us. Today you may have came in here trading horses but the Lord is extending His mercy to you. You can lay down the compromises. Through Him, You can turn away from it and turn back. Allow the kindness of the Lord to draw you in. Let today be the day that you turn away from your compromises and come back to Him fully.

Let's pray together.