

## Lesson Five: Finish Well

1 Kings 11: Solomon's Death (2 Chronicles 9)

2 Chronicles 10: The Tragedy of Solomon's Legacy

### Questions:

1. Have you examined your life for areas of compromise or incomplete obedience? Will you share one of those areas?
2. What is one of the gifts God has given you? How can you bring Him glory by using it well?
3. To what do you want to give your life energies?
4. To you, what does it mean to be foolish? What does it mean to be wise?
5. What are your "first things," your ultimates, your top priorities, things you will not compromise?



This photo was taken on the Cedar Springs campus. There is a waterfall near the student building, and this rock was wedged among the river slicks along the stream.

God first. Period.

# Day 1

The main questions in this lesson are, **What are our idols? What are we pursuing that has become an idol? What have we elevated above God Almighty?**

What does it mean to be foolish? What does it mean to be wise? What are your “first things”? What does a repentant life look like, and am I willing to live that life?

Take a moment to pray with me: “Father, I worship you as the God who sees. You see my heart, my motives, my time, my money, my fears, my addictions, my habits, my emotions, my thoughts. How thankful I am that as You see me, You love me. I ask You, would you now open up my eyes? Would You help me see my idols, my places of compromise, my incomplete obedience, my half-heartedness, and my own cold-heartedness?

And then, Father, would You lead me to Your great heart and help me repent? Would You break any hold that the darkness has on me? Would You prune off the dead places in me? Would You breathe life into my half-hearted heart until I have fresh fire and new life within? Thank You, Abba Father. Apart from You, I can do nothing. I love You and want to love You more. Amen.”

## The Erosion of Compromise

The Scriptures are plain about the causes and effects of Solomon’s poor choices. The key Scripture is 1 Kings 11:

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 700 wives of royal birth and 300 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 his father David had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech 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 Molech 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 My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

This passage has many key words and phrases to explore ... let's dive in.

### **"Nevertheless"**

We use the word **nevertheless** when God commands us to do one thing and we choose to do another. We use that word when we look at God in the eye and say, "No. Not this time." We use that word when we disobey, when we compromise, when we turn away from the God who gave us everything. We choose death, not life; we choose sin without thought for the consequences. We satisfy ourselves; we become our own god.

God uses the word **nevertheless** when He shows mercy. How incredibly ironic! We use it to push Him away; He uses it to maintain life. Truly His mercy endures forever!

### **Ushers: Don't be Fooled**

Solomon chose to disobey God by making unholy alliances in marriage. The gods of the women he loved acted as ushers, redirecting the path of his old age into a pile of cooled ashes.

Have you felt a similar cold chill in your life lately? Certainly it is not comfortable, is it? Let's examine what happened and learn.

In his early years, Solomon knew he needed:

1. God for Himself
2. God for government
3. God for the task (governing, judging, discerning, and building the Temple)

In his later years, Solomon knew he needed:

1. Women for himself
2. Women for government (alliances, not just sexual pleasure)
3. War against his (God-created) adversaries, 1K 11:14-40

In his early years, Solomon was humble and obedient; In his later years, Solomon was proud and empty. Solomon wandered from the task of worshiping God and got lost in his own self-inflating, self-defeating ways. When he gained his hubris, he lost his purpose. The focus of his life shifted from pleasing God to pleasing himself, with disastrous personal and national consequences.

What sins are ushering you away from God? What sins are redirecting your path toward cold-heartedness, toward destruction and strife, toward hopelessness? The fruit of being close to God is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23). That's because those qualities flow out of His great heart. Don't be fooled; idols offer nothing.

### **Slow Slide into Compromise**

What happened? Over a course of years, Solomon hardened his heart to the things of God. **Solomon became ruler, not God. God's will became less important until it became trivial; Solomon's will became more important until it became paramount.**

As a believer grows in faith, the things of earth grow more dim; we lift our eyes from this world to the next with greater and greater anticipation of being with our Father in Heaven. Solomon's eyes, however, grew fixed not on God, but on things here—his pleasure, his wives, his way of doing things, his commerce, his horses, his gold, his offerings to other gods, keeping religious peace with his harem. Rather than becoming a glowing, burning ember in his last days, he separated from the Source of life and grew cold. It's a life mistake we could all make.

Habakkuk 2:18-20 says, "Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman?

Or an image that teaches lies?

For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation;

he makes idols that cannot speak.

Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!'

Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!'

Can it give guidance?

It is covered with gold and silver;

there is no breath in it."

The Lord is in his holy temple;

let all the earth be silent before him.

Didn't the wisest man on the earth comprehend this? It seemed that Solomon wanted God on one hand and other gods at his other hand. But God does not play that game! God is

God alone; there is no other. Period. He does not share His glory or trifle with meaningless gods. That is beneath His holiness and an insult.

## Slow Seduction

Solomon's full heart emptied out as he had sex with more women than he could count. A friend of mine says, "When you sleep around, you leave a little part of yourself with every sexual encounter. God designed sex to be this way—intimate, bonded, part of a covenant. By the time Solomon was an old man, he was hollow. There was nothing of his true self left."

Solomon's humble heart was slowly seduced into sin. Satan has been around a long time and knows that slow seduction—compromise—is one of his most effective tools. When faced directly with sin as a young man, Solomon would have said "no," but faced with sin as an older man, Solomon entertained the idea. Rather than treating sin like a spiritual cancer, he lingered with it until he eventually invited it in. (Does this remind you of David with Bathsheba? He looked, lingered, lusted, and was lost.) That is a danger to all Christians! Blunt sin is easily recognizable and therefore easier to fight.

I remember my daughter saying, "Mama, why do small decisions seem really big?" She was beginning to understand the domino effect of choice. Slow seduction and partial compromises add up under our nose and by the time we realize what we're doing, we are often cold to the conviction of our first love and we choose to continue in sin. I think that's what happened to Solomon. The need that had enflamed his young heart was gone; the first love he felt for God had waned with his accomplishments and independence; and finally, lesser gods engulfed the flame of his heart like a fire extinguisher.

## Final Words

After reading those verses and asking these questions, I can tell you one thing: **I want to finish well!** I want to look deeply into the core of my life and see my places of incomplete obedience and compromises and half-heartedness. I want to return to my first love, to remember the height from which I have fallen (Revelation 2:4,5), and to enjoy the burn of a whole-hearted love for my Savior.

An honest examination reveals the places in my heart, life, and mind that are danger zones, as Solomon's relationship with foreign women was his danger zone, which then led to further compromise. I want to be whole-hearted, to completely obey God, rather than the alternative. Are you willing to peer within and ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your life that are causing cooling of His fire within you? Do you want to know in what ways you are hardening your heart, belittling the priority of the gospel, minimizing God? Will you ask God to show you your idols and knock them flat? If you are willing, God will show you—show me—

who we really are in His eyes, ugly spots and messy places and beauty and redeemed children and the whole package.

We will never read of elderly Solomon saying the words of Jesus, "I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do" (John 17:4); or of Paul: "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Instead, we read, "As Solomon grew old, ... 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 Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely ..." (1 Kings 11:4-6). This is a deep sorrow, a terrible grieving: the wisest man in the world made foolish choices that left him separate from God. We see in King Josiah's time (2 Kings 23:13) that the religious sites Solomon had built for the other gods were still standing; I think if Solomon had been repentant of his sin, he would have torn them down. (King Josiah smashed them to the ground!) Those sites were a monument to his failure and a snare to his nation.

## Questions

Isn't it ironic that young Solomon's first public decision was to save the child of a prostitute, but by the end of his life, he was worshiping a god who required offerings in which children were passed through fire?

Isn't it sad that Solomon was energized by questions and conundrums, yet failed to see the puzzle of his own kingdom beginning to fail?

Isn't it puzzling to see Solomon with so much wisdom, yet by the end of his life, he gave in to so much foolishness?

Why didn't Solomon see the value of complete obedience, of whole-hearted living?

Why didn't Solomon comprehend that following God whole-heartedly was the best decision he could have lived out?

Why did the wisest man on earth not believe that God was enough?

Why, after (1) building the magnificent temple, (2) seeing God's glory descend on it, and (3) hearing God answer his prayers, did Solomon then go on to build temples to other gods, basically putting God together with the others, like He—God Almighty!—was "one of the boys"?

Why were Solomon's interactions with God not enough for Solomon?

# Day 2

## The Process: Josiah and Ezra

So how do we recognize our idols? How do we turn away from them and turn back to the Lord? How do we really let go of our guilt and shame? How do we refocus on God? And how do we rest from all this striving?

Let's learn by following this process through two examples. First, read all of 2 Kings 22 and 23 about King Josiah. This is crucial ... don't skip this!

### Recognize

#### What or who are my idols?

King Josiah was twenty-six years old when he got the news: there was a certain book found recently that he needed to read. Hilkiah the high priest sat and patiently read the young king all the Book of the Law, revealing the heart, will, and standards of God as written by Moses long ago. Josiah was cut to the core when the Scriptures revealed the absolute failure of God's people to follow God.

Ezra's story is in Nehemiah 8:1-12. The priest (Ezra) read the Book of the Law to all the people. We know they recognized their sin because they wept and grieved (Nehemiah 8:9-11).

Here's the conclusion: **the word of God reveals our idols.**

### Repent

#### Show you are sorry and are willing to change.

What did Josiah do when he heard how far he and his people were from God? He tore his robes (22:11), he recognized God's righteous anger (v13), he admitted their sin, including himself (v13), he wept (v19), he humbled himself (v19). God was pleased with Josiah's responsive heart (vv18,19): "Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the Lord.'"

List all of the things in chapter 23 that Josiah does to show he is repentant, verse by verse. He was serious! No compromise:

**Verse Repentance shown by ...**

23:1,2 Josiah called a gathering of all the leaders and commoners.

23:2 Josiah read the Book of the Law to all the people

23:3 \_\_\_\_\_

23:4 \_\_\_\_\_

23:5 \_\_\_\_\_

23:6 \_\_\_\_\_

23:7 \_\_\_\_\_

23:8,9 \_\_\_\_\_

23:10 \_\_\_\_\_

23:11 \_\_\_\_\_

23:12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

23:15 \_\_\_\_\_

23:19,20 \_\_\_\_\_

23:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

23:24 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Kings 23:25 summarizes Josiah's thorough repentance: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses."

What does King Josiah inspire you to do? If you told King Josiah your list of idols, what do you think he would say to you? As you fought them and conquered, I think he would've been urging you on, speaking words of strength and God's glory.

Lesson: **turn to the Lord with all your heart** (2 Kings 23:25). Even our "sorry's" can be whole-hearted.

What did the Israelites do at the gathering with Ezra?

Nehemiah 8:1-12 records a gathering of all the Israelites, "men and women and all who were able to understand" (v2). When Ezra stood on the platform and opened the Book of the Law, the people spontaneously "all stood up" (v5) in honor of this Book. There was a time of praise and worship. Ezra the priest read the Book of the Law aloud for hours; "all the people listened attentively" (v3). Those who needed help understanding the meaning of it were given help (v8), and they were moved to tears (v9). They were grieving (vv 10,11); they knew they had been in sin. **Their sorrow showed their "sorry."**

Is your heart responsive to the truth shown in Scripture?

Do you read the Bible to know what the truth is?

When you know you've done something wrong in God's eyes, and that His loving, holy eyes have seen you do it, what do you do or say to Him to show Him you are sorry?

## **Receive and Release**

**Receive God's forgiveness and freedom. Let go of your stress and guilt about your failure and walk in forgiveness.**

The priests and officials urged the Israelites, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them" (Nehemiah 8:9-12).

God's great promise of forgiveness and release is summarized in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So confess your sins, specifically. Remember the truth of the character of God: He is faithful to you and to His promise to forgive you. He is just because He promised to take the blood of Jesus and cover your sin and cleanse you from it. So believe this, God-follower; do your part (confess and repent), believing He will do His (forgive you and purify you), and then move forward. Release your guilt. Release your fear of judgment. Release your sense of shame. You are forgiven and free through the blood of Christ.

## **Refocus**

Don't hyper-focus on yourself, your sin, or your badness. "Poor me" is still pride, because it's still all about you! Instead, **refocus on God**. Worship Him as the God who saves you. (There is a list of songs in Day 5 of this lesson if you would like any ideas.)

## **Rest**

Repentance takes energy. Sleep some, recoup. Have a good meal. Make space to rest. If you are a visually imaginative person, picture yourself resting in the arms of Christ, forgiven and fully restored, grateful and in quiet conversation with Him. Ask Him for great strength when you encounter that same sin again, and believe He will help you. Delight in God, your deliverer. He promises that He will not leave you (Hebrews 13:5); that He will discipline you

because He loves you (Hebrews 12:4-12); that He can deliver you from sin (you have a part to play too) (1 Corinthians 10:12,13).

## Day 3

### Is God enough for you?

One of the most serious questions of this study is this: is God enough for you? He was not enough for Solomon. Solomon needed God AND women, God AND horses from Egypt, God AND wealth, God AND idols. Is God enough for you? Do you need God AND a husband, God AND children, God AND money, God AND success, God and \_\_\_\_\_? Will you make God your "first thing," your Ultimate, your bottom line, your final say, your non-negotiable?

Are His promises of love enough to keep you going when He seems silent or when your prayers seem to ricochet off the ceiling? Is His Holy Spirit enough, and are you willing to listen to Him? Is His grace enough, when you don't want to forgive yourself or anyone else? Is His life enough, even when you feel dead inside? Is His love enough for you?

Most of us want to love and trust God like this, but we don't. That's why the Christian life has been called "a long obedience in the same direction." We continue, maturing along the way, but never reaching our goal until we open our eyes to His glory in Heaven. Take heart! This is a marathon, a commitment, a long-lasting, real-life love that will stand the tests of time and life. He loves you. And He is enough.

### Jesus and Peter: John 21:15-25

Peter had sinned against Jesus by denying their friendship and Jesus' Lordship, not once, but three times. Peter was devastated by his failure and wept, ashamed of himself. Thankfully, that was not the end of Peter's friendship with Jesus. They met privately after Jesus' resurrection, and also had this interaction on a beach after a breakfast of fresh fish.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

We learn from this interaction that Jesus wants us to love Him first; Jesus is to be a "first thing" in our lives, foundational as well as supreme, our first love, THE One. His question is, **"Do you love Me more than these?"** How profound, how devastating, how marvelous! That is the question we use to identify our idols. That is the question we ask to check the temperature of our hearts!

**Jesus' response to Peter's repentant, vulnerable love was to commission him to love; He does the same with us. If the love of Jesus is in first place, you and I (and Peter) will be able to love the sheep of God.**

Not only is Jesus enough; He is also our First Love, and the basis of our love and service.

## Gifts

Another lesson I get from Solomon's life is about gifts. God asked the question, "What do you want Me to give to you?"; Solomon requested wisdom for administering justice; God replied with abundance; Solomon used it; Solomon misused it. How easily we do this too!

**We must want God more than we want the gift.** A gift is His to give; we are stewards of that gift to His glory (not ours). The challenge for us is to receive from God's hand with thankfulness whatever gifts He gives, **and then give them right back to Him to govern.**

What gifts has God given you? Take time to make a list here:

Now, how has He asked you to employ those gifts for His glory? Write your thoughts:

## Humility

We must also approach God's gifts with humility. "What do we have that we did not receive?" We don't "own" the gifts as our own possession to use as we will; we need to seek God's plan for His gifts to us. Solomon could have continued to use the good gift of wisdom

throughout his days. Instead, Solomon became owner and distributor of his gifts and turned to folly. He didn't give God a say. He shut God out. Oh Father God, save us from ever doing that. None of us are above it!

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom . . . Jesus is the wisdom of God . . . Solomon began his reign fearing God, but slow, steady erosion degraded his fear of God into a complacent decrescendo of compromise. Solomon forgot who God was and who he was. **We fade from our God-given selves because we don't know who we are or remember who God is.** Our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29 from Deuteronomy 4:24), as well as our loving Abba . . . but we are never to treat God casually or disrespect His ultimate authority over our lives and this world. We are sinners—we move against God with force or neglect—and without His grace, we could not take our next breath. We forget who He is as we busy-up our lives and get swept away in the forceful stream of doing. We need to repent of this.

Join Henri Nouwen in a prayer to end your study today: "Dear Lord Jesus, I am still so divided. I truly want to follow you, but I also want to follow my own desires and lend an ear to the voices that speak about prestige, success, popularity, pleasure, power, and influence. Help me to become deaf to those voices and more attentive to your voice, which calls me to choose the narrow road to life. I know this will be a very hard road for me. The choice for your way has to be made every moment of my life. I have to choose thoughts that are your thoughts, words that are your words, and actions that are your actions. There are no times and places without choices. And I know how deeply I resist choosing you. Please, Lord, be with me at every moment and in every place. Give me the strength and courage to live my life faithfully, so that I will be able to taste with joy the new life which you have prepared for me. Amen." (*The Road to Daybreak* by Henri J.M. Nouwen)

### **Hope: Ezekiel 37:1-14**

What does a person do with the cold conclusion to Solomon's life? Is there any hope for us? What do we do when we feel dead within, when all is meaningless and vanity, when our fiery hearts have turned cold and stiff?

There is hope. Turn in your Bible to Ezekiel 37 and let's grab onto this hope!

The hand of the Lord was on me [Ezekiel], and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you

with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’”

God can bring what was dry and dead and unattached and useless into life with His command! Don’t give up hope. Does your life feel like this valley of dry bones? Do you know someone who is just a heap like this? Take courage. **God is a God of life and breath and meaning and fire and hope.**

Add to that this Scripture: Genesis 1:1,2:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be ....”

Do you feel as if your life is formless and empty? Is your marriage dead? Do you have some empty relationships in your life right now, and you are longing for them to be filled with God-centered passion and warmth? Ask the Holy Spirit to hover over you and ask God Almighty to create life within you. He created the universe; He can create life within you.

The illustration of the Holy Spirit hovering is an image: it is the picture of a hen with her wings open in a hovering position as she calls to her chicks to come and nest under her wings. It is an image of care, of protection, of nurture. This is an illustration of the God who loves us and brings us life! Run under the shelter of His wings and be safe.

## Legacy

At the very beginning of our study, we answered the question, “What legacy do we want to leave with the young people in our lives?” What did Solomon leave? Proverbs, yes;

songs, yes; magnificent structures, yes! But where was the passion of his heart, the fire in his bones, the joy in his soul? He had left them at the altars of other gods. What had he taught his own son, Rehoboam? Apparently, not enough; the kingdom splits quickly under his reign after he threatens the labor force with difficulty.

So of course we ask ourselves the same questions:

where is the passion of your heart and mine,  
the fire in our bones,  
the joy in our souls?

Have we left them at the altars of other gods, gods of security or success; beauty, brains, and bucks; power, position, privilege; control, culture, and ; children, church, being chosen? None of these are first things; these are secondary or less when compared with the priority of God first.

## Day 4

### **A Foolish Man and a Wise Man**

A cold heart works, but not very well.

Solomon wrote extensively about the fool and his folly, and about the sage and his wisdom. For today, read Proverbs 8 and 9. Make two columns on a piece of paper: left side, FOOLISH. Right side, WISE.

First, Proverbs 8 personifies wisdom, describing her character and invitation, her friendships and power, her benefits and her history. Verses 34-36 contain a critical challenge: *Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.*

Solomon extolled wisdom at the beginning of his reign and pursued her in order to rule, judge, and govern well. He was full of life; did honorable deeds; experienced God's favor; and brought shalom to his kingdom. In his later years, he turned from wisdom and brought harm to himself and his kingdom.

Second, Proverbs 9 sets up an epic battle between wisdom and folly. Solomon begins by using construction imagery (are we surprised?) and then compares the invitations of Wisdom and Folly:

Wisdom	Folly
<b>v1-3 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars [see Isaiah 11]. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city.</b>	The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way.
<b>v4 “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment.</b>	v16 “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment.
<b>v5 Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.</b>	v17 Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!
<b>v6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.</b>	v18 Little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.
<b>v8 Rebuke a wise man and he will love you</b>	v8 Rebuke a mocker and he will hate you
<b>v9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.</b>	v7 Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse.
<b>v12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you</b>	v12 If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer

Isn't it interesting how Solomon sets this up? He constructs his image carefully, as an engineer would. Wisdom is prepared; she has planned. She has a well-created house built on the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD (see Isaiah 11:2-5 for more). Her maids go out among the simple with the exact same invitation as the fool, discretely presenting Wisdom's invitation. Folly, however, is not prepared, but doesn't care. She just sits in her high position and yells at whoever passes by.

Both want the simple to come in, but their motivations could not be more different. Wisdom invites the simple into life, understanding, and greater relational wisdom; Folly invites the simple into death, deceit, and relational suffering.

Wisdom builds up a person in the fear of the LORD; Folly tears down a person every step she takes as they descend into death.

On the chart you have made, follow the same pattern as above and go through these Scriptures as you can make time:

Proverbs 1:32,33	Proverbs 2:12-19	Proverbs 3:35	Proverbs 4:18,19
Proverbs 5:21-23	Proverbs 6:23-25,32	Proverbs 7:4,24-27	Proverbs 10:8,14,23,32
Proverbs 14:8	Proverbs 14:16	Proverbs 15:2	Proverbs 17:10

Proverbs 18:2	Proverbs 21:20	Proverbs 26:1-12 Wow!	Proverbs 29:11
Ecclesiastes 2:13,14	Ecclesiastes 7:4,5,9	Ecclesiastes 9:18	Ecclesiastes 10:3

Now you are prepared to answer these two questions:

What does it mean to be a fool?

What does it mean to be a sage, a wise person?

## Day 5

### **Name & Identity: Solomon/*Shalom* and Jedidiah/*Beloved***

The name “Solomon” (*Shelomoh*) is firmly rooted in the Hebrew word “shalom,” meaning *peace, wholeness, and wellness*. God did grant Solomon peace and rest on every side while he built the temple and still had a flame in his heart. As Solomon moved away from God, even his name was calling him back to the Prince of Peace. Solomon lost his peace and wholeness as he rejected the God who sent him his true identity: God asked at Solomon’s birth that he be called “Jedediah,” *one beloved of the Lord* (2 Samuel 12:25). Names were so important to this culture; at the end of this era, Jesus will be given a Name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9, Revelation 19:1-16). He promises a new name to us as we overcome (Revelation 2:17). So why didn’t David and Bathsheba follow through with this God-given name? We do not know.

What name has God given to **you**? As His child, you are His beloved, His chosen (Ephesians 1:11), His daughter or son, His treasured possession (Exodus 19:5), His handiwork (Ephesians 2:10). He has set His affection on you (Deuteronomy 10:15) and gladly sacrificed for you. He could not do anything more to express His love for you. Hear Him call you with

affection today. It was a tradition that when a person became a believer, they could adopt a new name, as Paul did (formerly Saul). Listen; is He whispering a new name just for you?

You, as a member of His family, not only have His gift of *shalom*, but you are also His beloved. What riches! What a gift! Wrap yourself up in it and rest.

## **Repentance**

Take time to examine your life, to allow God to identify sin within you, and to repent honestly. This could take minutes, days, or longer; we are constantly in process! Just stay with Him and be faithful to deal with what He brings to your mind.

## **Worship**

I have found music to be so helpful in repentance, so I would like to suggest a few songs for you to sing through as you work your way through any repentance you have to do:

Come to Me (Jenn Johnson)

One Thing Remains (Jesus Culture)

Stronger (Newsboys)

Jesus Paid it All (classic hymn)

Just As I Am (classic hymn)

The More I Seek You (Kari Jobe)

Gravity (Shawn McDonald)

Deep in Love With You (Michael W Smith)

Set a Fire; Reach for Me (Will Reagan & United Pursuit Band)

Restless; You Speak (Audrey Assad)

Lose Myself (Toby Mac)

How He Loves (David Crowder Band)

## **Living a whole-hearted, full faith**

More than anything, after this study, I want you to live a whole-hearted faith. I want you to be fully open to God, full of His flames, bringing light and heat and heart everywhere you go! To help you keep the “whole-hearted” theme in mind, look up these Scriptures. Copy them down and post them around your house, in your car, on your mirror. Keep them near until you learn them:

Deuteronomy 4:29  
Deuteronomy 6:5  
Deuteronomy 10:12  
Joshua 22:5  
1 Samuel 12:24

Proverbs 3:5  
Jeremiah 29:11-13  
Joel 2:12,13  
Mark 12:33  
Matthew 22:36-38

## Moving Forward

So let's test ourselves a bit:

Without looking at notes or Scripture, what are your impressions of Solomon?

What are the most important lessons and Scriptures you took away from each Lesson?

Roots:

Becoming:

Building:

Crossroads:

Legacy:

Where is Solomon recorded in Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

What is one lesson from the life and times of this man that you are going to carry with you for your lifetime?

The lessons in Solomon's life are so relevant today! Do you see your strengths and weaknesses in Solomon? He started well, but finished poorly. He lost his "first things." He compromised without an eye to the consequences. At the end of your life, when you tell your story to your grandchildren or neighbors or all those whom God brings to you, what will you say about the reality of God in your life? What will your legacy be? What spiritual heritage will you bring into this world for coming generations?

Scholars debate whether Solomon regained his faith in God toward the end of his life. I don't know if he did or not. His fate in God's capable hands; He knows what to do!

As you take time to read one chapter of Proverbs per day—there are 31, enough for a long month—will you ask yourself, do I take my own advice? Am I listening to the wisdom around me? Am I learning what it takes to live a God-centered, wise life from Proverbs? Am I growing more wise and less foolish in my choices? Solomon would have lived a happier, more fulfilled life if he had taken his own advice to heart.

And now, friend, take time today and leaf back through each section of Solomon's life. Choose at least one lesson for each section to take with you to plant in your heart. Fertilize it well through the years! God's word always bears fruit—read Isaiah 55:10 and 11.

Think on God. What did you learn about Him? **Above and beyond all else, remember what you learned about Him.** Then when you meet Him in heaven, you can smile and tell Him that you learned \_\_\_\_\_ about Him through the life of Solomon.

Lord God, Holy One,  
keep the lessons You have taught us in our hearts and minds forever until we see Your face.  
Remind us of You often, and help us remember  
we need You for ourselves,  
we need You for our area of "government,"  
we need You for the task You give us.  
Grant us whole-hearted devotion to You.  
You are enough!  
Amen!

The end of a matter is better than its beginning,  
and patience is better than pride.

~Ecclesiastes 7:8