

CHAPTER 13

The King Who Had It All

TIMELESS TRUTH: Complete your walk - Finish faithful.

CHAPTER SUMMARY: (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

The “man after God’s own heart” had known seasons of triumph and tragedy, yet his legacy is marked by overall faithfulness and trust that God would keep His word. David’s story closes with instruction and warning for his son, Solomon, who was already poised to carry on the heritage. David charged the new king with the divinely appointed task of leading God’s chosen nation and urged him to “walk in His ways,” so their family would “never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel,” as God had promised.

Solomon’s reign began with a series of defining events. He married the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and ironically, the nation that had once enslaved Israel now sought the good graces of God’s people. Then God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to grant his heart’s desire. Solomon asked for wisdom to lead and God was pleased to grant this request and gave him wealth and honor as well. His wisdom was quickly tested when two prostitute mothers fought over a son. Solomon correctly judged in favor of the true mother and his people held him in awe. Solomon’s keen wisdom became the hallmark of his reign and gave him insight into human nature. He penned thousands of proverbs that gained him an international reputation. People from around the world sought him out and Abraham’s descendants became a blessing to the whole world as Solomon demonstrated that the cornerstone of all wisdom is a holy fear of God.

During Solomon’s reign, peace prevailed in the Promised Land. The time had come to build a temple for God. The construction project was massive and followed the pattern of the tabernacle that had been used since the days of Moses. The end result was as majestic as one could imagine. With great reverence, Solomon had the ark placed in the Most Holy Place. The temple was filled with a cloud of God’s glory and Solomon humbly realized that even a magnificent temple could not sufficiently contain Him. Still, the temple would become the enduring focal point of worship and life for God’s people.

Following the dedication of the temple, God appeared to Solomon and warned him of the consequences Israel would face if they turned away from Him. “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land” (p. 188). He also promised Solomon a royal dynasty in Israel if the king remained faithful. But if Israel followed other gods, God’s people would be cut off from the land.

King Solomon experienced phenomenal success. His wealth and wisdom were legendary. His reign was marked by peace and prosperity. But all of Solomon’s insight and riches could not make up for his choice to collect wives like gold. He married hundreds of women, many of them foreigners. Just like God had said, his foreign wives “turned his heart after other gods.” This single decision shaped the future of his descendants and of the nation of Israel.

Solomon’s story began with great promise, incomparable wisdom and magnificent achievement. His father and grandfather had also started out well, but the way each of them ended was disappointing. There are no final words of wisdom recorded for the wisest king of all time. Instead, his closing chapter reveals that the kingdom would be torn in two. Solomon spent his last days fighting off enemies and rebels. His splendor and his legacy were tarnished by disobedience and idolatry. What a sad ending for the king who had it all, but ultimately failed in the only thing that really mattered: finishing well.

DISCUSSION STARTER:

What is one of the smartest things you have ever done?

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. How did Solomon (and other Israelites) show love for the LORD in the Old Testament? How does this differ from New Testament believers? (See John 14:15, 15:12, and 1 John 5:2-3.)
2. Look at Solomon's prayer of dedication. What does this teach you about how you should approach God?
3. Solomon authored many proverbs that teach general principles of wise and practical living. Some examples are found on pages 179-183. Choose one that you particularly like or one that resonates with you. What is the main point that it communicates? How might your life be different if you applied the proverb?
4. Using what you have learned about Israel's history in previous chapters of The Story, why did Solomon make the dedication of the temple such a big event? What would it have been like to experience it first hand?
5. Compare God's promises to Solomon with His promises to David (p. 159). Which promise(s) had God faithfully fulfilled? What would Solomon and his descendants need to do to keep a successor on the throne (p. 176, 188-189)? How could Israel avoid captivity (p. 189-188)?
6. Solomon accumulated unprecedented riches. Look up Deuteronomy 17:15-17 and 28:1-14. Did Solomon go too far? Is extreme wealth a good thing or a bad thing?
7. As Solomon grew older, he was a rich and established ruler, but he did not apply the wisdom that defined his early career. How can you continue to seek wisdom, even after you have experienced success?
8. Solomon's failures began when he married women who served other gods. Why is it important for a husband and wife to both be committed Christians? What advice would you give someone who is considering dating a non-Christian?

In the time remaining ask your group members to share any of their personal reflection insights from their journal entries.