



Scripture



1 Kings 11:1-4, 9-13; 12:12-17

1 King Solomon loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh's daughter: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women **2** from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, and they must not intermarry with you, because they will turn your heart away to follow their gods." To these women Solomon was deeply attached in love. **3** He had seven hundred wives who were princesses and three hundred who were concubines, and they turned his heart away. **4** When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to follow other gods. He was not wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD his God, as his father David had been. ... **9** The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. **10** He had commanded him about this, so that he would not follow other gods, but Solomon did not do what the LORD had commanded. **11** Then the LORD said to Solomon, "Since you have done this and did not keep my covenant and my statutes, which I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. **12** However, I will not do it during your

lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of your son's hand. **13** Yet I will not tear the entire kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem that I chose." ... **12** So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered: "Return to me on the third day." **13** Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him **14** and spoke to them according to the young men's advice: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips." **15** The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the LORD to carry out his word, which the LORD had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. **16** When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him: What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Israel, return to your tents; David, now look after your own house! So Israel went to their tents, **17** but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.

Unit .12

Session .04

A Son Rejects Wisdom

Intro Options



Main Point:
**Half-hearted
devotion leads to
foolish choices.**

Option 1

Poll your students: how many of them would be willing to date two people at the same time? Why or why not?

Now tell your students to imagine one of their romantic interests approaches them and says, “I kind of have a thing for you. But I also have a thing for this other person. I wondered if you’d be interested in being my significant other, but you’d have to be okay with me dating this other person, too. I promise I’d treat you both equally.” How many of your students would be interested in this prospect?

Sometimes we think we can handle devotion to two things, or two people. But we almost never like the idea of splitting someone else’s love with another person. Solomon tried to divide his devotion between God and false gods, but that division ended up dooming himself and others.

Option 2

Pass out a sheet of paper and a drawing utensil to each of your students. Tell them you’ve got a friend who works at the Visual Dictionary: it’s a book that defines words by drawing them for people who can’t read. Your friend is up against a deadline and needs entries for a final word within the next fifteen minutes. The word is fool or foolish. Have your kids take a maximum of ten minutes to draw the entry for the dictionary.

Afterward, have them show their drawings and explain them. Look for connections to the lesson (maybe the picture shows someone who compromised his or her devotion, or maybe the picture shows bad consequences or problems for other people). Use those connections to introduce Rehoboam’s folly to them.

TEACHING PLAN

Everything we have seen about Solomon has been positive up to this point in the story. God has blessed him with wisdom, and Solomon used that wisdom to benefit God's people. God blessed him with peace, giving Solomon the ability to build the temple. Things have gone well. It looked like God's promises to Abraham were coming true: God's people had been rescued, they were living in the land God promised to them, they had a good and wise king, and other nations were being blessed by Solomon's wisdom. But would it last? How would history remember Solomon's reign?

First Kings 10 describes Solomon's great wisdom and wealth. It describes the Queen of Sheba as mesmerized by the depth of his insight, and it gives us a detailed list of his possessions.

If Solomon's story stopped there, we would be applauding him as the greatest king in Israel. We might even be wondering if he was (at last!) the long-awaited king whose sons would rule over God's people in God's promised land forever. Unfortunately, the story goes on to reveal Solomon's compromise and downfall.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-4.




What we see here is one of the most illustrative pictures of idolatry in the Bible. Idolatry and foolishness go hand in hand. If wisdom means to fear the Lord first and foremost, then foolishness is to place something above the Lord. Foolish choices always accompany idolatry.

In Solomon's case, there is no outright rejection of God. He wasn't setting God aside; he was adding other gods around God. He wasn't disregarding the Lord altogether; he was partially regarding the Lord. He chose to follow Yahweh alongside other gods.

Solomon's sin began when he decided to disregard the Lord's commands. Before God brought Israel to the promised land, He gave them specific commands about how kings were to conduct themselves. They were not to gather much gold and horses for themselves, and they were not to acquire many wives (Deut. 17:14-20). If they did, their hearts would go astray. We see this fleshed out in Solomon's life. He acquired much wealth, vast amounts of horses and chariots, and he had one thousand women in his court. The result? His heart was led astray.

- **Solomon disregarded God's command about having too many physical possessions. How can this serve as a warning for us? What are some physical possessions that have interfered with your walk with Christ?**
- **Solomon also allowed personal relationships in his life to direct his affections away from God. How can we avoid similar outcomes in our own relationships?**

Our choices impact others, often more than we know. When we make foolish choices, we inevitably create problems for those around us. Solomon's son reaped the consequences of his idolatry, and so did the nation of Israel, which saw a divided monarchy for the first time in its history. Let's read about the Lord's response to the folly Solomon allowed in his life. 

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Half-hearted devotion leads to foolish choices.

1 Kings 11

1-4. The half-hearted devotion in Solomon's heart was much more serious than a poor wardrobe choice. It wasn't merely that he indulged his foreign wives by patronizing their gods. That was bad enough, but it went beyond even that. Solomon followed these false gods himself. Ashtoreth, the fertility goddess, had been a snare to the Israelites since they first arrived in the promised land (Judg. 2:13). The worship of Molech (Milcom) demanded child sacrifices (Lev. 20:2-5). Both Milcom and Chemosh are described as "abhorrent" (or "detestable" and "an abomination" in some translations). While these idols are mentioned earlier in Scripture, this is the first time there is any mention of them being worshiped by Israelites. It is not a stretch to assume then that Solomon introduced their worship in Israel, as well as any number of other gods, according to verse 8. As if this weren't enough, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh and Milcom "on the hill across from Jerusalem." The great builder of the temple built pagan altars within sight of that very temple. Thus is the shamelessness of sin. On one hill, Solomon would continue to try to worship the Lord. On the adjacent hill, within view, he would worship pagan gods. But in reality, by doubling his efforts to worship, Solomon ended up failing to worship at all. Worshiping false gods is not worship; it's sin. And Solomon would learn what would happen when he tried to worship holy God apart from full devotion—it would be rejected.

Although verse 4 says that Solomon's heart was turned away from God "when he was old," the seeds of that turning away were planted years, if not decades, before. We merely see the fruit born from it here. It is the nature of sin to work on us over time. At some point, Solomon left his first love (Rev. 2:4), and as the king goes, so goes the kingdom.

If there was anyone who was perfectly set up for success, it was Solomon. As the tenth son of King David, he grew up with all the comforts and privileges befitting a prince. Solomon was the only king of Israel to whom God appeared in a dream in Scripture (1 Kings 3:5). God even appeared to Solomon again after the temple was dedicated (2 Chron. 7:11). He not only had God's law, but he had more God-given wisdom to understand and apply God's law than anyone else. Finally, he had specific warnings from God of what would happen if he turned away from following Him (2 Chron. 7:19-22).

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 104, DDG)

Sin's Effects in the World

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.



TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Kings 11:9-13.



Solomon had so much going for him, yet he still managed to rebel against God. The wisest man ever wasn't wise enough. This reminds us that in the human condition, we are all dead in sin, and we delight in rebelling against God, no matter what. Left to our own devices, we will take the best of God's provisions and turn them against Him. Even if we had Solomon's wisdom, we would do the same. Sin plagues our hearts no less.

As sinful and wretched as we are, God is that much more merciful and gracious. And yet, while God is incredibly patient with humanity (2 Pet. 3:9), He is not infinitely patient. He is completely just to give us exactly what our rebellious hearts deserve, and that is precisely what He does at times. That is what we see here with Solomon.

▪ How has God “set you up for success” to follow Him?

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Before his coronation was even completed, the people, who asked Jeroboam to be there as well, brought a request before their new king: as Solomon had placed a heavy yoke on the people, would Rehoboam lighten it (1 Kings 12:4)? The new king told the people to return in three days to receive their answer.


Read 1 Kings 12:12-17.



Despite his vast wisdom, Solomon's sin that led to Israel's fracture was folly, as was Rehoboam's choice to listen to the “wisdom” of his peers and the conventional “wisdom” of the northern tribes. So much wisdom; so much more foolishness.

With the death of Solomon, Israel's golden age came to an end. The next four hundred years of Israel's history would be marked by division, downfall, and ultimate dissolution. All of which can be traced back to one king's folly. But on God's timeline, the fall of the earthly kingdom of Israel paved the way for the spiritual restoration of Israel and the coming of the Son of David. (See Rev. 11:15.)

▪ Solomon's foolishness blinded him to the long term effects his sin would have on those around him. Why do you think people don't usually consider the negative impact sin can have on those around them?

Like Solomon, Rehoboam, and the northern tribes, we too are prone to make foolish decisions. We too are sinners who, without God's help, will rebel against God every chance we have. Yet, God is patient. But God is also just and because He loves us, He will discipline us to draw us to repentance. We cannot forget this. Nor can we forget that our foolishness—our sin—is not done in a vacuum. Our sin can, and often does, affect others. Thankfully, God's grace is able to cover all of our foolishness and all of our sin. And in Christ Jesus, that is exactly what it does. 

▪ How have you see your sin affect others? How have you see God's grace cover over it?

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
**Half-hearted
devotion leads to
foolish choices.**

1 Kings 11

9-13. Israel's long period of peace came to an end with Solomon's apostasy. God told Solomon that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant (Jeroboam, according to v. 26). Yet even with this stunning judgment, the Lord sounded two grace notes. First, the kingdom would not be divided until after Solomon died (v. 11). Second, it would not be torn entirely away from the house of David. God would allow one tribe to remain aligned with Judah (v. 12). The reason for these grace notes? For the sake of David and Jerusalem (v. 32).

Activity

Have your kids imagine that some local school districts have hired your group out to make some posters they have to put up their halls. The posters are to line up with a theme: "Foolish Choices: Past, Present, and Future." Specifically, they want three posters designed: The first poster should be about the past of foolish choices: they come from a divided, unfocused heart (point 1 of the lesson). The second poster should be about the present of foolish choices: they always have bad consequences tagging along (point 2 of the lesson). The third poster should be about the future of foolish choices: they create long-term problems for others (point 3 of the lesson).

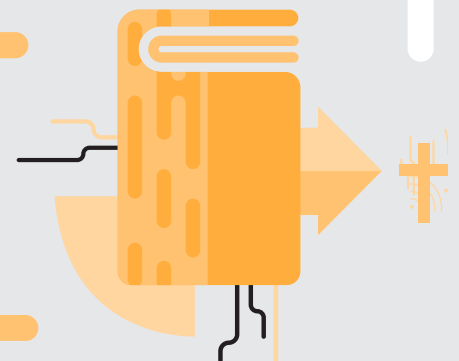
Some of the districts are public schools and some are Christian, so your kids can make posters with biblical themes or not. One group or individual might make a poster featuring Solomon or Rehoboam; another might make a poster featuring a cowboy, or an average middle school student, or a rock star. The more creative the better: the first poster might show Foolish Choices personified as a traveler leaving the split city of Divided Focus; the second might show a cowboy named Bad Consequences riding on a horse named Foolish Choices; the third might show a basketball player shooting a basketball labelled "Problems" into a net labelled "Other People." Or the posters might be less symbolic and show actual examples of divided devotion (playing video games while doing homework), bad consequences (being grounded), or problems for others (a boy hurt and sitting alone at a school dance).

Feel free to split the kids up as you see best: as individuals or as groups; you can assign a group of three posters to a single group, or one poster per group.

Let the students show their posters, and use them to discuss how Solomon's example here is one we should not follow.

(p. 106, DDG) Christ Connection

Solomon was a king whose reign was marked by prosperity and peace, but in the end, his sinful compromise led to the division of the kingdom. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke of Himself when He claimed "something greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). Whereas Solomon's sinful choices divided the kingdom, Christ's righteous submission to God established a new unity for God's people.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



How does Solomon's story challenge the way we think about earthly rulers?

What wisdom can we offer to others who have placed their security in earthly figures instead of in Jesus?

Heart



What does Solomon's compromise in devotion to God on account of his relationships teach us about guarding our heart?

What wisdom would you offer someone whose devotion to God is being compromised?

Hands



How does the story of Solomon challenge us to live from day to day?

What are some specific ways you live differently this week as a result?

Main Point: **Half-hearted devotion leads to foolish choices.**



Head

When we look at the life of Solomon we have reason to be both disheartened and encouraged. We are disheartened that he compromised his devotion to God and derailed his kingship. But we should also be encouraged because we know that the story does not end there. Solomon is not our king. He is not the true king. We are only to glance at Solomon, and then turn our gaze on the true King.

Solomon dazzled the world with his wisdom, riches, and power, yet look at how things ended. He failed. Earthly kings, rulers, and powers will always fail us. We must not look to them. We must look to Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). He will never leave us or forsake us. His love is constant. His grace is limitless. His mercies are new every day. We have much to learn from men like Solomon. But beyond all the wise proverbs and sayings that he has given us, perhaps the biggest lesson we take away from him is that we need Jesus more than we've ever imagined.



Heart

Today we toss around the word “love” just as freely to describe everything from how we feel about pets, to how we feel about God, to how we feel about the car we drive (or wish to drive) and our favorite ice cream. While we may argue that our love for a car is not the same as our love for God, we have to ask if they are in opposition to one another. Is our love for possessions, comfort, pleasure, even others creeping in and infringing on our love for God? Are we allowing these things—even the good gifts from God—to divide our hearts? Is our love for God waning as our love for these other things grows? Our visceral reaction might be to declare that our love for these other things is totally different from how we feel about God. But what do our actions reflect? What consumes our thoughts? Our time? Our efforts? What are we most afraid to lose? How we answer these questions will reveal much about our hearts and help us discover any splintering in our affections for God.



Hands

There are several practical applications that stem from this session that should challenge the way we live from day to day. We can learn from Solomon about the traps of material possessions and unhealthy relationships, and how those can lead one's heart astray. We can be on guard more when it comes to fending off heart idols. We can be challenged with the fact that, as with the people of Solomon's time, our world today needs a greater wisdom—a wisdom that saves. And as Christians, we are the ones to talk about Him. Whatever the application, be sure to not just hear this story, but allow it to challenge you to live differently as a result.

Sources

UNIT TWO

Session One

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne), 2015.
2. Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace and Why the World Needs More of It* (Zondervan), 1997.

UNIT THREE

Session One

1. Daniel Golman, *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam Books), 2005.