

BIBLE BACKGROUND

JOURNEY 2: “Wise as Solomon”

The Glory Days of Israel

Key Passage:

1 Kings 3:7–14; 8:12–25;
10:1–9

Key Verse:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all. . . and it will be given him.”

—James 1:5

Key Word:

Wisdom

Key Thought:

I want to fill my mind with God’s wisdom.

SOLOMON, DAVID’S SUCCESSOR

Before David died, he publicly proclaimed that Solomon was to be his successor. God had determined that Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, would inherit the throne of Israel.

Solomon’s rule ushered in the Golden Age of Israel.

- He conquered the warlike peoples that surrounded Israel in order to enlarge his territory.
- He expanded the kingdom until it covered 60,000 square miles; this was 10 times larger than the kingdom David inherited from King Saul.⁷ The nation of Israel encompassed all the land God had described to Joshua (Joshua 1:4).
- He made political alliances with countries surrounding Israel to ensure peace.
- He did away with the old tribal systems and divided the land into 12 administrative districts with an officer appointed over each.
- Because Israel was located in the middle of all the important trade routes in the

⁷ “Understanding Kings and Chronicles,” *What the Bible Is All About* by Dr. Henrietta C. Mears, Regal Books, rev. ed. 1998, p. 145.

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ancient world, Solomon was able to establish a vibrant economy based on trade and commercialism. Merchant caravans carried Israel's commodities through the deserts and up and down the Nile River into the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates.

A STATE VISIT FROM THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

The Queen of Sheba heard of the wealth and the wisdom of the great King Solomon. (1 Kings 10:1–9). She came bearing gifts, but her primary goal was to verify what she had heard about this king, his wealth and the nation of Israel. She tested his wisdom by asking him many things he easily answered. When she saw his wealth, the palace he had built and the temple to his God, she was left breathless (1 Kings 10:5). She declared that the wisdom and prosperity she had seen exceeded what she had heard. She affirmed that it was God's certain blessings on Solomon that had made the nation of Israel so great.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon is known throughout history for his great wisdom (1 Kings 3:7–9). He is credited with having written 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32) and more than a thousand songs of praise.

One example of Solomon's wisdom is found in the story of two women arguing over a child as described in 1 Kings 3:16–28.

- The two women lived in the same house. Both of them had recently given birth to a son.
- One woman claimed that in the middle of the night the other woman had rolled over on her baby and killed him.
- She accused the woman of switching her dead child with her living child while she was asleep.
- Now both women claimed the living child as their own.
- They were asking Solomon to determine who the real mother was.
- Solomon studied the matter carefully. He called for his sword and ordered his servants to cut the child in half and give one half to each woman.
- One woman begged the wise king not to do such a thing but to give the child to the other woman so that he might live.
- The other woman agreed to splitting of the child in half so that neither one would have a son.
- Judging from the two different responses, King Solomon was able to discern who the real mother was. He gave the child to the woman who had been willing to give

up her son in order that he might live. He knew the woman who had lied was the one who did not object to the death of the baby.

When the people of Israel heard of the king's decision, they recognized his wisdom as coming only from the blessing of God.

SOLOMON'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT:

1 Kings 8:12–25

Solomon's greatest achievement was the construction of a beautiful temple in the heart of Jerusalem. David had wanted to build the temple, but God had reserved that task for Solomon (2 Samuel 7:12–13). David had waged many wars and killed many people in order to secure the borders of Israel. This shedding of blood prevented him from building the temple himself (1 Chronicles 22:8) However, David made detailed plans for the temple as God directed him (1 Chronicles 28:11–13). Its basic design was like that of the tabernacle with the two inner areas designated as the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. He gave much of his wealth to the project. He collected the best building materials available to place at Solomon's disposal. He bartered with King Hiram of Tyre in order to obtain wood from the great cedars of Lebanon. When the time was right, God ordered the temple built. Solomon began laying its foundation stones 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. The year was 960 B.C.

The temple site was located on the spot where Abraham had offered Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:2). Jews call this site the Temple Mount. The building site was to be kept quiet and worshipful at all times. The stone cutting and woodwork were done offsite so as to make this possible (1 Kings 6:7–15). The project took seven years to complete.

When the temple was finished, Solomon had the ark of the covenant brought out from the tabernacle and placed in the temple in the area designated as the "Most Holy Place." A cloud filled the area as the Shekinah glory of God descended. Solomon rose before the people to dedicate the temple to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He said:

"O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart." —1 Kings 8:23

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Here are some interesting facts about the temple.

- Solomon poured tons of gold into the temple's construction. At today's prices, the building would be worth billions of dollars.
- In 586 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and burned it to the ground. The ark of the covenant disappeared. The people were taken captive.
- In 536 B.C., King Darius of Persia allowed Zerubbabel and about 50,000 people to return to the plundered city and begin the temple's reconstruction. It was finished in 516 B.C., 70 years after its destruction.
- In 20 B.C., Herod the Great remodeled the temple, doubling its height and widening the floor plan. It is believed that with such improvements Herod's temple exceeded the beauty and greatness of Solomon's.⁸
- Herod's temple is the one where Jesus was dedicated and the one He visited as a boy of 12. It is in this temple that Jesus confronted the money changers and noted the widow's gift of two mites.
- In 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed the temple with fire. The gold melted and filled the seams between the stones. Roman soldiers tore the walls apart in an effort to take the gold for themselves. This fulfilled Jesus' prediction in Matthew 24:2 that not one stone of the temple would be left sitting upon another.⁹
- Today on this same site stands the Dome of the Rock, a temple built by those who worship Mohammed.

THE SECRET OF SOLOMON'S DECLINE¹⁰

Solomon reigned in Israel for 40 years. He had levied heavy taxes on the people to pay for his army, his navy, and his special projects. Such heavy taxation resulted in discontent and rebellion among the people. He brought in foreign workers to expand his government complex in Jerusalem. He built a palace that astounded his own subjects. There was corruption among his own officials. The people protested over the hardships Solomon had brought into their lives.

It was Solomon's own unfaithfulness to God that demanded judgment. His alliances with many foreign countries had resulted in a collection of wives and concubines who embraced idol worship. Encouraged by them, Solomon erected temples to many of these idol gods and even participated in their worship. He had lost the wisdom he

⁸ *Charting the End Times* by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, p. 98, Harvest House Publishers, 2001

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Mears, pp. 148–149.

once so highly prized. He could no longer see that what he did not have was more valuable than all he had. He had placed his country in grave peril.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all. . . and it will be given him.”

—James 1:5

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TEACHING PLAN

JOURNEY 2: “Wise as Solomon”

The Glory Days of Israel



Key Passage 1 Kings 3:7–14; 8:12–25; 10:1–9	Key Word <i>Wisdom</i>
KEY VERSE: <i>“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all . . . and it will be given him.”</i> —James 1:5	Key Thought: I want to fill my mind God’s wisdom.



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

A. CONNECT the Big Room experience with the Bible story by asking the students questions about how the things they saw relate to the key word and the key thought for the day. Use the following questions to stimulate conversation.

- a. “Who needed a big dose of wisdom in Living with Fish?”
- b. “Why is wisdom important?”
- c. “How do you think a person learns how to be wise?”

B. WISDOM CHECK

ASK the students to get into table groups and discuss the following ideas. Table Group Leaders (TGL) will need to guide the conversation by asking the following questions.

- What does the word *wisdom* mean?
- Whom do you know that you could call “a wise person?”
- Where do you think that person got his/her wisdom?
- How do you think you can gain wisdom?

CALL the groups back together and ask them to share what they discussed.

DEFINE wisdom as “seeing life from God’s perspective.” You can even climb up on a chair to demonstrate this

C. KING/QUEEN FOR A DAY

If you could be a king or a queen for just one day and you could have anything you wanted, what would you ask for? *[Write the answers the class gives on the board and briefly comment.]*

SAY: The Bible tells us in Proverbs 3:13 that the person who finds wisdom is blessed. Wisdom is more valuable than silver and more profitable than gold. If something is that valuable, I would think we would all want to make sure that we have some. Let’s see what the man in our Bible lesson today really thought about wisdom.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

A. ISRAEL’S HISTORY

REVIEW Israel’s history by making these points.

- Israel wanted a king like all the other nations.
- God allowed them to be ruled by King Saul who proved to be a terrible king.
- Eventually, another king came to rule when Saul was killed in battle.
- This king was special to God. He was a man after God’s own heart. He was young but very brave. Who was he? (David)
- David ruled over Israel for 40 years and then his son took over the throne. Who was his son? (Solomon)
- Read aloud 1 Kings 1:39 and 1 Kings 2:10–12.

B. SOLOMON GETS HIS WISH: 1 Kings 3:7–14

HAVE the students open their Bibles to 1 Kings 3:7–14 as the passage is read aloud. **ASK** them the following questions.

- God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for anything he wanted. What did he ask for (verses 9–11)?
- How did God respond to his request (verse 10)?
- What else did God give Solomon (verse 13)?
- Why did this please God?
- How would this help Solomon as a king?



TABLE TALK 1: 1 KINGS 3:16–28

ASK the class to get into their table groups. Provide each Table Group Leader (TGL) with the following scenario to read to his/her group. *[If possible, use a baby doll as a visual aid.]*

- One night a mother lay sleeping in bed with her infant son. Accidentally, she rolled over and suffocated the child.
- Realizing what she had done, she replaced her dead baby with a baby from another mother who also lived in the same house and was sleeping nearby.
- The next morning the woman whose baby had been taken was shocked to wake and find a dead baby in bed with her.
- Looking around to see what could have happened to her child, she found her baby safe and sound in the arms of the mother who had killed her own child.
- Both mothers claimed this baby as their own.
- Unable to resolve the conflict, the two mothers appeared before King Solomon and asked him to identify the baby's real mother.

How could the king possibly determine the real mother?

ALLOW the TGLs to guide this conversation among the students for two to three minutes and then call the entire group back together. Let the students share some of their solutions to this problem.

C. PULL OUT a sword as a visual aid. **ASK** how a sword could possibly have helped Solomon with this dilemma. **READ** aloud from 1 Kings 3:23–28. **ASK** how Solomon could have known how to solve this conflict. (He was filled with God's wisdom.)

D. SOLOMON BUILDS A HOUSE: 1 Kings 8:12–25

SAY: Solomon not only was a wise king but he knew how to organize and run his kingdom well. Here are a few other things he was known for.¹¹

- He expanded the kingdom of his father David from 6,000 square miles to 60,000 square miles.

¹¹ "Understanding Kings and Chronicles," *What the Bible Is All About* by Henrietta C. Mears, Regal Books, 1998, p. 145.

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- He did away with the old tribal system known as the 12 tribes of Israel and divided the land into 12 districts with an official appointed to govern each district.
- He set up trade routes with other nations that brought goods and materials into the heart of Israel.
- He brought peace to his country by conquering warlike groups of people who tried to invade Israel.
- He made alliances with other countries that insured peace on their borders.

ASK: Does anyone know Solomon's greatest achievement as king?
[Assemble pictures from the web to illustrate the following: the tabernacle, Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, Herod's temple, the Dome of the Rock and the ark of the covenant. Make labels for each picture so that students can identify them correctly.]



TABLE TALK 2

HAND each TGL a set of pictures and labels. **ASK** each table group to figure out which temple Solomon built. When this has been done, describe the other temples and **ASK** the students to label each item on the page. Here are descriptions you can use.

- The tabernacle was a moveable "tent of meeting" that the Israelites used in the desert as they traveled toward the Promised Land. It symbolized God dwelling among His people. Solomon's temple would be modeled after the tabernacle. Find and label this picture.
- Solomon's temple was built in 960 B.C. It took seven years to build. He built it on the same spot where Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice. The walls made of cedar and cypress wood were overlaid with pure gold. Pure silver and precious stones were used throughout the building as decoration. This gold and silver had been provided by both David and Solomon. The people also gave what they had. Label Solomon's temple.
- Jeremiah prophesied that Solomon's temple along with the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the sins of the people (Jeremiah 27). This came to pass in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians

invaded Judah and took its people captive.

- In 536 B.C., Darius of Persia allowed the captives to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the temple was rebuilt but not with the same beauty and magnificence as that of Solomon. It is said that the people wept when they compared this new temple with that of Solomon. Find and label Zerubbabel's temple.
- Herod the Great, was made governor of Galilee by the Romans. Sometime around 20 B.C., he rebuilt Zerubbabel's temple and enlarged the floor plan. This was the temple where Jesus was dedicated as a baby; where He visited as a boy of 12 and amazed the elders; where He drove out the moneychangers; and where the veil in the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom. Find and label Herod's Temple.
- Today in Israel, a mosque sits on the site where the temple once stood where Muslims come to worship Mohammed. It is called the Dome of the Rock. Find and label this picture.



THE CROSSROADS

When Jesus died on the Cross and the veil in the temple was torn, the barrier between God and man was removed. Jesus made that access possible. Once we have received Christ as Savior, we can come before God in prayer to find forgiveness because we have been saved by faith in Him. Now we have become "the temple of God" where Jesus lives within our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14–17). If you had to draw a picture of the temple today where God dwells, what would you draw? (*a picture of a person*) Christ in me becomes possible when I do the following.

- Admit that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23).
- Believe in my heart that Jesus paid the penalty for my own sin when He died (Romans 5:8; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3–5; Romans 1:16).
- Confess that I desire to have a relationship with Jesus by giving Him first place in my life (Romans 10:9–10; 13).

[Explain the plan of salvation and close in prayer. Invite anyone who wants to speak with you privately about their relationship with Christ to do so.]



BIBLE LEARNING PROJECT:

Wisdom Coasters

Supplies: Ceramic coasters, permanent markers

- Distribute markers among the students.
- Provide each student with one coaster.
- Instruct the students to write “WISDOM” across the face of the coaster. On the back, they should write the reference: “James 1:5.”
- To fill one’s mind with God’s wisdom, one must pray and read the Bible every day. Challenge the students to read the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds with the day’s date. Read chapter 1 of Proverbs on the first day of the month and so on for the next 30 days. Wisdom comes as we learn to apply the truth of God’s Word in every situation.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY: *James 1:5*

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all. . . and it will be given him.”

ASK the students to identify ways a person may obtain wisdom
Solomon wanted to rule his nation wisely so he asked God to give him wisdom to know the difference between good and evil.

STAND UP on a chair and look out over the room and give this definition of wisdom: “Wisdom is seeing life through God’s eyes.”

Put your fists up to your eyes to form binoculars. If we saw our circumstances, the behavior of other people, and our own problems through God’s eyes, we would know better how to deal with life.

ALLOW the students to take turns repeating the key verse as they stand on a chair or small platform. This will help give them a new perspective on wisdom.

SAY the verse together as a group and then close in prayer.

ASK each student to pray silently for wisdom, just as Solomon did and just as James, the brother of Jesus tells us to do (James 1:5).

A LOOK AT THE BOOK

Have the students open their Bibles to the table of contents page.



- Point out the following books that Solomon wrote: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon and two of the Psalms, 72 and 127.
- Ask the students to locate each one of these books/chapters in the Bible.
- Have them read what Solomon wrote to young people in Ecclesiastes 12:1.
- Ask them to describe the one thing they can do today to demonstrate God's wisdom to other family members.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who was the first man to be king of Israel? (*Saul*)
2. Describe the kind of ruler he proved to be. (*mean-spirited, jealous, arrogant, disobedient to God*)
3. Who was the next king after Saul? (*David*)
4. What was David like? (*a man after God's own heart*)
5. What city is known as the City of David? (*Bethlehem*)
6. Who ruled after David? (*his son Solomon*)
7. What did Solomon ask God to give him? (*wisdom*)
8. What else did God give him? (*riches, honor and long life*)
9. Describe two things Solomon did that helped Israel become a strong nation. (*made treaties with other nations; increased commerce and trade; built a strong army and navy; took in more territory*)
10. What was Solomon's solution for the dispute between the two mothers who both claimed the same child? (*He suggested cutting the baby in half and giving half to each mother. He knew the real mother would give up her child before she let this happen.*)
11. What did God allow Solomon to build for His glory? (*A temple*)
12. What made this temple so beautiful? (*the gold, silver and precious jewels used to adorn it*)
13. How many temples have been built in Jerusalem? (*Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's*)
14. What tent of meeting was used in worship before the temple was built? (*the tabernacle*)
15. What special item was placed in the Holy of Holies? (*the ark of the covenant*)