



Solomon's Quest

A narrative about how to put
God's wisdom into practice.

THE BIBLE

1 Kings 1-5, 8-12
Ecclesiastes

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

Have you ever had a mission, project, or something you were desperate to accomplish? What were you working on? Why were you driven to achieve this project? What were some obstacles you faced? What was the outcome of your quest?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Ruth – A story of redemption
- The First King – Saul
- David – Fighting Giants and Kings

Hear the Story

Scene One: The Next King

Israel's second king, David, was known as a man after God's own heart. He spent much of his reign finishing the work the first king, Saul, had started, battling the Philistines and establishing the kingdom. He had a turbulent reign as king.

He endured a challenge to his throne from inside the family, a general who questioned him, and a nation that wasn't entirely behind him. And as his health began to fail him, David chose to make his son Solomon king.

When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon, his son. *"I am about to die," he said. "So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to Him and keep His decrees and commands, His laws, and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in everything you do."*

Then David died, and they laid him to rest with his ancestors. His reign over Israel lasted forty years.

Scene Two: Solomon's Request

Solomon succeeded his father, and his rule as king was firmly established. Solomon loved the LORD and followed all the instructions his father gave him; he made regular offerings to God and desired to please the LORD.

One night in a dream, the LORD appeared to Solomon and said, *"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."*

Solomon answered, *"You have been so good to my father, David, because he was faithful and followed after your heart. You have passed this same kindness to me by allowing me to be a king on my father's throne. But I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great nation of yours?"*

The LORD was pleased that Solomon asked for this. So God said to him, *"Since you have asked for this and not for a long life or wealth for yourself or the death of your enemies, I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have!"*

"I will also give you what you have not asked for, both wealth and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life!"

Scene Three: Wisdom and Justice

Sometime later, two prostitutes came to the king to have an argument settled. Both women had recently had baby boys. One of the boys had died while the other still lived. Each woman accused the other of stealing the boy, who was still alive. Solomon was faced with a very tough situation.

After a few moments, he said, *“Bring me a sword.”* So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: *“Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.”*

The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, *“Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!”* but the other woman said, *“All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!”*

After hearing their remarks, Solomon gave his ruling: *“Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is the real mother.”* When all of Israel heard the king's verdict, they held the king in awe because they saw God had given him great wisdom to make decisions with justice.

Scene Four: The Good Life

During Solomon's reign, the people of Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, drank, and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries sent tribute money to Solomon and continued to serve him throughout his lifetime.

God gave Solomon wisdom and great insight. He was wiser than anyone else, and his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered 1,005. From all the nations, people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world.

Because Solomon's father had been so successful at securing the Israelite kingdom, Solomon could focus on other things. Solomon's first response to a situation was to say a wise word and cut a good deal; he was a brilliant general contractor.

He spent much of his life physically building the kingdom. His most prized project was building a temple for the LORD. The temple was his father's dream, and Solomon was on a mission to make that dream happen.

Scene Five: The Dedication of the Temple

In the 4th year of Solomon's reign, he began building the LORD's temple. Solomon's temple's floor plan followed the tabernacle that Moses had constructed during the Israelite's desert journey. Construction took seven years, and to accomplish this, Solomon had to conscript more than 180,000 of his subjects to finish the project.

When it was finished, Solomon summoned all of the elders and leaders to bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant. So they brought it, the tent of meeting, and all the sacred furnishings in it.

Everyone gathered around Solomon, who was standing in front of the Ark. That day they sacrificed so many sheep and cattle that it could not be counted or recorded. The priests then brought the Ark to its place in the temple's inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the cherubim's wings. Then they withdrew from the Holy Place.

After they left, the temple of the LORD filled with a cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled it. Then Solomon said, *"The LORD said that He would dwell in a cloud; I have built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever. But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain Him. Much less this temple I have built!"*

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings. When the people saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt with their faces on the ground, worshipping and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, *"God is good; His love endures forever."* Then Solomon said to the people, *"May God turn our hearts to Him, to walk in obedience to Him and keep His commands, decrees, and laws, so that all the people of the earth may know the LORD is God, and there is no other. I pray that your hearts will be fully committed to the LORD our God."*

Later that night, the LORD appeared to Solomon and said, *“I have heard your prayers and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. When my people are in trouble, if they will humble themselves, seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sins and heal their land.”*

God reminded Solomon of the consequences of turning away from Him and being disobedient. If this happens, He said, *“Israel will become an object of ridicule among all peoples. The temple will be a heap of rubble. Everyone who passes by will ask what happened, and it will be said that this all happened because the people turned away from the LORD who delivered them from Egypt, and they embraced other gods worshipping and serving them – this is what brought their downfall.”*

God reminded Solomon that a submissive, joyful heart was what He desired, even more than all the gifts Solomon could offer. Solomon heard, believed, and followed all of these instructions even when faced with the accolades of admirers – people who came from all over the world to meet the famous king.

Scene Seven: The Beginning of the End

Over the years, King Solomon grew greater in riches and wisdom, and it was understood all over the world that there was no king like him at the time. The whole world sought an audience with him to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart.

Year after year, everyone who came brought gifts. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses. He made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones during his time. The king and his kingdom were truly blessed, and God did everything for Solomon that He had promised.

Solomon was an impressive king; however, he loved many foreign women. He formed alliances with other nations by marrying the daughters of other kings. He married royal women from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and many other nations.

Previously, the LORD had clearly instructed his people, saying, *“You must not intermarry with other groups of people because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.”* Nevertheless, Solomon insisted and continued to marry wives from foreign nations and loved them. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And just as God had promised, his wives led him astray.

As he grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and he was not completely devoted to the LORD as his father, David, had been. In this, Solomon did great evil.

The LORD became angry with Solomon because he had warned him specifically against worshipping other gods. So the LORD said to Solomon, *“Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. But for the sake of David, your father, I will not do this during your lifetime. I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of your son. And even so, I will let him be king of one tribe, for my servant David and Jerusalem, my chosen city.”*

Retell the Story

- Who became the new king, and how did he become king?
- What instructions did David give Solomon?
- One night, after making his offerings, God spoke to Solomon; what did He say?
- What request did Solomon make?
- How did Solomon rule his people?
- What was the kingdom like under Solomon’s rule?
- What project did Solomon spend most of his energy and focus on?
- When the temple was finished, what did Solomon do?
- What did God do and say about the temple?
- What would happen to the temple if the people turned away from God?
- Where did Solomon go wrong?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?

- David left Solomon with one piece of advice. What was it? Why do you think David thought this was so important?
- During his reign, Solomon did many things that went against God's instructions for Israel's kings; what were some of these things?
(*inter-marrying with foreign nations, building armies, amassing wealth*)
- When Israel first asked for a king, God promised that a king would do certain things to the people. What did Solomon do that fulfilled part of this promise?
(*hint: conscription*)
- How did God react to the building of a temple for Him? Do you get the impression this was something he wanted to be done? What do you think would have happened if God chose not to inhabit the temple?
- Previously, when the people turned from God, He allowed them to be taken captive; what else did God say would happen if the people turned away from Him now?
- What was King Solomon's downfall? Why did God say He would take the kingdom away from Solomon's descendants?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

1) WISDOM

God's gift of wisdom to Solomon did not mean he couldn't make mistakes. He made many mistakes, including idolatry, excessive taxation, and overworking his people. How do you take the wisdom God gives you (knowledge from the scriptures) and put it into practice? What critical steps in the faith process move God's words from your head to your heart and into your hands?

2) WIVES

Solomon's wives influenced him to worship other gods. Because of this influence, Solomon made choices that went against his wisdom. How do you think the king could have overcome this negative influence? How do you overcome those influences that would lead you to do what you know is wrong in your spiritual walk?

3) WEALTH

Solomon used his great wealth to build a temple for God. Solomon was successful in his quest to build the temple, but in other ways, he failed to glorify God. What does Solomon's life teach you about the connection between using your resources for God and true worship? What do you think God desires most from us?

God,

Give us the wisdom of spiritual remembrance so we will never take the riches of Your grace and goodness for granted. Help us recall how you have comforted us in times of despair, how You have encouraged us when we were discouraged, and how You've given us hope when all seemed lost. Let us remember You in all seasons so we may remain as faithful to You as you have been to us. Amen.