

WHAT A
ROYAL
mess

A STUDY OF
1 AND 2 KINGS

by Susan Tyner



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Although many publishers do not capitalize terms, and particularly pronouns which refer to the Trinity, CDM publications has capitalized those elements for reverence and clarity of reference.

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1

SOLOMON'S SIN 1 KINGS 1-12

Solomon's wisdom was legendary. After all, God had made him the wisest man on earth (1 Kings 3:12). Under his reign, Israel was at an all-time high, yet under his golden success was a rotteness. It was about to impact not only Israel's place in the world, but their comfortable place in God's arms.

A Royal Story

Read 1 Kings 1-1 Kings 12. This is a long passage to read, but it gets you up to speed on the transition from King David to his son, Solomon.

- 1. How was Solomon's personal life connected to his job as king?*
- 2. What was Solomon's weakness, and why do you think he was tempted by women of a variety of nationalities?*
- 3. What was the reason God took away Solomon's rule, and why did He wait until Solomon was dead?*

a. *What does this tell us about David?*

b. *About God?*



HOW RICH WAS SOLOMON? READ
2 CHRONICLES 9:13-28 FOR SOME
IMPRESSIVE STATS!

Solomon did not heed Proverbs 5 to resist the call of a wayward woman. His total of a thousand women—seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines—probably raised eyebrows even then. But who would have complained? Although some may have gossiped about Solomon’s love life, who would have said anything when Israel was on top of the heap? Riches abounded, the government was running smoothly, dignitaries were impressed, and Temple worship was booming. Yet the throne was shifting allegiance. According to 1 Kings 11:9, God was displeased with Solomon’s job as ruler of His people. No longer was the king of Israel wholeheartedly serving God, but he had been flirting. Literally. A beautiful smile, a pretty figure, and a bewitching conversation—these things distracted Solomon from his father David’s charge to put God first in his heart. Solomon’s wives and concubines not only had brought romance or political alliances, but their idols. Over time, Solomon left his first covenant love, Yahweh, and was fooling around with foreign gods. Notice, this did not start on the honeymoon with wife number one. This was a slow, simmering sin and, like a slow cooker stew, took a while to cook. Something that Solomon tolerated at first became his pursuit later.

INDEED, THE SAFEST ROAD TO HELL IS THE GRADUAL
ONE—THE GENTLE SLOPE, SOFT UNDERFOOT,
WITHOUT SUDDEN TURNINGS, WITHOUT MILESTONES,
WITHOUT SIGNPOSTS.

—C.S. LEWIS¹



God's Story

Unfortunately, this sort of falling out of love happens throughout Scripture when it comes to God's people. Although God is longsuffering, His heart breaks when His people have affairs with other gods (Eph. 4:30).

1. *Read Revelation 2:1-5. What had the church forgotten to do? How does this remind you of Solomon's sin?*
2. *What are the signs you or your church are flirting with things other than God?*
3. *How does a church "fall back in love" with God?*
4. *How do you see God's faithfulness in 1 Kings 11:9-13, even when His people "cheat" on Him?*

In Revelation 2:1-5, God accuses the church of Ephesus of leaving their first love. The Ephesians were doing good things, but they had forgotten to do what God wanted most—love Him. Solomon did the same thing. Solomon was doing great stuff, but that was not the main thing God wanted. While he successfully led a kingdom, he forgot, over time, to lead his heart to God.

How do you see the church today leaving her first love? Do we put our own local culture—whether a hard conservative stance or a liberal social agenda—over the gospel culture Jesus Himself sets up? Do we despise the Bride of Christ and leave her to flounder in order to flirt with other gods? The pretty and tempting gods of our time can look like individual rights, the pursuit of worldly wisdom, or even political preferences. These other gods call out to us in churches today, yet God Himself says to keep our eyes on Him and His ways.

My Story

We may be tempted to play Monday-morning-quarterback and critique Solomon, but let us look to see if we are making the same mess as he did.

- 1. Is there something in your life that you once only tolerated but is now becoming an obsession? Is there an area in your life that is starting to draw you away from your first love of Jesus?*
- 2. What are signs your love for God is getting dull?*
- 3. Just as Solomon's choices to follow other gods set in motion generations of trouble, our idolatries affect those around us too. Who is affected by your waning love for God?*

4. Consider Hebrews 3:12-13. How can we stay faithful to our first love?

Where is your heart focused today? Maybe your children's soccer game on a Sunday morning regularly takes higher priority over the family going to worship. Perhaps you would rather wake up early to arrive in the office before anyone else than carve out time to talk with God before your day begins. Is giving to the church a last budget priority or a "first fruits" priority (Prov. 3:9)?

At every wedding the best part is seeing the faces of the bride and groom as she walks down the aisle. But have you ever seen a bride yawning? No, she is laser-focused on her bridegroom. Yet five years later, that same doting bride may find her husband's jokes boring and his interests, well, a little tiresome. She is tired after work and would rather finish the dishes than cuddle on the couch—something she loved to do when they dated.

NO RELATIONSHIP CAN CURE OUR LONELINESS BUT THE ONE WE WERE MADE FOR, THE ONE THAT IS MORE CENTRAL, MORE DEFINING, AND CLOSER TO YOU THAN ANY OTHER RELATIONSHIP YOU COULD EVER HAVE: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. JESUS OFFERS YOU WHAT NO OTHER PARTNER COULD: UNWAVERING AND ETERNAL FIDELITY—NO SICKNESS, NOT EVEN DEATH, WILL PART YOU.

— RANKIN WILBOURNE²



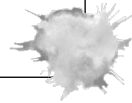
How do we avoid slipping out of love with God? First, just like the bored wife, we must get our eyes back on our Bridegroom, seeking first His kingdom (Matt. 6:33). Second, we must take advantage of the ways to "cuddle on the couch" with Him. Just as a couple must make time to spend together, so a Christian needs to make time to be with her first love, Jesus. Praying (Jer. 29:12), reading and hearing God's Word (Rom.

10:14), fellowshiping with other Christians (Col. 3:16) and taking part in the sacraments of baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26) are the “cuddle times” called *means of grace*. They are the ways a Christian can fan the flame of romance with her Savior.

Solomon's sin of idolatry brought judgment, and the consequences affected his kingdom and his sons, especially the next heir, Rehoboam. Remember, God warned Solomon that the blessing and enjoyment of a relationship with God would be impacted by his obedience. God would dwell with His people as Solomon followed His laws and ways. But Solomon stopped following God. However, out of love for His servant King David (Solomon's dad), God delayed these consequences for the next generation, Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

*THE SIN THAT IS MOST DESTRUCTIVE IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW
IS THE ONE YOU ARE MOST DEFENSIVE ABOUT.*

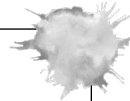
—TIM KELLER³



While this is sobering, there is good news, too. Our God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5), a forgiving God. He will welcome us back to His outstretched arms if only we will repent of our sin (“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.” —Hosea 14:4 NKJV). If you find yourself and your life messy, miserable, or just plain empty, then hurry into the embrace of a holy and kind Bridegroom who bought your wedding band with His blood. And, if you are His daughter already, but under His discipline, remember it is temporary and reserved only for those He loves (Isa. 53:5). True transformation comes through chastisement—all because we have a true King, Jesus.

*YOUR BLOOD, NOT MINE, O CHRIST,
CAN HEAL MY SINFUL SOUL;
YOUR WOUNDS, NOT MINE, CONTAIN
THE BALM THAT MAKES ME WHOLE.*

— HORATIUS BONAR⁴



Prayer

Lord, You see my sin and how I follow after fake gods—gods of physical beauty, career goals, family reputation, and the list goes on. Show me Your mercy and bring me back to Your arms. Never let me go so that I don't lose my worship of You.

Lagniappe Passage

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. —Ecclesiastes 11:9

Memory Verses

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. —Hebrews 3:12-13

¹ C.S. Lewis, "Letter XII," *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 63-65.

² Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2016), 207.

³ Tim Keller, (TimKellerNYC), Facebook, November 1, 2016, www.facebook.com/TimKellerNYC/posts/the-sin-that-is-most-destructive-in-your-life-right-now-is-the-one-you-are-most-/1286940228012527/.

⁴ Horatius Bonar, "Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ" in *Christian Worship: Hymnal* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2021), 560.