

If you were to describe King Solomon to me, what are some of the things that come to mind? If I told you to take a lesson from Solomon's life, what do you think it might be? I think that people sometimes have a hard time knowing what to do with this man. From a distance, it would be easy to idealize him. After all, the wisdom of Solomon has been passed down through the ages as iconic. We read about his wealth and accomplishments, and his collections of proverbs and reflections on the meaning of life are a key part of the scriptures. From this perspective, we see him as a man overflowing with success – and some people may struggle to relate with someone like that. After all, what does a king who was raised in a palace know about the struggles of the common man? How can a man who was granted superior wisdom by God be an example for those who struggled to get passing grades in school? From this perspective, trying to follow the example of Solomon might seem pointless.

On the other hand, when we look closer at his life, we see that he had a difficult and troubled life that tells us a lot about the struggles we face in our own lives. He was the son of a troubled father whose life was filled with scandal. His brothers and sisters were jealous and spiteful with one another, which sometimes led to horrible results, including rape and murder. Though raised to love and honor God, Solomon stumbled in his faith as an adult, experimenting with all sorts of questionable and self-destructive things. From this perspective, perhaps more people can relate to him, but is this the sort of man you want to emulate in life?

As we examine the life of this man, I think you will find that there are lessons for every one of us to learn, regardless of where we find ourselves in life. God had his life story written down in scripture for a reason, and we need to search and find that out. We're told in 1 Cor 10 that the life stories of the Old Testament were "examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did," (v. 6) and "they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." (v. 11) Solomon's life has both good and bad examples for us to examine, and helps us put to mind how we are to live. Staying here in 1 Cor 10, the very next verses (12-13) warn us, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." As we look at Solomon's life, we should be able to identify the temptations he faced, and the way of escape God provided for him – whether he availed himself of it or not.

Let's start out with his background and birth. We turn to 2 Samuel 12 to get the story. You're probably familiar with much of it, but let me briefly set up what happened prior to chapter 12. David was the king, and in the spring of the year, when kings led their armies out to battle, David sent his army to fight the Ammonites, but he remained home in Jerusalem. One evening he saw from his roof a beautiful woman bathing herself, and he sent for her. He knew she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of his mighty warriors, but he slept with her, and she became pregnant. David tried to cover his sin by bringing Uriah back from the battle, in hopes he would sleep with his wife, but Uriah felt that would be wrong, when his fellow-soldiers were roughing it on the battlefield. His plans foiled, David wrote a letter to his general, ordering him to put Uriah at the head of the fight, then withdraw forces and leave him to be killed. Upon receiving word of Uriah's death, his wife observed the proper period of mourning, then David sent for her and married her. Soon a son was born to them. This is where chapter 12 picks up.

God sent Nathan the prophet to David with a message about a rich man and a poor man, and how the rich man took a pet lamb from the poor man to feed a visitor in his home. When David heard this, (v. 5-

9) “David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.’ Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?’”

Our series isn’t about David, but his sin in this case is directly relevant to the life of Solomon, and we certainly can learn lessons from it. First of all, nothing is hidden from God. David may have hidden his sin from the people (though certainly some of his servants knew what happened), but God didn’t let him get away with it. God sent His prophet to confront David with his sin and guilt. God will use various methods to reveal our own sin to us, and there is only one response God wants from us. David’s response to that was immediate confession and repentance. In v. 13, he said “I have sinned against the Lord.” God forgave his sin, but he would still deal with the consequences of it. Nathan said “The Lord has also put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.” Here is another lesson: God’s forgiveness doesn’t erase the consequences of our sin. In His justice and mercy, God has lessons for us to learn from those consequences. In verses 15-23, the child got sick, and David prayed and prayed, asking for mercy and healing, but the child died, just as God had said. How did David respond to this loss? Verse 20, “Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.” David gave God praise, even when his prayer for the child was not answered. He trusted God. Then in v. 24-25 we find the first mention of Solomon.

“Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.” What is the lesson we get from Solomon’s birth? God doesn’t hold the sins of the fathers against the sons. God loved Solomon, and his nickname became Jedidiah, “Beloved of the Lord” or perhaps “The Divine Darling.” Think about the various levels of grace and mercy in these verses. This was an illicit marriage by any measure – yet God blessed it, and loved the child. His forgiveness is complete. David had scorned God’s law, yet when he confessed his sin, God blessed him, and gave him a son in the place of the one that was lost. The name Solomon means “the peaceful” – though there was sin and judgment in the events leading up to Solomon’s birth, David had hopes of peace for this new life.

Whatever your family background, whatever your circumstance, God is able to forgive and grant you peace and blessing – if you seek His forgiveness by confessing your sin to Him. Trust in God’s love and mercy, and you won’t be disappointed. Solomon had a great start in life, despite his father’s sin – all because David confessed his sin, worshiped God, and trusted in Him.