

**Solomon: A Heart Led Astray**

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

*Memory Verse*

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Solomon asked for a wise heart, but grew insensitive to God’s commands over time.</li><li>2. Solomon allowed his own desires to deteriorate his spiritual life.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is a jealous God.</li><li>2. God’s warnings are always clear and precise.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Idolatry is a danger to our faith when left unchecked.</li><li>2. We should search our hearts daily and strive to remove any sin that we find.</li></ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Solomon’s Wisdom
- B. Solomon Builds God’s Temple
- C. God’s Second Appearance to Solomon
- D. Solomon’s Downfall

**Life Application:** The Danger of Idolatry

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Whenever we leave room for sin to enter our lives, no matter how innocent it may seem in the beginning, it can take hold of us until we can no longer refuse. We need to be constantly aware of this danger, and be determined to turn away from any sin that can harm our faith.

## Events and Spiritual Teachings

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### Introduction

Ask your students to think about several things they would do if they had all the money or time in the world. Ask them to each share their thoughts. After they have expressed themselves, ask them to think about whether those things will hurt their faith. Why or why not?

Write the list on the whiteboard. Which ones do they feel are worse than others in terms of affecting their faith? Have them explain their reasons.

After David's death, the kingdom was given to Solomon. His name in Hebrew is *Shēlomoh*, from the root word *shalom*, meaning "peace." True to his name, God blessed the kingdom with a brief period of peace after years of war. The Bible says of his time as king, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kgs 4:25). Through Solomon, the Lord ushered in an age of unity both within his country and with the countries around Israel (1 Kgs 4:24; 1 Chr 22:9).

### A. Solomon's Wisdom

God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream and asked him what the Lord should give him. Let's read 1 Kings 3:5–9. What request did Solomon ask of God, and for what two reasons? (*He asked for an "understanding heart" to judge God's people and to discern between good and evil.*)

The Bible demonstrates Solomon's wisdom with a difficult case: two women each claimed to be the mother of a child, with no witnesses to prove which was speaking the truth. But Solomon, with the wisdom God gave to him, solved the case with a simple test that discerned each woman's motives. Let's read 1 Kings 4:29–34. Solomon's wisdom was so great that his fame crossed borders!

The Queen of Sheba herself, the ruler of a very powerful and wealthy nation at the time, came to see if everything she had heard about Solomon was true. When she saw his wisdom, she said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness" (1 Kgs 10:9). Solomon used his wisdom to demonstrate the existence and sovereignty of the Lord, to the point that even non-believers saw his fear of the Lord and respected God's power for it.

### B. Solomon Builds God's Temple

(*Teachers: There are plenty of images online that are easily searchable if you'd like to show images or replicas of the temple.*)

Although David wanted to build a temple for God, the Lord told him, "You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood" (1 Chr 28:3). God also told David that his son would build the Lord's house. Solomon was true to David's command (v. 10), and he dedicated seven years to building a temple that would last in the Israelites' memory for years on end.

It's difficult to imagine all of the measurements just from reading the Bible, but the building he constructed was a marvel of its time. The Bible records more than 150,000 laborers to help transport all of the stone that was needed. Solomon put such care into the temple's construction that "no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kgs 6:7). This took not only

great attention to detail, but also a great deal of skill, as everything had to be measured and cut perfectly to fit together on site!

When it was finally completed, Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord. Let’s read 1 Kings 8:62–66. After a prayer, Solomon offered great sacrifices, praise, and worship. God was so pleased with his offering that He filled the temple with His divine presence in the form of a cloud (vv. 10–11).

**C. God’s Second Appearance to Solomon**

After Solomon finished building both the temple and his own home, the Lord appeared to him a second time. Let’s read 1 Kings 9:4–9. Let’s briefly go over what the Lord promised Solomon in these verses.

If Solomon...	God will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walks before God as David walked</li> <li>• Walks in integrity of heart and in uprightness</li> <li>• Does according to God’s commands</li> <li>• Keeps God’s statutes and judgments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish his throne in Israel forever</li> <li>• Keep His promise to David</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turns from following God</li> <li>• Does not keep His commandments or statutes</li> <li>• Serves other gods and worships them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut off Israel from the land</li> <li>• Cast out of His sight the temple built for Him</li> <li>• Turn Israel into a warning to other nations</li> </ul>

These consequences seem quite dire! But there is one more promise that God gave to Solomon in this appearance. Let’s turn to 2 Chronicles 7:14. “[If] My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Even if the people made the mistake of disobeying God, the Lord would have mercy if they repented of their ways. All of His assorted warnings and promises may seem harsh to us, but they were in fact a demonstration of His love. God loves us, and He wants to take care of His people! But for Him to do so, we must obey Him first.

**D. Solomon’s Downfall**

Unfortunately, despite the wisdom God gave to him, Solomon eventually did fall away from God, so he suffered the consequences for his disobedience. He was a great leader for his people, but he failed to exercise the same kind of wisdom in his personal life. But how did Solomon turn out this way? First, let’s read God’s standards regarding Israel’s kings and how they should act. Let’s read Deuteronomy 17:14–17. Let’s go over each standard and see how Solomon acted in comparison.

**1. “But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses” (v. 16)**

In biblical times, horses were a sign of military strength. They signified how great an army and, in turn, their nation was. The Lord didn’t want Israel’s kings to rely on their military strength, but to rely on God’s strength. Let’s read 1 Kings 10:26, 28. This passage tells us that Solomon had thousands of horses imported from Egypt. Simply owning such an astounding number may not be a sin, but it would have caused the Israelites to rely on their own military power, rather than trusting in the invisible power of God to protect and deliver them. Solomon himself wrote, “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD” (Prov 21:31).

**2. “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away” (v. 17)**

Although Solomon began his rule as someone who “loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David” (1 Kgs 3:3), this didn’t last. Solomon had made a marriage alliance with Egypt by marrying the Pharaoh’s daughter (v. 1), a common practice in those days as a method of keeping the peace between nations. But Solomon’s marital troubles had only just begun; he married many foreign women to form political alliances, and none of them worshipped God. Let’s read 1 Kings 11:1–10.

Solomon may have at first resisted their requests to bow down to their false gods, but with 700 wives and 300 concubines, he was eventually persuaded to turn to idolatry (1 Kgs 11:4). God’s warning in Deuteronomy was clearly a valid concern. Unfortunately, this seemed to be a vice of Solomon’s, as he “clung to [his wives] in love” (v. 2). Solomon simply couldn’t refuse women, and, as a result, he allowed his desires to pull him away from God.

**3. “[Nor] shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself” (v. 17)**

Another sign of a powerful nation was its wealth, and it may have been common for kings to take advantage of their positions by accumulating riches for themselves. However, God wanted His kings to abide by different standards. He didn’t want Israel to boast of its wealth, and He didn’t want His kings to oppress His people, or to live in so much luxury that they forgot that they were merely caretakers of a nation that belonged to God. Let’s read 1 Kings 10:14–25. From this passage, we can only imagine the amount of wealth and luxury that Solomon accumulated! Solomon focused on accumulating riches for himself, and he failed to follow God’s standards for the kings of Israel.

**The Debilitating Power of Small Sins**

Solomon didn’t suddenly turn away from God one day. It was a gradual process that began with his marriage to a Gentile who didn’t worship the Lord as he did. His weakness towards women grew entirely out of control and led to his downfall. Small sins can often be the first steps in turning away from God. It isn’t the sins that we don’t know about, but the sins that we excuse, that cause the greatest trouble. Each piece of gold and every woman that he married may not have been cause for concern individually. But accumulating so many added up bit by bit, until he finally allowed his worldly pleasures to become a solid wall between him and God.

Did you know that the Book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon? Did you also know that one of the book’s main themes is how empty it is to pursue worldly pleasures? Let’s read Ecclesiastes 12:8. Solomon had likely become one of the wealthiest men of the time, yet he frequently wrote how quickly life vanishes before you. He used the word “vanity” more than thirty times, and often used words like “emptiness” and “vapor” to emphasize how meaningless worldly pleasures are.

In the end, Solomon rather ironically concluded that the enjoyment of this life can never satisfy the deep longings in our heart. Rather, the duty of man is to “[fear] God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl 12:13–14). For all of the wealth that he accumulated, the pleasures that he found in his love of his wives, and the leading might of the Israelite nation during his reign, Solomon at last concluded that the wisest thing for any person to do is to fear God and keep His commandments.

*Check for Understanding*

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1. **What did Solomon ask for when God appeared to him?** He asked for an understanding heart to judge God's people and to discern between good and evil.
2. **What did God promise Solomon in His second appearance?** He promised blessings if Solomon kept God's commands. If Solomon didn't obey Him, however, there would be consequences.
3. **In which three ways did Solomon disobey God as a king of Israel?** He multiplied horses for the nation, had many wives, and amassed wealth and riches for himself.
4. **What can we learn from the gradual process by which Solomon turned from God?** Small sins can often be the first steps in turning away from God. It isn't the sins that we don't know about, but the sins that we excuse, that cause the greatest trouble.
5. **What was Solomon's conclusion at the end of the Book of Ecclesiastes?** The enjoyment of this life can never satisfy the deep longings in our hearts, and the duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments.

### Life Application

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#### The Danger of Idolatry

##### 1. What Is Idolatry?

In biblical times, the Israelites worshipped foreign gods such as Baal. Today, it is more difficult to identify the idols in our hearts. An idol can be anything that takes the place of God. It is anything that receives our passionate devotion. What is considered to be idolatry today? Let's brainstorm a list together. *(Examples may be: money, objects, hobbies, celebrities, athletes, social media, television, video games, a boyfriend/girlfriend, academics, etc.)*

We all have some sort of weakness that each of us face on our own. It's likely more common that you might think! Do you struggle with any of the items on our list? Let's read a few scenarios. For each, first identify the idol that each person struggles with, and then answer the discussion questions as a group.

##### Scenario #1

*A concert starring Samantha's favorite group is fast approaching, and she's wanted to go for months. But her parents are refusing to let her go because it is on a Friday night, and they have insisted that they observe the Sabbath. On top of this, they think Samantha's being overly obsessive about this group. She has their posters plastered all over her walls, spends most of her allowance on their products, is always singing or playing their music, and even dresses like them whenever she can. It is starting to make her parents worry. But Samantha can't believe how insensitive her parents are being. How could they just veto her request? It simply isn't fair.*

- What is Samantha's idol?
- Why is it dangerous for us to fixate on certain groups or celebrities?
- Do you think it is okay to listen to any type of music?
- What kind of music can hinder or even break down our spiritual growth?
- What kind of music do you think is beneficial to our spiritual growth?

##### Scenario #2

*John sat in front of his computer, struggling with himself. It had all begun when his friends invited him over to watch some movies while their parents were out. John had said no at first, knowing that they were referring to adult-only movies. But after they persisted a second and a third time, his curiosity was stirred enough that he said yes. He had felt guilty the first time, but since then, he found himself searching for more and more to watch. The more he watched, the more he ignored his guilt. John began watching all sorts of adult-only movies. Worse, he couldn't seem to stop thinking about them, even*

during service at church. When he finally realized what was happening, though, he couldn't seem to convince himself to stop.

- What is John's idol?
- How did John fall into this form of idolatry?
- What are some basic steps John can start taking to put away the idol in his heart?
- If you were John's friend and he confided in you, how do you think you could help him?

### **Scenario #3**

*When Carly found a wallet on the sidewalk, instead of taking it to the police station, she instead peeked inside. She wasn't sure what to expect, but she was surprised when she found almost 100 dollars inside. Her thoughts immediately went to the new bracelets that all of her friends now wore. Since entering high school, Carly had been extremely conscious of keeping up with all the latest fashions and trends, to fit in with her friends. This was, however, an expensive hobby, and her parents had begun to limit her spending. With the money in this wallet, she could buy a new bracelet without her parents knowing. All she needed to do was throw it back on the sidewalk where she found it after taking the money for herself.*

- What is Carly's idol?
- How might Carly's particular hobby negatively affect her spirituality?
- How can money be a threat to our spirituality?
- How can Carly learn to control her shopping habits?
- At what point do you think hobbies become a danger to our faith?

## **2. Putting Idolatry to Death**

His abundant wealth and riches may have seemed like a blessing for Solomon, but in truth, they contributed to his downfall. As he increased in wealth, he decreased in his spirituality and his sensitivity to sin. The money itself may not have been inherently bad, but Solomon allowed his physical desires to ensnare his heart and pull him away from God.

The more we want the things of the world, the more destructive our desires become to our spiritual lives. We should never underestimate our physical desires, but ask God for a wise and discerning heart, so that we can see the desires hidden in ourselves and learn to control them. To do this, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's help, it is impossible to put idolatry to death. Let's read Colossians 3:5. "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." So what does God want us to pursue instead? What does He want from us? Let's look up the following verses. For each, write down what it is that God wants us to do.

- 1 Kings 3:3–7; Matthew 6:33 – *God wants us to seek Him with all of our heart.*
- 1 Kings 3:11–13; 1 Samuel 2:30; 1 Corinthians 10:31 – *God wants us to honor Him.*
- Matthew 11:28–30; 1 Peter 5:7 – *God wants us to rely on Him.*
- Proverbs 13:20; 22:24–25 – *God wants us to be careful with the friends we make.*
- Exodus 20:3 – *God wants us to worship Him, and Him alone.*

Have you unintentionally placed any idols before God? Have you forgotten to seek Him through prayer or Bible reading at home? Did you dishonor God by making a poor choice at home or at school, or perhaps forget to rely on Him for an important test or trial? Who have you surrounded yourself with? Do you live a life that glorifies God, and God alone? Take a moment to examine your actions this past month. Now, take a few minutes to write a letter to God. In the letter, explain what kinds of idols you

have recently been struggling with, and how they have been affecting your spiritual life. Conclude your letter by writing down the steps you can take this week to reduce the idol's hold on your life. Try writing the letter as if you were having a personal conversation with the Lord!

Example letter:

*Dear God,*

*Lately, I have been struggling with \_\_\_\_\_ (what idol in your heart has negatively affected your decisions and thoughts?) \_\_\_\_\_ . Because of it, I \_\_\_\_\_ (what action did your idol cause you to take that was a negative influence on your spirituality?) \_\_\_\_\_ .*

*To begin to free myself from this idol, this week I am going to \_\_\_\_\_ (what step will you take to reduce the idol's hold on your heart?) \_\_\_\_\_ . Please give me the strength to overcome this idol so that I can grow in my faith and strengthen my relationship with You.*

*Love,*

\_\_\_\_\_

We need to remember that Solomon's decline was gradual, but it wasn't necessarily inevitable. Despite all the wisdom that God bestowed on him, what Solomon failed at was examining himself and identifying his own sins. We should learn from this and examine ourselves every day. Avoid letting even a small sin slide by, or it may transform into something that eventually pulls us away from God! Instead, we should learn to obey God's commands. If we do, He has promised to bless us in so many ways!

### **Memory Verse**

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5)

### **Meaning**

To put something inside us "to death" means eliminating it entirely within ourselves. It means refusing to give in or submit to any of these desires, until they no longer exist in our hearts. Of course, when we are surrounded by a world that encourages such pleasures, putting such things to death is easier said than done! So how do we do this? In order to avoid these sins, it is important that we fill our hearts instead with something else – like any container, the more we fill ourselves with one thing, the less we can add of something else. The Bible tells us, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21). The more we treasure God's word, the less we will be concerned with the things of the world.

### **Conclusion**

As Christians, many of us feel confident that we do not worship anything but God alone. What we fail to recognize is that we often fall into the trap of idolizing things. They are just as likely to become more important than God in our lives. Whenever we leave room for sin to enter our lives, no matter how innocent it may seem in the beginning, it can take hold of us until we can no longer refuse. We need to be constantly aware of this danger and be determined to turn away from any sin that can harm our faith.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to put something inside us “to death”?  
*It means eliminating it entirely within ourselves and refusing to give in or submit to any of these desires, until they no longer exist in our hearts.*
2. “[...] \_\_\_\_\_ God and keep His \_\_\_\_\_, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_, including every \_\_\_\_\_ thing, whether \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)  
*Fear, commandments, work, judgment, secret, good, evil.*
3. What was the Queen of Sheba’s reaction upon meeting Solomon? Why is this unusual?  
*She praised God. This is unusual because even though she was a Gentile, she could still see Solomon’s fear of the Lord, and she respected God’s power for it.*
4. Aside from His warnings and blessings to Solomon, what additional promise did God give to Israel?  
*He promised that if the Israelites ever made the mistake of disobeying God, the Lord would have mercy if they repented of their ways.*
5. Why did God not want Israel’s kings to “multiply horses for [themselves]”?  
*He didn’t want them to rely on their military strength, but on God’s strength.*
6. What can we learn from the process of Solomon’s deterioration in his faith?  
*Small sins can cause the greatest trouble, because they continue to add up until they become a wall between us and God.*
7. Why do you think Solomon concluded that the duty of man is to “fear God and keep His commandments”? Do you think you follow this principle in your own life? Why or why not?  
*Personal answers.*