

Learning the Hard Way: Lessons from the Life of Solomon - Part 1

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Good afternoon everyone. It's nice to see everybody back together again this Sabbath. Also I want to extend a warm greeting to all of you out there who will be watching this on what I like to call "DVD Land" and will see this later or listen to it off the website.

A number of years ago when I was attending Ambassador College, one of my professors one day was addressing the entire student body. In the lecture he made a particular point that I would like to share with you by way of introduction today. He made the comment that all learning in life is experiential, but one of the keys in life is we don't always have to be the one doing the experiencing. The point he was trying to make is there are a number of lessons in life we don't have to learn the hard way. If we're willing to learn from the experiences of others, there's a lot of pain we can avoid in life without having to go through it ourselves. There are certainly lessons in life that you can't learn from other people. You just have to go through it. You can't really learn it by studying about or being advised about it from others. There are certainly lessons like that in that category, but there are a lot of things in life that we can learn the easy way, you might say, rather than having to go through it through personal experience if we are willing to do that.

In researching this sermon, I did a little research on the internet in order to share with you some famous quotes in regard to, you might say, the lessons of history. To start off with, I'd like to share a couple of these.

The first one is contributed to Aldous Huxley, and the quote goes: "Men do not learn very much from the lessons of history ... is the most important of all lessons of history."

There's another one here. This was actually attributed to an anonymous source. I like this particular quote: "History repeats itself because no one was listening the first time." When you think about that, it's kind of what we're going to look at today.

As I mentioned, there are a number of things in life that we can learn from others and don't have to learn through personal experience and we can avoid a lot of pain in life if we are willing to do that. In fact it was based on this very principal that God recorded the Bible for us.

By way of introduction, turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. We'll see here where the Apostle Paul tells us that this is the very logic of why God recorded the Bible for us, so we could learn from the examples of others and not have to learn a lot of lessons the hard way.

1 Corinthians 10:1. *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea.*
2) *all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*
3) *all ate the same spiritual food.*
4) *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*
5) *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for [their bodies] were scattered in the wilderness. (NKJV)*

Now notice verse 6.

6) *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. (NKJV)*

In other words, the reason this was recorded was in the hopes that we would learn the easy way and from the experiences of others. Continuing in verse 7:

7. *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, [“The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”]*
8) *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;*
9) *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;*
10) *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*
11) *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*
12) *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (NKJV)*

In other words, what Paul is saying here is the very reason these stories were recorded were for our admonition in the hopes that we would take heed and learn from this and not have to learn a lot of these lessons the hard way; that we would be willing to learn from the examples of others and just take their word for it and apply those principals rather than doing it the hard way.

We're going to focus on this idea of not having to learn the hard way in this sermon. What we're going to specifically do is look at the life of a biblical character known for his great wisdom and his great understanding, which he was blessed with from God. I'm sure as I mention that, a lot of you are thinking of Solomon and you are correct. That is exactly where we are going.

What we are going to see in the life of Solomon is, even though he is given a tremendous gift of wisdom, there are still some big mistakes that he made in his life. In many ways, they weren't what you might say the more complicated areas or he wasn't covering new territory that hadn't been addressed before and he wasn't sure what to do. In the areas of his life where he made big mistakes, Moses had already recorded

instructions not to do the things that he did. So he wound up having to learn the hard way in a number of areas in his life because, typical of human nature, he wasn't willing to learn the easy way.

So if you'd like a title for this sermon, and it's a bit of a long title, it's Learning the Hard Way: Lessons from the Life of Solomon – Part 1 I say part 1 because it's going to take two sermons to cover this entire subject.

To start off let's look at the life of Solomon. Let's turn to 1 Kings, chapter 3 and we're going to start with a very familiar story to most all of us, that we typically tend to think of when we think of the life of Solomon. Before I start reading, I'd just like to set up a little history here. As I'm sure most of us are aware, Solomon is the son of King David. When he comes into power, he was raised basically in the king's palace you might say and was raised by his father, who was king and was a man after God's own heart as the Bible tells us. So he had the advantages of being raised in this environment.

He also, being king, would have had access to the writings of Moses and Joshua and others who had come before him. In fact, for the kings of Israel, it was a requirement of God that the kings had to write out their own copy of the law. The idea there was that they definitely be familiar with what was written in the books of the law that Moses had written. So we know for sure Solomon would have had access to all of that. I point that out because as we're going to see today, some of the major mistakes that he made were things that Moses had spoken to. Solomon chose to learn it the hard way.

Let's start off here in 1 Kings, chapter 3 and verse 1.

1 Kings 3:1. *Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh King of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall all around Jerusalem. (NKJV)*

Now I'd like to pause here for a second to point out that this particular marriage came about as a result of a political alliance. Solomon is making a deal with Pharaoh over Egypt, and as a part of kind of brokering that deal, Pharaoh gives his daughter to Solomon as a wife. It was not an uncommon practice at that time because when nations were making a deal like this, now the other king has family connections. You might say that the king of Nation A now has family connections with Nation B and kind of gives him more motivation to follow through on whatever the agreement was that they came to. That was not an uncommon practice at that time. I just pointed this out because later we're going to look at the number of wives that Solomon had. Be aware that a number of these came about as a result of these political alliances.

Now picking up in verse 2,

1 Kings 3:2. *Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the Lord until those days.*

3) And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places. (NKJV)

Notice here in the narrative that God inspires, Solomon gets a very positive rating. He is saying basically that at this point in his life, God says he's doing a pretty good job. He's lived a pretty good life; God just has one particular issue with him. I point that out because we're going to see later in his life, the situation changes.

4) Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that [was] the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

5) At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

6) And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as [it is] this day."

7) "Now, Oh Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I [am] a little child; I do not know [how] to go out or come in."

8) "And Your servant [is] in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted."

9) "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (NKJV)

When we think of the scene playing out here, I'm sure at various times in our lives we've seen movies, cartoons or stories where they have a genie. The genie comes out of the bottle and says, "Tell me what your wishes are and I'll grant your wishes." Well, this is kind of a similar scenario. God is going to Solomon and saying, "Tell me what you would like and I will grant your wish." Notice here how Solomon responds; this is very pleasing to God because Solomon doesn't say, "Hey, make me rich, make me powerful, make me prominent." What he asks for is a discerning heart. He says, "Give me wisdom that I can do this job that you've given me to take care of your people." Notice he said, "I want a discerning heart to know good from evil." He's asking God to basically define for him what is good and what is evil.

If we remember the story in Genesis, there were two trees with Adam and Eve in the garden and God specifically told them of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. "That's the one tree I want you to avoid." Of course, as we know, Adam and Eve went and partook of it anyway. But symbolically what that represented was they took it upon themselves to decide what was good and what was evil in their own viewpoint rather than looking to God to define that for them. I point this out because what Solomon is saying here is I want You to give me a discerning heart from Your perspective and Your wisdom to show me what is good and what is evil. He's looking to God to define good versus evil. I point that out because we're going to see in part 2, later in his life he winds up doing the opposite of this. Later in his life he winds up trying to take upon himself to decide that rather than having God do it.

Also take note of the fact of the humility that he is showing here. He says, "I am but a little child; I don't know how go out or how to come in and I need you to show me." So again, he is small in his own eyes and he is also at this point in his life looking out for the good of all. He doesn't ask for something that is just for his own benefit. He asks for a discerning heart so it will edify everyone. He is basically talking about a principal here that he tells us later in Proverbs, "*When the righteous are in power, the people rejoice.*" That's what he is asking for. "If I can reign according to Your will, it will be good for everyone." So he's looking out for the overall good of others. I just point that out because later we're going to see how that perspective changes.

Let's pick up now in verse 10.

1 Kings 3:10. *The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.*

11) *Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,*

12) *"behold I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you." (NKJV)*

We're basically being told here that Solomon is the wisest man who had ever lived in human existence, because it said there wouldn't be a wiser person before him, nor would there come one after him. So this is unequivocally the wisest man who has ever lived in human history. Notice in verse 13,

13) *"And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days." (NKJV)*

Notice he was promised to be the wisest man in human history, but in terms of wealth, he is told, "You'll be the richest man of your time." So to make it analogous to our time today, he was like the Bill Gates, the Warren Buffet and the Donald Trump, you might say of his time. Today we would call him a billionaire. It's essentially what Solomon became in his time.

What we're also going to see as we go through this series is it's often said that a person's greatest strength can also be their greatest weakness. Something can really be a blessing to us and it can also be a problem. This can also be true of gifts that we are given, even gifts from God, that if we don't handle them well, we can turn a blessing into a curse. It can wind up being a stumbling block for us if we don't handle it well. We're going to see that in both of these things and the way Solomon handled them, he kind of turned them into negatives. We'll see that later in this series. Picking up in verse 14,

14) *“So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” (NKJV)*

15) *Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. (NKJV)*

Take note of the fact that at this point in life, where is his focus? It's on the overall good for everyone. He's not just looking to make himself happy and to please himself. Even when he throws a feast it's, "Hey, let's do this in a way that edifies lots of people and looks out for the good of others." I point that out because we're going to see in the second part of this series that the perspective of looking out for others very much changes in his life. Solomon is given a tremendous gift of wisdom from God. God has granted him, as it says here, 'to be the wisest man in human history'.

Now he became quite famous in his time as a result of this. Let's see some examples here. Turn to 1 Kings, chapter 4 and we'll pick it up at verse 29. What we're going to see here is not only was he known throughout Israel for his incredible wisdom, he became known amongst all the surrounding nations in his time because of his wisdom.

1 Kings 4:29. *And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.*

30) *Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.*

31) *For he was wiser than all men – than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. (NKJV)*

In other words, he became famous because of this.

32) *He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs were one thousand and five.*

33) *Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things and of fish.*

34) *And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. (NKJV)*

Now notice two things here. He isn't just given a gift of Godly wisdom, he is given a gift of great understanding of nature. It said, of plants, of animals and just the world around him. He was given great intellect and understanding in addition to Godly wisdom. Not only that, this was so much so that this became noticed by other nations around him. The rulers and those of the nations around him all knew about Solomon's wisdom and came to be taught by him. This kind of makes him a super star.

Let's see an example of this. Turn to 1 Kings, chapter 10. We're going to see an example here of a particular leader, the Queen of Sheba, that came to him because of his wisdom.

1 Kings 10:1. *Now when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions.*

She came to challenge him and see if she could stump him.

2) *She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.*

3) *So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain [it] to her. (NKJV)*

She challenged him with the best that she had and he could answer anything.

4) *And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,*

5) *the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. (NKJV)*

In other words, she is just overwhelmed by seeing this.

6) *Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom."*

7) *"However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard."*

8) *"Happy [are] your men and happy [are] these your servants, who stand continually before you [and] hear your wisdom!"*

9) *"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." (NKJV)*

The stories she had heard by word of mouth in her own land, she thought, "that just sounds too incredible. This just can't be right. I've got to go and check this out myself." So she comes and presents to him the most difficult situations she can and then she's blown away. She's like, "This guy answered everything. In fact, the stories didn't do this justice. This guy is more incredible than I even heard!"

So if you think about this, it's ironic what we are going to see in this man's life, of some of the decisions that he made. Because notice this is the guy we're directly told is the wisest man that has lived in human history. He is famous and astounds people with his understanding, but at the same time, what we're going to see later in his life, it's

astounding to be blunt about it, some of the dumb decisions that he made in his life in spite of the incredible wisdom he was gifted with.

There's a big lesson in human nature with this. There is a difference in having knowledge and understanding or even wisdom and having character. You can understand the right things to do, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have the character to actually put it into practice or oftentimes to say no to yourself. Because as carnal human beings, isn't that often one of the most difficult things we do? When we really want something and know it's not the right thing and we have to reign in our human nature and say no; those can be some of the most difficult things. Again it's oftentimes that carnal human nature that causes us to make decisions or to justify in our minds to do things that we have better sense than to do. What we're about to see in Solomon's life are the things that were kind of his downfall, they weren't complicated things. They weren't issues that never had been faced before that he wasn't sure what to do. They were issues that Moses had made very clear how one should respond and had documented the instruction. Solomon just refused to do it in his own life.

Let's turn to 1 Kings, chapter 11. We will see some of the mistakes that Solomon made.

1 Kings 11:1. *But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians [and] Hittites*

2) *from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.*

3) *And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.*

4) *For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as [was] the heart of his father David.*

5) *For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.*

6) *Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as [did] his father David.*

7) *Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.*

8) *And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. (NKJV)*

Notice he is being directly involved in pagan worship and worshipping other gods. How did he get there? What we're going to see in this chapter; there are two major mistakes that he made and again these weren't issues that had never been previously addressed. These were things that Moses and Joshua and others had recorded specific instructions not to do this. Solomon obviously had to be aware of it, but again there's a difference between character and understanding; in other words the ability to

carry it out. Our carnal human nature can play tricks with us and cause us to justify in our own minds: "I'll be the exception. It'll be okay for me to violate the rules. It'll work out for me. I can stick my hand in that fire and not get burned." That's what we very often tend to tell ourselves.

Let's look at these two different decisions that Solomon made, one at a time. One of them as previously mentioned in this chapter, Moses had recorded specifically that Israel had been commanded by God not to marry pagan women. So let's turn over to Deuteronomy 7 and verse 1.

Deuteronomy 7:1. *"When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you*

2) *"when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them [and] utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.*

3) *"Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.*

4) *"For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly."*

Now notice first of all, what the issue is about here is turning the heart after other gods. This really isn't so much of a nationality issue but a religious issue. If you also notice when Solomon was being addressed with this in 1 Kings 11, one of the groups that was mentioned as far as women he married was women of the Moabites. If you look in Old Testament history, you remember Ruth was a Moabite in the book of Ruth, where she marries Boaz. Now God actually arranged this marriage. If you read this story, God obviously works behind the scenes to bring Ruth and Boaz together. And if you look at the lineage of Jesus Christ, He is a descendant of Boaz. That's the lineage his descent came from. So why did God do this? Because it wasn't a religious issue at that point. Ruth had already said to Naomi, "Your God shall be my God and I shall follow you." In other words, she had already given up the gods of the Moabites and decided she was going to follow the God of Israel. So it was no longer a religious issue because this really wasn't about nationality; this was about religion.

If you think about it, the wise advice that Moses was giving here is not to basically set ourselves up, because when you think about it, what is a lot of marriage about? It's about compromising in many cases, isn't it? Learning to get along with each other. Just being male and female alone we have different ways that we're wired and different priorities and different likes and dislikes. Not only different personalities and such as a part of getting along with each other, there's a decent amount of negotiation that takes place, just in learning how to get along and work with one another. One of the places you don't want to be in is where your religion becomes one of the issues of that negotiation.

If you think about the situation that Solomon got put in, I'll just use an example and I found this humorous when this was said to me. A few months ago when I was first putting together the idea of this sermon, I was discussing it with my sister and we were talking about Solomon and some of his mistakes. We were joking on the phone and she commented to me and she said, "Well you know what Solomon heard don't you?" I said, "What do you mean?" She goes, "Oh, it went something like this: Some of the wives came to him and said, 'Well, Solomon, if you really loved me, if you really cared about me, you would build an altar to my god. We can be involved in your worship and worship your god, but if you really loved me you would build an altar to my god.' Then she said, "After he did it for the first one, you know what happened then." I chuckled and said, "No, what do you mean?" She goes, "It went something like this: the other wives came to him and said, 'If you loved me as much as you loved her, you would build an altar to my god.' So he got himself in the middle of this situation and it was one of the things that led to him doing this for multiple wives. She said that this was the situation he got himself into.

Let's look at a number of other times in the Bible this same instruction is given to us throughout time. It wasn't just Moses who recorded this. It's also in the book of Joshua. Turn to Joshua, chapter 23 and verse 11.

Joshua 23:11. *"Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God.*

12) *"Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations – these that remain among you – and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you,*

13) *know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. (NKJV)*

If you notice here, he mentioned this being a snare and a trap, if you think about how relationships tend to work out. When you're getting attracted to someone, what tends to happen? Our emotions get involved, our hormones get involved and that affects our ability to think clearly doesn't it? That's just a natural human tendency. That's what can lead a person into making these kinds of decisions and later it can bite you. Think about living a life with someone and you feel strongly about your religious beliefs and they feel strongly about religious beliefs that are completely the opposite. That especially becomes an issue if you're having children. Think about that. You want to keep the holy days and the Feast and things of that nature while you have someone else who wants to keep Christmas, Easter and Halloween. Especially if you have children, now both of you want to teach the child your way of life and your belief system. Think about where this puts the child. This is why it can be a setup to be a snare and a problem. Turn to the book of Nehemiah. We'll see a specific example where he addresses this particularly in the realm of how it affected children.

Nehemiah 13:23. *In those days I also saw Jews [who] had married women of Ashdod, Ammon [and] Moab.*

24) *And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.*

25) *So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, [saying], “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.*

26) *“Did not Solomon King of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused him to sin.” (NKJV)*

In other words, this tripped him up, even the wisest man who ever lived.

27) *“Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?”*

Notice he mentioned how the language ability was affecting the children. Think about it; the Bible, at least what they had of it at that time, was written in Hebrew. If they're raising children that no longer speak the language of Israel but the language of the other nations, how do they even study God's word? You can see the issues that would create.

If you put that in a modern day context, think of the example I used previously. What if one of you wants to teach your child to keep the Sabbath, the holy days and to observe God's festivals? The other parent wants them to keep Christmas, Easter, Halloween and all the other traditions that they're familiar with. Think of the situation this puts a kid in, kind of being pulled back and forth between these. This is why he advises against this.

This is also the instruction we get in the New Testament. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians, chapter 6 and verse 14.

2 Corinthians 6:14. *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? (NKJV)*

15) *And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*

16) *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.*

As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

17) *“Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”*

18) *"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (NKJV)*

You see, Paul is teaching the same principal that was taught in the Old Testament, that was written in Hebrew.

But you know in today's Church of God environment, I wouldn't say it's just an issue of are we both part of the Church of God. I think it's also important in any relationship like that to make sure we are on the same page with one another. Understand I'm not in any way defining this by corporational boundaries. That's a common mentality in today's world. 1 Corinthians 1 and 1 Corinthians 3 is very staunchly against what we would call today the corporational mentality. But I think it is important to make sure we are on the same page doctrinally when we are into a relationship like that. Think about it like this: So you both believe in the holy days. If one of you believes in the traditional Hebrew calendar and one of you believes in an alternate calendar because there are numerous alternate calendars, not just one. How do you go to the same Feast site together and agree on where you're going and how to do this when you don't even agree on what days they are? You're not even on the same page. So I think it's important in entering into a relationship like that to make sure you're on the same page and can agree with each other. Because if you think about it, you have a divorce rate today in America of at least about 50 percent for first marriages. Why put yourself in a situation where you're in major disagreement about a major issue like this in your life?

Let's turn back to 1 Kings, chapter 11 and pick up where we left off. Let's look at the other side of what Solomon did. We're going to start by rereading verse 3, because we're going to look at the number of wives this man chose to have.

1 Kings 11:3. *And he had seven hundred wives, princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. (NKJV)*

First of all what I'd like to address is what the Bible is really getting at when it refers to a concubine. I have to admit that a lot of my life I read this and when I would read "concubine", in my mind that meant mistress or girlfriend, as we would oftentimes look at it today. With the thought being, well, he had seven hundred wives and he had three hundred mistresses on the side. That's not exactly the idea of what the Bible is getting across when it says this. Just to cover that point, let's look at the Hebrew word that is translated here as concubine. It is transliterated into English as *piyleges* and is Strong's number 6370 and according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker, here's how it's defined: A feminine noun meaning a concubine. A concubine was a legitimate wife, however, she was of secondary rank. This was evident by the references to the concubine as having a husband; Judges 19:2, and that this man and her father are considered to be son-in-law, Judges 19:5, and father-in-law, Judges 19:4 respectively. Now I won't take the time to read through the story in Judges 19, but if you read that particular story, you get the clear meaning that the concubine was not just a mistress. There was a formal relationship, like a marriage, between them. It was just considered to be a lesser status than a full wife.

The point I'm getting at in saying this is that essentially what the Bible is telling us is that Solomon had a thousand wives. Now this was another thing that Moses had recorded that the king should not do. Turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 17 and verse 14.

Deuteronomy 17:14. *"When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that [are] around me.'*

15) *"you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; [one] from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who [is] not your brother.*

16) *"But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'*

17) *'Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.'* (NKJV)

So you see the instructions here were very clear, don't do this; don't have multiple wives. But Solomon did it exponentially more than most other had done. Even his father David made this mistake of having multiple wives, but nowhere close to what Solomon had done.

Let's just take a moment, and I'll warn you ahead of time that I'm going to have a little fun when talking about this particular subject. When I look at the situation that Solomon put himself in, this is quite frankly a lesson in human nature, to realize that the wisest man who ever lived in human history somehow convinced himself that this was a good idea. Because if you just kind of walk through the logistics of what this would do to his life; having been married for fourteen years myself and at one point in my career having been a marriage therapist, I look at this and shake my head and go, how did a man so wise convince himself that this was somehow a good idea? This is going to be a disaster! Just think this through. Think about the sheer numbers of what he is dealing with. With a thousand women, there is no way he is going to spend any meaningful amount of time with the vast majority of them. So when you look at this story, and this is what I think of when I read through 1 Kings 11 and hear the description of the thousand women, I always kind of picture myself in a conversation with Solomon and what this would be like and I just sit there and go, "Solomon, have you never heard of jealousy? Have you never heard of unity against a common enemy? Because if you're not familiar with these concepts, boy, you're going to be by the time this is done." If you think through the logistics of what this is going to do, just by the sheer numbers as I mentioned, he's not going to spend any meaningful time with a lot of these women. That is not logistically possible. Also by common sense, looking at different personalities and such, some of these women he's going to hit it off with more than with others. That's just common sense. With some he's going to have more things in common, their personalities are going to mesh a little more and he's probably going to spend more time with them and kind of favor them over some of the others. What's that naturally going to result in? It creates a lot of jealousy. All you have to do is look at the

other examples of polygamy in the Old Testament to see the jealousy, the vying for attention and infighting this causes. He's got hundreds of wives. Just imagine the situation this is going to create.

Also imagine this; he's got this many different women and again a large percentage of them he's going to spend little to no time with. I'm sure a lot of them came about as a result of political alliances, so there was no real connection between him and them. They were just part of his harem and part of a deal that he made. Consider the feelings of abandonment, resentment, loneliness these women are likely to experience and what they're going to go through and what kinds of negative feeling this will result in. Then what are they going to do? Naturally what a lot of them are going to do is what is very natural for a woman to do when she's hurting and going through a situation like that. She's going to want to reach out to others, have someone to talk to, have a shoulder to cry on, someone who is going to understand her and what she's going through and is going to validate her experience. What are they going to discover? There's hundreds of other women who know exactly how they feel. What is this going to do? They're going to fertilize one another's negative feelings towards him because they all have one thing in common. It's that same neglectful husband that is the source of all their negative feelings. Now they have a common enemy. Guess who the common enemy is? The rocket scientist who thought having a thousand wives was somehow a good idea. He is setting himself up for disaster and if you think about the situation that he had to put himself in, it was a very difficult lesson that he really learned the hard way. If he had simply followed Moses' instruction of don't do this, don't have multiple wives. You'll save yourself a lot of pain.

He records a lesson for us five different times throughout the book of Proverbs and I think one of the reasons it's talked about so many times is because this was a lesson he learned in spades through his own personal experience and he learned it the hard way.

Turn with me to Proverbs 21 and we're going to start in verse 9.

Proverbs 21:9. *Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman. (NKJV)*

Let alone with hundreds of them.

Turn to verse 19.

Proverbs 21:19. *Better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman. (NKJV)*

Again, let alone with hundreds of them.

Now turn to Proverbs, chapter 25 and verse 24.

Proverbs 25:24. *[It is] better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman. (NKJV)*

Turn to Proverbs 27 and verse 15.

Proverbs 27:15. *A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike,*

16) *Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil in his right hand. (NKJV)*

If you've ever listened to, and I use the analogy today of a dripping faucet; if you're ever tried to sleep and you just hear that constant drip, drip, drip; what does that do after time? Your nerves get on edge after a while, like, "Somebody fix that thing or turn it off!" That is kind of the analogy that he's making here. When he says, "grasping oil in your hand"; what happens if you try to grasp oil in your hand and squeeze it? You squeeze your hand and the oil just runs down your arms. Or if you try to grasp the wind; if you try to grasp air, all it does is slip out of your hand. That's the analogy he's making here.

One final scripture on this point; turn to Proverbs 19 and verse 13.

Proverbs 19:13. *A foolish son [is] the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife [are] a continual dripping. (NKJV)*

In other words, the same idea of dripping water or dripping faucet that gets on your nerves.

I'm not covering this to pick on the ladies. Although it's a biblical principal, realize Solomon set himself up for this. If he had been willing to learn the easy way and had followed Moses' instructions and not insisted on having to learn this the hard way through personal experience, he wouldn't have had to go through this. It was something he insisted through his human nature to put himself into.

As I mentioned, I'm just going to have a little fun with this subject. When I think of Solomon's situation, it reminds me of a humorous poster I saw once. This will kind of show you what a warped sense of humor I have. I'm sure you all have seen these motivational posters. You'll see them in office buildings and in various places and it will be a picture of a mountain or a guy climbing a mountain or something of that nature and it has a message about courage or commitment or perseverance or something like that. Well there are also some that are kind of a parody of that and done for sarcastic humor. There's one that I always think of when I read Solomon's example. In fact I have a copy of this poster on my face book page. It's a picture of a banister like you would see around a back porch or deck. Realize this particular photo is probably photo-shopped, but just so you appreciate the humor of it. What it shows on this banister is a fully grown bald eagle and this eagle is perched on this banister and he's looking off to one side. In the direction that he's looking you also see a house cat, and the cat is crouched down like he's stalking and he's making his way over to the eagle. The obvious

implication is like he's hunting birds, but the bird he's about to take on is big enough to pick him up, fly away and have him for lunch. Underneath the picture in big letters is "OVER CONFIDENCE". Underneath that in smaller letters the caption says, "This is going to end in disaster and you only have yourself to blame."

When I look at this thinking the wisest man in the world decided that having a thousand wives was a good idea and this was going to turn out to make his life fulfilling. I look at that and think, "over confidence." This is going to end in disaster and you only have yourself to blame. Because again it's a great lesson in human nature because common sense would tell most all of us that this is going to be a bad idea. But somehow this is the guy that talked himself into thinking, "it will work out for me. I'll be the exception. I can do something bone headedly stupid, but it will still work out okay for me. Somehow it will work when I do it. I'm the exception." Isn't that what we all tell ourselves when we avoid obvious good counsel and go against obvious basic principles? That's what we tend to do.

As any good sales trainer will tell you, if you ever worked in the sales industry and been through any professional training, one of the concepts they teach is, it is a natural human tendency to make decisions with emotion and then reverse engineer logic to make that decision make sense. We'll look at something in our own emotional desires or lust or whatever, and we want to do this because we just want it. Even though in the back of our minds we know it's a bad idea, it's not going to work out well, it defies basic principles that I shouldn't be going against, but we create a logic in our minds that will make it make sense so we can justify it to ourselves. It's a natural human tendency. So when you look at these kinds of decisions, it's obvious at some level that Solomon was doing this. Because why would someone so wise do something so bone headedly stupid? It's because of our human nature. It's our human nature, our carnality, the inability to tell ourselves no and the deceptiveness of human nature and how we can talk ourselves into believing this is a good idea because it's what I want to do. Even though it doesn't make sense for whatever reason I want to do it, so I'll talk myself into doing it. That's essentially a lot of what occurred here.

Let's also look at some other lessons in Solomon's life. Turn back to 1 Kings and pick up where we left off.

1 Kings 11:9. *So the Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10) and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. (NKJV)*

In other words, he knew better, he just couldn't harness his own human nature to do the right thing. He didn't do this out of lack of knowledge or lack of awareness that this was the right thing. He did this because he was carnal and stubborn and he decided to go against God's instructions.

11) *Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.*

12) *"Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David: I will tear it out of the hand of your son.*

13) *"However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom: I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen." (NKJV)*

What he is saying here, God is basically pronouncing sentence upon him. He said, "Look I tried to get you to go the right direction, you're insisting on going the wrong way and here are the consequences you're going to face."

Also there's another lesson in this, that Solomon's sins had a ripple effect. It didn't just affect his life, being the king we wound up affecting the whole nation as a result of the mistakes he made. It's an important lesson in regards to sin itself. The analogy I like to use is sin is oftentimes like taking a rock and throwing it into water. If you've ever been to a pond or a still body of water and taken a stone and thrown it in the water, what you're going to see is a shock wave goes out in every direction away from where the stone hits. The larger the stone, the bigger the shock wave that goes out. Those rings, again, go out in every direction. Well, sin has a similar effect. This is what happened in Solomon's life. His sins didn't just affect him and his family, they wound up affecting the entire nation. Also, if you think through what this would do to his family, think about not only the number of wives he had, but the children that had to come from this. One of the things that would have gotten him into having this many women was his own lust, his own sex drive.

As we're going to see in part 2, he says in Ecclesiastes, he got to a point to where whatever appealed to his eyes he didn't withhold from himself. You know one of the things that happened here was, "Hey, she's gorgeous and she's gorgeous and she's gorgeous! I think I'll have them all." Obviously some version of that is what fueled a lot of this. Of course, there were also political alliances, there was the desire for power and a number of things playing a part in this. The point I'm getting at is as a result of this there would be a good number of children, because his sex drive was probably one of the things that caused him to go down this road.

The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about his children or anything that came from that, but if you look at the other examples of some of the other patriarchs that had multiple wives and kids through them, what tended to happen? There was plotting and scheming and trying to get the favored position and there was discord between them as a result. Well, imagine all the lives that were affected as a result of the decisions he made in doing all this because this would have affected hundreds of families. Who knows how many children would be vying to get any of his attention or to be the favored kid and all the discord that this could sow amongst all the people. This all came about as a result of his bad decisions.

You know what Moses said, “Don’t do this and I won’t do it.” If he had done that all of this could have been skipped and all of this pain that not only he went through, but his family and the entire nation went through. Again, it works the same way for us. Our sins have a ripple effect to affect others and our decisions can have wide reaching effects, depending on the nature of them. It’s important for us to realize again that the key issue is not just our understanding, it’s the character to discipline ourselves and follow what we know to be right.

Let’s see how Solomon responds to all of this. He has been told by God basically, “Here are the sentences you’re going to receive for the mistakes you’ve made, because you’ve refused to do the right thing and refused to follow My instructions. Here’s the sentence I’m going to do to you.” What we’ll notice here is he doesn’t have a reaction like his father David did when he really messed up. I’m sure you’re all familiar with the story of David and Bathsheba and the matter of Uriah the Hittite as the Bible refers to it. When Nathan the prophet comes to David and shares with him, “You really messed up and God is really upset with you,” David’s reaction is one of humility and repentance. He’s repenting before God and asking for forgiveness and making amends to turn this around. He still suffers consequences from it, but that’s his reaction.

Solomon has a very opposite reaction to the situation. Let’s pick up in verse 26

1 Kings 11:26. *Then Solomon’s servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother’s name [was] Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.*

27) *And this [is] what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo [and] repaired the damages to the City of David his father.*

28) *The man Jeroboam [was] a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph.*

29) *Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two [were] alone in the field.*

30) *Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that [was] on him, and tore it [into] twelve pieces.*

31) *And he said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you*

32) *‘(but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel),*

33) *‘because they have forsaken Me, and worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do [what is] right in My eyes and [keep] My statutes and My judgments, as [did] his father David. (NKJV)*

Notice, Solomon's example got the rest of Israel worshipping these pagan gods as well. It was part of the ripple effect, because they wound up following his example and getting involved in this pagan worship as well.

34) *'However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes.*

35) *'But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you – ten tribes. (NKJV)*

What he's telling Jeroboam is, "You're going to be Solomon's replacement." In other words, after he dies, after Rehoboam takes over, you're basically going to wind up being his replacement with the majority of Israel is what's going to happen.

36) *'And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there.*

37) *'So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel.*

38) *'Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do [what is] right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.*

39) *'And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.'" (NKJV)*

Now notice Solomon's reaction to all of this in verse 40.

40) *Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.*

Now think about what Solomon is doing now. God has told him, "Look you've blown it and I'm going to tear the majority of the kingdom away from you. How does Solomon respond? His actions scream pretty loudly. It's obvious his thought process was something like, "Well, you can't replace me with a dead man. I'll just chase down the guy and kill him. I'll out do you." Does this story not sound familiar? Think about this. This is Solomon who grew up being raised by his father David. David went through the same thing as well. Because Saul had been told by God, "I'm going to pull the kingdom away from; I'm giving it to David. I've chosen him as your replacement." What does Saul do? He chases David around trying to pin him to the wall with a spear and trying to kill him because, what's his thought process? "You can't replace me with a dead man. I'll kill him and prevail over God. I'll get my way."

You'd think Solomon, having grown up with his father in his father's house where his father is king, therefore knowing how the movie ended, by virtue of the fact that he winds up king himself means his dad prevailed and God's will made it out here. Instead

what does he do? “I’ll do the same thing. You can’t replace me with a dead man. I’ll kill the guy.” Those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. I read the quote when we first started out, “History repeats itself because no one was paying attention the first time.” That’s kind of what happened here. He didn’t learn the lesson that, “This didn’t work out too well for Saul. Logic would suggest that it is not going to work out for me either.” So he tries to go down the same road and fails.

If you think about this, think about the massive transition that has taken place in this man’s life. When we started off the sermon, we read the story in 1 Kings, chapter 3 where you have Solomon who is very small in his own eyes. He says to God, “I’m a little kid; I don’t know how to go out, how to come in. I need you to give me a discerning heart. You define for me right from wrong. You show me the way I should go.” He is very humble and looking to God. We see later in his life, what is he doing? The guy who has now been blessed with all of this wisdom by God; he was given all these riches by God and he knows this is where he got it from, because he had a conversation with God about it. Now he has convinced himself that he’s going to outwit God and he’s going to be able to prevail against the will of God and somehow beat Him. What has happened in this man’s mind to bring about this huge change?

What we’re going to do next time is look at the behind-the-scenes story of the dynamics of what was going on in this man’s mind and the decisions he made that brought about this huge change throughout his life. That’s a whole other sermon in itself.

So I will basically say we’ll have to adjourn at this point and next time we’ll pick up the story and explain again the behind-the-scene story that Ecclesiastes tells us as to how he made this huge change in his life and where he went wrong. So at this point, I’ll just say tune in next time for, Learning the Hard Way: Lessons from the Life of Solomon – Part 2.