A Son Rejects Wisdom

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Sin against God has consequences that may impact others.

MAIN PASSAGES: 1 Kings 11:1-13; 12:12-17

On an unusually cold Florida morning in January of 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral to begin its tenth mission. Onboard was schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, and her status as the first teacher in space ensured millions of school children were tuned in to watch the launch. Seventy-three seconds later, the *Challenger* exploded in a horrifying plume of smoke and fire.

The investigation into the disaster determined that the explosion was caused by the failure of a rubber gasket—an O-ring—that had become brittle and stiff due to the cold. As a result, flames escaped from the booster and ignited the fuel tank.

It’s hard to believe that the failure of such a small ring of rubber could have such catastrophic consequences. What is even more tragic is that engineers were aware of the possibility of failure based on data from previous shuttle missions. Tragically, warnings were unheeded, and the shuttle blew apart, killing all seven onboard.¹

Why are human beings prone to ignore warnings and the possibility of consequences?
Group Time

Point 1: Foolish choices compromise devotion to God (1 Kings 11:1-8).

1 King Solomon loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh’s daughter: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women 2 from the nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, and they must not intermarry with you, because they will turn your heart away to follow their gods.” To these women Solomon was deeply attached in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives who were princesses and three hundred who were concubines, and they turned his heart away.

4 When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to follow other gods. He was not wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD his God, as his father David had been. 5 Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the abhorrent idol of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did what was evil in the LORD’s sight, and unlike his father David, he did not remain loyal to the LORD.

7 At that time, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abhorrent idol of Moab, and for Milcom, the abhorrent idol of the Ammonites, on the hill across from Jerusalem. 8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who were burning incense and offering sacrifices to their gods.

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the Lord gave instructions to His people about how a king should behave. But looking at 1 Kings 10:14-29, it almost seems as though Solomon used these instructions as a checklist of “Things to do to disobey God.” And what he didn’t check off in chapter 10, he checked off in chapter 11: acquiring many wives.

How is our love for other people related to our love for God?

Solomon’s love for his many foreign wives led his heart astray, resulting in compromised, halfhearted devotion to the Lord. He didn’t merely indulge his foreign wives with their false gods, he followed these false gods himself. At some point, Solomon left his first love for the Lord (Rev. 2:4), and as goes the king, so goes the kingdom.

What wisdom and encouragement would you offer someone whose devotion to God is being compromised?
Point 2: Foolish choices come with consequences (1 Kings 11:9-13).

9 The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 He had commanded him about this, so that he would not follow other gods, but Solomon did not do what the LORD had commanded.

11 Then the LORD said to Solomon, “Since you have done this and did not keep my covenant and my statutes, which I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 12 However, I will not do it during your lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of your son’s hand. 13 Yet I will not tear the entire kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem that I chose.”

If ever anyone were perfectly set up for success, it was Solomon. He had so much going for him, and yet, he still managed to rebel against God. The wisest man ever wasn’t wise enough. So the Father deemed it time to discipline His son (2 Sam. 7:14). While God is infinitely patient with humanity (2 Pet. 3:9), He sets conditions on the exercise of His patience. Whenever He wants, for His timing is perfect, God is completely just to give sinners what their rebellious hearts have earned and to give sons and daughters the discipline they need. We see a glimpse of God’s righteous discipline here with Solomon.

How do you tend to view the consequences of your sin?

God’s Judgment Natural Consequences God’s Patient Discipline

Israel’s long period of peace came to an end with Solomon’s apostasy. God told Solomon that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant. Yet even with this stunning consequence, the Lord sounded two grace notes.

1. The kingdom would not be divided until after Solomon’s death (1 Kings 11:11-12).

2. The kingdom would not be torn away entirely from the house of David; God would allow one tribe to remain aligned with Solomon’s son (v. 13).

How did preserving the house of David in spite of Solomon’s sin fulfill God’s purposes?
Point 3: Foolish choices create problems for others (1 Kings 12:12-17).

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered: “Return to me on the third day.” 13 Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him and spoke to them according to the young men’s advice: “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips.”

15 The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the Lord to carry out his word, which the Lord had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. 16 When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him:

What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Israel, return to your tents; David, now look after your own house!

So Israel went to their tents, but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.

Rehoboam showed none of the humility his father had when he began to rule. Faced with a pressing decision, Rehoboam sought wisdom not from God but from other people. And rather than listening to the seasoned wisdom of his elders, he followed the advice of his peers to further burden his would-be subjects. Thus, the kingdom split.

Sin’s Effects in the World: Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our ________________ relationships with the people around us. Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to ________________ and ________________.

Solomon’s folly led to Israel’s fracture, folly that was echoed in Rehoboam’s choice to listen to the “wisdom” of his peers. Israel’s subsequent history would be marked by division, downfall, and dissolution. But on God’s timeline, the fall of the earthly kingdom of Israel paved the way for the spiritual restoration of Israel and the coming of the Son of David, the true wisdom of God.

What are some wise choices believers can make to bless others?

Voices from the Church

“Let us give humble thanks and joyful adoration to our perfect King, Jesus, who alleviates our burdens, provides for our greatest needs, and rules His kingdom with wisdom and justice.”

—Tony Merida
My Mission

Because we have been forgiven of all our sin through Christ, we proclaim the foolishness of relying on our own wisdom for salvation and lift up Jesus as the only hope.

- How will you trust that Jesus is God-given wisdom for you today?
- What are some ways your group can provide godly wisdom for those who are younger in our church?
- With whom will you share about Jesus, the wisdom of God for our salvation? Whom will you invite to be a part of your Bible study group to hear about God’s wisdom in Christ weekly?

Voices from Church History

“Now, I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.”

–Martin Luther (1483-1546)
God had prohibited the Israelites from intermarrying with the nations surrounding them (Deut. 7:1-4). This was to preserve religious, not racial, purity, as is made clear in 1 Kings 11:2: “because they will turn your heart away to follow their gods.” Solomon was an extreme example that proves the rule. With seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and likely most of them foreigners, his heart was literally turned in a thousand different directions.

Notice the emphasis on the “heart” in these first four verses. The writer of 1 Kings wanted to make sure we understand that Solomon suffered from a terminal heart condition: the divided heart.

Sin doesn’t just happen because of something external, something happening “out there.” The work of sin is primarily internal, the result of something that has already happened “in here.” If you find your heart has been divided, pulled and turned in multiple directions, Scripture provides the remedy for uniting it again: “Teach me your way, Lord, and I will live by your truth. Give me an undivided mind to fear your name” (Ps. 86:11). Only God can bring together a divided heart.

Have you allowed your heart to become divided over time? Ask God to bring it back together again.
Day 2: Read 1 Kings 11:9-43

At the start of any large organized marathon, there are thousands of people lined up. There is energy, excitement, and enthusiasm. There are costumes. It isn’t uncommon to see people planning to run 26.2 miles dressed as Elvis.

That’s the starting line. The finish line looks quite different. There are a lot less people. Far fewer costumes. And while some finish well, many more barely finish, stumbling, walking, or even crawling or being carried across that line on the pavement. But whether they sprint across or crawl across, and no matter what the time reads as they cross, everyone who crosses the finish line has one thing in common: they all finished. Many who start never do. The point isn’t how you start, it’s how you finish.

The first eleven chapters of 1 Kings detail Solomon’s life and accomplishments. No king in Israel’s history built more, taught more, spent more, wrote more, or married more. But for all that, his death is summed up with this simple statement: “Solomon rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David.” He started well—with the best of them—but he didn’t finish well. May we be a people who finish strong.

What adjustments do you need to make in your race to finish well?

Day 3: Read 1 Kings 12:1-11

Rehoboam had two choices: listen to the old men who had counseled his father or listen to the young men with whom he had grown up. You know the rest of the story, and you know it didn’t turn out so well. It can be tempting to discount the previous generation and assume their ideas and perspectives are outdated. But consider these truths from God’s Word: “One generation will declare your works to the next and will proclaim your mighty acts” (Ps. 145:4); “Wisdom is found with the elderly, and understanding comes with long life” (Job 12:12); and “Listen to your father who gave you life, and don’t despise your mother when she is old” (Prov. 23:22).

Not only does it benefit us to seek wisdom from the previous generation, we also ignore it at our own peril. Rehoboam’s father, Solomon, put it this way: “The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov. 13:20). If only he had listened! What will it take for us to listen?

From whom do you seek advice and counsel? Whom do you need to seek out for wisdom in the future?
Day 4: Read 1 Kings 12:12-19

Verse 19 has a double meaning. On one level, “today” refers to the writing of 1 Kings itself, which could have been any time prior to the destruction of the temple (based on 1 Kings 8:8, that the poles to carry the ark could still be seen “today”). But this statement can also be seen as a commentary on the future state of Israel. It was Israel who first rejected Jesus (Acts 4:11). Paul wrote in Romans 9:31-32: “Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law … Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works.” Any time we seek to be justified apart from grace, we are in rebellion against Jesus, the house of David. This continues to happen—today.

How are you seeking to be justified before God? Spiritually speaking, are you in rebellion against the house of David, against Jesus?

Day 5: Read 1 Kings 12:20-33

Two factors contributed to Israel’s apostasy. First, Jeroboam attempted to use religion in the service of politics. Jeroboam reasoned that if people were required to return to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, they wouldn’t identify with Shechem as their new capital. Jeroboam missed the point of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It wasn’t to align the people with an earthly kingdom but with a heavenly one.

Second, Jeroboam appealed to his people’s desire for comfort and convenience. Instead of requiring them to go to one place to offer sacrifices, he established two shrines—one at Dan, on the northern border of Israel, and the second at Bethel, on the southern border. He placed a golden calf in each one, saying, “Here are your gods [or God] who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (v. 28). You have to wonder if Jeroboam knew he was repeating the words Aaron used when he made the first golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:4).

The problem with Jeroboam was that he saw the worship of God as a means to some other end. To him, worship of God was a means by which he could realize the end of a united people under his rule. Put simply, he made worship, and the God of that worship, a crass tool to bring about his purposes. Worship is never a means to an end. Worship is the end. May we remember that.

What do you need to do this week to make sure you are worshiping God with a pure heart?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Foolish choices compromise devotion to God (1 Kings 11:1-8).
- Foolish choices come with consequences (1 Kings 11:9-13).
- Foolish choices create problems for others (1 Kings 12:12-17).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

When has a failure to heed wisdom from someone led you into sin or considerable trouble? When has heeding wisdom done the opposite?

In what ways do the consequences of foolish choices reveal God's justice and the orderliness of creation? Why should this encourage us?

Notes
UNIT 10
SESSION 1

SESSION 2
1. Viktor Strigel, Commentary on 1 Samuel, quoted in 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, eds. Derek Cooper and Martin J. Lohrmann, vol. 5 in Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5

SESSION 6
3. “[I Kings,” in Africa Study Bible (Oasis International, 2016), 488.

SESSION 7

SESSION 8

UNIT 11
SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
2. “[I Kings,” in Africa Study Bible (Oasis International, 2016), 488.

SESSION 6
3. Martin Luther, Luther’s Large Catechism, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press, 1908), 44.
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Author of Gospel-Centered Kids Ministry and Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth

In this volume of The Gospel Project, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel’s heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them—one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God’s character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God’s people wanted and needed, each one proving God’s warnings true. Bookending God’s people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God’s people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God’s people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?