A Son Rejects Wisdom

Summary and Goal

The death of Solomon marked the end of Israel’s Golden Age, the United Kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon (circa 1050-930 BC). Soon after Solomon’s death, the kingdom of Israel was torn in two. Judah and part of Benjamin formed the nation of Judah in the south while the remaining tribes in the north kept the name Israel. While on the surface it might seem as though Israel divided because Solomon’s son Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders, the seeds of the split were sown long before that during Solomon’s reign. Compromise led to sin, and sin brought consequences that were felt for generations after. But even though God’s people were unfaithful to Him, we will see that God was never unfaithful to them. God had told David that there would always be a son of David on the throne. And because of Jesus, that is a promise kept.

Session Outline

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

Session in a Sentence

Sin against God has consequences that may impact others.

Christ Connection

Solomon was a king whose reign was marked by prosperity and peace, but in the end, Solomon’s sinful compromise led to the division of the kingdom. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke of Himself when He claimed “something greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11:31). Whereas Solomon’s sinful choices divided the kingdom, Christ’s righteous submission to God established a new unity for God’s people.

Missional Application

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.
Group Time

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraphs on page 121 of the DDG to relate the tragic story of the space shuttle Challenger, emphasizing the grave consequences that come with ignoring serious warnings.

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

INTERACT: Ask the group the following question.

Why are human beings prone to ignore warnings and the possibility of consequences? (we are prideful; we believe we can manage the potential consequences; we don’t believe bad things will happen to us)

SAY: The story of Solomon is another story of warnings ignored, leading to tragic consequences. Just as the integrity of the Challenger O-ring was compromised by the cold temperatures, Solomon’s coldness toward God’s commands compromised his devotion and the standing of his son as king over Israel.

SUMMARIZE: Soon after Solomon’s death, the kingdom of Israel would be torn in two: Judah in the south and Israel in the north. While on the surface it might seem as though Israel divided because Solomon’s son Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders, the seeds of the split were sown long before that during Solomon’s reign. But even though God’s people were unfaithful to Him, we will see that God was never unfaithful to them.

For session-by-session training videos, please visit MinistryGrid.com/GospelProject.
For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
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.

PACK ITEM 15: SOLOMON’S RICHES: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) as you point out the ways Solomon violated the instructions for a king given in the law and how his disobedience flowed from his compromised love for God. Use the map to highlight Solomon’s imports of horses, chariots, and gold.

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.


- In 1 Kings 3:3, Solomon “loved” the Lord, but in 11:1-2, Solomon “loved” many foreign women. Solomon’s love for his many wives and concubines detracted from his wholehearted love and devotion to the Lord (1 Kings 11:4), just as Deuteronomy 17:17 said would happen.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How is our love for other people related to our love for God? (when we love others more than God, we enter into idolatry; our love for God should cause us to love others as ourselves; our love for others is a matter of joy and obedience in our love for God; our love for God must be supreme)
EXPLAIN: Reference the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) as you explain the nature of the false gods Solomon chose to follow because of his love for his many foreign wives. Put Solomon’s devotion to these gods in context with his compromised, halfhearted devotion to the Lord.

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.

- The wise king of Israel permitted and participated in the worship of false gods in the promised land of God: Ashtoreth, a fertility goddess, had been a snare to the Israelites since they first arrived in the promised land (Judg. 2:13). The worship of Milcom (Molech) was known to involve child sacrifices (Lev. 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10)—he was rightly described as “abhorrent,” and the same apparently could be said of the god Chemosh. There’s no telling how many gods and goddesses Solomon worshiped, being that he loved many foreign wives with their foreign gods (1 Kings 11:8).

- Solomon also built a high place for Chemosh and for Milcom on the hill across from Jerusalem. The great builder of the temple for God built pagan altars within sight of that very temple. This is the shamelessness of sin.

- Although verse 4 says Solomon’s heart was turned away from God when he was old, the seeds of that turning away were planted years and decades before as he began accumulating foreign wives. We merely see the fruit born from it here. It is the nature of sin to work on us over time, if necessary (see Jas. 1:14-15).

Illustration: Few things reveal a person’s devotion like college football. For example: Travel to any town in Alabama wearing an Auburn University shirt and chances are that half of the town will love you and the other half of the town won’t even tolerate you. But imagine if you wore the colors of both schools: What would people say if you claimed to be a fan of both Alabama and Auburn? Or what if you declared yourself a fan of whichever team was having the better season? You probably would have an entire town against you. The reason is simple: Halfhearted devotion to a team means not being devoted to that team at all. Devotion to a team means you root for that team no matter what and especially that you abstain from rooting for its arch-rival.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What wisdom and encouragement would you offer someone whose devotion to God is being compromised? (turn back because that path results in pain and death; consider that temporary pleasure cannot compare to the glory that is in store for those who remain faithful; Jesus died to save you from this path of compromise; believe that God withholds no good thing from you)
Point 2: Foolish choices come with consequences (1 Kings 11:9-13).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 1 Kings 11:9-13 (DDG p. 123).

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.”

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 123) as you highlight Solomon’s privilege and show how God’s infinite patience is demonstrated toward Solomon, sinners, and sons and daughters.

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.

- Solomon: As a son of King David, Solomon grew up with all the comforts and privileges befitting a prince. He enjoyed the special love of God the Father (2 Sam. 12:24-25). According to Scripture, Solomon was the only king of Israel to whom God appeared in a dream (1 Kings 3:5). God even appeared to Solomon a second time after the temple was dedicated (9:1-2). Solomon not only had God’s law, he also had more God-given wisdom to understand and apply God’s law than anyone else. Finally, he had specific warnings from God of what would happen if he turned away from following Him (9:6-9).
- Sinners: God has given His warnings to humanity in Scripture. We know God’s Spirit will not contend with humanity forever (Gen. 6:3), and we know that it is appointed for people to die once, and after this comes judgment (Heb. 9:27). God is patient with sinners for them to come to repentance and faith (2 Pet. 3:9), but He does not owe human beings one second more of that patience. It remains as long as His good pleasure allows.
- Sons and Daughters: Those who are found in Christ by faith are adopted as sons and daughters of God. Scripture teaches that the Lord disciplines those He loves for the sake of their holiness (Heb. 12:5-11), and this is a demonstration of His infinite patience. Believers should delight in God’s patience toward them, but they should never hang their sin on it in refusing to repent.
INSTRUCT: Encourage group members to use the scale in their DDG (p. 123) to evaluate how they view the consequences of their sin.

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

- God's Judgment
- Natural Consequences
- God's Patient Discipline

EXPLAIN: Use the content below (DDG p. 123) to point out God’s grace notes to Solomon in his 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).

EXPLAIN: Emphasize God’s sovereign control in His discipline of Solomon as He raised up human rulers to resist and oppose Solomon until his death (1 Kings 11:14-43).

- The first was Hadad the Edomite (11:14-22), whose alliance by marriage with Pharaoh helped strengthen him in opposition to Israel. Previously, Edom was subject to David (2 Sam. 8:13-14). Don’t miss the irony: Solomon’s first step in apostasy was his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 3:1).
- God also raised up Rezon, who was made king over Aram in Damascus (11:23-25). Previously, Aram also was subject to David (2 Sam. 8:5-6).
- Finally, God raised up Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Solomon’s servant (1 Kings 11:26) to become Israel’s first king after the kingdom divided. According to verses 37-39, God made a similar promise to Jeroboam that he had made to David: If Jeroboam followed the Lord, God would build for him a house, a lasting dynasty, just as He built for David. But Jeroboam didn’t follow God.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How did preserving the house of David in spite of Solomon’s sin fulfill God’s purposes? (God kept His promise to David to establish his descendants on his throne; God kept His promise to treat Solomon like a son and not remove His faithful love from him; David’s dynasty was preserved so that one day the promised Messiah would come to rule on the throne of David forever; this demonstrated God’s attributes of faithfulness and grace)
Point 3: Foolish choices create problems for others (1 Kings 12:12-17).

SAY: After Solomon’s death, his son Rehoboam became king. Before his coronation was even completed, the people brought a request before their new king: Solomon had placed a heavy yoke on the people, would Rehoboam lighten it (1 Kings 12:4)? The new king deliberated for three days and then gave his answer.

READ 1 Kings 12:12-17 (DDG p. 124).

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.” 14 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. 15 When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him: 16 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.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 124) to contrast Solomon’s initial humility in becoming king with how his son Rehoboam began his reign, listening to the young men rather than the old men.

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.

- The Old Men (Elders): The old men who had advised Solomon advised Rehoboam to give the people what they wanted, to lighten the load Solomon had placed on them. The people’s request was not unreasonable. After all, now that the temple was built, there was no longer a need for the forced labor Solomon had conscripted (see 1 Kings 5:13-18). The people had served his father and sacrificed much; now, if Rehoboam lightened their load, they would serve him faithfully.

- The Young Men (Peers): The young men with whom Rehoboam had grown up advised him to power up and to keep the people in line with fear and intimidation. In marked contrast to Solomon’s humility, Rehoboam made his decision based on his ego. His response recalls that of Pharaoh in Exodus 5. Apparently Rehoboam didn’t pay much attention to his father’s proverbs (see Prov. 31:8-9).
FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 124).

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

**Essential Doctrine “Sin’s Effects in the World”**: Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 124) to raise up Jesus as the true wisdom of God, in contrast to the foolishness displayed by Solomon and Rehoboam.

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.

- Solomon himself provided a standard by which his reign was found lacking: “Fear God and keep his commands, because this is for all humanity” (Eccl. 12:13). So it is fitting that Jesus said He is greater than Solomon (Luke 11:31). Consider Jesus’ life in light of Ecclesiastes 12:13: Jesus feared God perfectly; Jesus kept God’s commands perfectly; and Jesus is for all humanity. God’s grace is able to cover all of our foolishness and all of our sin. Through faith in Christ Jesus, He does exactly that.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

What are some wise choices believers can make to bless others? (share the gospel of Jesus with others; warn people about the consequences of their unwise, foolish choices; invite others to believe in Christ and belong to a local church; give to and serve others in the name of Jesus; pray for others to see the wisdom of God in Christ)
EXPLAIN: There’s a “blink and you’ll miss it” prophecy in 1 Kings 11:39. God had just informed Jeroboam of His long-range plan for both Israel and Judah, with him as the king over Israel, saying “I will humble David’s descendants, because of their unfaithfulness, but not forever.” One day, Jesus, David’s descendant, would humble Himself by going to the cross, and for this reason, God would highly exalt Him, and give Him the name that is above every name (Phil. 2:8-9). Now we have the privilege of being citizens of Jesus’ kingdom with His message to share: Jesus is God-given wisdom who died on a cross for the salvation of all who believe (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 125), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

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?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You are all-wise. Yet from the beginning, we have sought to sustain ourselves by our own wisdom, and that has led to our ruin. Help us not to allow lesser things to compromise our love for You, and we thank You for Your love for us demonstrated in sending Your Son, Jesus, to atone for our sins. Fill us with Your Spirit as we direct others against trusting in themselves and toward trusting in Christ to save them. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 126-128), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 129) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 129) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.

- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: 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.”

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 3: “Not only does it benefit us to seek wisdom from the previous generation, we also ignore it at our own peril.”

- Day 4: “Any time we seek to be justified apart from grace, we are in rebellion against Jesus, the house of David.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 129) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to remind one another of the ways their meeting together helps keep them from falling into serious sin.

- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

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

“David had also married foreign wives, but they did not change either his religious life or that of the nation. Solomon’s wives, on the other hand, were known devotees of their national deities. Solomon’s Hethite wives had historical ties with the old Hethite aristocracies of the preceding millennium. Ruth, the Moabitess, showed that there was no offense in marrying a foreigner who had converted (Ruth 4:13) … These religious compromises were likely seen as politically expedient acts of courtesy to Solomon’s foreign wives, comparable to extraterritorial privileges that allow embassies in our time to conduct themselves according to the laws and customs of their native lands, but these common-sense principles conflicted with faith in God and God’s covenant with Israel. Both Ashtoreth (Astarte, Ishtar) and Milcom (Molech) were international deities worshiped under numerous names in different countries. Milcom/Molech was associated with child sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10). Chemosh, by contrast, was a god of Moab, probably a god of war.”

“Other than their link to his wives, Solomon’s choice of gods makes no sense. In the ancient world polytheists tended to worship the gods of nations who had conquered their armies or at least the gods of countries more powerful than their own. Ironically, Solomon worships the gods of people he has conquered and already controls. What could he possibly gain from such activity? The whole episode makes no sense, just as idolatry itself makes no sense.”

**Point 2: Foolish choices come with consequences (1 Kings 11:9-13).**

“The writer says Solomon’s heart was turned ‘when he was old’ (v. 4). He didn’t have a brief lapse into sin. The progression of sin seems to have gone on gradually until he eventually collapsed when he was old. Repeated words reveal the persistent nature of his turn from following Yahweh: turn (vv. 2,4,9), follow (vv. 5,6,10), and heart (vv. 3,9).”

“Even as drastic a sin as Solomon’s did not draw immediate judgment, ‘for the sake of David.’ This is a note that will reappear not only in this chapter (vv. 13,32,34,36) but also throughout the history of the kings (1 Kings 15:4; 2 Kings 19:34; 20:6). The Davidic covenant was inviolable, and it would move relentlessly to its fulfillment in the person of the Lord Jesus, the Son of David (Matt. 1:1).”
“The fact that God had appeared to Solomon twice (3:5; 9:2) made him especially culpable. Obedience would have led to the establishment of Solomon's throne (2:2-4; 3:14; 6:12-13; 9:4-5); his disobedience led to the loss of much of his kingdom. Nevertheless, for the sake of David, God would divide the kingdom during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam and would allow him to retain rule over one tribe (vv. 12-13; 12:20). The Lord's faithfulness to his covenant with David despite the sins of his successors is repeated elsewhere (vv. 32,34,36,39; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 20:6; 25:27-30).”

**Point 3: Foolish choices create problems for others (1 Kings 12:12-17).**

“The division of the nation into two parts has a tremendous impact on Israel's history. The separate entities never regain the prestige David and Solomon had established. They are also less able to repel foreign invaders. Of course, 1 Kings 11:1-40 discusses the religious roots of the breakup. This text also notes that Jeroboam, a northerner, was already a likely candidate to take Solomon's place. His position as supervisor over a forced labor project (11:27-28) underscores why northern Israelites were tired of Solomon's policies. They were drafted to work in the south, their tax burden was heavier than Judah’s, and their love for the Davidic dynasty was always tenuous at best … Only spiritual commitments could keep the nation united, and those commitments had already been weakened by Solomon.”

“After the kingdom of Israel divided, Rehoboam remained king of the tribe of Judah while Jeroboam became king of the ten northern tribes of Israel. Jeroboam rebuilt the town of Shechem and made it his capital. He also built up the town of Peniel and tried to keep his people from worshipping at Jerusalem in Judah by setting up pagan altars at Dan and Bethel. In 926/925 BC, five years after the division, Pharaoh Shishak I of Egypt came and attacked Jerusalem and many fortified towns in Judah (1 Kings 14:25; 2 Chron. 12:1-12). Shishak’s campaign also included the territory of Israel.”

**References**

3. Martin Luther, Luther’s Large Catechism, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press, 1908), 44.
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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?