

THE WISE GUY

by Bill Martin

KEY VERSE:

1 Kings 3:12b: Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.

FAITH STORY:

1 Kings 3:1-15; 4:29-34; 11:1-13, 12:1-11

FAITH FOCUS:

Solomon could have asked God for anything, but instead of asking for wealth and power, Solomon ask for a much better thing—wisdom. God was so pleased with Solomon that God not only gave him what he had asked for, but so much more—wealth, prestige, and power. The only stipulation was that Solomon needed to be faithful to God, and to follow God's ways. Solomon became the wealthiest and wisest of men, yet his own wisdom did not teach him self-control. He was a great teacher, but failed to follow his own teaching. In a number of passages in Proverbs, Solomon describes the attributes of a fool. Unfortunately, in many ways he was describing himself, because in the end he could not see that his desires and excesses were leading to destruction and separation from God.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students see that even as God blesses us with gifts, God also expects us to be faithful and obedient with those gifts.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

Students will be identify the different aspects of Solomon's life—his wise choices and his poor choices.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 A quarter, \$1, and \$5, bill.
- 2 Write these words on a note and wrap them in a box. "Congratulations! You have made a wise choice. You may have all of the money on the table."
- 3 Bibles for all students
- 4 paper, pencils, poster paper and markers
- 5 Posters with phrases for Apply activity written on them. (Feel free to create your own—ideas are suggested in the Apply activity.)
- 6 several pads of self-stick notes
- 7 brightly colored 3 x 5 cards

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5 minutes)

Prior to class beginning, place the quarter, \$1 bill, \$5 bill, and wrapped box on the table. Select one student to be the person who can choose from the items on the table. (You can draw names, have them pick a number you're thinking, the one who's having a birthday soon, whatever). Invite that student to choose one item from the table. If the student does not choose the box, open the box and show everyone what the student missed.

Discuss the student's choice, then say: *Sometimes the wisest choice is not the most obvious or popular choice. Today we are going to learn about a man who made some very wise, and not so wise, choices.*

CONNECT: (10 minutes)

Say: *The person we are getting to know today is King Solomon. King Solomon was the son of King David. Early in his kingship, God asked Solomon what he would like to have as a gift from God. Before we find out what Solomon said, I'm wondering what you would say. If you could ask God for anything, what would that be?*

Have the students answer the question by doing one of the options: *write a poem, draw a picture, or do a "body sculpture" of the request. (The body sculpture is simply a pose that shows their request.)*

Have the student share their poems, pictures and poses with the class.

Transition statement: *Now let's take a look at King Solomon, what he requested, and what happened in his life.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15–20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of two and give each group a passage to look up from the list below. Have them report what they found out about Solomon.

- 1 Kings 3:5-9...he made a wise choice
- 1 Kings 3:16-28...judicial insight
- 1 Kings 4:29-31...surpassed other wise men
- 1 Kings 4:42-34...uttered Proverbs and discourses
- 1 Kings 4:22-23...folly shown in extravagant living
- 1 Kings 11:1-2...married foreign women
- 1 Kings 11:3...excessive sexual involvements
- 1 Kings 11:4-7...worshiped other gods
- 1 Kings 12:1-11...oppressed the people

After this activity, talk about the differences in Solomon's life. Highlight the difference between the Solomon of 1 Kings 3:1-14 and the Solomon of 1 Kings 11:1-11.

Use Insights from Scripture during this discussion.

Ask the class to come up with “I wonder” questions about this story. Here’s a starter:

I wonder why Solomon was so wise at one time and so dumb at another time.

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Put up the posters you’ve prepared for this activity. Instruct students to take self-stick notes and put one on each poster with their comments on how wisely they think God’s gifts are being used in these areas. Posters could include:

- Personal wealth
- Environment
- Personal power
- National wealth
- National power
- Your gifts and abilities
- Your relationship with God
- Our church’s relationship with the community

Feel free to add other posters as well. After everyone has placed their notes on the posters, discuss.

RESPOND: (5–7 minutes)

Give students the opportunity to think about an area in their lives that they may be making unwise decisions, choices, and use of their gifts from God. Give students a 3x5 card and ask them to write down their thoughts about those unwise areas in their life, assuring them that this is for their personal reflection and no one else will see it. When students are done writing, offer a prayer for wisdom in their lives.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

Solomon was a son of David—the one that David promised would be the next King. It took some quick maneuvering by his mother Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet, and others, to make sure that Solomon’s brother Adonijah did not end up as king (1 Kings 1). So while David was still alive, he handed his throne over to Solomon. In 1 Kings 3 we see a Solomon who loved the Lord and who made many burnt offerings to the Lord. At Gibeon the Lord came to Solomon in a dream, and of all the things that he could have asked God for, Solomon chose wisdom. God was so pleased with Solomon that he not only gave him wisdom, God also gave him what he had not asked for—both riches and honor. Solomon grew in wisdom and stature. He was known for the wise way that he handed out judgment (1 Kings 3:16-28). He became famous among the nations; he was wiser than the wisest of men.

As a political figure, he helped Israel become a powerful nation in that region. He made many treaties by marrying foreign wives, the first being the Egyptian Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 3:1). He enlarged the government, and built up the military. He expanded on everything that his father David had done. His greatest accomplishment was the building of the Temple of the Lord (1K 5-6), which his father David dreamed of doing but was not allowed to by God.

Solomon became the wealthiest of men, his wisdom was known throughout the nations, and people brought him gifts so they could sit and hear his wisdom. Solomon is given credit for writing most of the book of Proverbs, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. He had power, wealth, prestige, and wisdom that were unparalleled. And the only thing that God asked of Solomon was that he be faithful and walk in God's way (1 Kings 3:14, 9:4-5).

The problem was that all of Solomon's wealth made him live life more extravagantly. He used gold like it was a common building material. He used it to adorn the temple, and to make shields for the army. Everything Solomon did was to great excess, and all this excess led to heavy taxation on the people, and forced labor on the people. Some 400 years after God had brought them out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, Solomon was putting them back into slavery.

His enlargement of the military and government also increased the financial strain on the people. But more importantly, it moved the people further away from the original way to fight Holy War, where the people stood still, and allowed God to do the fighting for them (Exodus 14:13-14). And it also further removed the people from having God as their king, because no longer were they trusting in God's power, but they were trusting in their own power.

The relationships and treaties that Solomon made gave him many foreign wives. This went directly against God's command (1 Kings 11:1-2). Solomon began to introduce the foreign gods that his wives worshipped; he built places of worship in honor of these gods. In the end Solomon turned his heart away from God, and because of his unfaithfulness, God broke the kingdom of Israel into two separate nations.

Solomon asked for the best gift, and God gave him that gift. Solomon had great wisdom, but he did not always use that wisdom wisely.

WORKS CITED:

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