

#### Thursday, June 17, 2021—1 Kings 8-10

Contractors and builders spend time, effort, and money to build a house that meets and exceeds the owner's expectations. They walk away from their completed task with a sense of accomplishment. Onlookers may be amazed at their design and skill, but the house is not a home until the owners become the occupants. The purpose is not for it to remain empty.

Solomon enlisted designers and workers to build a permanent home for the presence of God among His people. At the appropriate time, Solomon arranged for the Levites to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple. When they placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, the presence of God filled the place. His glory was so heavy that the priests could not remain in the Holy Place (8:11). Solomon assembled the people, and they praised Yahweh together for His grace and mercy to them.

God was pleased with Solomon's efforts, and He appeared to him a second time (9:2). He promised to bless and sustain Solomon if Solomon continued walking in faithfulness as his father David had done. David was not perfect, but his heart was wholly God's. Solomon had done a great thing for God, but God expected Solomon to continue giving Him his heart and worshiping Him alone. That is a daily decision.

God blessed Solomon with many things, most notably his wisdom (10:24). Pray for God's presence in your life to bear fruit which demonstrates to the world His presence and goodness in your life.

#### Wednesday, June 16, 2021—1 Kings 5-7

Solomon had the great privilege of fulfilling a dream his father, King David, had for Jerusalem. Solomon oversaw the construction of the Temple, the permanent dwelling place for the presence of God. The process says much about God and His desires for His people.

The construction began in Solomon's fourth year as king. Moses had led the people out of Egypt 480 years earlier (6:1). The plans of God and the dreams of man do not become reality overnight. They may not happen in one's lifetime. God works on His own timetable.

Solomon was wise, and Solomon was blessed, but Solomon knew he was not the man to do the actual building. He called in a man skilled in construction, and everyone benefited from this choice. Hiram built a stunning structure that honored God. In His wisdom, God gives a variety of gifts, skills, and abilities to His people for their good and His glory.

The stones and wood they used at the Temple were prepared away from the Temple sight. The design was specific, so they knew how to prepare the piece at the quarry. Similarly, God shapes the lives of those who come to Him in faith so He can place them into the Body of Christ. They need to do nothing to themselves. He dresses them appropriately. Each piece in the Temple had a purpose. Each person in Christ does, too.

Praise God for His timing, gifting, and grace which allows us in His presence. Pray for usefulness as His Temple to draw others to Him.

#### Tuesday, June 15, 2021—Song of Songs 5-8

The Song of Songs is also called the Song of Solomon. The actual title is even longer, something like “The Song of Songs Which Is Solomon’s.” Solomon wrote this song, which he felt like was a song like no other (the song of songs) to celebrate the relationship of husband and wife.

Marriage truly is a gift from God. The first relationship in the entire biblical story is a husband and wife in a perfect place. There they flourished until sin crept in. Anything God makes good Satan will try to corrupt.

Solomon’s song displays this reality. The budding courtship between the lover and his beloved becomes a celebratory wedding ceremony. The husband and wife consummate the relationship, and they revel in the goodness God has given (5:1). Like any relationship, theirs has its struggles. Schedules, emotions, and other factors cause the husband and wife to argue and lead to frustration. A supportive community and intentional communication help a struggling marriage recover (5:2-7:13).

Knowing the holiness of marriage and the gift of sexual intimacy between husband and wife lead people to guard them (8:7). Car owners know they have to use the car according to the manufacturer’s guidance, not personal preference. Likewise, Christ followers know they are to hold high God’s standards and to protect the vulnerable from being led away from them or harmed by the culture’s broken values (8:8-10).

Thank God for His design in marriage and sexuality. Praise Him for its mirroring the love of Christ and His Church.

#### Monday, June 14, 2021—Song of Songs 1-4

Love is a powerful emotion, but in its truest sense love is an action. To love someone or something changes a person and reorients priorities. To love someone well requires wisdom and self-discipline rather than the impulsive, passionate examples promoted by the media.

The love between Solomon and his beloved was deep and emotional yet controlled and purposeful. The beloved longed for the kiss of her lover (1:2), but she thought little of herself. She was embarrassed by her appearance (1:5-6). He knew her lack of self-esteem, so he encouraged her, using his words to give her value. This wasn’t the steamy passion of the cinematic world but the caring, thoughtful words of a loving husband.

Their attraction to one another was obvious and powerful, yet the beloved knew they could not give in to emotion. “Do not awaken love before its time,” she warned (2:8, 3:5). The fulfillment of physical connection can override discipline. Love can become lust in an instant (2:15). The two of them continually used words to communicate their love for one another, the value they saw in the other, and their desire. This verbal exchange blessed the listener and confirmed in the speaker the depth and richness of the relationship.

This love between husband and wife is a picture of the love between Christ and the church. He gave Himself sacrificially for the One He loved. She honors Him through praise and service. Pray for your marriage and your church to exemplify this self-sacrificial love.

### Sunday, June 13, 2021—Ecclesiastes 10-12

Wisdom is a treasure. With wisdom, words hit their mark more readily and warmly (10:12). With wisdom, leaders are able to think of themselves and their people, choosing to discipline themselves and bless their constituents (10:17). With wisdom, a person disciplines himself and stewards the gifts God has given (10:18). Wisdom is worth the work.

Wisdom motivates the wise one to share with those in need (11:1). Wisdom recognizes the mystery of the power of God and His working (11:5) but follows Him faithfully and fulfills the calling He has given. Wisdom knows He will bring fruit from faithful activity. Wisdom knows that the ease of youth will give way to the challenges of age (11:9-10), so wisdom does not place faith in self or ability but in the Creator (12:1).

The body will fail. Abilities will fade. If value and meaning are based in appearances and activity, then everything is meaningless because those things eventually go away. If, however, meaning and value come from revering God and obeying Him, then life has purpose every day. Wisdom teaches old and young alike to place their trust in God, not in achieving great things or knowing everything. Someone will always know more or do better. To measure one's life on those things is problematic. While they have value, their value is fleeting. God, meanwhile, is eternal.

Thank God for the gift of wisdom from His Word, His indwelling Spirit, and His faithful community. Pray for wisdom to saturate your mind and soul. Share that wisdom for the glory of God and the good of others.

### Saturday, June 12, 2021—Ecclesiastes 7-9

Life is filled with celebrations and frustrations. There are great highs and terrible lows. Wisdom helps see the value in them all.

Solomon may seem dark or depressed in Ecclesiastes 7, but he would likely say he was being realistic. He said it is better to go to a house of mourning than a house of feasting (7:2) because everyone will face death. Knowing this reality gives perspective and makes everyone consider how they are living and on what they are placing value. The day of one's death is better than the day of birth (7:1) because on that day one's life will display its true worth. What has been important? What legacy is left behind?

Life is uncontrollable on so many levels (8:8). The righteous receive the punishment the wicked deserve, and the wicked prosper as the righteous should (8:14). The ultimate authority and power rest with God, so the best plan is to trust Him and to enjoy what He provides each day (8:15). He will bring things to their proper conclusion in His time.

Knowing life will one day end encourages each person to make the most of each day. Knowing God is the ultimate judge motivates each person to live each day for His honor and pleasure. His wisdom brings abundance. Folly brings heartache. "Wisdom is better than the weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much good" (Ecclesiastes 9:18).

Pray for a life filled with His wisdom so that every situation—good and bad—can be helpful in knowing Him and seeing Him at work.

### Friday, June 11, 2021—Ecclesiastes 4-6

Wisdom transforms knowledge into understanding and application. Someone may know lots on information but not know how to apply that information to life or adapt to its truth. Wisdom gives perspective.

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes later than he wrote Proverbs. In both, he provided lists of sayings to give wisdom about life. Though jaded by life's experiences when he wrote Ecclesiastes, Solomon maintained proper perspective on two truths—community is vital, and God is sovereign.

Being in a position of power and wealth like Solomon can be lonely. One like that has few peers. Solomon knew God had woven the human spirit to thrive in community. Having someone with whom to work and rest is a blessing. A friend provides warmth when cold and wisdom when foolish. A friend picks up the other when he falls (4:4-16).

Though he was king over Israel, fabulously wealthy, and the wisest man on earth, Solomon remained aware of the majesty of God. Man was to approach Him with awe. If he made a vow to God, he should not delay in fulfilling it. Man should speak sparingly and worship fervently (5:1-7).

A person could live for thousands of years and never enjoy the work of his hands and the blessings of God. Wealth brings a desire for more wealth (5:10). Life loses its meaning when there is no community with whom to share it and no God to whom to give praise for it.

Thank God for a community of faith with whom to share life. Praise Him for the meaning and value He gives to life.