

THE STORY

Small Group Study Guide

Chapter 13

The King Who Had It All

Timeless Truth: Complete your walk – finish faithful.

Chapter Summary (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

The “man after God’s own heart” had known seasons of triumph and tragedy, yet his legacy is marked by overall faithfulness and trust that God would keep His word. David’s story closes with instruction and warning for his son, Solomon, who was already poised to carry on the heritage. David charged the new king with the divinely appointed task of leading God’s chosen nation and urged him to “walk in His ways,” so their family would “never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel,” as God had promised.

Solomon’s reign began with a series of defining events. He married the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and ironically, the nation that had once enslaved Israel now sought the good graces of God’s people. Then God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to grant his heart’s desire. Solomon asked for wisdom to lead, and God was pleased to grant this request and gave him wealth and honor as well. His wisdom was quickly tested when two prostitute mothers fought over a son. Solomon correctly judged in favor of the true mother, and his people held him in awe. Solomon’s keen wisdom became the hallmark of his reign and gave him insight into human nature. He penned thousands of proverbs that gained him an international reputation. People from around the world sought him out, and Abraham’s descendants became a blessing to the whole world as Solomon demonstrated that the cornerstone of all wisdom is a holy fear of God.

During Solomon’s reign, peace prevailed in the Promised Land. The time had come to build a temple for God. The construction project was massive and followed the pattern of the tabernacle that had been used since the days of Moses. The end result was as majestic as one could imagine. With great reverence, Solomon had the ark placed in the Most Holy Place. The temple was filled with a cloud of God’s glory, and Solomon humbly realized that even a magnificent temple could not sufficiently contain Him. Still, the temple would become the enduring focal point of worship and life for God’s people.

Following the dedication of the temple, God appeared to Solomon and warned him of the consequences Israel would face if they turned away from Him. *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land.* (p. 154) He also promised Solomon a royal dynasty in Israel if the king remained faithful. But if Israel followed other gods, God’s people would be cut off from the land.

King Solomon experienced phenomenal success. His wealth and wisdom were legendary. His reign was marked by peace and prosperity. But all of Solomon’s insight and riches could not make up for his choice to collect wives like gold. He married hundreds of women, many of them foreigners. Just like God had said, his foreign wives

“turned his heart after other gods.” This single decision shaped the future of his descendants and of the nation of Israel.

Solomon’s story began with great promise, incomparable wisdom and magnificent achievement. His father and grandfather had also started out well, but the way each of them ended was disappointing. There are no final words of wisdom recorded for the wisest king of all time. Instead, his closing chapter reveals that the kingdom would be torn in two. Solomon spent his last days fighting off enemies and rebels. His splendor and his legacy were tarnished by disobedience and idolatry. What a sad ending for the king who had it all, but ultimately failed in the only thing that really mattered: finishing well.

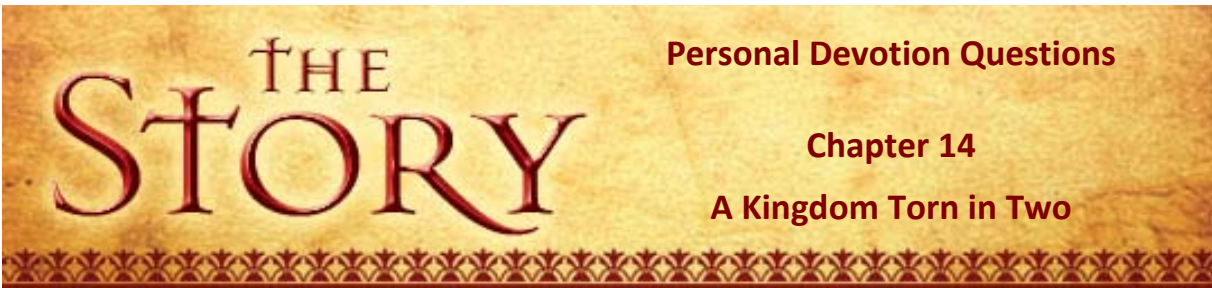
Icebreaker Question: What’s one of the smartest things you have done?

1. How did Solomon (and other Israelites) show love for the LORD in the Old Testament? How does this differ from New Testament believers? (See John 14:15, 15:12, 1 John 5:2-3)
2. Look at Solomon’s prayer of dedication. What does this teach you about how you should approach God?
3. Solomon authored many proverbs that teach general principles of wise and practical living. Some examples are found on pages 146-150. Choose one that you particularly like or one that resonates with you. What is the main point that it communicates? How might your life be different if you applied the proverb?
4. Using what you have learned about Israel’s history in previous chapters of *The Story*, why did Solomon make the dedication of the temple such a big event? What would it have been like to experience it firsthand?
5. Compare God’s promises to Solomon with His promises to David (p. 129). Which promise(s) had God faithfully fulfilled? What would Solomon and his descendants need to do to keep a successor on the throne (p. 144, 154)? How could Israel avoid captivity (p. 154-155)?
6. Solomon accumulated unprecedented riches. Look up Deut. 17:15-17 and Deut. 28:1-14. Did Solomon go too far? Is extreme wealth a good thing or a bad thing?
7. As Solomon grew older, he was a rich and established ruler, but he did not apply the wisdom that defined his early career. How can you continue to seek wisdom, even after you have experienced success?
8. Solomon’s failures began when he married women who served other gods. Why is it important for a husband and wife to both be committed Christians? What advice would you give someone who is considering dating a non-Christian?

In the time remaining ask your group members to share any of their personal reflection insights from their journal entries.

Closing Prayer





Journal your answers to these questions as you read through the chapter this week. You may wish to read one day and journal the next, or spread the questions over the whole week.

Day One

1. Rehoboam sought counsel from the elders who had served his father first and then to the young men who had served him. To whom do you turn when you need advice in making difficult decisions? Why?
2. This chapter is full of stories of conflict. Do you avoid conflict or are you more apt to provoke it? What lessons about conflict and conflict resolution can you learn from the stories in this chapter?

Day Two

1. Jeroboam turned away from the LORD and caused Israel to sin in order to hold on to his position and power. When in your own life have you sinned against God in order to maintain a position, hold on to power or boost your standing? What safeguard could you put in place to help you make God-honoring choices in the future?
2. When the man of God spoke against Jeroboam, the king was outraged (p. 162). How do you receive correction?
3. The anger of the LORD is mentioned four times in this chapter (p. 163 and 166). If someone asked you what makes God angry, what could you tell him or her? To which of the Ten Commandments was God's anger related (p. 49)?

Day Three

1. Review the summary statements made about Kings Asa and Ahab (p. 165 and 166). In a single sentence, write a summary statement that you would like to define the character of your life. If it is not true of your life now, what steps do you need to take toward that goal?
2. What are a few of the ways that the national leaders of this chapter shaped the populace of their nations? Our nation has new leadership. Based upon what you have learned from this chapter, write a prayer for them and for our country.

