

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 KINGS 1-3

We Americans are repulsed at the idea of a king. It's oppressive and tyrannical. We value freedom, and would never yield to the dominance of a single family.

But the ancient Israelites loved their king. They were royalists. They enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of a monarchy. It was a source of national pride. They took for granted the nation's destiny was largely tied to the decisions of a king.

For the next few months we'll be studying the kings of Israel and Judah.

Three kings ruled over the whole nation – all 12 tribes – Saul, David, and Solomon... After Solomon, the nation was divided by a Civil War... Nineteen kings reigned over the northern kingdom of Israel... Twenty kings ruled the southern kingdom of Judah. The entire period of history covered about 500 years.

In a Hebrew Bible the four books of 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings are actually considered one book "Kingdoms". Jewish tradition says they were written by the prophet Jeremiah. They weren't divided into their present form until 1516 AD.

2 Samuel closes in the midst of the history of Israel's greatest king, David.

1 Kings opens in the waning days of David's rule, and records the transfer of power from King David to his son, Solomon. And as was typical with most of David's family interaction it ended up a bloody and painful transition.

Chapter 1 opens on a chilly night in the king's quarters, "Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm."

David had not watched his cholesterol. The old boy had circulatory problems – iron-poor blood. His body temperature would drop and he'd get the shakes.

According to 2 Samuel 5:4, David was just 70 years old, but the king had some mileage on him. From his days in the wilderness on the run from Saul to his many battles – David had been "ridden hard and put up wet" more than once.

David had lived a *graced* but a *grinding* life.

Well, the physicians are called in - and they prescribe a special comforter to go on David's bed - not a *blanket*, but a *beauty*. "Therefore his servants said to him, "Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm." This was actually a recognized medical approach in the ancient world. A Greek doctor, Galen, mentioned this remedy in his writings.

This was the ancient equivalent of an electric blanket or a thermal quilt. Lay a hot-looking young woman next to the king to rev up the old boy's body heat.

Verse 3, "So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her." In other

words, the relationship never got sexual.

It was just for snuggles. Abishag kept the king warm and served as a personal nurse. Poor David had a tough time keeping his motor running anyway.

On cold, chilly nights at the Adams house, I roll over and whisper to Kathy, “*Honey, be my Abishag...*” It’s a great line. Hey, **every husband and wife should do a little snuggling**. It keeps the temperature of the relationship warm and healthy.

And unlike David, I’ve got some circulation left – which makes it even more fun.

Ladies, if the king of your castle is *growing cold* or *getting old* maybe he needs an Abishag to snuggle up close, and stir up some body heat? And hey, it’ll be a lot less complicated if you do it yourself. I don’t recommend recruiting someone else.

If you’re married don’t forget, “***Snuggles help get you through the struggles.***”

But I bet David wished he had never snuggled with Bathsheba. Immediately after his adultery, God warns David in 2 Samuel 12, “***The sword shall never depart from your house... I will raise up adversity against you from your own house...***”

It happened when Amnon was killed by his brother, Absalom.

It happened again when Absalom revolted, and died in a failed coup.

Now it happens a third time with Absalom’s younger brother, Adonijah.

Verse 5 “Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.” Notice Adonijah “exalted himself”. It’s true, he was probably next in line to be king, but in Israel hereditary rights were not absolute. The current ruler named his successor. And the process could always be trumped by God...

Rather than wait for an orderly and legal succession, Adonijah formed an armed militia and prepares to take the throne of his father, David, by force.

And here’s what haunted David’s family over and over again, (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, “Why have you done so?” He was also very good-looking. His mother had borne him after Absalom.) For whatever reason, David refused to discipline his kids. He could lead a kingdom, but not his own kids.

Perhaps he was stymied by his own failures – or too busy with affairs of state – or fearful of pushing them away – or had an unhealthy need to be liked by his kids.

These are issues all parents have to confront if they want to be good parents.

A parent’s job is to love his kids enough to rebuke them – to challenge their attitudes, as well as, their behaviors. At times you need to say, “Why have you done so?” Not just *the what*, but *why* - address the attitude behind the act.

Notice verse 6 says of Adonijah, “He was also very good-looking” - as if that were a concern of David. Maybe the king

cared more about appearance than character. He cared more about his family *looking good* than *being good*.

David avoided the ugly confrontations that discipline sometimes requires. He'd rather let his kids run wild than create a scene. David lacked the moral courage to reel in his kids. He was always giving his sons enough rope to hang themselves.

Verse 7 speaks of Adonijah, “Then he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed and helped Adonijah.” David’s longtime and faithful general, Joab, throws his lot in with the usurper.

“But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the mighty men who belonged to David were not with Adonijah.

And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattened cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En Rogel; he also invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, or Solomon his brother.”

David’s court was split in their allegiance.

“So Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, “Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord does not know it?”

Nathan knew that Solomon was God’s choice to be king – so he recruits the help of his mother, Bathsheba, to secure the king’s attention.

“Come, please, let me now give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go

immediately to King David and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord, O king, swear to your maidservant, saying, "Assuredly your son Solomon shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?' "Then, while you are still talking there with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words." They'll both tag team the king.

“So Bathsheba went into the chamber to the king. (Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was serving the king.) And Bathsheba bowed and did homage to the king. Then the king said, "What is your wish?"

Then she said to him, "My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant, saying, 'Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' "So now, look! Adonijah has become king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know about it. He has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but Solomon your servant he has not invited. And as for you, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, that you should tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

Otherwise it will happen, when my lord the king rests with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted as offenders." If Adonijah assumes the throne his first act would be to kill his potential rivals – including Bathsheba and Solomon.

“And just then, while she was still talking with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. So they told the king,

saying, "Here is Nathan the prophet."

And when he came in before the king, he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. And Nathan said, "My lord, O king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? For he has gone down today, and has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's sons, and the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest; and look! They are eating and drinking before him; and they say, 'Long live King Adonijah!' "But he has not invited me - me your servant - nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon.

Has this thing been done by my lord the king, and you have not told your servant who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

Then King David answered and said, "Call Bathsheba to me."

So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. And the king took an oath and said, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from every distress, just as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel, saying, 'Assuredly Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' so I certainly will do this day."

Solomon's succession will be immediate.

David will declare Solomon king even before he dies – that very day.

"Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and paid homage to the king, and said, "Let my lord King David live

forever!" A mom is greatly relieved.

And what a testimony to the totality of God's forgiveness! If God held grudges – if He marked our former sins against us - there's no way the offspring of David and his former adulteress, Bathsheba, would end up heir to God's favor and promises.

Apparently, *when God forgives us we really do get to start over!*

Verse 32 “And King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king.”

David makes arrangements for a royal coronation. Each detail is designed to grab the attention of the public and legitimize Solomon's claim to Israel's throne.

“The king also said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule...” When people see David's royal servants participating – and the royal mule in the parade - they'll recognize the coronation as an official, sanctioned proceeding. They're carrying out the king's orders.

Riding on David's mule was the equivalent of a presidential motorcade.

In our culture a mule is a symbol for stubbornness and ignorance, not royalty. But in Israel crossbreeding of horses and donkeys were forbidden, so a mule had to be purchased from a foreign land. They were no doubt rare and expensive. Commoners rode on donkeys. Only the king could afford a mule.

“And take him down to Gihon.” The Gihon Spring was Jerusalem’s primary water supply. It was south of the city in the Kidron Valley. It would’ve been a gathering ground for the people - a perfect place to witness the coronation.

“There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' "Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place. For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah."

Verse 36 “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! May the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David." The plan pleases the supporters of Solomon.

“So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down (these were David’s secret service) and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and took him to Gihon. Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon.” The holy oil from the Tabernacle confirmed Solomon as God’s choice not just David’s.

“And they blew the horn, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!"

And all the people went up after him; and the people played the flutes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth

seemed to split with their sound.”

A loud roar erupted from the people and reverberated throughout Jerusalem.

Though Adonijah had tried his best to sell himself to the people, the public realized that Solomon was the right man for the job. He was to be their king.

In verse 41 Adonijah’s banquet ends on a sour note. “Now Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the horn, he said, “Why is the city in such a noisy uproar?”

While he was still speaking, there came Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest. And Adonijah said to him, “Come in, for you are a prominent man, and bring good news.” Then Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, “No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king. The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites; and they have made him ride on the king's mule.

So Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon; and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar.

This is the noise that you have heard. Also Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom. And moreover the king's servants have gone to bless our lord King David, saying, 'May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne.' Then the king bowed himself on the bed. Also the king said thus, 'Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has given one to sit on my

throne this day, while my eyes see it!' " So all the guests who were with Adonijah were afraid, and arose, and each one went his way."

Talk about throwing a damper on the party. This is supposed to be Adonijah's coronation. Instead Solomon steals his thunder. Adonijah never got to deliver his victory speech. His campaign party was broken up by damaging early returns.

And all Adonijah's supporters abandoned him. A few minutes earlier they were about to pop the champagne – *now it's dangerous to be seen by his side.*

Verse 50 "Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar." Throughout the ancient world this was where an accused man would seek mercy. He would grab the horns of a religious altar.

"And it was told Solomon, saying, "Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.' "

Then Solomon said, "If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die. So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."

Solomon shows amazing grace. Adonijah was the leader of the coup against him. Yet Solomon gives his brother a second change to prove his submission.

1 Kings 2 records the death bed scene where David utters his final words.

I love these scenes in the movies. One of the most famous is from the movie *"Knut Rockne"*. Ronald Reagan plays the star Notre Dame running back, George Gipp. He's on his deathbed, and with his dying breath George Gipp tells his coach, "When the team needs to win a big game, and their back is against the wall, and they need encouragement... tell'em coach, to win one for the Gipper." What an emotional moment! A new rallying cry for Notre Dame football was born...

How many times have you heard the expression, "Win one for the Gipper"?

Here David utters his last words. He leaves his son, Solomon, with a challenge.

Verse 1 "Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man..." I love what the wise old king says to his son, "be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man." The late author, Ed Cole, once wrote, "Being a male is a matter of birth. Being a man is a matter of choice."

Half the population is male, but to be a man you have to prove yourself.

According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Solomon was 14 years old at the time. Solomon had been born in the palace. His whole life had been surrounded by the perks and luxuries of royalty. Solomon was born with a silver spoon in

his mouth. But now it's time for him to grow up. He needs to prove himself a man.

Every boy wants to be considered a man. But you can tell a boy a million times he's a man - and in his heart, he knows it's not enough. Every boy knows that manhood isn't granted. It has to be earned. You have to prove you're a man.

Most cultures take this fact into consideration. They have rites of passage from childhood to manhood - ways a boy can prove himself a man. Certain Indian tribes use to require a boy to slay a bear - or canoe a river - or brave the elements.

Yet, how do you really prove yourself a man?

It's sad, that some men use sinful tests. *Can he hold his liquor? Or will he lose his virginity? Or is he willing to fight with his fists?* Hey, drunkenness, and sex, and violence don't prove yourself a man – that stuff just proves you're stupid!

Listen to how David tells Solomon to prove his manhood... verse 3, **“And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn...”**

Here's the true test of manhood – *are you brave enough to obey and follow God? It takes a real man to go against the flow of this world – resist temptation - put God first!* A real man is strong enough to walk in God's ways and keep His commandments. So what that you're a male – the question is, *are you a man?*

David wants Solomon to prove himself a man so “that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.” Solomon’s integrity will insure the longevity of David’s throne. God wants the king to be a man of character.

In the next verses David instructs his son on how to deal with some characters left over from his reign. Solomon will have to tie up some of David’s loose ends.

Verse 5 "Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist, and on his sandals that were on his feet. Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.” He warns Solomon about General Joab. Here’s a man who was loyal to a point. But he had proven more than once, to have his own agenda – and was ruthless in obtaining his goals.

Over time Joab had lost respect for David. David had lost trust in Joab. David encourages Solomon to do what he never had the guts to do – deal with Joab.

“But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.” Barzillai was the old guy who fed David while in exile.

The king commands Solomon to reward his descendents for his kindness.

I hope you realize how you treat others doesn't necessarily determine how they'll treat you. You may be mean, but because you're the boss your employees will look past your rudeness and be polite despite how you treat them.

But how you treat others will determine how they treat your descendents...

If you're kind they'll repay your heirs with kindness – but if you're cruel, the moment you're gone, they'll take out their frustrations on your successors.

Verse 8, “And see, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.'

"Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood."

David had promised to spare Shimei. He now viewed his vow as a mistake.

Perhaps in the years after his pardon, Shimei failed to live up to the forgiveness David showed. Rather than be grateful, Shimei remained obnoxious and critical.

Solomon had made no promises regarding Shimei. He was free to exact the judgment, that in retrospect, Shimei deserved. David orders Solomon to do so.

Verses 10-12 are David's obituary, "So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David. The period that David reigned over Israel was 40 years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years.

Then Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established." And the new king begins his reign by cleaning house...

"Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. So she said, "Do you come peaceably?" And he said, "Peaceably." Moreover he said, "I have something to say to you." And she said, "Say it."

Then he said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had set their expectations on me, that I should reign. However, the kingdom has been turned over, and has become my brother's; for it was his from the LORD.

Now I ask one petition of you; do not deny me." And she said to him, "Say it."

Then he said, "Please speak to King Solomon, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife." Evidently, Adonijah had been eyeing old David's thermal blanket. *She was hot alright.* He wanted to do a little snuggling himself. So he asks the King's mother for her hand in marriage.

"So Bathsheba said, "Very well, I will speak for you to the king."

"Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah.

And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand.

Then she said, "I desire one small petition of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Ask it, my mother, for I will not refuse you." So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife." Bathsheba saw the request as a way to placate a potential threat. Hold out an olive branch.

But Solomon sees Adonijah's request for what it is... another example of his insubordination. It's probable David had taken Abishag to be his concubine.

When a royal court experienced a transition of power the king's harem became the property of his successor. If Solomon allowed Adonijah – who was already his older brother - to marry Abishag it would bolster his claim to the throne.

This is why Solomon erupts in anger at Bathsheba's innocent request, "And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "Now why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also - for he is my older brother - for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah."

"Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "May God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life!

Now therefore, as the LORD lives, who has confirmed me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has

established a house for me, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today!" So King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he struck him down, and he died.

And to Abiathar the priest (who had supported Adonijah) the king said, "Go to Anathoth, to your own fields, for you are deserving of death; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you were afflicted every time my father was afflicted."

So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh."

Without realizing it at the time Solomon fulfilled a 100 year old prophecy.

1 Samuel 2 and 3 tells us Eli's sons sinned, and he refused to restrain them. Thus, God promised to remove the house of Eli from the office of High Priest.

Abiathar was a descendent of Eli – and here Solomon takes the priesthood away from the house of Eli and gives it to another priestly family – a man named Zadok. Both were descendents of Aaron, but God fulfilled His judgment on Eli.

"Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the LORD, and took hold of the horns of the altar." Joab sees that Solomon is cleaning house. He's doing what David never had the guts – or heart to do. And he knows he's next.

“And King Solomon was told, "Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the LORD; there he is, by the altar." Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down." So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said to him, "Thus says the king, 'Come out!' " And he said, "No, but I will die here."

Notice, there is never any repentance on the part of Joab. He never admits he overstepped his bounds, or acted selfishly. Solomon was willing to show mercy where there was repentance, but Joab's stubbornness seals his death sentence.

It was Spurgeon who pointed out that when faced with death, Joab laid hold of the altar – though he had never visited it before. Joab was a man of war who had little for God in his lifetime. He'd never placed a sacrifice on the altar, or prayed before the altar. But now he rushes to the altar hoping to find some reprieve.

Joab is like the person too busy for God, or salvation, or the church in his lifetime, but when faced with death he rushes to the altar, but never repents.

“And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me." And the king said to him, "Do as he has said, and strike him down (put him to death) and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. So the LORD will return his blood on his head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword - Abner the son of Ner, the

commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah - though my father David did not know it.

Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the LORD."

So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.

In verse 36 the house cleaning continues, "Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere." Solomon places Shimei under house arrest.

"For it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head." The Kidron is the east border of the city. As soon as he tries to escape he'll be hunted and killed.

Here's what happens in the last part of chapter 2... Shimei violates his house arrest when he leaves Jerusalem to chase down two runaway slaves. When he returns he discovers the king meant what he said. Shimei is executed.

And here's a thought... Jesus called Himself, "a greater than Solomon". If Solomon meant what he said how much more is Jesus a man of His Word.

Guys, when the king says it... you can *take it to the bank!*

Chapter 2 ends, “Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.”

1 Kings 3:1 tells us, “Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem.” Ancient kings believed the best way to insure peace was to make your enemies your in-laws. Treaties were sealed with a marriage.

This is the reason Solomon ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines. His harem was full of *political princesses* – daughters of neighboring rulers.

But there was a drawback to this practice. Pagan princesses brought with them pagan gods and idols. This was why Deuteronomy 17 prohibited the king of Israel from accumulating wives... And as we'll see later this became Solomon's downfall.

Verse 2 “Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days. And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.” Judaism was a highly centralized religion. The only place to offer a legitimate sacrifice was on the altar at the Tabernacle.

The high places were altars that hosted unsanctioned sacrifices.

Apparently, in the early days of Solomon he went to these high places to offer sacrifices to Yahweh. Later in his life they

become the site for Solomon's idolatry.

This was why the high places were prohibited. They were too easily perverted.

Verse 4 "Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar." This was a big event. 2 Chronicles 1 tells us Solomon invited everyone in Israel to Gibeon.

This seems to be a dedication to God of Solomon's new administration.

"At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" In other words, God hands Solomon a blank check.

What if God appeared to you and said, "make a request - any request - and I'll see to it that it becomes a reality" – for what would you ask? *Gold? Girls? Glitz?*

Remember Solomon is just a kid. He's 14 years old. At this point in his life Solomon is overwhelmed with his new responsibilities as king. He's just taken over from his dad, David. God had called Solomon to lead *His* people. Solomon feels inadequate. He's too young and inexperienced. He doesn't know what to do. He needs wisdom to handle the people justly and mercifully.

Years ago we took our kids to see a movie called "*Blank Check*".

It was about a boy who stumbled across a gangster's

fortune - and ended up spending all the money on his own extravagance and entertainment. But in the end the kid's blank check couldn't buy him what he wanted most... *friendship.*

Rather than ask for money, or honor, or long life - Solomon asks for wisdom - so he can evaluate situations, and understand people. We're told in verse 6...

“And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.

And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

Already, Solomon was wise enough to know it didn't matter the size of his bank account - or length of his days - or his popularity – or victories over his enemies - if he wasn't successful in relationships he wouldn't be a successful person.

Solomon asks for wisdom - and God was pleased with Solomon's request... Verse 10, **“The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.”**

“Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

God not only granted Solomon wisdom - He threw in the riches, and honor, and longevity – all the “*other stuff*” Solomon could’ve asked for, but didn’t.

1 Kings 3 proves what Jesus spoke in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Verse 14, “Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.”

In the last half of chapter 3 Solomon gets an opportunity to demonstrate the wisdom he had acquired from the Lord. He’s asked to judge a difficult case...

“Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him.” Neither party has a good reputation for

morals or honesty. Both are prostitutes.

And both gals are roommates. “And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house.

Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him.” This was tragic – and why an adult should never sleep with an infant. But it was an innocent mistake... *Yet this is where a sad story becomes sinister...*

“So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne.” Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son.” And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son.” Thus they spoke before the king.

Remember, there're no dental records – no fingerprints – no DNA - no baby photos. The two women live by themselves. This is a case of one person's word against another. *What's Solomon to do? What would you do if you were judge?*

Verse 23, “And the king said, “The one says, 'This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one'; and the other says, 'No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the

living one." Then the king said, "Bring me a sword."

So they brought a sword before the king.

And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other." Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son;" Her motherly instinct kicked in...

The true mom would be willing to drop her claim to save her son's life. "And she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!"

But the other said, "Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him."

So the king answered and said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother." A mother's love will always put her child's welfare ahead of her own desires... And Solomon was smart enough to know it...

"All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice."

As a pastor it seems I encounter one impossible decision after another.

I've discovered not all situations are black and white. The answer isn't always clear. I need discernment. *I hope you'll ask God to help me make wise decisions.*

But the need for wisdom and discernment is not only true for *pastors* - but for *parents*, and *business partners*... we all face tough decisions from time to time...

This makes James 1:5 such good news “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

God makes a promise... Ask for wisdom and God will give it to you.