

MITCHELTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FOOLISH WISDOM

5 WEEK SERIES IN 1 KINGS



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What kind of wisdom do you need?

No matter what the decision—whether it's what to study at uni, which job to go for, how to invest your super, how to improve your love life, which car to buy, whether to renovate or move, where to go on holidays, where to send your kids to school—no matter what the decision, none of us would mind a bit more wisdom! Wisdom to make good choices instead of bad ones; wisdom that leads to great outcomes in the end.

But what *kind* of wisdom is best for us?

Solomon (~990-930BC), son of David, King of Israel, was famous for his wisdom. Famous worldwide, and famous for generations. Under Solomon, and his choices, the nation of Israel reached it's indisputable all-time high point. Yet even *his* choices led to family failure. In the end, his choices led to national disaster. So then, what's the story here? What kind of wisdom did he have? What kind of wisdom did he lack? And what can we learn from his life?

1 Kings 1-11 tells the story of Solomon in an intriguing way. Over and over it deliberately gets us thinking something positive about Solomon, it draws us in to admire him, only to then turn round and show us what was *really* going on in his heart the whole time. As we read it together, thinking about it personally and discussing it in our groups, we'll see the story reveal *two different kinds* of wisdom. There's the wisdom to achieve what you want, which we'll see Solomon had in spades. Then there's the wisdom to want the right thing... which we'll see Solomon never actually mastered.

As we follow his story, we'll come to see why it's the wisdom to want the right thing that we all need more than anything. It's a fundamental life lesson each of us needs to

keep learning and relearning, over and over throughout our lives. That's why we're going to spend the next five weeks in 1 Kings 1-11.

So, what would it be wise to want more than any other good thing? You'll have to think through the story of Solomon to find out! But here's a little hint from the apostle Paul:

“You have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3:15

It's our prayer that through Gary's Sunday sermons and these follow-up Growth Group sessions, the story of Solomon will make each of us wise to want relationship with God through Jesus above every other good thing in this world.

Jeremy and the MPC Ministry Team

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WEEK 1 || 1 KINGS 1 & 2

WISE KING SOLOMON?

Solomon is famous as the wisest person who ever lived. But as we begin to follow his story together, we'll see there's actually two sides to that claim.

If you try to think of a "wise" person, who comes to mind?

What makes them "wise"?

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Read 1 Kings 1:1-27

1. What impression of David do we get in v1-4?

If you've ever read about David's exploits earlier in life (1 & 2 Samuel), how is he different now?

2. How does Adonijah take advantage of the situation in v5-10?

What was meant to happen instead? v17 (compare v10 and *God's Promise to David*)

Nathan and Bathsheba's collaboration works and David is finally sparked into action. He makes Solomon king, to the horror of all who've sided with Adonijah! They instantly abandon him and he seeks refuge in the tabernacle, God's tent of meeting, knowing he shouldn't be executed in such a holy place. Which works! Solomon has to let him live—at least for now.

Read 1 Kings 2:1-12

3. According to David in v1-4, what should Solomon want to do more than anything else?

Think of a good name for this kind of wisdom:

How does this relate to *God's Promise to David*?

4. How does David's advice about Joab and Shimei fit (or not) with that previous advice?

Think of a good name for this kind of "wisdom" (v6 & 9):

How does this relate (or not) to *God's Promise to David*?

God's Promise to David

David said to Solomon: "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'"

1 Chronicles 22:7-10,
retelling 2 Samuel 7:11-16

In 1513AD, the philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli ‘wisely’ advised every prince to “exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him.” But here it’s as though David and Solomon have read an advance copy! Knowing that a new king would often take the wives of the previous king, Adonijah ‘innocently’ asks to have Abishag as his wife, presumably to make a royal impression. But Solomon’s no fool. He immediately has Adonijah killed. And his death is just the first of many.

Read 1 Kings 2:28-46

5. What was Joab’s original crime in 2:5?

How does it compare to what Solomon does to Joab?

6. As Joab is killed in the tent of meeting, what kind of wisdom is Solomon displaying? Is it the wisdom that helps you to achieve what you want, or the wisdom that helps you want the right thing?
7. How does Solomon treat Shimei? Is this presented as right, or just effective?
8. From v46, what was Solomon trying to achieve by all this killing?

How does that compare to how things were in v12 before he did any of them?

9. Imagine this advice to a young king Solomon (like 2:2-4 without 2:5-9!): “Remember, you were fully established as king without doing anything yourself, despite all these enemies. So don’t worry about them. Just focus on loving God and obeying him, and it’ll all be fine.” Would that advice have sounded ‘wise’, or ‘naive’? How so?

FOLLOW THE STORY

Jesus was born in the line of David and Solomon (see Matthew 1). But he didn't display the Machiavellian wisdom that we've seen David advise and Solomon display: the wisdom to achieve whatever you want. As Jesus chose not to kill his enemies but to be killed by them, he displayed a very different wisdom. Read Paul's words to the Christians in Corinth in the sidebar, *The Foolishness of the Gospel*.

10. Why would the message about Jesus' death and trusting him sound naive and foolish?

According to Paul, why is it actually the height of wisdom?

11. Imagine these words to a young adult in Brisbane:

"Don't worry about anything else in life: education, employment, financial planning, relationships. They're all good things, but there's something that matters more than all of them put together. Above all else, make sure you trust in Jesus and follow him. He died to win you eternal life."

Does this sound 'wise' to you, or 'naive'? How so?

How would it sound to people you know and work with?

If you really saw the wisdom in this advice, how would it change your life choices?

12. What kind of wisdom do you desire more: the wisdom that helps you get what you want, or the wisdom to trust Jesus above all else?

When are you most drawn to one kind of wisdom or the other?

What could people pray for you out of this session?

The Foolishness of the Gospel

"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe...

We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength...

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

1 Corinthians 1:18-30