



WEEK 2 | **1 KINGS 3-4**

## GOOD KING SOLOMON?

Whether it's political leaders or people we know personally, we often peg people as either a 'goodie' or a 'baddie'. We don't tend to think of people as both good and bad simultaneously.

Take the following statements:

*"Adolf Hitler loved animals and was kind to children."*

*"Martin Luther King repeatedly cheated on his wife."*

What's your gut reaction to these statements? Why do you think that is?

## WHAT'S THE STORY?

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Solomon lives in Israelite memory as the epitome of wisdom and virtue. But as we'll see now, the story wasn't always that clear cut.

*Read 1 Kings 3:1-15*

1. Before his dream, how was Solomon both obedient to God and disobedient? v1-3
2. What does Solomon ask for from God? v7-9

If you remember last week, how is this a big change? (compare v11)

3. What else will God give Solomon and why? v10-13

What condition is set on this continued blessing? v14

4. How does Solomon's behaviour change in response? v15

God's gift to Solomon is then displayed in this famous story:

*Read 1 Kings 3:16-28*

5. Why might a prostitute (v16) not normally expect such justice from a king?

What does this say about the consistency and extent of Solomon's justice?

### *One place to worship*

These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains, on the hills and under every spreading tree, where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods... You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices.

**Deuteronomy 12:1-6**

In 1 Kings 4:1-19, Solomon ‘wisely’ sets up district governors to make sure he receives from the people all the goods he requires of them. But already it’s not clear whether this is still the same kind of wisdom that God just gave him, or his *old kind* of wisdom.

### *Read 1 Kings 4:20-34*

6. How is Solomon already disobeying *God’s laws for the king*? v26 (we’ll see more instances in the coming weeks)
7. How equitable are Solomon’s provisions for himself from among the people? v22

What does this say about his ongoing concern for ‘justice’?

8. How would you characterise Solomon throughout chapters 1-4? Consistently godly, consistently ungodly, or something else? How so?

How does his behaviour match up to the condition of 3:14?

Do you think he really trusts God’s promise in 3:11-13?

## **FOLLOW THE STORY**

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Solomon seemed to have a problem with consistency. He had a ‘conversion’ experience in chapter 3, suddenly wanting God and his righteousness above all else. There’s no reason to doubt this was genuine at the time. But already by chapter 4 he’s back to his self-serving, worldly wisdom! He wasn’t consistently ungodly. But he wasn’t consistently godly either!

### *Laws for the king*

The king must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.



9. Even Solomon, uniquely blessed with God's wisdom, was badly inconsistent. What does that suggest about human nature in general?

Can you relate personally to Solomon's inconsistency?  
How so?

10. If even the most godly people are badly inconsistent...

What should that mean for the way we evaluate other people?

What should it mean for the way we evaluate ourselves?

Writing after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul gave a strong reason for always trusting God consistently. **Read the Romans excerpts in the sidebar on the right.**

11. What has God done about our sinful inconsistency?

What does this say about God's ongoing love for us, even when we're still sinfully inconsistent?

12. How does God's guarantee to us (Romans 8:32) resemble God's promise to Solomon (1 Kings 3:11-13)?

How is it better?

Could this thought help you trust God more consistently?  
Why or why not?

What could people pray for you out of this session?

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

**Romans 5:6-10**

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

**Romans 8:32**