



## CHAPTER 5

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# Lessons from Solomon for Christian's Today

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### INTRODUCTION

Solomon's calling to be the leader of Israel is seen as God's promise that starts as far back as Genesis 12:7 where God promises Abram that his offspring will be given the land of Canaan. The history of Abram, David, Solomon, are crucial as this lineage ultimately points to the fulfillment God's promise with the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary outside of Jerusalem, and risen three days after His death. While this chapter focuses on Solomon, it is important to note that Solomon is one piece of a bigger picture where Jesus's death on a cross was payment for our sins and His resurrection is evidence that He is the one and only living God.

Saul was the first king of Israel, followed by David, then Solomon. There were 14 generations between Abram (also known as Abraham) and David. There were another 14 generations between David and Babylon's deportation. Followed by another 14 generations from Babylon's exile to

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the Messiah (Matthew 1:17). According to scripture, Solomon was a man that had favor from God from the very beginning (2 Samuel 12:24). He also found favor with his father and mother as David chose Solomon as his successor with persuasion from Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan (1 Kings 1:13, 17, 30). Solomon had many brothers that could have replaced their father as King; however, Solomon was the chosen one despite the fact that Adonijah was the eldest living son. David prepared Solomon as heir to have all that he needed to reign with peace and prosperity (1 Chronicles 22). According to a study by Friedman and Friedman (2019), Solomon's "seemingly small character flaw can transform even the wisest king into one of the worst leaders in history" (p. 4). The scholars wrote that "Solomon's blunder began when he lost connection with the basic tenets of ethical leadership" (p. 6). Throughout this chapter, Solomon's "blunder" will be explored in more detail and applied practically for leaders today to understand how to avoid such pitfalls.

Biblical exegesis was used in this study of Solomon's lived experiences. Osborne (2006) wrote of the Hermeneutical Spiral and explained that wisdom literature, including Biblical text about Solomon's life, is "one of the least-known of the biblical genres" (p. 242). Osborne continued by saying wisdom teaching is central to the "concept of the 'wise man;,' not as one who escapes the word but as one who learns to live in the world with God's guidance for help" (p. 242). Robbins (1996) explained that interpreting text could involve hundreds of strategies and techniques. For the purpose of this study, socio-rhetorical criticism was used to explore the phenomena of Solomon's calling and his lived experiences including his ancestry, wisdom, wealth, pleasure, and power, in addition to his downfall and his revelation of a man who walked this earth in search of meaning and purpose.

While exegeting this chapter using the following four strategies of socio-rhetorical criticism: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture, it became apparent that the life of many leaders and followers in the world today is in pursuit of happiness, meaning, and purpose similar to that of Solomon. This same pursuit is not a new endeavor and it is somewhat surprising that we have not learned from the past to know how to find happiness when so many wise people have given instructions; many on their deathbeds after a lifelong quest to find meaning and purpose. As human beings, we think that if we can just get that job or just make so much money we will be happy. We think the grass is greener on the other side and if we can just make the jump

from one company to another, we will be happy. We even think that if we could just be in a relationship with someone else, our marriage would be so much better.

The restless spirit of humanity is one that can only be satisfied with Jesus. In 1987, Graham explained that we live in an evil and adulterous generation. His sermons are just as relevant today as they were when he preached his first sermon in 1947 or one of his last sermons prior to his death in 2018. Graham attributed the pursuit of so many people today seeking knowledge, love, and security to the same quest of Solomon (1010 BC–931 BC). The famous preacher explained that we do this with the clothes we wear, the people we associate with, the events we attend, and the things we buy. We think we can buy happiness. However, lottery winners have been quoted in saying, “money is a curse” and “I wouldn’t wish winning the lottery on Hitler” (Sherman et al., 2020). Scripture also reminds us to be careful with money as the “borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7) and “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24). These facts ring loud as the United States hits an all-time high of \$930 Billion in credit card debt (White, 2021). Meanwhile, a 2019 report indicates that more than 44 million American adults (31.6%) have a mental illness and 17.3 million (7.1%) have depression (Stribling, 2020). Looking at this from another perspective, the United States tops the list with credit card debt and is also near the top of the list as the most depressed country in the world; China and India are numbers 1 and 2 respectively (Dekin, 2021). We live in a world where people are unhappy, unsatisfied, and longing for meaning, purpose, and joy in their lives.

Graham (1987) explained that “many of our young people today are lonely.” He asked the Dean of Harvard University, Dr. Bach, “What is the greatest problem on this campus” and he responded, “lack of purpose and meaning.” The Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen conducted a study of 3,211 people in 97 countries. They found that emotional well-being is closely related to happiness. There have been many studies on credit card debt and happiness with the findings usually pointing to a negative or inverse relationship between spending habits and depression. In other words, the more you spend, the less happy you are. For example, a study conducted in three waves (2013, 2015, and 2017) found that “any type of debt holding is negatively associated with happiness” (Xiao et al., 2021). This study shows significant findings as there were 28,141

households in 2013, 37,289 households in 2015, and 40,001 in 2017. Dave Ramsey is often quoted as teaching the 80/20 rule. He explains “personal finance is 80% behavior and 20% head knowledge” (Cruze, 2021). In other words, we know what to do; we just have to do it and for some reason, our stubborn human selves continue to try over and over again to do things our way instead of following the advice of those that have learned the lesson(s) the hard way.

Using intertexture analysis, this chapter evaluates conditions that determine positive/negative outcomes of Solomon’s calling in addition to a comparison of the world we live in today to reveal practical steps one can take to have more positive outcomes than negative. The art of intertexture analysis uses a technique to examine Biblical text in addition to other texts, other cultures, social roles and relationships, and historical places and events. To begin, a look at Solomon’s genealogy in the first book of Samuel will dispel rumors that some people are born into a family that will give them all the luxuries of life, thus making them happy. The chapter will then proceed with an examination of wisdom, wealth, pleasure, and power to dismiss the false belief that one can be satisfied with life if they have these worldly gifts. Finally, a revelation from Solomon will be explored to understand what he found as the root of all joy and bliss along with similar revelations from others that lived a life in pursuit of a dream that could not be achieved with eyes of greed, selfishness, or materialism.

## SOLOMON’S ANCESTRY

Perhaps Solomon’s trouble started long before he walked the earth. As with all humans in the world, we do not live in a vacuum. Instead, we have parents and family “legacies” that may or may not influence the way we live. Solomon was the son of David. David is known as being in the line of Judah, which is the line the Messianic King would come from. David’s bad reputation included adultery and murder. He was also persecuted by Saul. However, David also had a good reputation of being faithful and loyal to God. God’s covenant with David included receiving and preparing the plans for the temple (2 Samuel 7). David was born around 1035 BC. Sometime between the ages of 10–12, Samuel anointed humble David as a future king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). Around age 15, the shepherd boy from Bethlehem became famous for killing Goliath (1 Samuel 17). David volunteered to fight with the giant Philistine with

much faith in God to rescue him and much confidence in his skills of attacking lion and bear that pursued his sheep. David was not always liked or considered the chosen one by all people. In his mid to late 20s, he was threatened by the jealous Saul and fled for safety (1 Samuel 21). David, like his son Solomon, had a soft spot for pretty women. At this time in history, polygamy was allowed. There are seven women in scripture named as David's wives (1 Chronicles 3). These women include Ahinoam of Jezreel, Abigail the Carmel, Maachah the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, and Bath-shua (Bathsbeba) the daughter of Ammiel. Together with all of his seven wives and multiple concubines, it is believed that David had 19 sons and one daughter in total. As with many of our family backstories, David had good and bad stories to tell. He was a hero on one hand and a sinner on the other. It is unknown how all of this family history played into the life of Solomon, but it is worth noting because some people today wish they were born with different parents or in different places. They ponder if they just had a different circumstance of life, could they be happier. Solomon's life is a perfect example of a man whose father was born into a modest and humble lifestyle. Solomon was a man that had high expectations placed upon him at an early age and a man that had everything (literally everything) available to his disposal. This chapter will explore what Solomon did with all of his abundant blessings and how his life ended with a perspective that differed greatly from the perspective he had most of his days on earth.

### *Wisdom*

Solomon humbly sought divine wisdom in 1 Kings 3:1–15. He asked God for 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” (v. 9). In return, God was pleased and said,

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. (1 Kings 3:11–14)

With the exception of Jesus Christ, Solomon was the smartest, most brilliant, and best educated man that walked the earth (Matthew 12:42). He had wisdom far beyond that of any other human being, besides Jesus Christ (Ecclesiastes 1:16, 1 Kings 4:30). However, Solomon's wisdom did not bring happiness or peace. It is believed that Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes because it refers to so many of his life experiences, including those that dealt with wisdom. This chapter will not dispute the authorship of the chapter, but will use Ecclesiastes as support for Solomon's journey and the ultimate decision that "nothing under the sun" is capable of giving meaning to life. Instead, the author concludes chapter 1 with, "for with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." With much wisdom and knowledge is much grief. It does not satisfy something deep inside our hearts and souls; only a relationship with Jesus Christ can do that nourish one's soul.

Founded in 1946, Mensa International is an organization for the most intelligent people. They determine intelligence by using the *intelligenzquotient* or IQ test. The average score is 100. Scores above 130 are very gifted. Only 2.2% of the population have an IQ at or above 130. These gifted individuals are welcomed into Mensa to encourage research, exchange ideas, foster human intelligence, and provide a stimulating environment. Johann Goethe is said to have had an IQ that ranged from 210 to 225. Albert Einstein's scores ranged from 205 to 225. Leonardo da Vinci's scores ranged from 180 to 220. Isaac Newton's scores ranged from 190 to 200. James Maxwell's scores ranged from 190 to 205. Charles Darwin's IQ score is estimated to be 165. And Stephen Hawking's score is estimated around 160. Of all of these brilliant men, one would think they would have figured out how to be happy, satisfied, and have a life full of meaning and purpose. However, most of them fall short on this quest.

The one on the list that likely came the closest to living a life full of meaning and purpose is Isaac Newton. Newton was "buried like a king who had done well by his subjects" commented Voltaire. His body was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1727 in front of the choir screen. Charles Darwin who died in 1882 was buried next to Newton. Recently, Stephen Hawking's ashes were interred between Newton and Darwin. Hawking died in 2018. What was so special about Newton and why do

other brilliant scientists want to be so close to him, nearly 300 years after his death?

“No scientist before or since has been so revered and interred with such high honor” (Hummel, 1991). Newton is a great example of a man that fused faith and learning into life. He is known as “one of the greatest scientists who ever lived” and “his deep belief in God and his personal conviction that scientific investigation leads to a greater knowledge of God the Creator is a wonderful example” (Ridder, 2021). Newton read the Bible daily. He spent much time investigating religious issues. Hummel (1991) wrote that, “He has been called ‘the greatest scientific genius the world has known;’ yet he spent less time on science than on theology.” Faulkner (2018) wrote that Newton remains near the top of the list of one of the most influential people in the world over the past 1000 years. Newton was “passionately religious” and had no qualms with using scripture to explain science (Faulkner, 2018). He wrote 10 × more on theology than he did on science.

Unlike Newton, Charles Darwin’s final resting place (heaven or hell) is not as certain. Darwin is well known for his theory of evolution; which is quite contentious and opposing to the account of creation in Genesis (Ham, 2014). Darwin’s religion is unknown for sure. Some say he was an atheist, some say a deist, and others believe he had a deathbed conversion where he renounced evolution and accepted Jesus Christ. Mitchell (2009) explained that the conversion story is “unsupportable” and we do not know if Darwin ever became a Christian or if he renounced evolution. However, there is plenty of evidence to discredit evolution and one day, when we get to our final resting place, we will find out where Darwin landed too. For more information see the work from Answers in Genesis or the debate between Bill Nye and Ken Ham (Ham, 2014).

While some of us admire those that are smarter, wiser, know more, or are more intelligent, this is just one piece of the puzzle with regard to life. The piece that most of these brilliant scientists have missed is their faith. Most of us probably know people that are very book smart but have little common sense. Warren Buffett commented that he knows plenty of people that are wise but they would not score high on an IQ test (Belmonte, 2020). Buffett, is a self-proclaimed agnostic that does not believe in an unseen divinity; however, he has seen the return on investment when refraining from work on Sunday. In 1995, R. C. Wiley Furniture Store was on the radar for a Berkshire Hathaway acquisition (Benson, 2012). The one sticking point was that the store must not open

on Sunday. At first Buffett did not approve of this philosophy; however, he tested the theory. Alongside a \$9M investment from CEO Bill Child, devout Mormon, Buffett saw that the store would be successful as a 6-day a week operation.

Despite all the brains, many scientists do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and many of them are vocal about their lack of faith. Some even make fun of religion. Although Solomon believed in God, he too lived a lifestyle that was unbecoming of a Christian. It was a lifestyle that did not always honor and please God. Regardless of one's IQ score, tending to the inner self, the soul, is necessary to have joy in life.

### *Wealth*

Richard Easterlin (1973) conducted a study in search of the answer to this question, "Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all?" His quest led to the answer, "raising the incomes of all does not increase the happiness of all." This same study was revisited decades later to provide an answer with greater assurance (1995). The answer was still no. This research is known as the Easterlin Paradox which states that more income does not equate to more happiness. Despite this study, work continues to be done to prove that money can buy happiness. In 2002, Hagerty and Veenhoven used the theory of relative utility and the theory of absolute utility as the foundation for their study claiming happiness depends on income. In their study, they cautioned the use of any theory to argue that happiness is dependent on income. Instead, Hagerty and Veenhoven (2003) wrote, "happiness is apparently not a zero-sum game... since the expulsion from Paradise, humans could only hope for happiness in the after-life" (p. 24). In 2013, Stevenson and Wolfers sought to find if a satiation point could be reached where, once basic needs are met, income could correlate with subjective well-being (2013). They too could not find a positive answer stating, "the relationship between well-being and income is roughly linear-log and does not diminish as incomes rise. If there is a satiation point, we are yet to reach it."

Solomon's wealth is described in 2 Chronicles 9:13–29. Solomon was the richest man. His income was staggering. The weight of gold he received annually was said to be 666 talents (1 Kings 10:14). The price of gold on 8/31/2021 was \$58.48 per gram. One Talent is 33 kg or 33,000 grams. This is equivalent to \$1.285 billion US dollars per year.



No one in his lifetime could compare with Solomon in financial worth. As of July 2021, the richest people in the world are Jeff Bezos (\$177B), Elon Musk (\$151B), Bernard Arnault (\$150B), Bill Gates (\$124B), Mark Zuckerberg (\$94B), Warren Buffett (\$96B), Larry Ellison (\$93B), Larry Page (\$91.5B), Sergey Brin (\$89B), and Mukesh Ambani (\$84.5B) (Moskowitz, 2021). This list of rich men does not naturally equate to happy lives or purpose in life. That can be seen from the likes of Jeff Bezos divorce after 25 years in 2019 or Elon Musk's "turbulent personal life" where he was quoted in saying he'd "rather stick a fork in my hand than write about my personal life" (Cain & Hartmans, 2021).

The number 666 should raise a glaring red flag as this is also the number of the Beast (Rev. 13–18). This number is used in the Old Testament three times (1 Kings 10:14, 2 Chron 9:13, and Ezra 2:13). Bodner and Strawn (2020) insist that 666 mentioned in 1 Kings shows a significant point in Solomon's life. The previous pericope memorializes the visit from the Queen of Sheba where she praises his abundant wisdom and fame with hard questions, 12 talents of gold, spices, and precious stones. This, according to Bodner and Strawn (2020) is a pivotal moment for Solomon; whereas "from the queen's departure onwards the King breaks the law of kingship" (p. 303). This law of the King instructs them to "not acquire great numbers of horses" (Deut 17:14–20), which Solomon did. It also declares that the King is to "not take many wives (which he did), or his heart will be led astray" and to "not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold" (Deut 17:17), which he did. The King is also not allowed to "consider himself better than his fellow Israelites" (Deut 17:20). Bodner and Strawn (2020) explain that idolatry and economic evil were plentiful with Solomon. The scholars note that the Second Temple commissioned by David and built by Solomon was, on one hand complete as Solomon had "accomplished all the magnificent works of the Temple" (1 Kings 6, Duling, 1983), but on the other hand it was "not the most impressive construction project that Solomon undertook: his own palace was considerably larger and took almost twice as long to build" (Bodner & Strawn, 2020, p. 307).

Solomon was in pursuit of all that his wealth could offer him; yet in Ecclesiastes 3:20 we read, "All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return." This revelation of priorities and perspective is summarized beautifully in a post written by Sergio Cardenas on the life of Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, who had a net worth reported as \$7B (also reported as \$10.2B) at the time of his untimely demise from pancreatic

cancer. The post itself has been an item of debate as to whether or not Steve Jobs actually said it (Landeck, 2020). Nevertheless, the post reads:

In other eyes, my life is the essence of success, but aside from work, I have a little joy. And in the end, wealth is just a fact of life to which I am accustomed.

At this moment, lying on the bed, sick and remembering all my life, I realize that all my recognition and wealth that I have is meaningless in the face of imminent death. You can hire someone to drive a car for you, make money for you – but you cannot rent someone to carry the disease for you. One can find material things, but there is one thing that cannot be found when it is lost – ‘LIFE’.

Treat yourself well, and cherish others. As we get older we are smarter, and we slowly realize that the watch is worth \$30 or \$300 – both of which show the same time. Whether we carry a purse worth \$30 or \$300 – the amount of money in the wallets are the same. Whether we drive a car worth \$150,000, or a car worth \$30,000 – the road and distance are the same, we reach the same destination. If we drink a bottle worth \$300 or wine worth \$10 – the “stroller” will be the same. If the house we live in is 300 square meters, or 3000 square meters – the loneliness is the same.

Your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world. Whether you’re flying first class, or economy class – if the plane crashes, you crash with it.

Wealth in and of itself is not evil. However, the *love* of money is the root of evil. In scripture, 1 Timothy 6:10 informs us that “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” Trusting in one’s wealth instead of in God is foolish as seen in Luke 12:16–21. And loving one’s money more than God is despicable (Matthew 6:24). These verses are often used to argue with Christians that they should not be wealthy. As a small business owner, I have been told I should do my work for free; however, that is not what scripture says. Instead, money is a tool; God owns and we manage. It is what we do with the money that makes the difference. J. Robert Ouimet struggled with the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30) because he had inherited his father’s business and had plenty of money that he, himself, did not earn. In his book, *Everything Has Been Loaned to You*, Ouimet spoke of his many trips to the Holy Land between 1958 and 2008 (Ouimet & Semen, 2013). At his first meeting with Mother Teresa in 1983 at the

age of 49, he asked her, “Should I give away everything I have, Mother?” She replied:

You can't give anything away. Nothing belongs to you. It has only been loaned to you. However, if you wish it, you can try to manage what the Lord has loaned to you... in His way... with Him. And if you attempt to do that, you will have to follow His order in your own life, an order where Love comes first. You're married; I am not. If you want to follow His hierarchy of Love, you must start with your married life and manage what He has loaned to you. You must place your wife as your first priority. She doesn't belong to you; she's been loaned to you by the Lord. And after your wife come your four children; they don't belong to you either, just loaned to you. And after your four children come the men and women you work with. They too are loaned to you, and you will have to account for them! (p. 8)

A similar living testimony to His Way at Work is Peter Freissle who manages Polydeck Screen Corporation, a company he inherited from his father. Freissle unapologetically explained that Christians can make money and can be wealthy (personal communication, December 6, 2018). The more money one has, the more good they can do with their wealth. Job 31 reinforces that when one stays on the straight and narrow path with their eyes fixed on God and not worldly desires their wealth can be pleasing and honoring to God. Job used his wealth freely to help others and after he lost it, he stayed true to his plan to revere God, thus God made him rich again. Edgar (2016) stated, “So a man can be rich and love God. One can be a real Christian and be rich.”

No riches compared to the riches of Jesus Christ who was rich, “yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:8–10). If you know God, you are rich. A relationship with Jesus is one that fulfills the inner depths of the human soul and when we look at all that God has blessed us with, we will count those blessings and know that we are abundantly wealthy. Wealth may not always show up as financial means. Wealth may look like the love of one's family, the blessing of having a roof over one's head, or the blessing of having running water and food on the table. Wealth can also be the blessing of waking up one more day with a fresh start and an eager heart to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ.

### *Pleasure*

The writings of Ecclesiastes 2 are more like a diary from Solomon where he explains all that he did to try and make himself happy. Scripture says that Solomon gave himself great pleasures. He said he “wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives” (Ecclesiastes. 2:3). Solomon had every pleasure known to man at his beckon call. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11). Billy Graham commented several times on how much sex Solomon must have had (1986, 1987). He had every sensual pleasure you can imagine. Solomon had 4,000 horse stalls and 12,000 horses (1 Kings 4:26, 2 Chronicles 9:25). His throne was made of solid ivory overlaid with pure gold (1 Kings 10:18). He drank the finest wine out of golden goblets (1 Kings 10:21). He had the finest swimming pools (Ecclesiastes 2:6). There were three large rectangular reservoirs with a total estimated water capacity of 40 M gallons.

The Vanity of Pleasure pericope (Ecclesiastes 2, NKJV) is also known as Pleasures are Meaningless (Ecclesiastes 2, NIV), or the Vanity of Self-Indulgence (Ecclesiastes 2, ESV). Graham (1987) uses the metaphor of a bursting bubble as he quoted Solomon in saying, “Vanity of vanities - all is vanities” Graham went on to explain, “it’s all a bubble that burst - it’s nothing – all this pleasure, all these riches, and nothing.” In other words, pursuing after worldly pleasures is ill-fated. It is worthless because the happiness or joy that may come from such pleasure is temporary and fleeting. Real, permanent, long-term joy is provided through Christ and cannot be found anywhere else. Hebrews 12 encourages us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.” As we run the race with faith in pursuit of a finish line in heaven, we can “rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 8). The pleasures of this world will dissolve, but the pleasures of God are forever (Psalm 16:11).

Solomon lived an aesthetic lifestyle. He had developed a love for art, music, and all the fine things in life, yet they did not fulfill him (Ecclesiastes 2). He reflected, “So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17). He went on to say, “For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes

2:26). Peace and happiness is found in Christ, not in the things of this world.

### *Power*

Solomon had great power; there was not any other nation on the planet that could defy Solomon. Graham (1986, 1987) explained that Solomon had the greatest military with the best and biggest Army and Navy in the world. He had infantry and an impressive chariotry and calvary (2 Chronicles 8). Solomon's strategy was to kill his adversaries and move his friends into key positions for a mostly peaceful 40 years as King. These years of peace were yet another blessing bestowed upon Solomon that ended during his son's reign.

No other person that has walked this earth has power like Jesus. Genesis 1:26 says that human beings are to "have dominion (power) over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." It does not say that we are to have dominion over other human beings. Many have tried to have power; but they fail. Jesus has all authority, all power (Matthew 28:18). He has power over all things including disease, deafness, blindness, nature, and demons. Power is not something humans should seek. Instead, the Great Commission calls us to love God and love others (Matthew 28:16–20). It does not say to have power over them.

Jesus will reveal his great power and glory when He returns (Mark 13:26). Graham (1986) called it "Jesus Power" as the energy that can change a person's heart and he gave the example of a Black Panther leader that thought he could change the world with the Black Panther movement until he met Jesus and all of the hatred emptied from his heart. Only the power of God through believing in Jesus Christ can save a person from living a life of torment in hell; be not ashamed of being a Christian (Romans 1:16).

### *Downfall of Solomon*

Solomon's downfall stems from not following God's plan, but instead trying to live his own life. In opposition to the law of kingship, Solomon was not following God's law (Deut 17:14–20). He had taken many foreign wives (1 Kings 11), he had a great number of horses (2 Chronicles

9:25), and he had large amounts of wealth (2 Chronicles 9:13–29) which he used in pursuit of his own pleasure instead of honoring and pleasing God. He also used slave labor (1 Kings 9:15–17) and he built shrines for worshipping other gods (1 Kings 11:8–10). All of these were not a good use of his money; instead it was a direct offense to God.

It is worth noting briefly that the Testament of Solomon (TSol) is a book that includes Solomon's ring describing it as a powerful tool that could summon spells and control demons; which he supposedly used to build the Temple. It also includes stories of exorcism. Scripture does not include any reference to Solomon and demonology. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter, the TSol is not included as fact. Instead, Schwarz (2007) contends that the manuscript is not dated early enough to have been written by Solomon or someone that lived during his lifetime that would have had access to see Solomon building the Temple. It was probably written in medieval times or in the fifth or sixth century. Schwarz also noted that in addition to there not being mention of demons and a powerful spell casting ring in the Bible, there is no mention of it in the Dead Sea Scrolls either. Disturbing as this is, Solomon may have been dancing with the devil on occasions where he was clearly not keeping his eyes on God, but there is no proof that he was intentionally interacting with witches, demons, or any other dark spirit. Yet, for someone to have written such a book gives rise to the possibility that his downfall was more spiritual warfare than bad luck.

### *Revelation*

One evening, Solomon sat at his beautiful country Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. Solomon sat under the stars and contemplated the emptiness of his life. It was one of the most beautiful estates where Solomon could retreat and seek divine inspiration and clarity. It was at this place where Solomon realized all that he had and all that he had been doing was “vanity of vanities.” It was a “bubble that bursts” as Graham (1986, 1987) explained.

While examining 2 Chronicles 9–13, Matthew Henry explained:

True wisdom and happiness are always united together; but no such alliance exists between wealth and the enjoyment of the things of this life. Let us then acquaint ourselves with the Savior, that we may find rest for our souls. Here is Solomon reigning in wealth and power, in ease and

fulness, the life of which could never be found; for the most known of the great princes of the earth were famed for their wards; whereas Solomon reigned forty years in profound peace. The promise was fulfilled, that God would give him riches and honor, such as no kings have had or shall have. The luster wherein he appeared, was typical of the spiritual glory of the kingdom of the Messiah, and but a faint representation of His throne, which is above every throne. Here is Solomon dying, and leaving all his wealth and power to one who he knew would be a fool (Ecclesiastes. 2:18-19)! This was not only vanity, but vexation of spirit. Neither power, wealth, nor wisdom can ward off or prepare for the stroke of death. But thanks be to God who giveth the victory to the true believer, even over this dreaded enemy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Solomon wrote the conclusion of the whole matter of his lifelong quest to find happiness. His decision was that seeking such worldly pleasures was meaningless. Instead, we should fear God and keep his commandments. Solomon instructs Christians to fulfill their vow to God in Ecclesiastes 5 saying, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God” and “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it.”

### *Similar Companions*

Throughout this chapter, several similar companions have been mentioned. Those that shared great wisdom include Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, and Johann Goethe. Those that shared much wealth include Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, and Warren Buffett. One that has not yet been mentioned is Charlemagne, King of the Franks. Charlemagne was tall, strong, good looking, and similar to Solomon in that Charlemagne had it all, according to worldly standards. Charlemagne was also known as “Charles the Great.” His conquests “united Europe and spread Christianity” (McLean, n.d.). His 30-year military campaign was focused on expanding religion, advancing education, and ending the turmoil in Europe. His empire included Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and parts of Austria and Spain. By the time of his death, Charlemagne had conquered the majority of Western Europe and was instrumental in the spread of Christianity. At his death, he had specific instructions to be buried with his throne, his crown, his scepter, and his sword (Woodrum, 2017). Most impressive was that his Bible was to be open on his lap with his finger pointing to Mark 8:36, “What shall it

profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul, for what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## DISCUSSION

Solomon wraps up his journey of seeking immense pleasure by saying everything is "Meaningless! Meaningless... Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1). Solomon sought pleasure by every possible means. In the end, he said it was not worth it. His bubble had burst. The question now points to what we, as the reader, will do with this information. Will we continue to seek happiness with worldly pleasures or will we seek joy through a relationship with Jesus Christ?

Graham (1986, 1987) spoke about the possibilities of our world being destroyed. He said, "Americans are prone to utopian thinking" and quoted from a popular (unnamed) book saying, "We are much more likely to be drifting into a universal totalitarian society which would completely suppress freedom and then into the apocalypse and human annihilation." He continued in saying, "We could be on the verge now of universal extermination either through war, an accident, or a disease." In another sermon, Graham (1971) explained that the Attorney General of the United States said, "America is imperiled (at risk of being harmed, injured, or destroyed) more from within than without." As a nation built on Christianity, why are we so divided? Graham (1971) said "There is not much hope for the world if we are depending on America." Instead, we must depend on Jesus Christ and the eternal home He has prepared for us.

## CONCLUSION

In closing, this chapter offers recommendations for Christians to avoid sin, temptation, and worldly pleasures today while keeping a keen eye on honoring and glorifying God. Osborne (2006) explained that wisdom teaching aligns with the quest to become a "wise man" and to not escape the world, but learn to "live in the world with God's guidance and help" (p. 242). While the proof of knowing what to do has been studied and written about for generations, the evidence in putting those recommendations into action is not as obvious. The human soul is the most important, yet most neglected part of any human being. Jesus gives us joy, peace, security, love, grace, and satisfaction. Instead of seeking worldly pleasure,



seek Christ and allow Him to guide your life. Be vigilant of how you live on earth so as to have a life pleasing and honoring God (Proverbs 23, Colossians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Psalm 37). Scripture offers much advice and guidance on practical application such as (1) have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) be worthy of respect, (3) maintain the deep truths of faith, (4) refrain from malicious talk, (5) be temperate and trustworthy, (6) be faithful to your spouse, (7) manage the family well, and put on the full armor of God (1 Timothy 3:8–13, Ephesians:10–18). Instead of seeking worldly pleasure, seek Christ and allow Him to guide your life. Be vigilant of how you live on earth so as to have a life pleasing and honoring God (Proverbs 23, Colossians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Psalm 37). This chapter challenges academics and practitioners, leaders, and followers to move beyond the status quo and to live a life that stands out as being in the world, but not of the world.

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