

The Smartest Thing You Can Do

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1 Kings 11:1-13

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I've been talking about King Solomon's life for about a month now, and if you've never studied this part of the Old Testament, you're probably thinking "What an amazing man!" He really had it made. He had fame, fortune, wisdom, and religion. He organized the nation and set up trade agreements with other countries. He demonstrated godliness to the people by his constant prayers and sacrifices. He established alliances with former enemies, ensuring his people could finally live in peace. He established his own type of stimulus package and brought the troops home from war. What a man! But for those of us who know the whole story, we knew this next part was coming. Things are about to fall apart. And surprisingly, King Solomon was given all the tools necessary to keep this from happening. But for some reason the wisest man alive does one of the dumbest things a person can do.

At the beginning of Solomon's reign we read about all the things God promised to give him (1 Kings 3:10-15). Solomon was king of Israel for 40 years. He was wealthier than anyone else and he was smarter than anyone else, even Ethan the Ezrahite (1 Kings 4:31). But what Solomon apparently forgot is that this blessing God spoke to him came with a stipulation. It was more of an agreement than just a general No-strings-attached, your-life-will-be wonderful, blessing. God tells Solomon, *"If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days."*¹ (1Kings 3:14) Solomon says something similar in Proverbs 3. *"My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying."*² (Proverbs 3:1-2) In affect, God is telling Solomon that if he follows God's laws and commandments, he will actually enjoy these things for a long time. But as it turns out, Solomon didn't obey, and for a great deal of his life he was absolutely miserable.

Solomon was rich enough to support 700 wives and 300 concubines. And for that reason I sometimes doubt his wisdom. But apparently Solomon was ruled by his

¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (1 Ki 3:14). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

lust and not by his mind. This would explain why he would write *"Your lips are like scarlet ribbon; your mouth is inviting. Your cheeks are like rosy pomegranates behind your veil."*³ (Song 4:3) Now as wise as Solomon seemed to be; wise enough to write in Proverbs *"Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life."*⁴ (Proverbs 4:23), apparently he didn't take his own advice. And he must have completely ignored the advice God would have given him when he first became King.

About 400 years before Solomon began to build the Temple, God gave an interesting command to His people. This will blow your mind. *Read Deuteronomy 17:14-17.* Um, okay. So what did this wonderful man of God do? *Read 1 Kings 11:1-13.* One of the dumbest things Solomon did was to think that he could live in this world trusting in his own smarts and understanding. But it didn't work because Solomon had ignored the instruction God had given him. That was dumb, real dumb. Everything God said not to do, Solomon did. And it made God very angry.

Perhaps in Solomon's defense you're thinking that how would he have known not to do these things? When specifically did God tell him not to marry foreign women? If you read further in Deuteronomy 17, you'll see why God was so upset. (*Read Deuteronomy 17:18-20*)

First thing in the morning, Solomon was to read the copy of God's laws that he was supposed to have made when he became king. Now either he neglected to make that copy, or perhaps he failed to read it each day. Perhaps Solomon felt he was wise enough and religious enough that it was no longer necessary to turn to God's word for instruction and guidance. And without God's Word to steer and to guide, Solomon fell into the very trap God had warned him to avoid. Dumb Solomon, real dumb. You were supposed to be the smartest in the land (smarter than the sons of Mahol). But ignoring the word of God doesn't sound very wise to me.

You know, I run into far too many Christian streakers. They're running through life wearing nothing but the Helmet of Salvation. At one point in their life they came to Christ and called Him Lord and Savior. But that's where it stopped.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

They've done nothing more that get their sin covered. And they are not prepared for the onslaught that they will face from the Adversary; the Satan. He wages a war against those whom God loves. He will use every trick in the book (and some not in the book) just to see us fall. His greatest joy is to ruin our lives just so he can then turn to God and say, "See, I was right. He doesn't deserve your love". And God knows this. He knows these attacks will come. That's why He left us not just with the Holy Spirit, but also His word. God's word was the first weapon Jesus used against Satan while facing him in the wilderness. So it seems to me that the smartest things we can do is to pick up His word and read it first thing in the morning. That way when the temptations come, we will know ahead of time what God has said; what instructions He has given us.

When Solomon was facing the temptation to marry all these foreign wives or go to Egypt and buy all those horses, the Word of God was there to instruct him. But he ignored it. And he ended up making God very angry. So when we whisper juicy gossip or slander, when we are selfish and place our needs above others, when we ignore those in need, do you think God gets just as angry with us? Probably, because these are the instructions and teaching found in His word.

I'm not suggesting that we go out and write our own copy of the Bible, but it amazes me the number of Christians who never even open it. When is the last time you've read even a portion for yourself? And there are very few who read the whole thing, which makes no sense at all. However, the smartest things you can do as a Christian is to take the time and make the effort to learn what God expects and what God wants. Do that and you'll be demonstrating wisdom far greater than even Solomon.