

SOLOMON LESSONS FROM A FALLEN KING

STUDY FOUR

When the Heart Is Turned Away

1 Kings 11:1–9

Unlimited freedom inevitably leads to disaster. Nobody on earth can handle unrestricted unaccountability.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHY do people who once loved God turn their hearts away from Him? Usually, there isn't one clear reason; rather, a combination of factors contributes to a person falling away.

Sometimes *overexposure* to the things of God causes cynicism. The wonderous truths of Scripture that once stirred awe induce little more than a yawn.

Another factor is *overindulgence*. When people are given too much for nothing, they don't value what they have. They toss aside blessings from heaven, unappreciative of the treasures they hold in their hands.

Being *overpromoted* to positions of responsibility and privilege can lead to shallow professionalism. The focus becomes maintaining a flashy image rather than deepening spiritual roots.

Could overexposure, overindulgence, and overpromotion have led to Solomon's spiritual failure? Perhaps so. David fought for his crown, but Solomon's was handed to him. Solomon had it all. A vast fortune, widespread fame, unlimited power, and innumerable pleasures. Was it all just too much for anyone to handle wisely, even for the man who wrote the book on wisdom?

What turned Solomon's heart away from the One who gave him so much? In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll analyze Solomon's descent into failure . . . so we can avoid tumbling down after him.



When the Heart Is Turned Away

1 Kings 11:1–9



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“Search me, O God, and know my heart,” prayed David in Psalm 139:23, a prayer he surely taught Solomon as a boy. Open your study with this line on your lips as you pray for wisdom from God’s Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Solomon started his reign with wholehearted devotion to God. He took after his father in so many ways, perhaps no one thought much of his first recorded compromise. It barely lifted an eyebrow of those around him.

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters. He brought her to live in the City of David until he could finish building his palace and the Temple of the LORD and the wall around the city. (1 Kings 3:1)

Solomon’s heavenly Father, however, would not have approved of that marriage, and Solomon knew it. He brought his new wife from Egypt to David’s city but not into David’s house, saying, “My wife must not live in King David’s palace, for the Ark of the LORD has been there, and it is holy ground” (2 Chronicles 8:11). He thought he could keep his personal life separate from his spiritual life.

After completing the temple, Solomon shifted his focus to building his Egyptian wife a new palace ([1 Kings 9:24](#)), elevating her to high standing in his kingdom. Without realizing it, Solomon was inviting her idolatrous and immoral influence into his heart.

These actions might seem insignificant, but they reflect an attitude of Solomon putting his desires first and tolerating what God condemned. In other words, he failed to take God seriously. Did God notice? Certainly! The Lord appeared to Solomon three times to let the king know His mind.

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Observation: The Lord's Appearances and Solomon's Failure

Observation is the process of seeing what the text says—the facts, setting, context, and characters. The biblical author often repeated key words for emphasis, so mark those in your Bible or make notes. As you examine God's appearances to Solomon, notice similar themes weaving through the passages and an increased intensity in tone.

The Lord's Appearances—1 Kings 3:3–14; 9:1–9; 11:9–13

We're familiar with the Lord's *first* appearance to Solomon from previous studies. Review the affirming words God told Solomon in *1 Kings 3:3–14*. Take a closer look at *3:14*, which is like a postscript on a letter. What was the Lord reminding young Solomon?

The Lord's second encounter with Solomon was less affirming and more cautioning. It occurred in *9:1–9* after Solomon completed the temple. Note the strong tone, particularly in the last half. What was God's warning to Solomon?

No more warnings in the Lord's final message. It was time for judgment. Write down all the details you see in *11:9–13*.

How had Solomon veered so far off track between God's first and third appearance? Let's follow his downward path.

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Solomon's Failure—1 Kings 11:1–8

The author of 1 Kings detailed Solomon's sins, first, as they related to his marriages. What did Solomon do that so displeased the Lord in *1 Kings 11:1–3*?

But Solomon did more to desecrate the Lord's name. In addition to his marriages, what other horrific sins did Solomon commit in *11:4–8*?

Solomon introduced the worship of three foreign gods in Israel—*Ashtoreth*, *Milcom* or *Molech*, and *Chemosh*. He built pagan shrines to them on what is called today in Jerusalem “the hill of evil counsel” on the south ridge of the Mount of Olives. The pagan temples would have been in clear view of the Lord's temple. Such brazen blasphemy!

Consult your Bible-study tools for further information about the despicable practices associated with these false gods. What facts do you discover?

Ashtoreth was the goddess of Canaanite fertility. Milcom was the god of authority. Worship of Chemosh involved child sacrifice. It's interesting that when there is backsliding, the three characteristics of these gods—sensuality, pride, and cruelty—are often present. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Analyzing the Steps to Failure

Interpretation seeks to understand the meaning of the details we observed in the passage. Let's highlight four lines from 1 Kings 11:1–6 and draw truths from them. Based on each line, write down a step that leads to a person turning his or her heart away from God.

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1 Kings 11:1–9

“Now King Solomon *loved many foreign women*” (1 Kings 11:1, emphasis added).

Step 1:

“The LORD had clearly instructed the people of Israel, ‘You must not marry them, because they will turn your hearts to their gods.’ Yet Solomon insisted on *loving them anyway*” (11:2, emphasis added).

Step 2:

“In fact, *they did turn his heart away* from the LORD. In Solomon’s old age, they turned his heart to worship other gods” (11:3–4, emphasis added).

Step 3:

“Solomon *did what was evil* in the LORD’s sight” (11:6).

Step 4:

Reflect on Solomon’s descent into failure. We’re not ancient kings and harem-building isn’t our temptation, but the dangers of sin’s allure, defiance, and tolerance are just as real. What makes Solomon’s steps into ruin just as deadly for God’s followers today?

Solomon played with the things of God. He wasn’t committed to them. The lines of resistance to sin had already crumbled when he grew older. What a formidable figure Solomon could have been, but he was not.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Commands for Israel's Kings Ignored

God indicted Solomon based on a section of the Mosaic law that contained instructions for Israel's kings. Read the following verses and write down how Solomon violated God's mandates for monarchs.

Prohibition	Violation
<i>Deuteronomy 17:16</i>	<i>1 Kings 10:26–29</i>
<i>Deuteronomy 17:17a</i>	<i>1 Kings 11:1–3</i>
<i>Deuteronomy 17:17b</i>	<i>1 Kings 10:14–21</i>

In addition to these “must-nots,” God gave one ultimate “must.” Each king must keep a copy of the law with him and “read it daily as long as he lives” (Deuteronomy 17:19). What was the value of regular reading of the Scriptures, according to *Deuteronomy 17:19–20*?

The purposes of daily Scripture reading for kings were to “learn to fear the LORD,” prevent them “from becoming proud,” and prevent them “from turning away from these commands in the slightest way” (17:19–20). How important it is to make reading and applying the Bible a daily habit for everyone!

God is so practical. He knows how to cement truth in our minds.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Concluding Reminders

Let's sum up Solomon's actions that led to his downfall.

- 1) He willfully ignored God's written Word.
- 2) He flaunted his own desires.
- 3) He resisted being totally committed to the things of God.
- 4) He pursued the satisfaction of ungodly companions.

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Despite God's direct warning and even after God pronounced judgment, Solomon never repented. His heart had turned away, and it wasn't turning back. How tragic.

The good news for us is that *no one who has slipped needs to stay in that condition*. How gracious is God who offers anyone a second chance through the forgiveness and restoration of Christ.

Do you need a fresh start in any area in which Solomon struggled? What area might that be?

What might be your first step in the right direction? With whom can you share your heart for God?

Solomon's own words must have come back to haunt him in his old age after years of giving his heart away to everyone and everything but the Lord.

*Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of your life.* (Proverbs 4:23)

How true, Solomon! If you had only followed your own counsel! But we can . . . starting now. Keep your love for God burning brightly and guard the flame every day.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, more than anything, I desire my love for You to be always strong. May I never turn my heart from You but always keep my heart devoted to You. Keep me from falling for sin's allure and always keep me true. In Christ's name, amen.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1978, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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