

“World-Renown Wisdom” // 1 Kings 4, 10; Prov 9:1–17 // *The Man Who Had It All* # 2

MUSIC PAD/PRAAYER TIME

Summer is an **amazing time of ministry** for the Summit Church

- We have teams of all ages leaving literally every week on short term trips to take the gospel all over the globe.
- We have several out right now, including our City Project teams, which is over 150 college students around the globe sharing the gospel.
 - This past week one of the teams saw **43 people profess faith** in Christ last week in Poland. Isn't that good news?
- It's also a time we reach out to our city: **SERVERDU**
 - Last week: My family is joining up with one of the outreaches at a public school...
 - If nothing else, join one of these prayer walking teams.
 - When I was in Indo...
- **Finally, we do a lot of student camps**—this week we have more than 500 Summit students and volunteers at our annual youth camp. Pray for them. PRAYER

Introduction

1 Kings 4, if you have your Bible... Several years ago,¹ the WSJ carried the story of Harry Lipsig, a lawyer who at 88 years old decided to leave the law firm he had started himself and spent 60 years building up so that he could leave and start a new one.

¹ 1989

Works Consulted:

“Solomon’s Wisdom,” Tony Merida

“Solomon in All His Glory,” David Jeremiah

“Solomon’s Tainted Glory,” Tony Merida

When asked why, Lipsig said he ‘evidently wasn’t dying fast enough’ for the men under him, who wanted their chance to run the firm. So, at 88 he left his firm to start a new one.

His first case with the new firm involved a woman suing the city of New York because a drunken police officer had struck and killed her 71-year-old husband with his patrol car. The woman sued the city for a million dollars, arguing that the city had deprived her of her husband’s future earnings potential. The city countered that at 71 years old he had little potential left for earning income.

Well, in an act of genius she hires Lipsig, and when a vigorous 88-year-old Harry Lipsig strolls into the courtroom on the opening day of the trial, the city decided to quickly settle out of court.

Lipsig, in this article, said he’ll never retire. ‘*A few doctors have recommended it along the way,*’ Lipsig told the *Wall Street Journal*, ‘*but they’re all dead now.*’²

We’re not all lawyers and entrepreneurs like Lipsig, of course, and not all of us have this much energy in our 80’s... or our 40’s... but deep down I think **we all want to live wildly successful lives like this**, to feel like we **lived up** to our full potential.

- I told Veronica that when I retire from TSC I want to start going on really dangerous mission trips—street preaching in Saudi Arabia or something like that—because I want to go out in a blaze of glory.
- Burn out, not rust out.

² From David Jeremiah, “Solomon in All His Glory,” *When Wisdom Turns to Foolishness*, 61–74.

“Living up to your full potential” has probably **never been truer of anyone in history more** than King Solomon.

I. Solomon’s Greatness: 1 Kings 4, 10

Last week we saw **how God appeared to Solomon in a dream** at the beginning of his reign and gave him one request. *Carte blanche* to ask anything.

Solomon requested wisdom—Wisdom to perceive God’s will and do it, so that he could be a blessing to the people God had given him to serve. And because of that, God said not only will I make you the wisest man ever to live, I’ll also make you the richest.

Chapter 4 describes the way that this gift of wisdom worked itself out in Solomon’s life.

Solomon became incredibly proficient as a:³

- **Governor (4:2–6, 21)**: He ruled **the largest territory** in Israel’s history.
 - He had an unbelievable ability to **organize people**.
 - **Chapter 4 tells us his cabinet** consisted of religious leaders, historians, military and financial experts, and he was able to listen to their opinions and discern the best course of action, which is a real talent.
 - **Last summer I read *Team of Rivals***, which makes the point that this was perhaps Abraham Lincoln’s greatest leadership gift. He could get really smart people in a room who disagreed with each other vehemently and figure out the right course of action. Solomon evidently had that.
- Solomon was also proficient as a **Judge (3:16–28)** As we saw last week, he ruled with insight, justice, fairness, and compassion for the poor.

- He was prolific as a **Builder (9:15)** He constructed a temple that was one of the most magnificent structures ever built—nothing in Israel’s history ever again came close to its beauty.
 - **(Tragically, it was destroyed in war** so we don’t know exactly what it would have looked like, but had it survived, it would undoubtedly have been one of the ancient wonders of the world.
 - **We know that when Israel got back from captivity they tried to reconstruct it** (under Ezra), and what they built was impressive, but when some of the older men who had seen Solomon saw it they wept at how pitiful this new Temple was compared to the glory of Solomon’s.
- **Financial genius (4:25; 10:14)**: **Dave Ramsey of his day**. He **brought Israel into a time** of unparalleled prosperity.
 - **If you read the description of the buildings** Solomon erected, you see that all these things were coated in gold. It was said in those days that silver was so common it was almost worthless (1 Kings 10:21).
 - And it wasn’t just the government that prospered, either. **Chapter 4 tells us that in Solomon’s day every person in Israel lived “under his own vine and his own fig tree” (4:25)** which is like saying there was “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.” Under Solomon, everyone had an iPhone.
- **Scientist (4:33)**: He became an **internationally-known expert** in natural history, zoology, ornithology, and botany (you can see glimpses of that in Proverbs).
 - **One tradition holds that the birds loved Solomon so much** that the doves would form a canopy with their wings so that Solomon could walk from his house to the temple in the shade. I highly doubt that’s true, but it shows you how he was regarded.

³ From David Jeremiah’s sermon, “Solomon In All His Glory”

- He succeeded as a **Military Leader (10:26)** and **Commercial Developer (9:26–27)**. Their army was so large under him that chapter 10 tells us no one in the world dared oppose him (10:26), and he built a massive navy that not only provided a strong national defense but also led to one of the first organized international import/export systems in the ancient world.
- **And there's more. He was skilled at love (The LOVE Doctor)**. He wrote **(Song of Solomon)**, an insightful and epic book on love and sex that **Hebrew boys** were not allowed to read until they were 18. He was like the **Dr. Ruth** of his day. All the **talk shows...** VIEW
- And, finally, he was a prolific **Author (4:32)** and **Artist (4:32)**. 1 Kings 4 tells us that **Solomon wrote over 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs**, many of which are included in the Psalms and Proverbs—not to mention the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. What we have in the Bible is just a fraction of his total writing.
 - **And what's even more impressive than the number of things he wrote is the breadth of subjects** his writing covers.
 - **A lot of authors can write a lot on one subject**, but Solomon writes as an expert in theology, love, leadership, workplace efficiency, relational conflicts, parenting, science, economics, spiritual leadership, and every subject in between!
 - **And then he put down his pen** and picked up his harp and plucked out a few gold records.

Solomon was, in every way, a **Renaissance man**. He didn't drink beer often, but when he did, it was Dos Equis.

The point I want you see: Solomon's wisdom was not just spiritual. God gave him skill in all things.

- **God's wisdom, you see, applies not only** to the spiritual realm, it applies to the so-called secular realm as well.
- Kuyper: *"There is not one square inch of the entire cosmos over which Jesus does not declare, MINE!"*⁴

1 Kings includes another intriguing detail about his reign that you might be tempted to gloss right over.

Chapter 9 says that during his reign he controlled **(MAP) Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor (9:15)**, which were the 3 main cities of **what they call the Via Maris** (*the way of the sea*, or at the time, the main trade route of *the world*: the trade from the North to the South had to go through this region).

- During its day, this section of Israel was right in the center of the world and
- Solomon controlled the **New York, London, and RDU** of his day. Well, **chapter 4 says** that his wisdom and success was so great it gained worldwide fame: "His reputation extended to all the surrounding nations," (4:31), and a lot of people around the world gave glory to God because of the magnitude of his wisdom.

Probably **the climactic moment of Solomon's life** occurs in chapter **10:1** The queen of Sheba (modern day Yemen and Ethiopia, pretty far away from Israel) heard about Solomon's fame connected with the name of the Lord (Solomon's life shows us how Christians are to use their prosperity. How much do people connect your success with the name of the Lord?) and came to test him with riddles. (not riddles like, "What do you call it when a cow jumps over a barbed-wire fence?" But, why do some good marriages go bad? Or why does it seem sometimes like God is not fair?) **2** She came to Jerusalem with a very large entourage, with camels bearing spices, gold in great abundance, and precious stones. She came to Solomon and spoke to him about everything that was on her mind. **3** So Solomon answered

⁴ Abraham Kuyper

all her questions; nothing was too difficult for the king to explain to her.

4 When the queen of Sheba observed all of Solomon's wisdom, the palace he had built, 5 the food at his table, his servants' residence, his attendants' service and their attire, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he offered at the Lord's temple, it took her breath away.

6 She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your words and about your wisdom is true. 7 But I didn't believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, I was not even told half. Your wisdom and prosperity far exceed the report I heard. 8 How happy are your men. How happy are these servants of yours, who always stand in your presence hearing your wisdom. 9 Blessed be the Lord your God! He delighted in you and put you on the throne of Israel, because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel. He has made you king to carry out justice and righteousness." (a pagan queen—falls on her face and said, "Surely God is among you")

What you are seeing here is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless his people, to put his wisdom into them and use them as a testimony to his blessing power so that other nations come to believe.

In Solomon, we get **a little taste of what the reign of the Kingdom of God is supposed to look like.**

And here's the application for you: *God has promised to put this spirit into you, too.*

Now, I want to be careful here, because in our day the fullness of the Kingdom has not come in any of us, and I'm not saying that we can all become as smart or proficient in these things as Solomon was.

But the Kingdom was most fully revealed in Jesus, and his Spirit is in us and through us he can give people glimpses of this kingdom just like Solomon did.

You see, in the NT Jesus calls himself the truer and better Solomon:

- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:42).
 - **John 7:** the Jewish leaders sent guards to arrest Jesus and they came back a few hours later and the leaders said, "Where is he?" And they said, "We couldn't! Never man spoke like this man." They had been in such awe of his wisdom they couldn't bring themselves to arrest him⁵.
- **And he has put his Spirit into us:** In the book of **1 Corinthians in the NT**, Paul describes unbelievers coming in to the church, sensing the wisdom at work in the church, seeing the beauty of our relationships, having the secrets of his heart revealed, "...and they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Cor 14:25).
 - (This is, I believe, stated in a way to **give illusion** to the Queen of Sheba.)
 - People will come from far and near to the church and they'll say, "I've heard... but not the half was told to me."
- Again, this doesn't mean we are all going to **become rich and skilled like Solomon** in everything. (Don't assume you can go home and write your own version of the Song of Solomon and that we'll feature it in Christmas at DPAC this year. You just keep that between you and your spouse...)

⁵ Cf. Mark 6:2

- **But what it does mean, is that the Holy Spirit will sometimes give little glimpses** of that in our lives through the giftings of the Spirit.
- **(Think of this wisdom almost like you do the healing miracles in Jesus' life.** Jesus' miracles were in-breakings of the kingdom, demonstrations of what the world will look like when Jesus reigns. **Jesus healed blind eyes and made the lame walk.** That is not to say every Christian now gets healed immediately, but that ultimately that is where we are headed, and sometimes now God allows us to experience a taste of that now.)
- **God puts these dimensions of his Spirit into his people to testify to the greatness of God** in the world and show us believers what we'll all be like one day.
- **One day you will be wiser** than Solomon!
- **And, like Solomon, we are to be in the cultural centers—the Megiddos of our day—demonstrating the kingdom of God.**
 - Christianity was never supposed to exist on the fringes.
 - We're not supposed to be ghettoed in our own subculture with our exclusively Christian music and Christian novelette series (which are always about Amish women falling in love).
 - We are to be in the **arts, in government, in education, demonstrating** the Kingdom of Jesus.
 - In fact, the most prominent of those cities **(MAP) Megiddo** =, is where we get **Armageddon**. (Which is, of course, the site of the last battle in Revelation: More battles, historians tell us, have been fought in Megiddo than any other place in the world.)
 - **Get this: The battle for Armageddon is symbolic of the battle for cultural control of the world.**
 - **(MAP** Nazareth is right on the North edge of the valley of Megiddo. Jesus grew up at Armageddon! Jesus work started at Armageddon and ends at Armageddon.)

- Those of you in so-called secular work need to see yourself in today's Megiddos.
 - **Megiddos are those places today that control culture:** Entertainment, business, higher education—we are to seek to demonstrate the wisdom of the kingdom in those areas.

If you are in one of those places, imitate the wisdom of Solomon where you can, and ask God for that wisdom where you don't have it.

- Interview with a successful marketing agency president—31 chapters, I read 1 chapter of Proverbs every day of my adult life

Solomon talks about what that will happen with you when you do that...

- **Prov 22:29, "Do you see a man skilled (wise) in his work? He will stand before kings."**
 - **You need to seek God for God-given, Solomonic skills** in business and use them to stand before the Queens of Sheba and tell them about Jesus!
 - **Your skill, wisdom and work ethic in the workplace can have a direct influence on bringing the Queens of Sheba to Jesus!**
 - One of my favorite stories has always been that of **Eric Liddell, retold** in the movie *Chariots of Fire*—how God used his skill to stand him before a literal king...
- **We need Christians of supernatural insight** and peace inserting themselves into the contentious discussions of our day, like Solomon did.
 - **I don't know about you, but I tend to get discouraged** when I listen to how majority and minority cultures talk to each other about reconciling the past and moving forward.
 - **Both sides, so to speak have some important and valid points.** But neither seem that concerned with listening to the other. (Rarely do you hear

something from either side that is measured, gracious, and really seeking to understand.)

- And the tone people adopt on Facebook with these issues is deplorable.
- We need **people of Solomonic wisdom** leading these discussions.
- God will give it to us, if we ask.
- **In this country, we face a crisis of the family.**
 - My friend **Trevin Wax says that we are getting to the place** where when you see a married couple walking along down the road pushing a stroller, and the dad is engaged and the couple is treating each other well, you can just about assume they are Christians. He says that is kind of sad, but it also gives the church an extraordinary moment of opportunity. **The church can be a place** that shows what healthy, self-less, grace-filled families shaped by God's wisdom look like!
- **In the church, we can show what it looks like for someone to be crazy successful at business** but use their success to serve and not exploit.
 - **Have you noticed that our culture doesn't really know what to do with success?** On the one hand, they want to praise success and want to obtain it, but on the other they like to portray rich people are bad because they have obviously used the capitalistic system to exploit others and in their richness, they only care about themselves.
 - **In the church, we can provide examples of people, like Solomon**, who make themselves crazy successful but use their success to serve and bless others rather than hoard for themselves. People who are insanely generous.

- **Derrick Carr, NFL quarterback**, just got a huge payday. And in an interview, he was asked, "What are you going to be doing with all that money?" He said, "The first thing I'm going to do is splurge on Chick-fil-A. Anytime I want to go, I'm just going to go. He said, "Second, I'll be tithing to my church. God gets the first and best." They kept pressing him, "What are you really going to do with tgeh money?" He said, "You know, I'm just excited about how much good this will do for other people."⁶

This is, in part, God's agenda with his people. The point is, God does not simply want to show off his power *in the church*. (This is a **familiar Summit theme**.) *The majority of what God wants to do he wants to do outside the church, in the world.*

- **39 of 40** miracles. 39/40 of what God wants to do is outside of my control!
- **Lincoln to Generals:** It's all our territory! "There is not one square inch of the entire cosmos over which Jesus does not emphatically declare, 'mine!'"

Solomon's life shows you what you are supposed to do with prosperity.

- LISTEN! Most Christians fail this test.
- **Solomon's answer:** Use your success to point people to Jesus!
- **Do what you do well**, like Solomon, and stand before the kingdoms of the world and point them to Jesus!

⁶ <http://www.nfl.com/videos/oakland-raiders/0ap300000817204/Derek-Carr-I-m-splurging-on-Chick-fil-A>

II. Seeking Solomon's Wisdom: Prov 9

- Like I said, there are certain aspects of Solomon's wisdom that only God can give, but there is a heart attitude toward wisdom—wisdom's foundation—that we all can have.

So, I want to spend the last little bit of our time letting Solomon instruct us about how to seek his wisdom.

- Ironically, this is **what Solomon will depart** from in his later years (which we'll get into in the weeks to come).

In chapter 9 of Proverbs, **Solomon instructs us in this by personifying wisdom and foolishness as 2 different women**, both attractive, both sitting at the city gates calling out to passersby to enter their homes:

Proverbs 9:1 Wisdom has built her house; she has carved out her seven pillars. ² She has prepared her feast; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table... ³ she calls out from the highest points of the city: ⁴ "Whoever is inexperienced, enter here!" To the one who lacks sense, she says, ⁵ "Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I have mixed. ⁶ Leave inexperience behind, and you will live; pursue the way of understanding... ¹¹ For by me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

Then, Solomon describes this 'way of understanding...': ⁸ Don't rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you; rebuke the wise, and he will love you. ⁹ Instruct the wise, and he will be wiser still; teach the righteous, and he will learn more.

1. The wise person receives correction (Prov 9:8–9)

- Isn't it interesting that **of all the things that Solomon could have started off with** to describe the wise heart, he starts off with the ability to receive instruction?
- Does this describe you?
- **How do you respond to correction?**

- **Would your friends, your spouse, your parents** your co-workers, your boss, or your employees say you are approachable?
 - **If you are sitting next to one of those people**, just look at them right now and let them tell you on a scale of 1 to 5 how approachable you are.
 - **You see**, some of you are angry right now,—that's how resistant you are to any feedback or correction.
- **When people rebuke** you, do you thank them for it, or resent them?
 - **How much correction can you hear from them** without firing back, or finding fault with them, or impugning their motives, or just shutting them off?
 - **I'm always at my best articulating** Veronica's faults right after she has pointed out 1 of mine... spirit of eloquence comes over me; my memory turns razor sharp—"Do you remember 6 years ago, it was a Thursday night, we'd just had spaghetti for dinner, and you said..."
- **When you are in conflict of some kind**—say a political discussion with somebody different than you—are you more interested in understanding things from their perspective, or making sure they see the truth of your own?
- The **humble person is quick to hear**, slow to speak, and slow to anger. He recognizes there is usually more about issues that he doesn't know than what he does know.
 - **Hard for me: I have opinions on everything.** (*My wife says: Often wrong, never in doubt*) Fairly well-thought out ones. **But there are people who have had different experiences** than me, and they come from different backgrounds, and if I am humble I'll spend twice as much time listening to them and understanding their perspective as I do trying to get them to understand mine.

Characteristic 2, vs. ¹⁰ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

2. The wise person fears God (Prov 9:10)

- *That’s the “beginning of wisdom.”*
- **“Fear of God” doesn’t mean you sit around “terrified of him,”** (we are supposed to relate to him like a child to a Father, but “fear” like you recognize the power and value of something in your life.
- Think of it like you “fear” the sun.
 - **Most of us don’t get up in the morning** and think, “Oh, what is the sun going to do to me today.”
 - But we recognize the power of the sun. **We know it is necessary for life**, and that being in wrong relationship to it can end up in death. Even overexposure to it can burn us.
- To fear God is to know how valuable he is in your life, how much you depend on him, and how foolish it would be to get on the wrong side of him or be separated from him.
 - **People say, “J.D. what you believe** about this is going to put you on the wrong side of history.” I’m just concerned about being on the right side of God.
 - I fear him more than I do the opinions of other people.
- **Your fear of God is measured** by how attentive you are to your relationship with him.
 - **How submitted you are to his word?**
 - **When you fear God**, disobedience doesn’t just make you feel guilty, it scares you...
 - **For that matter, how much are you seeking to know his word?**
 - (Because neglect of God’s word—laziness in knowing it—is just as bad as defiance of it.
- **Here’s another metric:** How healthy and robust **is your prayer life?**

- **I’ve often told you: When you fear God**, prayer will come naturally to you as breathing because you know how dependent you are on his help!
 - I don’t breathe because it is the right thing to do, or because I’d feel guilty if I didn’t. I breathe because my body is desperate for air.
 - **I don’t have accountability partners** who hold me accountable for breathing.
 - **I breathe because instinctively I recognize the value and importance of oxygen** and I’m scared to be without it.
- **That’s how a person who fears God is with God.** Their thought in any situation is I want to be connected to God.

Now, folly... ¹³ Folly is a rowdy woman; she is gullible (not discerning) and knows nothing. ¹⁴ She sits by the doorway of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, ¹⁵ calling to those who pass by, who go straight ahead on their paths: ¹⁶ “Whoever is inexperienced, enter here!” To the one who lacks sense, she says, ¹⁷ “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten secretly is tasty!” ¹⁸ But he doesn’t know that the departed spirits are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

- The **striking feature in this description** is how similar the “women” of wisdom and folly are.
 - Both are at the same location—at the highest point of the city, calling out to people as they pass by.
 - Both have prepared their houses for guests, and both appeal especially to the young.
- **But whereas wisdom calls out to those who are humble** and fear God, folly appeals to those who want immediate satisfaction.
- Did you notice the difference in what the two women said?
 - Wisdom says: ⁴ “Whoever is inexperienced, enter here!” To the one who lacks sense, she says, ⁵ “Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I have mixed.”

- Folly says: ¹⁶ Whoever is inexperienced, enter here!" To the one who lacks sense, she says, ¹⁷ "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten secretly is tasty!"

IOW, "Who cares where this came from? It tastes good now."

To be foolish doesn't mean you hate God; you just really want some "bread"—the bread of success, or romance, or sex, or family, pleasure—and if you have to leave behind God temporarily to get it, then so be it.

Which leads to #3...

3. The wise person values fellowship with God above all else (Prov 9:16–17)

Some are having to consider that now:

- Maybe that is sexual—will you wait for marriage
- Maybe with success: Are you determined to get up that corporate ladder, even if you have to harm your family, or bend your integrity?
- Maybe it's in regards to building up your wealth, even if you disobey God's commands to tithe and to generosity to do it
- Or with getting vengeance—because that always feels good.

Wisdom says, "It's better to do things God's way, with God, than eat stolen bread."

Did you see what Solomon said? ¹¹ For by me (wisdom) your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

- There is a kind of gratification that comes from pleasing God lasts longer and is more satisfying than any stolen bread can provide.

Solomonic wisdom **puts a relationship with God above everything** else—and says, "I'd rather have this relationship than anything else, and so I'll seek it first above all else."

Conclusion/Music

Two women, calling us down two different paths... both offering happiness:

- One says, "Be humble. Always be open to correction. Assume you have blind spots. Fear God. Learn God's word. Pray often. Prioritize fellowship with him above all else."
- The other says, "You know what is best for you. A **little religion** is good, of course, so obey God's word where it makes sense, but go your own way when it doesn't. Don't receive correction. You are the one who is in the right. Always assume the best about your motives even as you assume the worst about other people's."

Both of these paths *feel* so right when you begin down them. But one leads to peace and prosperity and happiness and blessing while the other to destruction.

Solomon warns, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." (Prov 16:25)

Which will you choose? BOW FOR PRAYER

- *How approachable? Open to correction? Submitted to God's word? Studying to learn it? How desperate and frequent in prayer?*

Wisdom calls out to you! One greater than Solomon is here, and he calls out to you to let him fill you with wisdom beyond even Solomon's!

Will you submit to it? If so, in whatever chapter you are (teenager going to HS, new parents, or someone nearing retirement, say, "God, in all things, I consent to do things *your way*.")

