

“How to How to Bring a Good Man Down... and Back Again” // 1 Kings 11:1–14 // *The Man Who Had It All* #4

Apex Campus!

Introduction:

Every time I am flipping through the channels and come across one of those “where are they now” shows I just have to stop and watch. It feels like watching a train wreck. Here’s someone who had it all—and then just fell apart. And usually I didn’t realize this person had gone off the radar until they tell me. But then I’m like, “Well, now that you mention it, I haven’t seen Meg Ryan or Emilio Estevez in any movies recently. *Are they still alive?*”

One of my favorites is Daniel LaRusso, the hero of the second greatest movie in our nation’s history, *The Karate Kid*, right behind *National Treasure*. Seriously, I’ve been waiting for years to let my kids in on the magic that was Karate Kid, and so we finally watched it over Spring Break this year. And, at first, my kids were like, “What... why the old movie, dad? Old movies are dumb.” But as we pressed on they fell underneath the spell, and they were like, “Dad. This is awesome! Wax on, wax off?” And when they saw on the Netflix recommendations, “Because you liked... we suggest” there was a Karate Kid 2, they said, “Dad, we HAVE to watch that,” which is not as good as the 1st but still good, so we did. And then one day Allie came home and said, “Dad did you know there is a Karate Kid 3? Dad, we have to watch that.” And I said, “Sweetheart, I’d have to hate a person pretty severe to inflict on them Karate Kid 3. Karate Kid 3 was one of the worst disappointments of my life, ranking right up there with the Left Behind movies and Justin Bieber’s adult singing career.

Daniel was actually the character’s name; the actor’s name is apparently Ralph Macchio, which still doesn’t sound right to me. In fact, that was his issue: his role as Daniel LaRusso was so iconic that the actor couldn’t get future acting gigs because everybody just knew him as “the karate kid.”

Interestingly, the nemesis, Johnny Lawrence, had the same problem, but he just rolled with it. He got plenty of further acting spots, including a commercial for Wild Wings recently, but it was always as a cameo of his former tough guy self.

Well, whenever I hear about these “Where Are They Now?” sorts of stories, I always want to ask, *What happened?* One minute this person had it all. And then suddenly it’s all unraveling at the seams.

That’s what happened in the life of Solomon, and this is the spotlight on where it all went wrong.

1 Kings 11:1–14

King Solomon loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh’s daughter: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, and they must not intermarry with you, because they will turn your heart away to follow their gods.” To these women Solomon was deeply attached in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives who were princesses and three hundred who were concubines, and they turned his heart away.

4 When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to follow other gods... 5 Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the abhorrent idol of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did what was evil in the Lord’s sight, and unlike his father David, he did not remain loyal to the Lord.

7 At that time, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abhorrent idol of Moab, and for Milcom, the abhorrent idol of the Ammonites, ... 8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who were burning incense and offering sacrifices to their gods.

9 The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

This chapter seems to come out of nowhere. You are going through the story of Solomon and reading chapter after chapter about glory, success, wisdom, devotion to God, and then suddenly, chapter 11, *disaster*.

- We used to have our old offices in a small office park with some other businesses, and I was there early alone one morning... “We’re here for Chapter 11.” And I was like, “Of which book?”
- That’s what this is like—where did that come from?
- And you are like, “1000 wives? I thought this guy was the wisest man who ever lived? I am not smart and I know that is a good idea.”

We tend to think of Solomon as the man who fell because he was a sex addict.

- I mean, if you have 1000 wives that is some **serious libido**.
- I’m not even sure how that is **physiologically possible**.
- How do you keep up with the **anniversaries and birthdays**?
- Can you even **remember all of their names**? Sometimes I meet people in the community who will say, “Pastor J.D.!” And I will say, “I’m sorry. Do you go to our church?” and I’m **embarrassed that I don’t know them** but they usually understand that that’s what happens when you are part of a large church. Solomon was that way with his wives. “I’m sorry. You look familiar. Am I married to you? Are you one of my wives? Would you like to be?”

But there is **a lot more going on here** than a lust for exotic women.

- In ancient times kings would marry daughters of other kings as a way of guaranteeing peace between the two countries. The idea is that **if my daughter is married to you** and lives in your house I’m less likely to attack you.
 - Did **you see how in vs. 3 the writer clarifies** that of Solomon’s 1000 wives 700 were “princesses?” These were daughters of the kings of surrounding nations.
- **So, Solomon collected wives from the surrounding countries. When you visit a new place, you bring back some kind of trinket from that place—a coin or a shot glass or something. Solomon brought back one of the king’s daughters.)**
- **These wives were more about security than sex.**

The problem was that God had explicitly told Israel in Deut 17 *not* to do this. They didn’t need treaties with other nations for security—God would be their security. But Solomon wasn’t satisfied with just the promises of God, he wanted a little extra insurance.

And here’s what happened: Gradually Solomon grew attached to these women and they turned his heart away. For most of these wives, Solomon built them their own palace, and in that palace they would build an altar to whatever god they had worshipped in their home country. Over time Solomon went from merely tolerating the existence of these things to actively participating in worship of them.

So, I want to use this story to **highlight for you the things that bring a good man—even the world’s wisest man—down.**

- One of my favorite country groups, Alabama, used to have a song “You can’t bring a good man down.” 1 Kings would beg to differ.
 - Some of the best men in history, including the wisest one ever to live, have been brought down.
- (And **ladies, don’t let the phrasing of my points** throw you—they are as applicable to you as they are to men.)

1. A good man is brought down by *disbelief in God's promises* (11:1)

- Like I pointed out, Solomon's **FIRST problem was not wanton, out-of-control sexual lust**. His problem was that he didn't trust God enough to surrender himself fully to God and rely only on him for his future.
 - In fact, if you want to think of it this way, **700 of his 1000 marriages** were politically, not sexually motivated. **70% of his problem** was insecurity and only 30% was lust.
- **That's almost always the case**. The **root core of all sin is unbelief**. Peel back the layers of any sin and there you will find the seed of unbelief.
 - **When I talk to a high school student** who just won't offer up their life fully to Jesus I always tell them it's always because they don't really trust him. They think following Jesus will make you miserable.
- **In whatever area of your life you are not fully obeying God**, it's because that is an area where you are afraid of being let down and you don't really trust him.
 - There's a story that I often tell high school students to illustrate this, and it's the story of the first time I went rock-climbing...
 - The reason my friend got to a point where he couldn't go on any farther is that he never really trusted the rope to begin with.
 - There's a difference between using the rope as a safety net and leaning your full weight back on it.
 - *You'll never press on to full obedience, until you trust God enough to lean the full weight of your life on him.*
- So, here's my question for you: **Where do you not trust the promises of God?** Where are you hedging your bet?
- **Let me suggest some** of the most common offenders:
 - I see a lot of people falter in obedience specifically in the area of **romance**:
 - Because you feel like **if you get this area wrong** your whole life is going to be messed up, you want to maintain control over.
 - This may **take the form of dating** someone you know is not God's choice for you (maybe because they are not a committed Christian or a spiritual leader), or you **compromise God's timing**—live or sleep together before you are married; or **after you are married** you step out on your spouse through divorce or adultery because you are unhappy in your marriage and need to take matters into your own hands.
 - **It's not that you're just a rebellious defiant person who hates God**, it's just that in this area they are so afraid of being unhappy that they can't fully trust in God.
- Another big one is **money**: the majority of church-going people do not obey God in the area of finances. **Give the first and the best—the Bible suggests we start with 10%**. Again, for most, it's not because they are defiant, or even stingy, but because they are afraid—**what if I can't pay my bills?** What if I get hit with a rainy day? Or, can I really live a happy or fulfilled life with a 10% or 20% reduction in disposable income?
 - And you see the promises of God where he promises to bless and multiply you when you give him the first and the best, but you don't really trust those promises...
- Sometimes I see this lack of trust when people refuse to **extend forgiveness to someone**. They say, "Well, if I forgive this person, they are just going to get away with that they did, and they are never going to realize how much they hurt me and I'll probably just get hurt again." And so instead of forgiving they nurse bitterness in their heart because you just don't trust God with them.

- One more: Some **people can't trust God** when life throws a curve ball at them. Something hits you that you are not expecting. You **lose your job**. Get passed over for **promotion**. You don't get into the school or get cut from the squad. Get an **unexpected medical diagnosis**. And your 1st impulse is, "**God, you don't have a plan, or if you do it's not a good one**" so you take the weight of life back on yourself and live mad at God.
- The root cause of Solomon's downfall was his feeling a need for political alliances for the sake of security that God had told him he didn't need.
- **Where are you hedging your bet?** Where do you not trust God enough to let go of the rope?

Closely tied to this is #2...

2. A good man is brought down by disregard of God's word (11:2)

- 1 Kings 11:2 tells us that God had clearly said **not** to multiply wives (Deut 17:17). In the rest of the chapter the writer of Kings is going to show us a number of other biblical things that Solomon ignored, too.
 - For example, Deuteronomy 17:16-17 prohibits the king from **multiplying silver and gold for himself**. (Deut 17 tells future kings of Israel to stay away from moneys and honeys because they'll mess you up.) Solomon disregarded both of these warnings flamboyantly.
 - **1 Kings 10** tells us that every year Solomon collected for himself 666 talents of gold (which is about 25 tons) and that he had only gold articles in his house¹. **"Nothing was made of silver, since silver had no worth in Solomon's day."** 1 Kings 10:21
 - **That sounds like multiplying gold to me.**

¹ 10:14

- Remember a couple of weeks ago I explained how it look **150,000 laborers 7 years** to build Israel's Temple?² Well, Solomon spent 13 years building his palace (1 Kings 7:1).
- **Not multiplying wives, multiplying gold for himself: Solomon probably thought these commands were not that important.** He was probably like, "Hey, it's not like I'm breaking one of the 10 commandments. These didn't even make God's top 10!"
 - But the **danger of sin** is not in how wicked or immoral the act is, but in the authority of God that you reject.
- **When you reject God's word**, no matter how small, you put yourself outside of his protection.
- **Imagine** I sold you a huge 5000 square foot house, and said I'd give you control over all of it except for 1 small nail in the front foyer. You can have the whole thing, I just get 1 small nail, and I can do anything I want with that nail. Pretty good deal, huh? But I hang a diseased dead deer caucus from that nail. It spoils the whole house.
 - **That's what the Enemy did with these small areas** Solomon didn't yield to God.
 - Through his wives and his gold he smuggled in spiritual death.
- Where is that for you? Your relationships, your money—where is he bringing spiritual death into you?

3. A good man is brought down by disobedient friends (11:2-3)

("To these women Solomon was deeply attached in love... and they turned his heart away." (2-3))

- **Vs. 2** tells us that when Solomon grew attached to his wives that they turned his heart away."
- **Probably the single-most important factor** in your life in determining whether you will make it all the way with Jesus is whom you surround yourself with.
- **I feel like I haven't talked about this enough in my ministry...**

² 6:38

- **Ironically, the one who talks about this the best in the Bible is Solomon** (who toward the end of his life did not heed his own advice) **Prov 13:20, “He who walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion of friends will be destroyed.”**
 - I’ve heard it said that: **Your friends are the future you.**
 - *You show me your friends; and I’ll show you your future.*
 - Or, you will become the average of your 5 closest friends.
- **The most determining influence on your shape in the future is your companions in the present.**
- This is one of those **practical things that people overlook**. They get really motivated to become something great for God but because it never affects their friendships their intentions never become reality.
 - **One of my mentors** in college told me, *“For most things in your life, it is not the big dreams you dream, but the small decisions you make.”*
 - There is probably no better application of that than friendships. It’s not the big dreams about doing great things for God that determine your future, but the friendships you choose in the present.
- And, of course, there is probably no more important and influential friend than your spouse.
 - When I see a Christian intentionally pursuing a romantic relationship with someone who is not a Christian, I wonder, “Do you **know what you are doing** to your future?”
 - They say, **“Oh, I’m the exception.”** And you really like this person and you’re confident you can change them.
 - This is one of those areas where you are likely to bring cursing on yourself if you disobey? Scripture says, **“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers”** and that believers should only marry “in the Lord.”³
 - **Just as with Solomon**, if you disobey this you are likely to bring down destruction on yourself.
- “But I know people where it is worked.” Yes, God’s grace is amazing. But you **can’t willfully flout God’s rules** and then look to him to fix everything. That is mocking him, and God will not be mocked.
- And **just on a practical level**, do you really want to gamble like that with the rest of your life?
 - **As a dad now I will tell you that the single most important thing** in my life becomes your kids, the single biggest influence on them is their other parent. Especially if you are a lady, why would you intentionally put into their lives someone who not help point them to God, or confuse their other parent doesn’t take Jesus seriously at all?
 - **Now, if you** are already married and you became a believer after you were married or whatever, that’s different. You can trust God to work in the lives of your kids despite being alone. But **don’t mock God** by saying, “I’ll do it my way and then expect you to bless.”
- **And, really quick...** let me say something because I know we have several people in here who are not Christians but are dating a Christian and **I just made things really uncomfortable...**
 - I’m not trying to insult or demean you—on a **practical level for you**, I’d advise you that if you’re not a Christian, you shouldn’t date one **unless you plan to become one. Because the Christian you are dating right now really wants to convert you.**
 - LET ME PROVE IT: THEY BROUGHT YOU HERE TODAY. This wasn’t your idea, it was theirs. And that’s why they keep looking at you to see if I’m connecting, to see if you get a tear in your eye
 - The point: They don’t accept you as you are.
 - Tell you something else: **Their mom and dad don’t like you and want you to become a Christian.** Their whole family is praying for you right now (they know you’re here), and nobody in the family is ever going to be really happy until you become a Christian.

³ 1 Cor 6–7

- I'm just being honest with you; I've observed this for many years.
- So if you don't plan on becoming a Christian, I'd advise you not to date one.

Back to the point: A good man is brought down by disobedient friends.

So, Solomon counsels us (in counsel he disobeyed and destroyed himself by) **Proverbs 12:26**, "The righteous man is cautious with his friendships. Especially his marriage.

- **Your most intimate acquaintances ought to be believers** because you will inevitably become like them.
- Now, you say, "Pastor J.D., are you saying that we shouldn't have Christian friends?"
- Great question! **Circles**

4. A good man is brought down by degrees, not all at once

- **Chapter 11 feels like it comes out of nowhere, but it really doesn't.**
- If we go back to chapter 3, at the beginning of Solomon's life, the 1st passages we looked at in our series, right before God gives Solomon the dream where he tells him to ask him anything we find this: **3:1** Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon brought her to the city of David until he finished building his palace and the Lord's temple... and **then God gives Solomon his dream** where he says, "Ask me anything, and I'll give it to you."
 - **From the beginning, Solomon had sowed the seeds** of this destruction in small compromises.
- **Now, in one sense, this is encouraging to me.** Because it means that God chose Solomon and appeared to him *even though* he was a compromiser.
 - **Isn't that encouraging?** That means he can choose and work through someone messed up like me, too.

- But it was like, in appearing to Solomon, God was inviting him to depart from these ways and follow him.
 - But **Solomon never did.** Instead, he took God's blessing for granted and grew really comfortable with his small sins.
 - He thought, 'It hasn't hurt me yet, I'm probably fine.'
- **Maybe nothing is more dangerous in the Christian life than sleeper cells** of sin that you haven't dealt with. You think they are fine, and they aren't hurting anyone. But it's **just a matter of time!**
 - **Spurgeon** describes them like a spider web. "*At first...they can scarce be seen; and they seem as though you could break from them in a moment. Then they become silken bonds: then firmer still, until a man seems to be enveloped in a tangle of cables, and every cable hardens and becomes as iron or triple steel until at last there is no escaping.... the greatest moral catastrophes happen not all of a sudden, but by slow degrees.*"
 - And **C.S. Lewis** described sin like a **cancer** that never stops growing in the background until you suddenly realize that it has eaten away all your desire for God.
- **Maybe it is the sin of exaggeration.** Small lies that get you out of jam. Temper flare-ups. Lust.
- **James 1:15 says, "Be warned.** Sin starts in you as a wayward desire—a fantasy—then turns into a guilty pleasure; then something you crave and can't live without and then something that destroys you." It's **like a fire that starts** small but eventually burns the whole house down.
- **You have to take sin seriously in your life.** You have to be actively killing it or it will be killing you!⁴
- **Where are you letting it ride?** It's a ticking time bomb.

That ties very closely to the last insight here...

5. A good man is brought down by deceptive overconfidence

- Solomon had had a life of nearly unbroken successes.

⁴ John Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin*

- He **had met with God twice** (BTW, we're not talking about the person in your SG that is like, "Oh, I really met with God and he whispered in my heart and hold me Dallas is going to win the Super Bowl next year." No, this is full-on, legit, presence-and-glory-of-God kind of meeting.
- **Furthermore**, Solomon had **unmistakable spiritual gifts** that were world-renowned, and his track record was impeccable. He had accomplished more than any other king in Israel ever had.
- And that **made him lower his guard**. Solomon bought into his own hype, and assumed that his role as God's chosen one meant that he was unique.

Few things destroy you faster than success, *especially spiritual success*, because success makes you forget how desperately you need grace.

- **Illus.** Paul Tripp on why most pastors fall
- **John Newton:** *Growth in grace primarily means growth in your realization of your need for grace and in your dependence on it.*⁵

Solomon is the man who had it all; the king who gave Israel a taste of the blessing God wanted to pour out on them and through them; the wisest, most successful man who ever lived—but whose wisdom and success could not keep him from destroying himself.

So, I want to **end this series with a couple of reflections on Solomon that show us the bigger lessons of Solomon for us**.

Lesson 1: Solomon shows us that we need something more than wisdom

- The **primary lesson Solomon's life**, and every Old Testament character, is not "be wise and successful like Solomon."
- Solomon had **more wisdom here (head)** than all of us!

- The **problem with Solomon was not here (head)**; the problem is here (heart). His heart turned away from what his head knew to be right.
- The problem with most of us is not that **we don't know what to do**, it is that we lack the will to do it.
- **God's laws, God's wisdom**, are only like the railroad tracks that point us in the direction to go, yet are powerless to move us along the tracks. **We need something more than wisdom; we need a heart change**.

This leads to lesson 2...

Lesson 2: Solomon's wisdom is fulfilled in a Suffering Savior, not Teaching King

The people of Israel thought that Solomon was the fulfillment of God's promises to David to establish a kingdom that would last forever, multiply prosperity, and bless the nations.

- **But they were bitterly disappointed**. Solomon himself let them down.
- **Even though he had more wisdom and prosperity** than any King before him—he couldn't even rule himself!

That's where we see the beauty of the Old Testament really kicks in Solomon was just a dim picture of a greater King who was coming.

God had **promised to David a Son** who would bring in a glorious, eternal kingdom, build a temple where the people could meet with God and rule with such wisdom that they'd bless the whole world!
Israel naturally assumed that son was Solomon.

But clearly, he wasn't. But centuries later, another descendant of David—another Son—would show up. And **that Son exuded all the same wisdom that Solomon had**, and even more. People came from **far and near** to hear him.

⁵ *The Letters of John Newton*

But the **center point of this Son's** life was not his wise teaching, or some glitzy temple he built, it was his **dying for sinners**.

He suffered for our foolishness so that he could be resurrected from the dead and put his Spirit of wisdom within us.

Unlike Solomon, Jesus wasn't admired around the world for his success—at least not yet. **Instead**, he was hung up in shame, bathed in human spit, where the whole world mocked his claim to be King.

Yet because of that, you see, because of that he can restore wisdom to those of us who, like Solomon, have messed up our lives with foolishness.

Look at what God says to Solomon in 1 Kings 11 after rebuking him for the foolishness of his sin: **11** "Since you have done this and did not keep my covenant and my statutes, which I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. (There is a consequence). **12** However, I will not do it during your lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of your son's hand. **13** Yet I will not tear the entire kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem that I chose."

"For the sake of David—for the sake of my promise to David—who was an adulterer and murderer by the way—I am not going to give you what you deserve, just like I did not give David what he didn't deserve.

There is an earthly consequence for your sin, yes, but I'm **going to leave one tribe—Judah**. And you know what is going to come out of that one tribe? Something greater than all the wisdom of Solomon and the riches of Egypt: **Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, in the city of David**.

- A Savior who is Christ the Lord.
- Christ, the wisdom of God, the glory of God, the riches of God.

And that King will restore what you have lost through your foolishness. And that King that will restore what you have lost through your foolishness.

I think the whole point of Solomon's life is summed up in **Hebrews 12:1–2**, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us,

- Don't be like Solomon! Don't start well and then let foolishness and lack of trust and small idols and unconquered sins destroy you and your family's life.
- But, but...

² keeping our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...

"Author and finisher" means that ultimately your "victory" is not dependent on you running with perfect wisdom. He started the race for you, and won it for you. He ran in your place.

The verdict is in, the crown is yours. And when you believe that, and **ONLY** when you believe that, will you have the ability to lay escape the foolish sins that will trip you up, in a way Solomon did not.

(MUSIC) ² keeping our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God."

Think about how he loved you when you were a sinner, separated from him. He loved you so much he went to the cross with joy over the thought of saving you.

And he sat down at the right hand of God, which means the race is over! The victory has been won; the verdict on your life has been declared, the crown in yours. You are an overcomer. You are sitting there in the winner's circle with Jesus.

When you believe that—that Jesus ran and won the race in your place, and that his victory and place of acceptance before the Father has been given to you as a gift of grace—then God gives you the **power to run victoriously in a way Solomon could not.**

Jesus' blood breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free!

- **It is ironic**, but the only ones who get better in the Christian life are those who realize that their acceptance by God is not dependent on their getting better!
- **And that means Jesus can help you** when you mess up your life through horrendous acts of foolishness.
 - **You don't have to be embarrassed.** Jesus came not to tell you to live wisely and then criticize you for not doing it; he came to save and enable those who had ruined their lives through foolishness.

Your **sin no longer defines** you; Jesus' finished work defines you. You are his child. And if you will confess your sins, and the ways your foolish sin has messed up your life, he'll put his victory and his wisdom and his healing power to restore in you.