

ADULT Teacher's Guide

A successful Sunday school year is about to start—September, October, November 2005!

Get ready for an exciting quarter of learning. Sure, Bible knowledge is foundational to what adults will learn, but adults also need to learn to live that knowledge. That's what Bible-in-Life is all about—making the Word come alive in their lives every day! That's discipleship at its best. Have a great quarter, and know that God is using your teaching to change lives forever.

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Adult Teacher's Guide
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**Volume 107
Number 1**

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4 Enrichment Tools

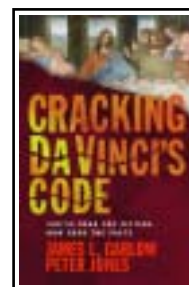
The special-needs child

Lauren Littauer Briggs tackles the art of helping families overwhelmed by constant fatigue. Link to author interview.



5 Cracking Da Vinci's Code!

Many of your adults are reading the bestselling *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. In his fiction, Brown includes assertions intended to shake the very foundations of Christianity. In this article, authors Garlow and Jones take on one of those issues.



6 Teaching Tools

Teaching Bible-in-Life.

As easy as 1, 2, 3, 4!

It's a crime to bore adults. Challenge those who think adult Sunday school is nap time. With Bible-in-Life, that challenge is easy. It's just as big a crime when teachers burn out! But with the 4-Step lesson plan, your job becomes a whole lot easier, and adults will discover that it's still exciting to grow spiritually.

Unit 1—Choosing and Losing

Selections from 1 Kings

1 9/4 Making the Right Choices 10

2 9/11 Choosing the Right Values 18



Link to Last Week! This accountability chain stretches for three months, a great reminder to you and your adult students that Sunday school is making a difference.

Adults can get personally involved in giving. Introduce the missions project. See the inside of the back cover.



Adult-targeted Bible studies are Part 2 of every lesson!

3	9/18	Leading with Respect	26
4	9/25	The Success Trap	34

Unit 2—Royalty and Loyalty

Selections from 1-2 Kings, 2 Chronicles

5	10/2	The Choice Is Yours	42
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This lesson is designed to help you evangelize unsaved students. For more help, see inside the back cover.

6	10/9	Heeding What We Hear	50
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Link to Last week! This accountability chain stretches for three months, a great reminder to you and your adults that Sunday school is making a difference.

7	10/16	Better than You Expected	58
----------	--------------	---------------------------------------	-----------

8	10/23	A Heart for Worship	66
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9	10/30	Never Beyond His Reach	74
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Unit 3—Wise to Advise

Selections from 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah

10	11/6	The Mark of a Christian Leader	82
-----------	-------------	---------------------------------------	-----------

11	11/3	Learning to Listen	90
-----------	-------------	---------------------------------	-----------

12	11/20	The Harvest of Sin	98
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Don't miss the sidebar in every lesson, "Understanding the Bible." And even more important for you—participate in the Teacher's Devotional, on the first page of every lesson.

13	11/27	Sliding Down the Slippery Slope	106
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Click your mouse on www.DavidCCook.com for a three-minute demonstration of how Bible-in-Life helps you reach every student!

Inside Back Cover

- **Leading an Adult to Jesus**
Be prepared, not panicked, when an adult confronts his or her need for Jesus.
- **Missions Project**
- **Adult Teacher's Guide Lesson Cycle**

Ministering to Families with Special-Needs Children

Show God's love and support to hurting children and their families. Here's how:

NO ONE TEACHES VERY LONG without having to address this issue. What better people to help us help them than the parents themselves.

What Not to Say

- "Call me if you need anything," friends would say. I never called anyone or asked for anything, even though I desperately needed help.
- People told me to accept it, to act like a Christian, to get over it. Words such as these should never be uttered.
- When a friend heard about the psychologist's diagnosis, her comment was, "Well, I don't know why she's so upset. She knew they had problems." She showed no compassion or understanding for what I was going through.

What Parents Should Hear from Us

- "Your son is so loving and precious."
- My friend's words of tenderness were so helpful as she tried to reassure me. She said, "Irene, somehow, someday, God will get us through this." I wasn't sure I believed her. I was terribly angry with God at that point.

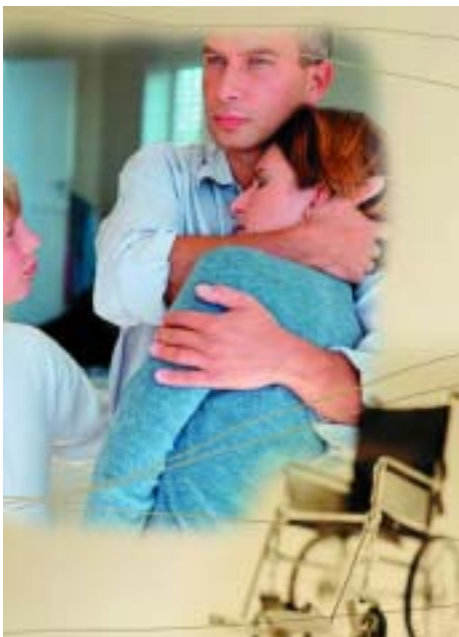
What Parents Wish We Understood

- Sometimes I want to talk, but sometimes I don't. Please be understanding when I don't.
- After the car accident that injured my daughter and left her permanently disabled, we became the church tragedy. Many of my friends avoided us because they didn't know what to say. It was friends who treated me as if I hadn't changed who meant the most. They called me on the phone to chat, took me out to lunch, accepted the fact that though I hadn't changed, my life had

changed, and they loved me anyway.

How We Can Help

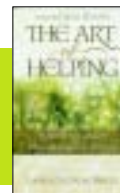
- Just being there is enough. No words, nothing to do, just be there.
- One friend volunteered to spend the Sunday school hour teaching disabled children. This was the only break I had from taking care of my child all week.
- How I wish someone would stop by with a café mocha or a big soda and offer to stay with me.
- The greatest gift is down-home friendship. Pray for ways to stay close to the parents and make ways to include that child in normal activities like birthday parties, sleepovers, and trips to the movies. Worse than the disability is the loneliness, the empty calendars, the absence of a circle of friends. Pray that God will make you and your class real friends.



Sunday School Teacher's Prayer

Dear Lord, You know how much I love this precious child. Please give her parents the strength to provide for her care. Show me ways I can help and support the parents and the child. Give me ideas for building friendships and help-ships between my other students and this child. I come to You for my tomorrows, one day at a time. I ask for Your guidance and strength for the days that lie ahead. With a grateful heart, Amen.

Edited from Lauren Littauer Briggs's book, *The Art of Helping—What to Say and Do When Someone Is Hurting*. Order your copy at www.CookMinistries.com



Photocopy this page for your adults. Many will have read the bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*, and may have questions. Place *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* in your class library. Get more copies from your Christian bookstore or via www.CookMinistries.com

Cracking Da Vinci's Code: W o m e n

All the subtlety of *The Da Vinci Code* disappears each time the topic of women is mentioned. Brown's thesis is succinct: Christianity destroyed and killed women. Paganism affirmed them. But he's wrong. Very wrong. But even though he's wrong, this book can't be easily ignored. The author cleverly mixes occasional "facts" with assertions, making it appear that the characters are speaking truth. But Brown's book is neither fact nor fiction. It is "Fact-ion"—a wily narrative that blends limited facts with some grossly exaggerated claims (like the church killed five million women in its witch hunts).

Brown is not completely wrong in writing that women have, at times, been mistreated by those who claim to be Christians. At the same time, we object to Brown's technique of focusing on the aberrations while ignoring normative, biblically based Christianity.

The advent of Christianity radically transformed the fate of women. Even ancient Roman pagan scholars agree that it was the turning point for the freedom and dignity of women.

Consider these biblical examples that flatly refute the fiction that Christianity is anti-female. Mary, mother of Jesus, became pregnant—before marriage and, miraculously, without having had sexual intercourse. The Virgin Birth is a core doctrine of the Christian faith, but what is important to

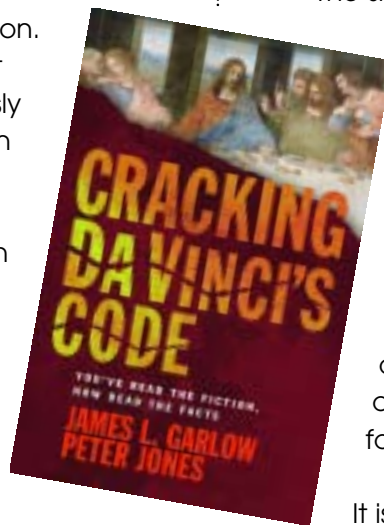
note in the genealogy of Christ is that the role of the mother was so honored as to be cited in a list that would typically include only the father.

Jesus' very first announcement that He was the Messiah was shared with a woman, and not just any woman. She was a five-time divorcee involved with a live-in boyfriend. Furthermore, she was a Samaritan, which meant that Jesus violated the mores of the time by crossing racial lines.

The single strongest affirmation of women in

the New Testament is found in the fact that a woman—who, according to the customs of the time, would not have been allowed to testify in court—is the one to testify regarding the single most important announcement in all of biblical or Christian history: the actual, literal, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All of Christianity hinges on this one event, and a woman was chosen for this highest honor.

What is driving Dan Brown's agenda? It is the pagan worldview that denies and distorts a core biblical truth: Men and women are created equal but different.



This article is excerpted from *Cracking Da Vinci's Code—You've Read the Fiction Now Read the Facts*, by James Garlow and Peter Jones. The book deals with the other assertions made by Brown's book, including: Was Jesus merely human and not divine? Did Jesus and Mary Magdalene marry and have children? Is there a Holy Grail? Millions have read *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. This book will help you answer your friends' questions.

Bring the Bible

As Easy As One,



Step 1: Life Connection

Surprise! Most adults show up on Sunday focused more on where the mortgage money will come from and how they can recapture their relationship with their teen than with learning something new from the Bible. This step will help adults focus on the morning's challenge. Don't skip this step! It's not fluff or foolishness. It's the step that gets adults ready to discover why this Bible study is important to them. At the end of these few minutes, they are ready to participate—and today's lesson just might contain the answers to life questions they brought with them to class.



Online Is Where It's @

Each student is different. Bible-in-Life helps you teach to each person's strongest learning style—and you can do this successfully in one classroom. For a full-color, online demonstration of how this works, log on to www.DavidCCook.com and click on Learning Styles Teacher Training. Easy as the click of your mouse!

Step 2: Bible Exploration

Lively Bible study! That's what happens here. As adults study the Bible and discuss what they found, they gain growing understanding of how to move forward on their discipleship journey.

Spend lots of time preparing Step 2. In class, you can discuss the passage, read the Scriptures, and conduct both deductive and inductive Bible study. Adults should never think the Bible section is the duller part of the lesson. Bring it alive with your expression, actions, and most of all, your own attitude!

Each week you'll challenge adults to prepare for next week's lesson. Their preparation isn't long or difficult, but it does encourage participation. When adults have invested something of themselves in the lesson, they will get more out of it.



to Life for Adults

Two, Three, Four



Step 3: Bible Interaction

Practice Time—a time to turn the classroom into a laboratory. You'll discover how deeply your adults are personally involved with what the Bible taught. This guide will give you three choices every week. Use all three. Or, if you have a small class, pick several. Activities will be different each week—a roleplay, creative activity, discussion, case study, interviews—lots of adult-level interaction.

Step 4: Life Application

Okay! You got your adults focused on the topic (Step 1). Then you guided them into the Bible (Step 2). They practiced what they learned (Step 3). Now students will decide what they will actually do with what they've learned. This part of the lesson is not safe! Living the Christian life is difficult and exciting.

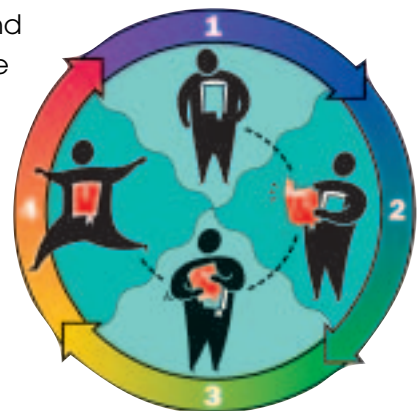
Each adult will decide for himself or herself how to live for Jesus this week. You can encourage people, but ultimately they need to personally own their decisions. They are living for Jesus because they choose to, not because of outside pressure you put on them.

Don't have a single doubt about it! The biggest part of your Sunday school lesson doesn't happen in your classroom. It happens on Monday and Tuesday—and through the week—when instead of following their own desires or the crowd, they dare to say, "No, I will follow Jesus."



Natural Learning Cycle

You've just been around the Natural Learning Cycle. It's fun! It's simple! It's how we all learn—adults, teens, and children. First, we get interested in the subject (Step 1). Then we learn the facts from the Bible (Step 2). Next, we practice what we've learned (Step 3). Then, and most importantly, we use what we have learned during the week (Step 4). Finally, accountability! We come back to class next week and share how we lived the Christian life (Link to Last Week).



Making the Right Choices

Week of September 4

Teacher's Devotional

Choosing Wisely

You can't even get up in the morning without making a decision, because you decide what time to get up. After that, what you've eaten (or haven't) and what you've added to (or subtracted from) your schedule will influence the kind of day you will have today, and possibly tomorrow.

Personal decision-making not only affects ourselves but also our spouses, families, co-workers, even Sunday school classes. No one operates in a vacuum.

Solomon was aware of this fact when he asked God for discernment. As king, Solomon would be responsible to rule the lives of others. When he prayed for discernment, he sought special insight and the ability to apply godly wisdom not only in his own life but also in the lives of his subjects.

We all value wisdom and fairness in those who are in positions of authority over us. We personally reap the consequences when our leaders do not exhibit these qualities.

Read James 3:1-2 and Proverbs 3:13-22. This week, pray for discernment in your God-given role as Sunday school teacher.



Lesson Focus:

A discerning heart is better than power or riches.

Lesson Scripture:

1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:3-4, 5-10.

Lesson Path

1 *Life Connection:*
Discuss how discernment is essential for leaders.

2 *Bible Exploration:*
Understand how Solomon received discernment from God.

Suggested material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:*
Poster and Reproducible Sheet—
Solomon in All His Glory

3 *Bible Interaction:*
Discover the true meaning of discernment.

4 *Life Application:*
Ask God for personal discernment in everyday situations.



Understanding the Bible

Read 1 Kings 1–3 to see the difficulty Solomon faced in becoming king and the blessings God gave him. Taking over the responsibilities of ruling Israel was no easy task for young Solomon. Despite his father David's blessings, Solomon still had to wrestle the reins of power from his older brother, Adonijah. Then young Solomon had to prove to a king-

dom who adored David that despite his inexperience and youth, he was God's man for the job.

At the same time, he had to prove himself to the various monarchs of the countries surrounding Israel. They had to know that he could protect his nation and navigate through the mine field of political intrigue and international commerce that marked the political

climate of his age.

To accomplish these overwhelming tasks, Solomon would have to discern his allies from his enemies. He knew that he could not do this alone. Wisely, he turned to God and requested wisdom beyond his own abilities. In response to Solomon's humble request, God blessed him with great wealth and wisdom that is still spoken of today.

As Your Students Arrive

On a sheet of newsprint or a board, write the words *knowledge*, *discernment*, and *wisdom*. As your adults arrive, pass out blank pieces of paper (half-sheets are fine) and give this instruction: "List ways that people might attain these three attributes." As the class is about to start, ask your adults to contribute answers from their lists. You may wish to ask students with particularly interesting answers to explain their insights. (For example, a student who writes try/fail/try again under the column for "wisdom" may have personal experiences that will enlighten the entire class.)

Link to Last Week

Talk with a few of your adults about whether they had the opportunity this past week to reach out in new ways to those who have special needs. If you have a person your entire class has been reaching out to, talk about how that is going so far.

Step 1

Life Connection

Discuss how discernment is essential for leaders



In this step we will begin to focus the attention of the class on the different standards that are used to "qualify" for positions of leadership. You may have just gone through national elections, and this topic could be fresh in your students' minds.

However, it is important to not let the class get too side-tracked from the lesson into the current political situation.

Instruct the class to silently read the anecdote on page 5. Divide the class into small groups and let them talk over **Discussion Points 1, 2, and 3**. After several minutes of discussion, ask for a sampling of answers to the questions to be shared with the entire class. They may say that those with low morals for themselves cannot effectively lead others because they have no base of character to draw upon. They may base decisions on what looks right at this moment without considering long-term consequences.

A leader who asks God for discernment puts the welfare of others ahead of his own, as Solomon did in the Scripture passage we'll be studying this week.

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L E S S O N 1

For September 4 • Page 5

Making the Right Choices

As an election day approaches, most politicians devote themselves to convincing voters of their worthwhile goals, their experience, and their power to get things done. Television advertisements focus on their physical appeal and professional bearing. Speeches are typically chock-full of crowd-pleasing promises.

This strategy makes perfect sense. After all, this is how people get elected.

Or is it?

According to this week's Scripture passage, there was a time when leaders were chosen based on a very different set of criteria. Morality was more important than message. Discernment carried more weight than demographics. People, like God, understood that the spiritual health of a person's inner being was far more significant than outward symbols of power or wealth.

There is little chance that our political process will change to reflect such values. But, thankfully, we do not have to enter politics to live as moral leaders in the world. Each of us has the power to seek a discerning heart that chooses to follow God in wisdom and truth.

And where we lead, others will surely follow.

Think about and discuss the following questions:

1. How does personal morality affect a person's ability to lead others?
2. Discernment plays an important role in a leader's life. Identify several ways that it might be used to lead a nation.
3. Name the most "discerning" leaders that you have known, or known of, in your lifetime and describe how they exemplified discernment.

Lesson Focus: A discerning heart is better than power or riches.

Step 2

Bible Exploration



Understand how Solomon received discernment from God

Getting the right foundation in place at the beginning of a person's term of leadership is a key to a successful life of service. Help the class see the discernment that Solomon already must have had in place to be willing to ask for that gift in the first place.

Put up the teaching-aid poster, "Solomon in All His Glory,"

and give copies of the handout sheet to your students. You'll be using the poster this week and next. Read together the story of Solomon's reign that is on the poster and the sheet. (You'll discuss the sad end of

Solomon's kingdom in more detail next week.) On the map, locate Gibeon, just north of Jerusalem. Here Solomon received his gift of wisdom from the Lord. Also, note the painting of the Queen of Sheba, who later visited Solomon to see if he was as wise as she had heard (1 Kings 10:1-13).

David's Directive to Solomon

Read 1 Kings 2:1-4 and highlight these important points:

- As David was dying, he told his son Solomon, his successor, to be faithful to the Lord and obey His commands and laws.
- David promised that if Solomon was faithful, as his father had been, he would prosper, and God would keep His promise to have David's descendants remain on Israel's throne.

BIBLE COMMENTARY

King David's Sons

The Bible mentions 19 of King David's sons by name. Only four of them receive more than passing mention—Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon. Amnon, David's spoiled firstborn, raped his half-sister Tamar. Though angry over the rape, King David did nothing to punish Amnon. All that is known about David's second son is his name, Daniel. David's third son, Absalom, murdered his elder half-brother,



Adult Creative Teaching Aids



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Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 6

David's Directive to Solomon

1 Kings 2:1-4, KJV

1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

1 Kings 2:1-4, NIV

¹When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.

²"I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, ³and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, ⁴and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'"

Many years had passed since King David's sin with Bathsheba and his war against his son, Absalom (2 Sam. 14—18). Now much older and very weary, David was ready to pass on the reins of power to one of his sons. The question for the kingdom was which son would inherit the throne of Israel. Out of David's numerous sons, two were mentioned as being the most powerful claimants to the throne. The first was Adonijah, the son of Haggith. He was the fourth born of David's sons and the oldest surviving son of David. The second claimant was Adonijah's younger half-brother, Solomon, son of Bathsheba. Both young men had powerful allies in the royal court.

However, both God and King David wanted Solomon to become the next king of Israel. First Kings 1 tells how Solomon thwarted Adonijah's early attempt to usurp the throne against

Amnon, in retaliation for raping Tamar, Absalom's full sister. Years later, Absalom led Israel into a civil war as he attempted to usurp the throne from his father. Despite David's orders not to harm Absalom, Joab murdered him during a battle.

With David old and dying, his fourth son, Adonijah, appointed himself king. David immediately overturned Adonijah's claim and selected the younger Solomon as his actual successor. Adonijah then attempted to usurp the throne from Solomon by devious political means. Solomon then had Adonijah executed for his treachery.

Though the youngest of David and Bathsheba's five sons, Solomon inherited the throne of Israel from his father. Other than the names of 14 other sons, nothing else is known about David's other offspring. However, we have no reason to doubt David's generous attitude and treatment toward each of them.

Now answer **Questions 4 and 5.**

4. What primary instruction did David give to Solomon on his deathbed?

(Suggested Answer) David directed Solomon to show his loyalty to the Lord by fully following His commandments. David's willingly confronted his son and declared what Solomon must do to prosper. David left no room for miscommunication.

5. What did David promise Solomon in response to his obedience?

(Suggested Answer) If Solomon followed the Lord's commandments, David promised him success in all his endeavors. He also said the Lord would keep His promise to have one of David's descendants always on the throne of Israel.

Solomon's Sacrifice to God

Read 1 Kings 3:3-4 and point out these emphases:

- Solomon followed his father's advice and obeyed the Lord's commands.

- Solomon worshiped the Lord with offerings at the high place at Gibeon (since there as yet was no temple for making sacrifices).

The "high places" (1 Kings 3:3) had been used since the time of the Canaanites, and many Israelites had worshiped foreign gods there.

q BIBLE COMMENTARY

The High Places

Many Israelite villages took up the Canaanite practice of designating a sacred

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Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 7

David's wishes and became king of the mighty nation his father had built. Hearing of Solomon's success, David called his favorite son to hear his deathbed directives. David's primary directive to Solomon was to show his loyalty to the Lord by following His commandments. If he did, David assured Solomon that the Lord would make him prosper. Though unspoken, David implied that if Solomon and his descendants failed to follow the Lord's commandments, they would fail instead of prosper.

David ended his directives to Solomon with suggestions on how to deal with David's living enemies before they became a problem for Solomon as well.

4. What primary instruction did David give to Solomon on his deathbed?

5. What did David promise Solomon in response to his obedience?

Solomon's Sacrifice to God

1 Kings 3:3-4, KJV

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

1 Kings 3:3-4, NIV

³Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

⁴The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

By the end of his fourth year as king of Israel, Solomon had severely dealt with any internal threats to his throne. He had also begun dealing with any external threats to his kingdom by making a marriage alliance with the pharaoh of Egypt (3:1).

To show his gratitude to God for the stability his kingdom now enjoyed, Solomon traveled to the high place near Gibeon and offered a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord there. Though the biblical writer clearly explained that performing an offering on

worship area, called the “high place.” These areas were often located on hills that were once sites to worship Baal. A stone sacrificial altar was usually at the center of the hilltop worship sites. Many also had large stone incense altars. Despite prohibitions against using once-pagan worship sites to worship the Lord, the practice was quite common in Israel before Solomon built the temple.

After you have read the Scripture and commentary, answer **Question 6**.

6. Solomon made sacrifices on the “high places” (1 Kings 3:3) of Gibeon, but did not come under God’s severe judgments. Why?

(Suggested answer) In this passage it seems that God’s requirements were turned more toward the heart and motives rather than the law, as He seemingly “allowed” Solomon’s sacrifices on the “high places” to be made without condemnation or judgment. Since the temple had not been built, a better place for sacrifices apparently did not exist.

Solomon’s Request of God

Read 1 Kings 3:5-10 and emphasize these key points:

- While Solomon was at Gibeon, he had a dream in which God offered to give him anything he wanted.
- Rather than ask for wealth or power, Solomon thanked God for favoring him as he had his father David.
- Solomon then asked God for the wisdom to rule Israel, a request that pleased the Lord.

q BIBLE COMMENTARY

Solomon’s Dream

Young King Solomon, who demonstrated his love for God through the many sacrifices he made at Gibeon, further demonstrated his love for God in even more personal ways as he talked to

God in his dream.

- He acknowledged God’s faithfulness to his father, David, and now to him.
- He showed humility regarding this great position that God had set him in.
- He had the wisdom to know the limitations of his natural leadership abilities.

q BIBLE COMMENTARY

Solomon’s Wisdom and King Hezekiah

Solomon’s reputation for wisdom was renowned in the ancient world. A doubting Queen of Sheba traveled from southwest

Comprehensive Bible Study Student Book Reduction

Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 8

such high places went against God’s commandments, He seemed to make allowances for it, since the temple had not yet been built (vs. 2). Though the location used to make the offerings was once used for pagan sacrifices, Solomon’s intention was to thank and glorify the one, true God. The biblical writer makes a careful link between “love for the LORD” and “walking according to the statutes” (vs. 3, NIV). Obedience is very important to God. As Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23).

6. Solomon made sacrifices on the “high places” (1 Kings 3:3) of Gibeon, but did not come under God’s severe judgments. Why?

Solomon’s Request of God

1 Kings 3:5-10, KJV

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

1 Kings 3:5-10, NIV

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

⁶Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

⁷“Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or

Arabia to see if his reputation was warranted and returned home convinced it was. According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon spoke some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. He is also credited with scientific studies of various animals, fish, and trees. Many scholars believe that a large number of the proverbs in the Book of Proverbs were a part of Solomon's 3,000 wise sayings. Solomon probably also wrote the books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.

Much of Solomon's writings, especially his proverbs, might have been lost forever if not for King Hezekiah. Solomon's wise sayings were selected, compiled, and organized by a committee of scholars, appointed by King Hezekiah (about 715–686 B.C.) for the purpose of reforming Israel (Prov. 25:1). Apparently, this compilation of Solomon's wisdom was organized at the same time as the restoration of King David's psalms (2 Chron. 29:30). Imagine what would be missing from the Scriptures if not for King Hezekiah's diligence and desire to serve God.

Now, answer **Questions 7 and 8.**

7. What did Solomon request from the Lord? Why?

(Suggested Answer) Solomon requested a discerning spirit so he could fairly rule his kingdom. He realized that the wisdom needed to rule a nation successfully and fairly was beyond his ability, especially since he was young and had little experience at the job.

8. What did God promise Solomon in response to his request?

(Suggested Answer) God granted him the wisdom and discerning heart he requested. God also promised to bless Solomon with a long life, great wealth, and security from his enemies.

q WINDOW ON THE WORD
More Valuable than Great Wealth

There really is no substitute for the God-supplied discernment and wisdom that comes from a lifetime of experience.

Two men prepared to meet one another in a heated business transaction—a young man with money came and engaged an older man with experience. Their encounter was feisty and confrontational. When the dust settled and they both departed, the man with the experience had the money and the man with the money had the experience.

Remember: the wise discernment that comes to a man or woman throughout his or her lifetime

Comprehensive Bible Study Student Book Reduction

Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 9

KJV

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

NIV

number.⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

God rewarded Solomon's obedience by speaking with him through a dream. In the dream, God offered to give Solomon anything he requested. The typical wish of Solomon's contemporaries would have included a long life, great riches, or the destruction of enemies. Instead of asking for these, Solomon requested a discerning heart so he could properly govern his kingdom. In making this remarkable request, the young Solomon, probably about 20–24 years old, acknowledged that properly ruling a nation called for more experience and knowledge than he could claim. Perhaps Solomon's first four years in power had taught him how complicated running a kingdom could be.

The Lord's response to Solomon's humble request was to promise him the wisest and most discerning heart of all time. He also promised Solomon the long life, great wealth, and security from his enemies that the king had not requested. All Solomon had to do to insure receiving these blessings was to wholly follow the Lord.



7. What did Solomon request from the Lord? Why?

8. What did God promise Solomon in response to his request?

The ruins of a "high place" in northern Israel, perhaps similar to the one at Gibeon where Solomon offered sacrifices to the Lord (1 Kings 3:3–4). Photo: Publisher-owned image from the Lorraine O. Schultz Collection.

Step 3

Bible Interaction



Discover the true meaning of discernment

If you wish, make copies of this page and cut out the boxes, giving the instructions to the groups. #

• Role-Play

Divide into groups of three. Take turns having one person be a defendant with two others playing the part of judges. The defendant thinks up a scenario that may either be true or false, and takes a moment or two to tell the judges the charge. (Example: “When I was a teenager, I was accused of cheating on a history exam.”) The judges then may each ask the defendant two questions that are not directly related to the charge against the defendant (defendants can answer truthfully or untruthfully, or they may require the judge to ask less direct questions). The defendant tries to “trick” the judges, while the judges try their best to discern the truthfulness of the exchange. Rotate the roles until each person has played the defendant’s role. #

• Discernment

The word “discernment” may be thought of as “the ability to determine the fruit or outcome of a matter when it is still in its seed form.” It is the gift of being able to see the “fruit” while it is still in the “seed.” Ask for volunteers to discuss how their life might have been different (better or worse) if they had had “discernment” to see the fruit of a certain circumstance while it was still in its seed form.

• Discussion Group

Read “Seeing the Flower in the Seed” on page 10 and answer **Questions 9, 10, and 11**. A “discerning” cardiologist could see diseases before they fully developed, a personnel director could see the potential in prospective employees, and a marriage counselor could see ways to help struggling marriages. #

Comprehensive Bible Study Student Book Reduction

Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 10

Seeing the Flower in the Seed

Discernment is as necessary today as it was in Solomon’s time. Solomon understood that it was the ability to separate right from wrong (1 Kings 3:9). He knew that he would come up against many circumstances in ruling the nation of Israel that would not be as they appeared—it was discernment that Solomon would rely upon to judge between the apparent and underlying realities.

The prophet Samuel had a hard time “discerning” which of Jesse’s sons should replace Saul as king of Israel. God told him that his discernment was lacking because “man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7b, NIV). In other words, Samuel was having trouble seeing past the apparent truths or outward circumstances and discovering the genuine reality.

We mustn’t think of discernment as something mystical or inaccessible as we think about developing this trait. And younger adults should not think of wisdom and discernment as something that only comes with advancing age. At any age, we need discernment to get beneath the surface or get past the deceitfulness of others.

We ask God for discernment for ourselves to help us see things that are not immediately apparent. It is like the ability to already see a patch of wildflowers in a packet of seeds, or see a giant oak tree in a tiny acorn. Solomon received this ability simply by asking God, and we are exhorted to ask Him for the same gift (Jas. 1:5).

9. Describe ways that discernment might be of help to a

- cardiologist
- personnel director
- marriage counselor

10. If you can, describe an instance that your own “discernment” revealed truths that were beneath the surface.

11. Identify some ways that discernment might save a person from future trouble or sorrow.

Step 4

Life Application



Ask God for personal discernment in everyday situations

This lesson has sought to bring your adults to an awareness of three important truths: (1) what discernment truly is, (2) how we might receive it, and (3) how valuable discernment is—it is greater than riches or power. It's time now to give them ideas of how to apply discernment in their lives.

Have your students read "Having Discernment in Your Life" on page 11 in *Comprehensive Bible Study* and ask your adults to think about these questions: From what you now know about discernment, how can you have more of it in your life? In what ways have you possibly overlooked its working in your life in the past? Encourage them to pray for more discernment in all areas of their lives and to ask God to give them wisdom about a problem they are currently dealing with. An example of a problem might be a mother who worries about her teenager. She commits to pray for discernment as she tries to decide how to respond to her child's request to go out with a group of other teenagers on a Friday night.

End the class session with a final prayer. As you pray, ask God to give you and your adults the discernment you need to separate right from wrong and make wise decisions in your life. Thank God for the discernment He has already given you in past situations when you were able to see beyond appearances and make wise choices that honored Him.

As class members are leaving, be sure to pass out this week's edition of *Power for Living*.



PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Read in 1 Kings 11 about Solomon's disobedience to the Lord and its results. Also, ask your adults if they think that compromise is a good or bad thing, and why.

Comprehensive Bible Study Student Book Reduction

Lesson 1 for September 4 • Page 11

Having Discernment in Your Life

Discernment for Solomon meant the ability to be successful in managing the development of a nation. For Christians today, the gift and ability to discern is important for managing the development of our personal life and family. Don't expect that this gift or ability will appear "full-grown" within you the moment you begin to receive it. It will come to you in seed form and will continue to mature throughout your entire lifetime. What's important is that it gets planted within, and that you continually water it by obedience and devotion to the Lord.

► *Ask the Lord for more discernment in your life, as Solomon did. Also, write down a problem area in your life where you need more discernment.*

KEY VERSE

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? —1 Kings 3:9, KJV

So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? —1 Kings 3:9, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

September 5 through September 11

Mon. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18—Compromise Can Weaken Our Faith.

Tues. Psalm 1—Do Not Follow Those Who Have No Use for God.

Wed. 1 Kings 11:1-8—Solomon's Heart Turns Away from God.

Thurs. 1 Kings 11:9-13—Solomon's Actions Anger God.

Fri. 1 Kings 11:14-25—God Raises Up Enemies.

Sat. 1 Kings 11:26-33—The Prophet Ahijah Speaks to Jeroboam.

Sun. 1 Kings 11:34-43—God Makes a Promise to Jeroboam.