

CrossWise Living | *Bible Study Series*

The Life and Writings of
Solomon

Dr. Gail Bones

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Dedication

In memory of my father, Melvin C. Nelson (1927-2021), whose impressive breadth of knowledge was due to a lifelong habit of reading. He taught me to always have a book within arm's reach. He was also like Solomon in that he was a man of many proverbs, the chief of which was,

*"The most important thing a man can do for his children
is love their mother."*

And that he did until the day death parted them.

Special thanks to:

- Caleb Weeks and Nali Hilderman for all they do to help me to publish these Bible studies.
- My husband Jeff, whose servant's heart continues to bless and inspire me.

The Life & Writings of Solomon

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About the Author

Gail Nelson Bones, Ed.D., is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over 40 years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the award-winning author of *Living CrossWise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition* (2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for 40 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader at her home church, a worship leader, and doting grandmother.



About the Study

This study in the CrossWise Living Bible study series on the Life and Writings of Solomon will examine in detail the historical account of his life found in the Old Testament books of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. In addition, we will study the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon (Song of Songs), along with all of the Proverbs attributed to Solomon. In support of building the habit of spending time with the Lord daily, the homework is divided into 5 lessons to be done on successive days rather than all at once. However, as you do your best to be diligent, at the same time give yourself grace. Don't be discouraged from attending your meeting if you haven't answered every question. If you are doing this study with a group, enjoy the blessing of having accountability partners you will look forward to meeting with once a week. And as you sit down with your lesson each day, don't forget to ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to speak to you personally.

After you have read the passage and answered on your own, you may use the notes on your study Bible to supplement your understanding. Be very careful about information you may find online, however. Stick with reliable sources such as biblehub.com or blueletterbible.org for commentaries containing sound doctrine. Make sure you have a good Bible map or atlas because we'll refer to it often.

While you will be meeting with your group primarily to study the Bible together, an important part of your fellowship will be supporting one another in prayer. You'll find a section to record prayer requests at the back of the book. Since time is likely to be limited for this kind of sharing, try to plan ahead as to how you would like your group to pray for you that week—keep your requests succinct so you can devote the last 10-15 minutes of your time to prayer requests. Remember to record your own prayer request on your list so you can recall and record praise for answered prayer.

Here is my blessing for you as you embark on this exciting journey into God's Word. This is one of my favorite passages in Scripture:

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name."

Malachi 3:16

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INTRODUCTION

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”

PROVERBS 4:7

INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Note for group leaders: Thank you for being willing to take on the challenge and blessing of leading a group of students in an in-depth study of God's Word! This introductory lesson can be used in one of two ways. It contains important background information and may be done either before or during your first meeting. If you will be distributing the books at your first meeting, you can do these questions together. If your group members will have their books prior to the first meeting, you can have them do this lesson in advance and then discuss it as a group. This will give you time for some get-acquainted questions, exchange of emails or phone numbers, and prayer requests.

THE LIFE & WRITINGS OF SOLOMON

Welcome! In our study of the Life of Solomon, we will be exploring several different biblical genres and it is vital to remember which is which as we are reading. Solomon's life story is told in the **history** books in the Bible, 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. His other writings: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon (Song of Songs in some translations) are from the portion of Scripture known as the **poetry or wisdom** books. Wisdom is the quality for which Solomon is most often noted and so that will be a repeated focus of our study.

1. What is your definition of wisdom?
2. Do a Google search for quotes about wisdom and record a few that you find helpful below.
3. Turn to the concordance at the back of your Bible. Approximately how many references do you find to the word wisdom? Choose one or two to look up and record.
4. What does 2 Timothy 3:14-17 teach us about wisdom?
5. Who is the wisest person you know? How did they obtain their wisdom? Can you think of an example of any of their "words of wisdom" that you have taken to heart?

THE BIBLICAL RECORD OF KING SOLOMON

The history of the reign of Israel's third king, Solomon, is told in the books of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The account in 1 and 2 Kings, which was initially one volume, reveals both the strengths as well as the sins and weaknesses of Israel's rulers. Written by an unknown author, Kings is a retrospective analysis of Israel's history, "written to explain to a people in exile that the reason for their condition of humiliation was their stubborn persistence in breaking the covenant" (NIV Study Bible, p. 467).

In contrast, Chronicles was written about 500 years later by a priestly recorder identified by Jewish tradition as Ezra. He, along with Zerubbabel, and later Nehemiah, was instrumental in leading the exiles back to rebuild Jerusalem's temple and to point them to back to the Word of God. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were addressed to the restored community after their return from Babylon. The author's divinely inspired purpose was to remind the nation of its godly history and heritage. In order to encourage and unite the restored nation, both David and Solomon are idealized in this history, and the failures and struggles we find recorded in the book of 1 Kings are not found here. We will follow the parallel accounts of Solomon's reign in these two books in our study of his life.

Solomon succeeded his father David as King of Israel when he was about 20 years old and reigned from 970-931 B.C. David was a man of war whose writings in Scripture focused on the emotions. In Psalms we see the inner life of the man God described in 1 Samuel 13 as "a man after my own heart." In contrast, Solomon was a king who enjoyed a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity in Israel. His writings are also poetic, but perhaps more philosophical or intellectual than David's, and by the end of his life he'd tragically concluded that life was meaningless.

Over the coming weeks we will also examine Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, each of which represents different periods in Solomon's life. When God said he'd give him anything he wanted, Solomon famously asked not for wealth or fame, but for wisdom to lead his people. The book of Proverbs contains a record of the great wisdom God gave to Solomon. Sadly, Solomon's great wealth and wisdom did not prevent his falling away from God and into idolatry. David, through military conquest and strong leadership had passed on to his son a nation united, prosperous and at peace. Solomon's strategy was more diplomatic, and we see the first seeds of his downfall when he married an Egyptian princess in order to forge an alliance with that nation. By the end of Solomon's reign, the kingdom had fallen apart, and the golden age of Israel was over.

NOTES ON THE FIRST AND SECOND TEMPLES

The First Temple

Solomon's greatest accomplishment was the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. He built this marvelous edifice to replace the tabernacle, or tent, which had housed the Ark of the Covenant for centuries. For 440 years, the Israelites worshipped God at the tabernacle, first constructed by Moses during their time in the wilderness (see Exodus 25-31).

After King David conquered Jerusalem, making it the capital city, he moved the Ark of the Covenant there to create a centralized place for worship. As we will see in today's reading, although David desired to build a permanent, glorious dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant, God told him no. Instead, David received detailed plans for the Temple from God—but the assignment was given to his son Solomon.

Solomon's temple, the "First Temple," was built by forced labor, took 7 years to complete, and stood for approximately 400 years, from 957 until it was destroyed during the Babylonian Conquest in about 586 B.C. The land on which it was situated had been obtained when God commanded David to purchase and build an altar for sacrifice on the threshing floor belonging to Araunah. This location on Mount Moriah was the site of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac centuries before. It is also the approximate location of Jesus' crucifixion.

The magnificent structure was 180 feet long, 90 feet wide and 50 feet high. At its highest point, it was 207 feet, or 20 stories. The innermost room was the Holy of Holies which housed the Ark of the Covenant, a gold box containing the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's budding rod. The Ark disappeared when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and there are many tales today concerning its continued existence and location.

For example, “through the centuries, Ethiopian Christians have claimed that the ark rests in a chapel in the small town of Aksum, in their country’s northern highlands. It arrived nearly 3,000 years ago, they say, and has been guarded by a succession of virgin monks who, once anointed, are forbidden to set foot outside the chapel grounds until they die.” (smithsonianmag.com/travel/keepers-of-the-lost-ark-179998820)

The Second Temple

After 70 years of Babylonian captivity had passed, the Jews were released by their conquerors to return to their homeland. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the rebuilding of the temple (521-515 B.C.) and, later, the wall around Jerusalem. It is significant that the older people who had seen Solomon’s temple wept when they saw the second temple—perhaps in part because it fell short of the glory of the former. Later, the evil Greek King Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig to Zeus on the altar. This started the Wars of the Maccabees. After Israel’s victory, the Temple was restored and rededicated at the Feast of Lights in about 164 B.C. Today, this is still commemorated by Jews worldwide as the holiday Hannukah.

Four centuries later, during the time of Roman rule, Herod the Great spent 46 years rebuilding the Temple. It was an engineering marvel, with stones as large as 40 tons fitted together so tightly without mortar that not even a piece of paper could pass between the stones. Elevated on a hill, made of shining white marble and gold, with bronze entrance doors, it could be seen from many miles away. Herod increased the size of the temple, creating a temple complex covering over 35 acres, employing 10,000 workers to do so.

During the three annual feasts, the population of Jerusalem swelled from 150,000 to a million. In response, Herod built a plaza around the Temple that could accommodate this massive crowd. He essentially built a box around Mount Moriah the size of 6 football fields and filled it in. One of these retaining walls has survived and is now called the *Kotel*, or Western Wall, the holiest location to the Jews in Israel. Today, this plaza is called the Temple Mount and on it stands the Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque (see virtualjewishlibrary.org).

OPTIONAL “GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER” QUESTIONS FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

1. What is a wise saying you remember your parents or grandparents repeating to you when you were a child? Based on your adult knowledge of biblical truth, was it really wisdom?
2. If God would give you the ministry assignment of your dreams, what would it be?
3. David’s legacy to his son Solomon was a united, peaceful Israel. What has been your parents’ legacy to you?
4. Describe the most impressive building you have ever seen.
5. Use three words to describe your current relationship with God.

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The Life & Writings of Solomon

LESSON 1

“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”

1 CHRONICLES 28:9

REFLECTION

1. What is the most important point you wish to remember from last week's study and discussion? Did you have a chance to apply it?
2. Where have you been most aware of God's presence or work in your life this week? Do you have any answers to prayer to share?

DAY ONE

Read 1 Kings 1:1-27

1. Describe King David's condition at age 70 as the book of 1 Kings opens.
2. Which of David's sons set himself up as king? What did he have in common with his brother Absalom?
3. Which of the men in David's inner circle joined the usurper? Which did not?
4. What role has Nathan previously played in the life of David? What is his connection with Bathsheba? See 2 Samuel 12:1-7 and 24-25.
5. How did Nathan show wisdom in the way he handled Adonijah's rebellion?
6. Nathan had known Solomon since he was a baby and likely loved him like a son. What name for Solomon did Nathan receive from the Lord?
 - a. Are there young people other than your own children with whom you have a close relationship? Do your children have a godmother or godfather?
 - b. Do you have any older people not related to you who have played an important role in your life?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Kings 1:28-53

1. How did David respond to Nathan and Bathsheba? At what other time in his life did David respond decisively when confronted by Nathan?
 - a. Is there someone in your life you can trust to confront you when you are moving away from God's will and purpose for you? Can you think of a time in your own life when you were grateful you were brought to repentance and restoration by the words of a friend?
 - b. Are you faithful to speak the truth in love to your friends and loved ones? Can you think of a time you were glad you did?
2. Who were the Kerethites and Pelethites? Why is it significant that they had an important role in establishing Solomon's kingdom?
3. David chose some of his faithful men to place Solomon in power. What were their names and roles?
4. What did Adonijah do upon hearing the news that David had placed Solomon on the throne? How did Solomon respond? What does this tell us about Solomon's character?
5. Note that neither David nor his son Solomon attained the throne—God's chosen place of service for them—without opposition. What insight does this give us about the path we may have to follow to get to our place of service for God? Do you have any personal testimony in this regard?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Kings 2

1. Make a list of each piece of advice King David gave to his son Solomon as he was about to die. From your prior knowledge of David, comment on why he made each point.
2. What were the promised results if Solomon were to observe what the Lord required?
3. What word had God given to David concerning Solomon in 2 Samuel 7:11-16?
4. Sadly, Solomon and his descendants did not keep their covenant obligations and the result was civil war and eventually the Babylonian captivity. Did God abandon his people at that point? See Amos 9:11-15 and Acts 15: 13-18.
5. How did God fulfill his promise to David from 2 Samuel 7:16? See Romans 1:3-5.

DAY FOUR

Review 1 Kings 2

1. From 1 Kings 2:4, why did David care about what happened to future generations?
 - a. Is there a difference between believers and unbelievers in the nature of their concern for the generations to come? Why?
 - b. As we see America becoming a “post-Christian” nation, what effect will this have on our society?
2. As David advises Solomon on certain old enemies that needed to be dealt with, what attribute of Solomon’s did he refer to several times? See 1 Kings 2:5-12.
3. Which enemies did David tell his son to deal with and why? How did Solomon administer justice wisely to each of these men?
4. What was the first challenge to Solomon’s throne? What qualities did he display in his handling of the matter?
5. What other steps did Solomon take to secure his power?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Chronicles 28.

1. David publicly installed his son Solomon as his successor to the throne. From 1 Chronicles 28:2-7, what did he tell the assembly about his son?
2. Write out some words or phrases that strike you from David's charge to his son in 1 Chronicles 28:8-10 and 20-21.
3. What do we learn about the plans for the temple from 1 Chronicles 28:11-19? What strikes you?
4. David had desired to serve God in a certain way, but God told him he had a different plan. Have you ever had this experience?
5. What does this chapter teach us about God's character?

WEEKLY REVIEW

1. Which of God's attributes were most clear to you this week?
2. What did you observe that made you love him more?
3. Which passages or insights were most meaningful to you this week? Explain.
4. How have you applied what you've discovered this week about God, others, or yourself?

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Choose a verse from this week to memorize, and write it below.

More Studies from Gail Bones:



Featured Study: Living Cross Wise Hope & Help for navigating transition

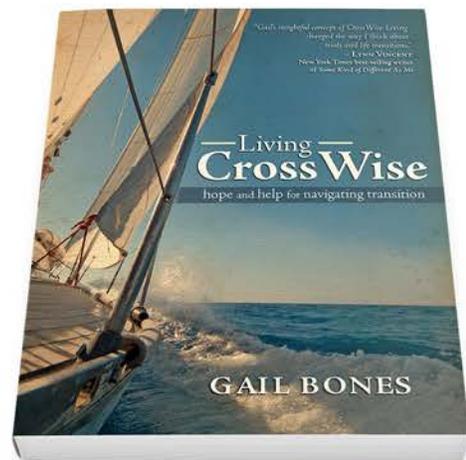
Includes a 12-week companion Bible Study and a Leader's Guide

As relentless as the waves of the sea, times of transition challenge us. How can you find God's power to chart your course and move forward in the face of constant change?

"Gail's insightful concept of Cross Wise Living changed the way I think about trials and difficult life transitions."

— LYNN VINCENT

New York Times best-selling author of *Heaven* is for Real and *Same Kind of Different as Me*



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*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*

Proverbs 9:10

God appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and told him to ask for whatever he wanted. Pleased with his request for a discerning heart so he might govern well and distinguish between right and wrong, God gave him exceedingly deep insight, and understanding beyond measure.

Solomon’s great intellect is fully on display in the Old Testament wisdom books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, but his fall from the heights of anointing by God to the depths of idolatry was cataclysmic. How did the man to whom God gave incomparable wealth, riches and fame, as well as matchless wisdom, come to build his house like a foolish man, not on a rock but on sand?

This 16-week study of the life and writings of Solomon will show us practical ways to live our lives with spiritual insight and discernment. We will also observe the perils of drifting into a life of disobedience that leads to cynicism and unbelief. God lets us choose our path: it is up to us to study God’s Word in order to choose wisely.



Dr. Gail Bones, a former English teacher and professor of education, has been engaging audiences as a speaker, Bible teacher, songwriter and worship leader for more than forty years. She has also written eight other Bible studies in the CrossWise Living series: *The Book of Ruth*, *The Book of Mark*, *Walk: The Letters of John*, *Creative Conversations with God: The Art of Bible Journaling*, *Jesus’ Farewell: Love to the Uttermost*, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, *The Life & Letters of Peter*, *The Life & Psalms of David* and the award-winning *Living CrossWise: Hope & Help for Navigating Transition*.

CHRISTIAN LIVING/SPIRITUAL GROWTH/BIBLE STUDY



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BIBLE STUDY SERIES

