

Project Runway

Designer Clothes For Disciples

Solomon: Part 6

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

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At my first church in Green Valley, Arizona, Pastor Lawson gave me the responsibility for the food and clothes closet. I wasted no time organizing the food on the racks, and then I started going through the bags of donated clothes, putting them on hangers and placing them on rolling rods to make “shopping” easier.

Since we lived in an affluent area, most of the clothes we received were quite nice, well, except for one dress I pulled out of one of those forty gallon black bags. Holding it up, I couldn't believe how many holes covered it from top to bottom. Seems like more than one moth had a field day with this former costly designer dress. After showing the staff the moth-eaten dress, I discarded it and moved on. To this day, I still can't believe someone gave that tattered piece of clothing to the clothes closet. I'm sure they never really looked at it.

Spiritually, this snapshot from my pastoral career has teaching value. How so? Metaphorically, it represents what happens when a sinful moth like compromise eats away at your spiritual garment. At the beginning, you wind up with just one, seemingly insignificant hole; however, if left unchecked, more of these menacing moths descend on your clothes and start eating holes all over the place. If anyone knew the reality of this process it had to be King Solomon.

First, he compromised his spiritual walk, slowly tossing God's model and commands regarding marriage between one man and one woman to the side. Next, he sexually compromised himself by marrying a lady the Mosaic Law forbid, and, then, when that compromise proved advantageous, he hooked up with another woman God said he should have run from. That inappropriate relationship, in turn, led to another, then another and many more. Tragic, isn't it?

The moths of sexual compromise certainly did a number on ol' Solomon, when he should have known better.

Since this is such a dangerous sin, I've got to ask you, "Are the moths of sexual compromise eating away at your spiritual garment?" If so, I pray the Spirit would give you the tools you need to break free so you can put on the beautiful garment of godliness.

Are You Wearing A Coat Called Compromise? (1 Kings 3, 11, 14)

From 1 Kings Chapters 3 and 11 we've learned the following premise is true regarding compromise: It typically starts small and goes large. This is especially true regarding sexual compromise as we see in the life of King Solomon. One deviation from God's perfect prescription for a viable and holy love and marriage relationship morphed into shameful ones. Before we move on, I must ask you one more time: Whether you are single, divorced, never married, or currently married, is there any place in your life where you have purposefully departed from God's design of intimate relationships so you could have what you wanted? Additionally, what logical, biblical, and/or emotional rationalizations are you employing so you can defend and continue in your wayward, really wicked, activity? May the Spirit of God move you to coming clean, as Solomon's father, David, did when his sexual compromise with Bathsheba was brought out into the light by Nathan, God's prophet (2 Samuel 12; Psalm 51).

In our current analysis of these inspired texts from 1 Kings, we encounter two more priceless principles regarding sexual compromise.

Compromise Comes To Full Bloom Later, Not Sooner (1 Kings 11)

We can't miss this concept in the opening verses of this chapter:

³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Turning from God's perfect plan for marriage, viz., one man married to one woman, no matter what the reasons and rationalizations are is always counterproductive, highly complex (imagine trying to keep all those personalities happy and content ... imagine trying to navigate all the changing moods ... imagine trying to be an effective father to all those children), deceptive (if I just have one more relationship ... even though its forbidden ... then perhaps it will finally be the right relationship), and spiritually destructive because it is sin. As we read in verses 9 and 10:

⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

You might be smiling in your sexual sin. God isn't. It angers Him for He is holy.

Regardless of whether Solomon married some of these women for political reasons or for love, none of that mattered to the living God. Solomon had willfully disregarded God's divine

command regarding marriage, opting to literally take a progressive (digressive) walk on the proverbial wild side of life. His bad actions and illogical choices served only to arouse the anger and displeasure of God.

And it all started when he was a young man. He didn't guard his intimate walk with God, choosing to wed his theology and biblical training and knowledge to the false worship systems offered at his day and time by surrounding countries. Yes, Solomon's unchecked and unbridled sexual compromise started out small, but as we see in verse 4, when he was old his sin had corroded his entire life. No longer did he have vibrant love of God. No longer did he hold tenaciously to the Word of God. No longer did he fear the holiness of God ... like he used to (Proverbs 1). No longer did his conscience bother him. Now he participated in and permitted a vile spirituality which found its basis in the doctrines of demons. Read on and you'll see what I mean:

⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. ⁸ Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

I'm sure ol' Solomon never thought his sexual compromise would take him here, but such is the way of this type of sin: You never think it will take you into a deep, dark bottomless pit of outright wickedness. You always think you can control it and enjoy it as you go along. Such is never the case.

In his old age, look at what the King winked at and supported. He had no problem with worshipping at the throne of the goddess Ashtoreth and in encouraging others to join him. Originally, Ashtoreth was known as the Babylonian goddess Venus and Ishtar, the androgynous goddess of erotic love. To facilitate the worship experience, men and women engaged in sexual acts with temple prostitutes in any combination imaginable. Her name changed to Ashtoreth when Semitic people brought her to Canaan and she became the consort or queen (one of three wives, actually, Astarte, Asherah, and Baaltis ... can you say polygamy and incest?) and sister of El, the chief of the Canaanite pantheon, but her worship remained very close to that experienced and practiced in Babylon. Her most famous name, Qudsu, or "the holiness," I'm sure, aroused the jealousy of Yahweh, the true God.¹ Such is the end of the line when sexual perversion masquerades as spiritual worship. We have certainly and tragically slipped far down this slippery slope as a nation; however, we are nowhere near the depth of darkness as in the time of Solomon.

Shocking, isn't it? Such is the nature of sexual compromise. It always takes you to places you never dreamed you'd go. And to think that Solomon embraced her worship in Israel all while he worshipped the living, holy God. Who says sin doesn't blind? Who says sin doesn't sear the conscience, making it difficult to see the difference between moral light and darkness? Who says sin, especially of a sexual nature, doesn't lead you to doing provocative, unimaginable things? Consider Solomon.

The compromised King didn't just permit the perversion of Ashtoreth, he personally built a temple on the Mount of Olives to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites directly across the small

¹ William Foxwell Albright, *Yahweh And The Gods of Canaan* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1968): 121.

and narrow valley from the magnificent Temple of Yahweh, the living God. Mesha, the king of Moab from the ninth century B.C. left us a stele, or a stone slab, upon which he inscribed at one juncture that Chemosh was directly related to Athtar, or Ashtoreth. Ostensibly, this means Solomon's sexual sin had become so degenerated in his old age he actually gave leadership to erecting this worship facility in God's face. He also went one step further and erected another one to Molech, the god of the Ammonites, neighbors of the Moabites. Sexual deviancy was not only associated with these worship sites, but so, too was child sacrifice, and it was done all for the sake of sacred worship. Disgusting, isn't it? What started out as a small sexual compromise in his youth became jaw-dropping, heart-stopping, and mind-numbing sexual activity in his old age.

I give you all this sordid ancient detail to impress upon you the nature of sexual compromise. It promises you enjoyment and love when you want it and who you want it with; however, if left unchecked it will, over time, corrode your moral and spiritual life completely, leading you into sinful activity you never dreamed you would not just entertain but actively support. We all know the drill. One promiscuous relationship in your teens, easily morphs into a third, and fourth and so on. One wicked web site becomes a whole host of seemingly magnetic websites. One chat room with carnal chatter becomes a whole array of chat rooms with distorted folks. One forbidden relationship becomes a string of forbidden relationships. And as you age and fail to allow Christ to give you victory in areas like these, these sins take your hand and usher you into unfathomable darkness.

Someone correctly said years ago, "The follies of youth become the vices of manhood and the disgrace of old age."² How true. I would modify this quote, however, to say ... "The follies of youth *may* become the vices of manhood and the disgrace of old age." That little word, *may*, leaves room for the grace and forgiveness of the Lord for even the most vile sinner. One of my California friends, a police officer, loved Christ, loved his wife, and loved his children; however, he also loved viewing things he should have never laid his eyes on. He delved into this forbidden material as a young man, but later as a married man it sucked the life out of his spiritual walk and marriage for years. I'll never forget the day he found freedom. He said when he got to the bottom of that pit, when he felt he'd never be free is when he just sat on the bed in his master bedroom and started crying uncontrollably. While sitting there in utter brokenness, he came clean from his sin, sought the forgiveness of Christ, and lived to see the darkness removed from his life.

I hope you are listening, you who are toying with sexual compromise now in your younger years. What seems simple now will become highly complex later. What seems like it's not that big of deal now is a big deal to God and will become a really big deal as you age and fail to lay this at the feet of the cross of Christ.

Why? Why will your sexual compromise at a small level become compromise at larger levels? Again, consider the forces at play in Solomon's life.

One word can't be missed: *pressure*. Driving up to Lake Tahoe, California once, I noticed massive sections of solid rock workers cut away years ago to expand the highway lanes. These massive, towering sections of granite are simply cut in half from top to bottom. How did this happen? If you are paying attention you'll notice vertical lines every so many feet. What are they? They are from the pneumatic drills which sunk shafts slowly at key junctures. Giving enough time and pressure, therefore, the outcome was predictable: A massive fracture.

It was the same with King Solomon's life. Think of wife #1 at shaft number one on the rock surface of his spirituality. The only problem was he had 700 wives and 300 concubines,

² The New Encyclopedia Of Christian Quotations (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995): 946.

creating 1,000 shafts in his life. Day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year they pounded away at him unmercifully. “Honey, if you loved me you’d build an altar to my parents god.” “Honey, I just want our children to have a place close to our home where they can be impacted by the gods I was reared on.” Thump, thump, thump ... they kept on drilling him until eventually he was not just funding the pagan altars; he worshipped right along with his wives (1 Kings 11:5). And it all occurred in a flagrant fashion when he was old, let’s say 50 or 60 perhaps. At twenty, it didn’t seem like any big deal, just a couple of episodes of youthful indiscretion. Don’t be deceived. All that thumping will catch up to you.

Why? Well, the older you get the more emotionally and spiritually fatigued you can become if you are not careful. The compromises of your youth, which weren’t too hard to handle, have continued to pound on your spiritual life, and others have been added as well due to your lack of attention and toleration.

- You husband isn’t as romantic as he used to be when you were younger.
- Your wife spends more time focusing on the children than she does on you.
- Your life isn’t as exciting as it was in college, so you set out to spice things up a bit.
- You find that flirting is fun, even though you’re married.

Can you hear the thumping of the pneumatic drill? Trust me on this one: If you fail to ask God to remove them from your life, to give you victory, they will relentlessly pound away until they get results.

Do you hear any thumping in your life? If so, Jesus is waiting to hear from and help you:

²⁹“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11).

“Ah, rest, that is what I need,” you say. “That constant pounding it killing me.” You’re right, and there is hope. Jesus is equipped to deal with the operator of that drill and to help you have some peace for a change. Any takers?

While you are thinking about this powerful second premise, let’s turn to take a hard, honest look at the third one:

Compromise Passes Easily From Parent To Child (1 Kings 3, 11, 14)

You know the adage: Like father, like son. Here’s another you probably know well: As goes the leader, so goes the people. The truth of these sayings was unfortunately played out in Solomon’s family. Put differently, his penchant for compromise became that of his firstborn son, Rehoboam. The book of Chronicles, which is a priestly/spiritual understanding of the period of the king, shows how he followed his father’s imprint:

¹⁸Then Rehoboam took as a wife Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse,¹⁹ and she bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. ²⁰ After her he took Maacah the daughter of Absalom, and she bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom more than all his other

wives and concubines. For he had taken eighteen wives and sixty concubines and fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters (2 Chronicles 11).

See what I mean? You can hear the rationalizations of Rehoboam: “Well if dad had all those ladies, why can’t I?” Makes you stop and ask yourself: What sexual compromising ways am I passing onto my children? More on that in a moment.

According to 1 Kings 9, verse 10, it took twenty years to finish the building of his house and the Lord’s Temple. This means that since Rehoboam was his firstborn, he watched his father’s worship compromise for at least a good twenty years. And what did the crown prince learn from his father’s negative example? Do what you feel is right, not what God wants. Do what comes natural. Live and let live. Don’t worry too much about God’s model of sexuality.

1 Kings 14 catalogues the sad, sordid, sexually twisted reign of Solomon’s son:

“²¹ Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonitess. ²² Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed. ²³ For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. ²⁴ There were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel” (1 Kings 14).

First, his father started out with slightly compromised/improvised worship of the living God. Then, years later he morphed into allowing, even supporting the worship of any and every false god known to the surrounding region. Rehoboam took note and started out where his father had left off; however, he ramped up the false worship to more abhorrent levels. Whereas it is assumed that cult prostitution was observed in Solomon’s day, here it is shocking fact.

Such is the nature of compromise. It starts small and goes large, it comes to full bloom later not sooner, and it easily passes from father to son, and mother to daughter. So let’s get highly practical. Got any activities you need to stop doing which are teaching your children the wrong message about sexuality? And all of this applies to you even if you are single because one day you may have a family to be a model too, so the time to get control of this issue is now. Here are, then, some things to think about:

- Do you frequently allow people of the opposite sex in your home when your mate is not around? This could present the wrong picture to neighbors and it could also lead to undo temptation. Better to change your operating procedures.
- Are you communicating with an old girlfriend or boyfriend on Facebook without your mate’s knowledge? Why are you doing that? What’s your motivation? What are you talking about? Wake up. Sin has a way of broadsiding you and of moving all too quickly from the darkness to the light.
- Do you talk your mate down when you are with your friends, and do your children hear you?

- When you are deployed are you spending way too much private time with a person of the opposite sex?
- Are you secretly meeting and communicating with someone other than your mate?
- Are you viewing things you shouldn't be viewing?
- Are you reading steamy novels you shouldn't be reading?
- Are you subscribing to women's magazine's you'd never read in God's presence because the content is just too racy?
- Are you not affectionate toward your mate because someone else is the object of your emotions?
- Are you adamant about not going to counseling even though your sexual compromises are out in the open? What is this telling your children?
- Do you watch DVDs or go to movies with your children where the content and images are over-the-top? Ever walk out of movie? You probably should. Ever ask for your money back because of the carnal content? I have.
- If you weren't pure prior to marriage and your children know it, do you teach them the importance of waiting to be intimate until marriage? Are you driving home the emphasis of Paul that our bodies, as believers, are not for sexual immorality but for the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)? Are you teaching them that the deeds of the sinful flesh include sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, and the partying spirit (Galatians 5:19-21)? Are you making sure that, as believers, sexual sin, be what it may, shouldn't even be named among Christians (Ephesians 5:3-12)? Are you using the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife to teach them about the importance of running from sexually tempting situations (Genesis 39:7-12)?
- Positively, if you were pure prior to marriage, are you driving home the three-fold benefits of waiting which entail "No guilt," "No fear," and "No comparison"?
- Positively, do you share stories from your past about buddies who lived large and paid dearly for it?
- Positively, do my children hear me speak loving, kind words toward my mate?
- Positively, do my children see me developing the romance of our marriage?
- Positively, do I teach my children about God's view of sexuality and am I available to answer their questions as they grow up?
- Positively, when your daughter picks up a seemingly innocent teen magazine, one replete with false views about sexuality, are you there to help guide her thinking to God's perfect model? Do you help her see the vanity and vacuous thinking of the world?
- Positively, when distorted views of sexuality are shown on TV sitcoms, do I help my children biblically evaluate them?
- Positively, when the friends of your children go off the sexual rails, do you talk with your children about it, showing them what God's Word says and what is wisest, safest way to act in relationships?
- And since there is an intrinsic relationship between a departure from God's Word and worship and sexual compromise, as in Solomon and Rehoboam's

cases, you've got to stop and ask yourself some tough, timely questions: Do my children see me reading my Bible? When's the last time they heard me pray with and for them? Do they see me serving at church? Am I really a leader in getting everyone to church on a consistent basis? Do I talk about spiritual things in the home? Do they watch me make personal sacrifices in order to put Christ first in my life?

- If you are divorced and you have children, are you keeping yourself pure, or are you compromising God's standard by letting a boyfriend or girlfriend move in with you?
- If you are a widow or widower, please, don't drop your guard, either. I've seen people do it all for the sake of not losing Social Security benefits. Here's how it works. They move into together so they can financially make it, something they would have never done as Christians earlier in their lives. If that's your situation, what are you teaching your grown children?

I could give you many more examples, but I'm sure you are intelligent enough to connect the dots yourself. Young eyes watch you closely and they will grow up to follow in your footsteps in many ways. I pray that when it comes to sexuality you will teach them God's ways, not the world's ways. I pray that you will walk so closely with Christ, you'd never dream of lowering your guard and standards for the sake of a fleeting compromise. As King David would tell you, it isn't worth it. Far better and wiser to stay true to God's model for marriage. Stay on this lofty road and not only will His blessing rest upon you, but you shall find true and lasting relational peace and happiness.

And since we have an election year upon us, here's another worthy bit of spiritual advice from these stories of Solomon and Rehoboam: Select leaders with a biblical not a worldly view of marriage. Strong marriages are the strong foundation of our great nation; therefore, we need leaders over us who not only have strong marriages themselves, but who are committed to calling all of us onward and upward in how grow healthy, happy marriages. Additionally, I'd say vote for leaders who possess a positive view of the Church because they see the value it gives to the fabric and success of our society. Conversely, turn from those who espouse a hatred of the Church because it stands in the way of their Rehoboam-type activities.