

... May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing and of you, who are ROCK, REDEEMER, and COMFORTER of us all. Amen.

1 Kings 6:38-7:1...Each week we are visiting with a familiar biblical story which invites us to listen and respond with courage, trust, & live with hope. Today the focus is with a well-known character...SOLOMON, and a lesson we need to hear as we struggle in this season of safety through separation.

Solomon, son of Bathsheba, was appointed by King David to rule over Israel as his successor. David was known for his skill as a warrior, as well as for his psalms. Solomon became known for his wisdom, wealth, and accumulated power. If we read we learn that Solomon accumulated more...more chariots, more food, more palaces, more wives and more gold.

David's desire was to provide God an earthly dwelling place, a temple, but God said, No, that task is for one of your descendants. So Solomon is the one who builds the temple, according to the plans and resources David provided.

Solomon laid the foundation in the fourth year of his reign (2nd month, Ziv. April/May) and completed the project in the 8th month(Oct/Nov) of 11th year of reign (7 years).

Did you notice what is described next in this passage? It took 13 years to complete his own place, The Forest of Lebanon Palace. If we were to continue to read, there is a skilled artisan who is hired, a labor force, several other building projects, as well as amassing huge quantities of gold, 1400 chariots, 12, 000 horses, and hundreds of women to serve at his pleasure as wives & concubines.

Where, is the wisdom in this kind of living? If you ask me, it sounds more like living in fear of running out or an internal need to prove your worth. It sounds like GAAS, Gathering and Acquisition Syndrome, rather than wisdom. Frankly, it sounds as if Solomon forgot the priority of his reign... that God is first, that God will provide, and caring for God's people is next in priority.

In 2004 the term FOMO became popular...fear of missing out. This fear of missing out is often the motivation behind many midlife crises. In the age of

social media, FOMO also feeds our need/habit of checking cell phones and other access points of social media.

I became keenly aware of the frequency of my own cell phone use as I took time away this week. This is true anytime I go away... I make a conscious effort to put the phone aside or use it primarily as a camera. The intentional act of setting the cell phone aside is a choice to disconnect and to re-connect...Now. Here. This. In this very place, space & moment.

The choice to use the device as a camera helps me to have eyes for 'wonder', 'awe', and 'wow'. So not only am I present, but I am mindful that I am a small part of an intentional design created by a source of life so much more than I can comprehend. It is very humbling...it is very necessary for my mental and spiritual health. These two choices to pause and to see permit me the same opportunity to re-frame and re-prioritize my life, my call, my vision, my identity. It is transformational and it is renewal. It is life-giving in that I focus and center in the source of all.

Solomon is a peacetime ruler. He greets dignitaries from many lands, who bring gifts worthy of the ruler of Israel & Judah...who has built great palaces and has amassed many 'things' of status, power & wealth. But Solomon, for all the wisdom he was granted did not seem to pause until it all began to unravel... until his priority for Gathering And Acquiring Stuff became an obstacle in loving and serving God and God's people.

The key message each time God spoke to Solomon was obedience to covenant. The consequence of Solomon's sins (greed, idolatry; abuse of gifts of wealth, wisdom & fame) becomes the fracture of the Nation into a divided kingdom and the rise of strife within and outside the reign.

The good news is that God did not give up on God's people. John Wesley writes in his Notes, that Solomon neglected God's gifts, and for us to ignore the work we are called to do is a choice of disobedience. But God has provided everlasting love and faithfulness and forgiveness in Jesus. When we pause, recognize our self-reliance instead of seeking help & leaning on God, when we

give thanks and soak in the Wow of God, we are restored; we are re-connected; we are renewed in strength and energy and in faith.

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Let's pray...

Lord, help me to be grateful for what I have. Help me, Lord, to remember that I don't need most of what I want. Lord, help me know that JOY is found in simplicity, in generosity, and staying connected with you. Amen.