

**INTRO:**

—Erik grew up in a pretty messed up environment. His Dad was virtually not a part of his life. Erik had his mom and older brother—when they were around. It's safe to say that early on Erik found himself hanging out with people who constantly partied. He got drunk and explored the drugs that were out there. On top of all this, Erik was an amazing electric guitarist and had a lot of talent! I met Erik for the first time in the spring of 2001 when I was in youth group. He had an intimidating stature, but was truly a big teddy bear! —In the summer of 2001 Erik and I would share a room at CIY—the last day of the event, we responded to a challenge by the speaker and together we both made our way down to the front. I wanted to recommit my life, and he wanted to make the commitment to follow Christ for the first time. Erik's life changed throughout the course of a couple weeks. Questions of God answered in community, began serving in the youth worship band. It was an incredible and radical transformation in his life. However, as summer faded and fall took over, slowly I saw less and less of Erik and heard more and more about how he was giving his heart back to the things which would destroy him. —When I was a youth pastor, I met tons of students like Eric—transformed and “all in,” but eventually faded away. —Not *just* a student problem; I've seen it with adults too. —WHY? —Probably a more complicated answer than I can afford in one sermon, but I think there might be a primary cause worth mentioning, and so let's look at King Solomon's life to drive us to the answer.

**MOVEMENT 1:**

—**I Kings 2:1-3** *When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, 2 “I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, 3 and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn....* — David gives a charge to his Son, Solomon—let your heart beat for God. Walk in his ways. Be a living example of everything God requires of you. —That plea doesn't just fit for Solomon, but for each one of us here! —The first few months of Solomon's reign are not that great. People are trying to trick him out of his kingship, so he has those people executed. Later, God tells Solomon to ask for anything and he can have it. Solomon asks for a heart of discernment (wisdom), and with it came wealth as well. Eventually, Solomon uses his wealth to make this awesome temple for the Lord and a fantastic palace. However, as the years go on something happens with Solomon, and we begin to see a shift in the direction of his life.

—**I Kings 10:14, 26** *Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.... And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.*

—He does the very opposite of what is warned against in **Deuteronomy 17:14-17**: *“When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ 15 you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ 17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. —Why these sharp restrictions? What's wrong with a few more horses, a few more wives, and some silver/gold (I get the less wives thing LOL)? God is wanting the King to be reliant on Him, more than relying on his own power and possessions establishing a false sense of security with his wealth and military power. —We've all been here before (feeling secure, and not “needing” God). What happens with Solomon?*

—**I Kings 11:1-8** *Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he*

*did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.* How the mighty fall! —I used to trick my dog when I was a kid... I'd take food and hold it high above his head and watch him salivate, as his eyes intensely focused on what I was dangling before him. He wanted it so badly, and then right before it touched his nose I ate it! Cruel isn't it? He thinks he's going to get that amazing piece of meat, and then I keep it for myself. —Somehow, we think that can be either cruel or funny to do to a dog, but we don't think twice about it when we dangle our hearts in front of a jealous God who so badly wants it, and then we just keep it for ourselves or throw it some meaningless thing that will corrupt us! God is a jealous God. **God doesn't want to be one of many in your life, but he wants to be the one and only.**

—One of the hardest parts of being a pastor is watching folks come into the church, carrying heavy burdens, asking for help, submitting to Christ, but then watching them slowly drifting away as they begin to make small allowances of sin here, or small compromises there—The downfall of Solomon (BUILD): **1)** Took the Lord's commands as nice suggestions. **2)** Made small compromises to faithfulness for comfort. **3)** Made his primary focus about his name and his fame. And although we might blame his drift or shift of allegiance from Yahweh simply on these bad choices; I believe his bad choices are far more symptomatic of something crucial missing from his life. He had everything, and yet there's something his father, David, had that he didn't!

## MOVEMENT 2:

—Read through David's story and you'll find he surrounded himself with good community. —Who were the men that Solomon chose to surround himself with??? Where's *his* Jonathan that would fight for him, Nathan the prophet who spoke harsh truths into his life, or his men of Valor who would risk their lives to simply provide a cup of water for their thirsty king? —Solomon had lots of success, splendor, fame, and fortune, but the most costly thing Solomon lacked was a god-fearing community.

—Warning from Camp Speaker: some of you won't be here next year, but it's b/c you removed yourself from the community that anchors you into Christian faithfulness—this was Erik!

—Most folks who drift away from Christ are the ones who neglect accountability, wise counsel, and have a hard time trusting themselves to the care of others, and so they become their own authority and do what's right in their eyes (at the least, people's circles are shallow interest groups). AND YET, Solomon knew better!

—**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* Solomon knows community is important! —**Prov. 18:24** *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* Companion (“with bread”)—quality fellowship is important—we need people who know us intimately—one who mourns with you, fights for you, knows your thoughts. —**Prov. 11:14** *Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.* We need to listen to godly advising and counseling in our lives. —Solomon's wayward heart is symptomatic of the absence of the Godly influences that David had. \*\*\***Solomon, neglected to keep his heart in the hands of God, by neglecting to entrust his heart into the hands of godly men.**

## CONCLUSION:

—Growth and maturity in Christ is always connected to a commitment to community. —When God has done something new in me, rarely was it isolated from strong Christian fellowship. —Often we attribute the struggles of life as the source of our sanctification, but even then, maybe it's the burdens of those tests that drive us to surround ourselves with faithful men or women to help ease the weight, and in turn changed by the people who walked alongside us during that time of despair.

—We are called to clothe ourselves in Christ and to put on the full armor of God, and I don't want to *simply* spiritualize that call, but there is a very real material side at work when the clothing of Christ and the armor of God is manifested by the Christian brothers I clothe and arm myself in.

—Who are your people? Who are you letting in to share your thoughts, emotions, struggles? For some that sounds weak and pathetic, but it's actually hard, because exposing our true selves to one another allows us to see our hearts and minds and to recognize what might need to be put to death for Christ to transform us more (but change is hard/work—we want comfort). —Those I've seen displaying the most joy, contentment, strength, and growth in Christ are those who are committed to close Christian connection (small groups).

—Do you have a strong Christianity community?