

LESSON 3

SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND JUDGMENT

I Kings 3:1-28, I Kings 4:20-34

“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

(I Kings 3:9)

Solomon Asks for an Understanding Heart



After Solomon became king, the Lord appeared to him “in a dream”. This means that the Lord opened Solomon’s spiritual eyes and ears so that he could see and speak with the Lord, and could hear the Lord talking to him from heaven. The Lord told him that he could have anything he wanted.

If the Lord gave you such a promise, what might you ask for?

Solomon asked for only one thing: **“An understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.”** (I Kings 3:9)

Solomon asked the Lord for this one thing because he had become ruler over a large kingdom. His father had conquered many countries. All the conquered countries paid tribute every year to Solomon. Though they still had their own kings, Solomon ruled over those kings. He needed guidance to understand the feelings of the people, why they did things, and what things were right or wrong so that he could be fair and just at all times. This is wisdom.

The Lord was pleased with Solomon’s request—so pleased that He promised Solomon riches and honor as well. The Lord also promised Solomon long life if he would walk in His way and keep His commandments. The Lord renewed the covenant He had made with so many Israelitish leaders before Solomon. Solomon began his reign as a righteous leader.

Two Women Ask for Judgment

Soon after Solomon asked for wisdom, he was put to a very difficult test. Two women came to him with one baby. They had given birth to boys just three days apart, but one of the babies had died. Each of the women claimed that the baby they brought to Solomon was hers. One of the women told Solomon a story of what had happened. She said that the other mother’s child had died during the night, but she had taken the living child and put the dead baby into her arms. The other woman denied having done

this. You can imagine that both women were very emotional and that it would have been very hard for Solomon to know which of them was telling the truth.

What Solomon suggested did not seem wise at first, but something that you might think was cruel and threatening. He said that he would divide the child and give each woman half of the baby. Solomon knew that a person who would steal someone's child might not have the compassion that most mothers would have.

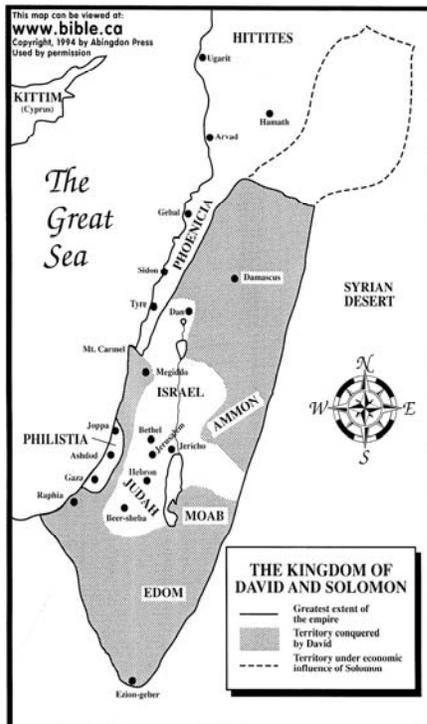


He was right. The actual mother was willing to give up her child so that he might live, while the thief was willing to let Solomon divide the baby. Solomon never would have allowed the living child to be divided and killed, but his threat revealed which woman was the mother and which was not.

Can you think of any other ways Solomon might have discovered who was the real mother?

When the People of Israel heard of Solomon's judgment, they could see that the

“wisdom of God was in him to administer justice” (I Kings 3:28).



Solomon's Wealth and Power Grow

As the Lord promised, Solomon became powerful and wealthy. The kingdoms around him that had been subdued by David paid him taxes and left Judah and Israel in peace.

“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” (I Kings 4:25)

Can you list some of the things described in the Word that illustrate Solomon's wealth and power?

Solomon had many horses, chariots, and people to serve him. The people under his rule provided him with an abundance of food, both for those who ate at his table and for his livestock. He had everything he needed. As long as Solomon followed the Lord and kept His commandments, the Lord blessed him with power and riches.

Solomon's Wisdom Grows

“God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.” (I Kings 4:29)



The Word tells us that Solomon was wiser than all the other wise men of his time. He was famous for wisdom throughout all the surrounding kingdoms. People from all nations came to hear what Solomon had to say.

Solomon expressed his wisdom in proverbs and songs. While Solomon's proverbs are not Divine revelation or part of the Word of God, you can read them in the Bible following the Psalms. The proverbs often are very beautiful and full of useful ideas of how to live a good life. They tell of the value of education, of helping the poor, of being a good friend, and of working hard. The proverbs also warn of things a person should avoid such as envy, gossip, and pride. They give instructions to both kings and servants—to all people.

Asking For an Understanding Heart

Usually when people think of wisdom they think of being smart—of being able to learn quickly and do well in school. When people think of a part of the body associated with wisdom, they might think of the brain. Why, then, did Solomon ask for an understanding heart? What thoughts and feelings do you identify when you think of the heart? Possibly love and caring come to your mind. When heart/love and brain/understanding are put together, you can begin to see what Solomon was asking for and what you might want for yourself.

It is good to love and care for people, but there are intelligent ways to do this, as well as useless ways. An older sister might always want to help her little brother so he doesn't make mistakes, but if she does everything for him he'll never learn to do things for himself. A friend could ask you to steal something from a store, and say you aren't really a friend if you don't go along. If your heart is not ruled by your brain you might join in because you want to show what a good friend you are, but an understanding heart will know better.

We do not know if Solomon was suddenly much wiser than he had ever been before, but we do know he was wise and caring enough to know he needed loving wisdom to rule his people well. He wanted to follow the Lord, and he had some idea of what the Lord wanted of him. Perhaps he had been taught by a priest or some other caring adult to read the Word, the source of true wisdom. The Lord can give you an understanding heart if you read the Word, heed the words of wise and caring friends and adults and pray to the Lord to help you follow Him.



ACTIVITIES

LESSON 3: SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND JUDGMENT

❖ REFLECTIONS ON GEMS FROM THE WORD

“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”
(1 Kings 3:9)

1. Write about times in your life when it would be good to have an understanding heart. For example, a younger sibling gets into your room and accidentally breaks a special belonging of yours. How might you respond with an understanding heart?
2. Describe someone in your life whom you think shows an understanding heart—give reasons why you think this is true.

❖ ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

❖ CHART OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Note any more facts that you have learned about Solomon.

❖ RICHES AND HONOR

The purpose of this activity is to help you understand why people see riches and honor as rewards. You will also have the chance to see what might be considered better and more useful rewards.

❖ SOLOMON'S MAZE

Follow the directions. Think carefully about what the passage from the Word might be telling you to do. Look for directional words such as right and left.

❖ HEART QUOTATIONS

Choose one (or more) of the heart quotations and print it in calligraphy or your best writing in the middle of a piece of paper. Then create a decorative border around the quotes. Hang it somewhere where you will be reminded to use an understanding heart when you make decisions.

For information about the series this lesson comes from, visit
<http://www.newchurch.org/materials/educational/home/learning/jacobs-ladder.html>

Questions: Lesson 3—Solomon's Wisdom and Judgment

After each question write the number of the verse from I Kings chapter 3 in which the correct answer is found. The questions are not in the order of the verses. Use your copy of the Word to find the answers.

1. What did Solomon command should be done to the living child claimed by two women?
2. What did the Lord give Solomon in a dream by night?
3. What did the Lord give Solomon that he had *not* asked for?
4. Whose daughter did Solomon marry or make “affinity with”?
5. How did one woman's child die in the night?
6. What did Solomon ask of the Lord?
7. How many burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon the alter “that was the great high place”?
8. What weapon did Solomon command be brought to him?
9. Why did the people sacrifice in high places?
10. Who received the living child?
11. What was the reason Solomon gave for his special request of the Lord?
12. What did Solomon have to do to have his days lengthened?

Kings of Israel and Judah - Signs of Righteousness

(Jacob's Ladder Level Six – The Lord Is Prophet and Preserver of the Covenant)

Fill in the details of each king as you learn about them. Use the information on Saul and David as samples on how to fill out the chart. Leave out details you cannot find.

The Kings of the Israelites

	Father	Reigned	# Sons	Worshiped	Wealth	Wisdom	Building	Health & Death	Righteous?
Saul	Kish	40	?	Jehovah	Some	✓ -	Kingdom grew	Depression/fell on sword	In beginning
David	Jesse	40	Many	Jehovah	More	✓	Kingdom grew	Good/old age	Most of life
Solomon	David								

The kingdom is divided into two kingdoms - Israel and Judah – about 930 B.C.

Kings of Israel										Kings of Judah									
King	Father	# Years Reigned	# Sons	Worshiped	Wealth	Wisdom	Building	Health & Death	Righteous ?	King	Father	# Years Reigned	# Sons	Worshiped	Wealth	Wisdom	Building	Health & Death	Righteous ?
Jeroboam										Rehoboam									
Nadab										Abijam									
Baasha										Asa									
Elah										Jehoshaphat									
Zimri										Jehoram/Joram									
Omri										Ahaziah									
Ahab										Athalia (woman)									
Ahaziah										Joash/Jehoash									
Jehoram/Joram										Amaziah									
Jehu										Azariah/Uzziah									
Jehoahaz										Jotham									
Joash/Jehoash										Ahaz									
Jeroboam II										Hezekiah									
Zechariah										Mannasseh									
Shallum										Amon									
Menahem										Josiah									
Pekahiah										Jehoahaz									
Pekah										Jehoiakim									
Hoshea										Jehoiachin									
										Zedekiah									
Fall of Israel - 721 BC										Fall of Judah – 587 BC									

RICHES AND HONOR

When a person is young and learning to do what is right, the adults in his or her life often offer worldly rewards such as gifts, food and special privileges. Write down some of the rewards you have been offered for doing things like cleaning your room, doing your homework, caring for a younger brother or sister, *etc.*

Though Solomon did not ask for any rewards, the Lord told him he would receive riches and honor as well as an understanding heart. From your lesson and from other things you might know about the times in which Solomon lived, what sort of riches did Solomon have?

Compare the riches Solomon had to the type of riches people have today. Note how some are the same and some are quite different.

The Lord also gave Solomon honor. What are some of the things that happened that illustrate how Solomon was honored?

In what ways are people honored today?

As people become older they begin to understand that riches and honor are not the most important rewards they can receive for the good things they do. Instead, the Lord gifts people with special feelings of accomplishment, a delight in other people's happiness and the knowledge that they have chosen well. Tell about a time you did something that gave you joy in someone else's happiness and/or the knowledge that you had made a good decision.

The Lord's final reward to people is living in heaven to eternity doing the good things they most love to do. What might some of those things be for you?

Passages from the Word for Solomon's Maze

We have many decisions to make in life. When you come to a time of making a decision or a coming to a crossroad, you can let the Lord guide you through His Word. Can you find your way through this maze? Follow the line starting in the lower right corner. The passages from the Word will give you clues about which way to go. If you follow the guidance of the Word, you, like Solomon, will gain a wise and understanding heart.

Exodus 14:15 And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward."

Numbers 20:17 "Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

Deuteronomy 17:19-20 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Joshua 1:7 "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go."

Psalms 31:8 You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place.

Psalms 60:5 That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me.

Jeremiah 26:3 Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.

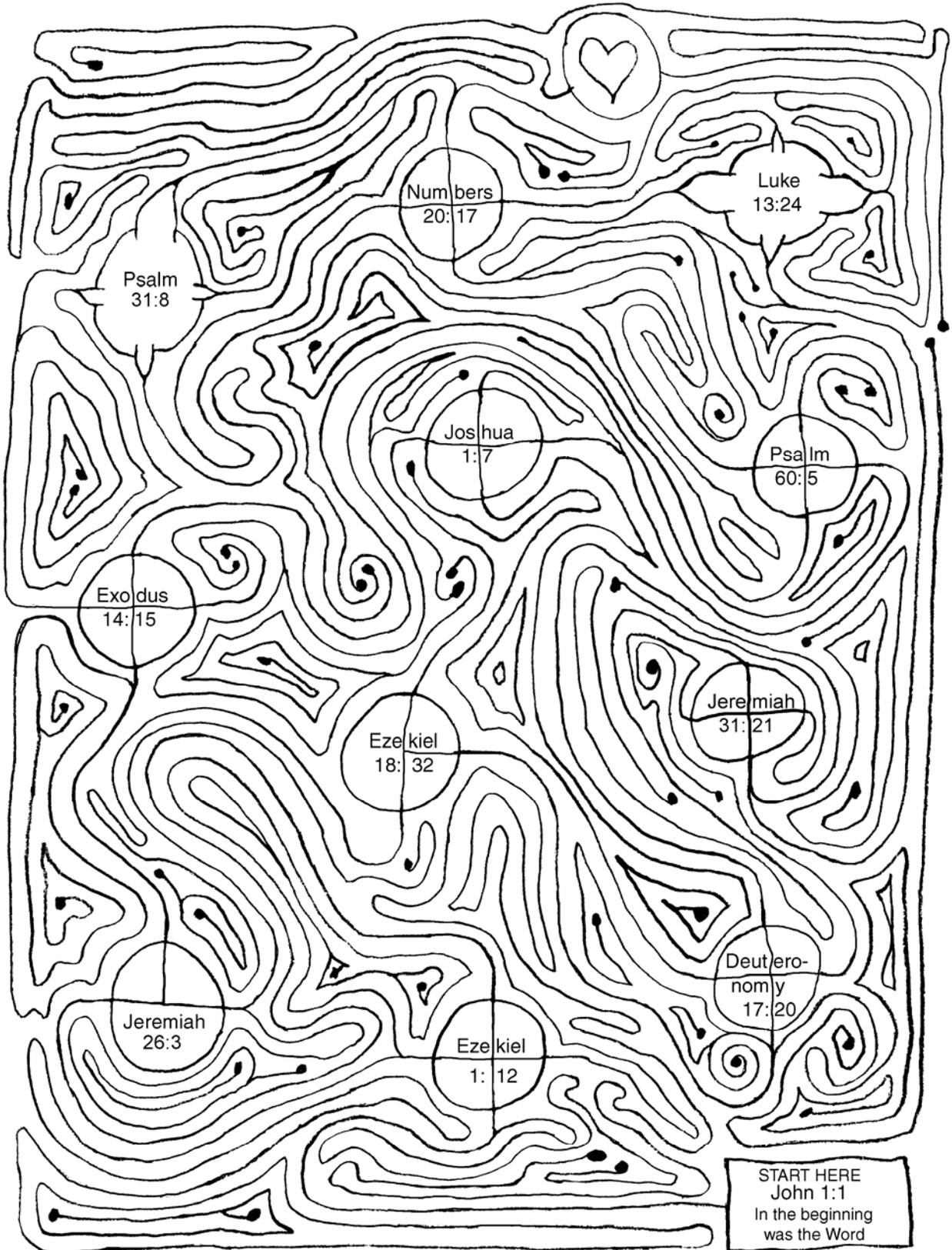
Jeremiah 31:21 Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities.

Ezekiel 1:12 And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"

Luke 13:24 Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Solomon's Maze



Heart Quotation

Choose one or more of the quotations below. Write it/them in calligraphy or your very best writing in the center of a nice piece of paper. Then create a border to go around the quotations.

**Give to Your servant
an understanding heart.**

1 Kings 3:9.

**GOD IS THE STRENGTH
OF MY HEART.**

PSALM 73:26.

*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage,
and He shall strengthen your heart.*

Psalm 27:14

Be of good courage,
and He shall strengthen your heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.

Psalm 31:24

You shall love the Lord your
God with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your strength
and your thought.

Matt. 22:37

Blessed are the pure in heart.

Matt. 5:8

So teach us to
number our days,
that we may gain
a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12.

*I will praise the Lord
with my whole heart.*

Psalm 111:1

**It is the nature of love
to will to share with another,
indeed, to confer joys upon another
whom it loves from the heart,
and to seek its own joys in return
from doing so.**

Conjugal Love 180

When friendship and mutual trust
join together with the first love in
marriage,
conjugal love results, which opens
the partners' hearts
and inspires in them the sweet
enjoyments of that love.

Conjugal Love 162

LESSON 3

SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND JUDGMENT

I Kings 3,4

OVERVIEW OF THE STORY

- Solomon Asks for an Understanding Heart
- The Lord Grants Solomon's Request and Gives Him Wealth and Power
- Two Women Ask Solomon for Judgment
- Solomon Makes a Wise Decision
- Solomon's Wisdom and Power Grow



THOUGHTS FOR PARENTS

If we could be granted anything for ourselves, how many of us would have the wisdom to ask the Lord for an understanding heart? As adults we might be wise enough not to ask for wealth and power and instead ask for something good and useful—good parenting skills, a happy marriage, a kinder personality.

Solomon's choice enabled him to make intelligent and caring decisions. This is illustrated by his judgment in the case of two women, each claiming a baby as her own. His solution seems somewhat harsh on the surface, but Solomon's solution quickly restored the child to his real mother.

We are told that Solomon's wisdom "surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of the Egyptians." In the internal sense this means that he had a deep understanding of good and truth and was aware of factual knowledge as well. Both of these are essential to a person's ability to make wise and loving decisions.

- Young people might have the wisdom not to ask the Lord for something selfish, knowing He could/would not grant it. However, they will need help to understand Solomon's request. Young people tend to make quick, emotionally charged choices. They often resist the voice of reason. The more we can lead them to think—as well as feel—when they make choices, the more likely they are to make decisions that lead to good consequences.
- Young people can be led to see that if Solomon had followed his emotions, he might have gotten angry and threatened the women, hoping to force the truth from them. We can wonder about what might have occurred if he had used cold, hard reasoning with them. Ask your child to contrast these scenarios with what Solomon actually did.

From the Word

The Word can only be taught mediately through parents, teachers, preachers, books, and especially through the reading of it. Nevertheless, it is not taught by these, but by the Lord through them. This, moreover, is in keeping with what preachers know, for they say that they do not speak from themselves but from the spirit of God, and that all truth, as also all good, is from God. They are indeed able to declare the Word and bring it to the understanding of many, but not to the heart of anyone; and what is not in the heart perishes in the understanding; and by the heart is meant a person's love. From these considerations it may be seen that people are led and taught by the Lord alone; and that they are taught immediately by Him when this is done from the Word. (Divine Providence 172)

It is the mark of someone "wise", and it is wisdom, to be moved by love to put truths into practice and the mark of someone "wise in heart" and wisdom of heart to be moved by love to put good into practice; and from the meaning of "putting wisdom in the heart" as being moved by the Lord, and so by the good of love, to do those things, for the good of love originates in the Lord. All such people will and do what is good and true for goodness and truth's sake, because good and the truth that goes with good are the Lord as He exists with them; for those things which originate in Him, and so which are His, are also He Himself.

(Arcana Coelestia 10336)

"The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (1 Kings 4:30). Here "the wisdom of the sons of the east" means interior cognitions concerning truth and good, and so means people who possess them. 'The wisdom of the Egyptians' however means knowledge of the same things as they exist in a lower degree "the Egyptians" meaning factual knowledge in general. (Arcana Coelestia 3762)

READING THE STORY FROM THE WORD

1. Pre-reading Activities and Questions

- ❖ Ask your child what he or she might choose if the Lord told them he or she could ask for anything.
- ❖ Have your child describe what they think real wisdom might look like.
- ❖ Vocabulary—Please review these if you feel the words might be difficult for your child to read and/or understand.
 1. Spiritual eyes and ears—the ability to see and hear in the spiritual world—this can happen for some people while on earth. This happened to Solomon in a dream.
 2. Tribute—a payment made by one king to another king to show submission.

2. Read the Word

- ❖ Please help your child as needed with the reading of the text. Many of the names in Kings are difficult to pronounce.
- ❖ First reading—I Kings 3:1-28
- ❖ Second reading—I Kings 4:20-34

3. Ideas to Discuss Together Following Reading the Word

If your child is working independently, you might want to give him or her the following ideas to think about. They are not designed for students to answer on paper.

- ❖ Discuss what this quotation might mean: “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father, except that he sacrificed and burned incense in high places”?
- ❖ Ask your child to give examples of times people he or she knows have shown an “understanding heart” in making decisions. *E.g.* A parent acted with understanding and patience when the child had difficulty with homework.

WORK IN THE STUDENT ACTIVITY BOOK

1. Reading the Lesson

- ❖ Your child should now read the lesson in the Student Activity Book. You may wish to read with your child sometimes.
- ❖ You might like to discuss with your child the questions that appear from time to time during the lesson.

2. Activities—Your child may need some guidance deciding which activities to choose. He or she might also need some assistance finding materials not provided with the lessons. Some additional notes for each activity are provided below.

- ❖ **Reflections on Gems From the Word**

You may wish to discuss the quotation with your child before he or she writes a response, using the suggestions for this lesson found in the Student Activity Book.

❖ Answers to the Questions

(Having the child look for these verses gives them practice searching the Word for information.)

1. Verses 24, 25
2. Verse 12
3. Verse 13
4. Verse 1
5. Verse 19
6. Verse 9
7. Verse 4
8. Verse 24
9. Verse 2
10. Verse 27
11. Verse 9
12. Verse 14

❖ Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Ask your child to fill in any additional details they may have discovered about Solomon in this lesson.

❖ Riches and Honors

The purpose of this activity is to help your child understand why people see riches and honor as rewards. He or she will also have the chance to see what might be considered better and more useful rewards.

❖ Solomon's Maze

Ask your child to read through the directions. Some of the clues might be difficult to decipher, and he or she may need your help.

❖ Heart Quotations

Your child might like some help choosing which quotations he or she would like to copy. You could suggest this project as a gift for someone such as a grandparent.