

date: **2/11/18****Bible Passage: 1 Kings 1—6**
(Solomon, Part 1)

God Blesses

REMEMBER VERSE

How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.

Psalm 31:19

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

In college, I was close friends with a girl who wasn't a Christian. One afternoon, the two of us walked to the local coffee shop to chat and catch up. As we approached the door, we walked past a homeless man sitting on a nearby bench.

"Would one of you ladies be able to spare any change?" he asked. I noticed my friend tense up and mutter, "Sorry" as she continued walking. Not thinking much of it, I reached into my wallet and handed the man a dollar. I smiled and shook his hand and then caught up with my friend.

As we sat down for coffee, Megan seemed puzzled. "Aren't you worried that homeless guy will take your money and waste it on liquor?" I wasn't sure how to answer, but when I opened my mouth, the words spilled out.

"Maybe he will," I said. "But I'm realizing more and more that everything I have is a blessing from God. My money, my clothes—even the breath of life within me. It's all a gift. Sometimes I use the gifts He gives me well. Honestly, most of the time, I probably don't use His blessings exactly as He would desire. But, He doesn't take away the gifts or stop giving them."

Later that day I heard those words repeated over and over again in my head. It was such a breathtaking reminder. Sometimes I get caught in the belief that if I just act like the woman God desires me to be, then He will bless me. But, in fact, it is God's character to bless. The Bible declares that God is love. Part of the way He expresses that love is by showering all of His creation with blessings, not based on merit or achievement, but purely as a gift. We cannot earn it; we can only accept it.

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

In 1 Kings 3:12, God tells Solomon, “I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.” Solomon desired to lead the Israelites with good judgment, so he asked God for wisdom.

Because God was pleased with Solomon’s request (and had been pleased with Solomon’s father, David), He blessed Solomon with a richness of wisdom that hasn’t been surpassed. Many people have been enlightened not only by Solomon’s writings in the book of Proverbs but also the legends of his decision-making skills, such as the wise ruling concerning a child in 1 Kings 3:16–28.

However, Solomon wasn’t always wise in his personal life, especially in his later years. As we read through the account of Solomon’s life, we might shake our heads and wonder how someone so blessed with wisdom by such a generous God would make the foolish choices to disobey God’s laws.

Our God is a generous God who blesses His people. Solomon’s life cautions those who desire and receive wisdom from God to continually thank Him for the gift they’ve received. Solomon possessed wisdom, but he turned away from the God who blessed him with it, which turned out to be his biggest folly of all.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

Let’s face it: We lead jam-packed lives. Our schedules are filled with work, meetings, and to-do lists. In the face of so much going on, it can be easy to lose sight of how God is uniquely blessing us this week, today, and right now.

Spend some time alone with God this week. Pray and ask Him to remove your distractions. Take out a sheet of paper and a few colored markers, and start jotting down all the ways God has blessed you this week. Each time you pause to think, pick up another marker. You may be surprised by what God brings to mind.

Keep the list in your pocket or tape it somewhere you’ll be able to see it for the rest of the week. Use it as a reminder to thank Him for blessing you. Each time you see it, offer a prayer of thanks for how massively He’s pouring out His love to you. Furthermore, let it be a reminder of our responsibility to be generous like God, and consider how, in the midst of such blessing, you can bless those around you.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s portion of The Big God Story.

Blessing Flowers

Make the following piece of art with the children as a fun illustration of how abundantly and beautifully God blesses us.

SUPPLIES

- Tissue paper (various colors)
- Scissors
- Chenille wire (green)
- Glue
- Construction paper

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut the tissue paper into two-inch squares, one square per child. Glue the chenille wire in the center of the construction paper.

RELATE

God has given us so many blessings! In today's part of The Big God Story, we'll hear about a man named Solomon who asked God for wisdom and received so much of this blessing that it couldn't even be measured! Let's make a flower together as we remember how beautiful it is that God blesses us.

Leader, set the example by going first. Take a piece of tissue paper, crinkle it up into a small ball, and place a dot of glue on the back. Then, as you share one blessing you have seen this week (e.g., your family, God providing something you needed, your church), glue the tissue paper ball near the end of the chenille wire to start creating a flower. Then, encourage the child next to you to choose a piece of tissue paper, crinkle it up, and glue his ball next to yours as he shares a blessing he experienced this week. Repeat so that all children get to share at least once.

LARGE GROUP

SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a

structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you. Psalm 31:19

Connect

Encourage the members of your community to get to know one another through engaging questions, energizing games, and creative activities.

Question

When have you received something without having to work for it?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: 1 Kings 1—6

Storytelling Technique: Interactive Display and Images
God Blesses

SUPPLIES

- **Timeline image** (see Resources)
- **Images: Egypt, Wilderness, Battles, King David** (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Stool or chair
- Baking dish (9" x 13", glass)
- Drinking glass (16 oz., clear)
- Cola (2 L bottle)

SET UP

Set the stool, with the baking dish on top, in the center of an area visible to everyone. Set the drinking glass in the center of the baking dish, and place the two-liter bottle of cola on the ground next to the stool.

RELATE

As we've heard about The Big God Story this year, we've seen how God blessed His people—providing for them, fighting for them, and showing them how much He loves them. What does *bless* mean? Pause for responses. To bless means to give a special gift or attribute to someone. Today we'll hear how God overflows blessings into the lives of His people. Before we hear more, let's pray. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Let's think about God's people, the Israelites. They had been slaves in Egypt (*Tech: Cue Egypt image*), **and what did God do for them?** Pause for answers. **Right—God blessed them by freeing them.** Open the bottle of cola and pour a little into the drinking glass. **They wandered through the wilderness** (*Tech: Cue*

Wilderness image) and finally arrived at the Promised Land. Pour a little more cola into the glass. **What happened then?** Allow responses. **God blessed the Israelites by fighting battles** (*Tech: Cue Battles image*) for them and **giving them victory over their enemies**. Pour a little more cola into the drinking glass. **God poured out blessing after blessing upon Israel.**

What about King David? *Tech: Cue King David image.* **God made a covenant with David. What did God promise?** Allow responses. **He promised that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come from David's family line. God blessed David with so many blessings that he said in Psalm 23:5, "My cup overflows."** Pour a little more cola into the drinking glass. **It's kind of like when you pour too much milk into your glass and it spills all over the place!**

David reigned as king for 40 years, and at the end of his life he was ready to pass on the kingship to his son Solomon. Invite kids to turn to 1 Kings 2:2–3 in their Bibles and follow along. **David told Solomon, "Be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands"** (1 Kings 2:2–3). **What does this mean?** Pause for responses.

Solomon became king, and God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5). **God desired to bless Solomon and through him bless Israel.** Pour a little more cola into the glass. **What do you think Solomon asked of God?** Pause for responses. **Solomon asked God for wisdom. He didn't ask for wisdom that would make him smart—like being good at math or science—but wisdom that would help him be a good, fair, and honest leader for God's people.**

God was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom, so God blessed Solomon with more wisdom than any other person on earth. In 1 Kings 4:29 (invite kids to follow along), **the Bible describes Solomon's wisdom "as measureless as the sand on the seashore."** Pour a little more cola into the glass. **On top of that, God made Solomon rich and so well liked that no other king would ever compare!** Pour a little more cola into the glass. **And God told Solomon that if he obeyed God's commands, he would live a long life** (1 Kings 3:14). **So God blessed Solomon with wisdom** (pour a little more cola into the glass), **and riches** (pour a little more cola into the glass), **and favor** (pour a little more cola into the glass), **and long life** (pour a little more cola into the glass). **Wow! God blessed the leader of His people with wisdom so the world would be able to see who God is. Solomon was blessed to be a blessing to others.**

At this point, the glass should be full and about to overflow. **God's blessings didn't stop with Solomon. God blessed all of His people, the Israelites, with land** (pour enough cola into the glass that it overflows into the baking dish), **plenty of food** (pour a little more cola into the glass so that it keeps flowing over), **and rest from their enemies** (pour a little more cola into the glass so that it keeps flowing over). **After hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt** (*Tech: Cue Egypt image*), **40 years of wandering in the wilderness** (*Tech: Cue Wilderness image*), **and many years of fighting** (*Tech: Cue Battles image*), **God blessed His people abundantly and gave them rest.**

Tell a personal story about a time you felt overwhelmed by God's blessings in your life—when you were blessed with His Spirit or a sense of His overwhelming love. **God loves us and pours His blessings into our lives. We can't do anything to earn them, and we don't need to try harder in order to receive them. We can't do anything to make God love us more or less. We can't earn God's love or take credit for working hard when God blesses us because it all flows out of His love.**

As if giving us, His people, peace, rest, provision, friendship, and everything we need isn't enough, God gave the greatest gift of all. As you continue speaking, pour the rest of the cola into the glass so it keeps

overflowing and begins to fill the baking dish. **God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus took the punishment we deserved, and when we trust and obey Him and ask Him to be King of our lives, He forgives us and brings us into His family.**

What should our response be to a God who overflows blessings to us? We are to bless others. In the Bible, when Jesus sent out His disciples, He blessed them and said, “Freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8). We are freely and abundantly blessed so we can freely and abundantly bless others. When we share the blessings God gives us, the world sees who He is.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Blesses

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **Who was King David's son?** 1 Kings 2:1
- **For what did Solomon ask God?** 1 Kings 3:7–9
- **What is a blessing?**
- **How do you think God blesses us?**
- **Is there anything we can do to earn God's love?** Ephesians 2:8–9

Questions for Older Kids

- **How did God bless Solomon?** 1 Kings 3:10–14; 4:29–34
- **How did God bless the Israelites?** 1 Kings 5:4; 8:20–21
- **Why did God bless Solomon and the Israelites?** 1 Kings 3:10–14
- **Did Solomon or the Israelites deserve the blessings God poured out on them?**
- **Is there anything we can do to earn God's love?** Ephesians 2:8–9
- **How can we respond when God blesses us?**
- **What are some ways we can bless others?**

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Psalm 67:1–3.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

May God's goodness and blessings overflow in your life.

After you bless the group, invite the children to bless one another. Encourage them to take turns putting a hand on a neighbor's shoulder and saying, "Dear God, please bless (child's name) so he/she can be a blessing to others." Repeat until everyone gives and receives a blessing.