

Aim of lesson

To show that choosing God's way is a better choice than choosing riches or fame.

Bible background

1 Kings 3

Outline of lesson

Good advice

Remind the class of king David. Ask what advice they think David would have given to his son who was going to be king after him. After they have made some suggestions or you have thought how a good king might advise his son before he died, turn to 1 Kings 2:1-4. Bring out what David thought was important. Encourage the class to see that David wanted the best for his son; that is why he wanted him to choose God's ways. He knew that following God's ways would be a greater blessing to Solomon than anything else. Ask the class about advice they get on how to run their lives – from school, from advertisements, from friends, from family. Which do they think is good advice, which bad, and which is the best?

A momentous choice

Read together 1 Kings 3:4-15. Ask the class to look at the decision Solomon has to make, and consider how easy or difficult they would find it. Discuss with the class the things Solomon did not choose. Ask the class members if they have ever dreamed of having them? Use the workbook to help in thinking about the things Solomon could have chosen, and what the class might have chosen.

What made it a good choice?

Discuss with the class how they think that Solomon's choice was a good one. We can see that it was a good decision because verse 10 says that God was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom to judge the people. Encourage the class to note that this is the touchstone for all our decisions – 'is it one which will please God?'

Our choices

Some of your class may be involved in choices. They may have been choosing a new school, or which subjects to take at school, or what job to aim for. They will have other smaller choices every day about how to spend their time, and with whom. Ask them to consider whether they make the choices that 'please God', 'show care for others' and 'are not selfish'. These three tests can be applied to most situations.

The two women

You may like to read together 1 Kings 3:16-28 to see an example of the wisdom Solomon had to administer justice. This passage shows several things about the wise justice of Solomon.

- Firstly, the two women were probably amongst the poorest in society. They were prostitutes; they shared a house; they had young babies to care for, but no one lived with them in the house so that they probably had no help from anyone else. Yet these women could come before the king of the land to ask for justice. This was not because of legal aid. The responsibility for free and fair justice for all was a part of what Solomon saw as his role as king.
- Solomon's ruling shows an understanding of the feelings of a mother for her child. He was not only concerned with simple justice, but also with compassion and love. The mother's compassion and love for her child are what decided the case. The fact that no punishment is mentioned for the woman who was not the mother may suggest that Solomon understood enough of what she had gone through in losing perhaps the only living creature whom she cared for, to administer justice with mercy.

Digging deeper

The wisdom of Solomon

This section looks at what we are told of Solomon's wisdom: the three books and two Psalms that he wrote. It suggests learning the names of the poetry books in order.

Relevance to our lives

God gives us all the opportunity to choose by his standards of compassion, justice and love or by the standard of our own selfishness. Ask the class to be aware of this in any such choice they have to make during the week.

Prayer

It would be good at the beginning of this study to have each of the class write a short, perhaps a one-line prayer, about the choices they have to make, doing what pleases God or learning more about him during the study. These could be displayed in the classroom to look back on or add to in future weeks.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could dramatise – perhaps on tape – the different voices of advice that can come to us about getting on in life, earning as much as possible, winning millions on the lottery, having the best life style and the right image. Include also the advice about what really matters from the teaching God gives us.

- The class could plan questions they would like to ask Solomon if he were here, and one of the class – or the teacher – could be chosen to take on the role of Solomon and attempt to answer them.
- The class may like to work out how Solomon at this stage in his life was like Jesus. He was David's son, on David's throne, given wisdom by God, his name means 'peaceable', he established God's house in Jerusalem, he was honoured by other kings, ruled with justice etc.