

DWELLING WITH GOD

I Kings 8:27-30

1 Kings dedicates eleven chapters to telling the story of King Solomon's forty-year rule as one of Israel's most well-known and well-regarded kings. While the brevity of the book's account of his reign might seem curious, the material's focus offers an even more curious element. For example, four out of the eleven chapters recording Solomon's life detail his building of the temple and one of those four chapters – the longest one – focuses on Solomon's dedication prayer for the temple. The compactness of the book's account of Solomon's reign and its focus on the temple emphasizes God's faithfulness to His covenant promises to Israel and to David. But it also provides insights into Solomon that illustrates the characteristics that should define God's people. In particular, this lesson will consider the penitent humility Solomon demonstrated in his dedication prayer for the temple and consider how that attitude relates to the growth God desires in our lives.

“Will God indeed dwell on the earth?”¹

- God chose Solomon to build His temple in fulfillment of His promise to choose a location in Israel where He would “make his name dwell” (*Deuteronomy 12:1-28; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Chronicles 22:17-18*).
- The temple Solomon built housed God's presence and, he said, needed to be “exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all the lands” (*1 Chronicles 22:5*).
- Solomon, however, recognized that the temple could not, no matter how magnificent, contain God's presence (*1 Kings 8:27; cf. 1 Kings 8:13, 27, 30, 39, 43, 49*).
- Even though it could not contain Him, God nevertheless indwelt the temple in a way similar to the way His presence inhabited Mount Sinai and the tabernacle (*Exodus 19:16-20; 40:36-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11*).
- Because it housed His presence, God directed Solomon to build the temple in ways that symbolized its significance. For example:
 - The temple's design included interior decorations depicting Eden (*1 Kings 6:29-36*).
 - The temple's construction lasted seven years followed by a seven-day consecration ceremony; a timeframe of sevens widely used in Israel's religious activity because it echoed the seven days of creation (*1 Kings 6:38; 8:65-66; cf. Exodus 29:35-37; Leviticus 25:3-7; Deuteronomy 16:13*).
 - God intended the symbolic connections between the temple's imagery and its construction to remind Israel of its meaning – **it represented God's desire to dwell in the midst of His people** (*cf. Revelation 21:3*).

¹ 1 Kings 8:27. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- Solomon's prayer of dedication evidenced his understanding of the temple's significance. His prayer, for example, reveals:
 - His understanding that God's presence in the temple was an act of mercy and faithfulness towards a people whose sins violated His presence (*1 Kings 8:27-30, 54-60; cf. Exodus 33:1-3*).
 - His awareness that God's presence represented a relationship with Israel that required the nation's penitent humility (*cf. 1 Kings 8:46-53*).
- Solomon's prayer of dedication not only reveals his understanding of the temple's importance, it also models for us an important insight into growth:

Growth requires an attitude of penitent humility

- Solomon poetically expressed his understanding of the connection between penitent humility and growth in Proverbs 3:5-18 – **trusting in God rather than self and turning away from evil leads to life and blessings.**

Applications

- As He did with Israel and with Solomon (*1 Kings 8:12-21, 53; Exodus 19:5-6*), God initiates a relationship with us (*1 John 4:10*).
- God initiates the relationships because "there is no one who does not sin" (*1 Kings 8:46*); He initiates the relationship because we cannot.
- God's relationship involves His presence, which places expectations on us just as God's presence in the temple placed expectations on Solomon (*1 Kings 8:54-61; 9:1-9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19*). Meeting those expectations requires the humble recognition of our failures and our need for those expectations.
- Growth will not happen in our relationship with God if we do not therefore feel genuine, penitent humility (*cf. Ephesians 2:11-21; 4:1-3, 15-16*).
- God's willingness to dwell among His people reveals His merciful faithfulness and outlines the trajectory of His plan for His people (*Revelation 21-22*). Recognizing the graciousness and generosity of His plan ought to deepen our sense of penitent humility.

Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple evidences his attitude of penitent humility, an attitude that contributed to the growth he experienced in his reign as Israel's king. Similarly, growth in our relationship with God and in the roles He assigns us in life depend on our own attitude of penitent humility. Humbly embracing our failings is not, therefore a low point but the beginning of highs God desires for us.