



FAMILY DEVOTION :: PRIME :: BRAINSWEAT

Lesson 3 :: Pay Attention

In the 1980s, all eyes were on two sprinters—American Carl Lewis and Canadian Ben Johnson. Each had won several medals in the 100-meter race and had set world records. The 1988 Summer Olympics became a showdown between these two talented athletes. There was no love lost between the two, and Johnson came away the apparent winner in one of the biggest contests of the Olympics. It appeared that Johnson finished first—and did so in spectacular fashion.

But the story didn't end after the finish line was crossed. Three days following the race, Johnson was stripped of his medal and world record because he tested positive for steroid use. While Lewis claimed the gold medal and record, it was later found that he too had a history of stimulant abuse.

Two great runners—each started their race well, but neither ended well. It's a lesson that all believers should learn in their spiritual journey.

Read 1 Kings 11:1–13 together as a family. Solomon was known for his incredible wisdom. He asked God to give him wisdom rather than wealth in 1 Kings 3. God was pleased with the way that Solomon had begun his race. But by chapter 11, Solomon had turned his heart away from God and instead was pursuing the desires of his flesh and lust for women. Instead of guarding his heart for the things of God, he allowed sin to creep into his life and his lifestyle.

While taking international wives was customary for rulers in order to seal foreign relations, Solomon disobeyed God's commands found in Deuteronomy 17:17. He especially disregarded the fact that the wives he took worshipped pagan gods. The result? Solomon became an idolater. As 1 Kings 11:12 describes, "Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord." The final result was that Solomon's kingdom would be destroyed in the next generation and only a remnant would remain—the tribe of Judah.

Did Solomon's downfall happen suddenly? It most likely did not. It was a gradual disobedience that led him down a path of destruction and idolatry. In fact, most sin patterns occur the same way if our hearts are not guarded by the truth of obeying God's Word. One poor decision that leads to another poor decision can guide us down a path of sin that will take us farther than we ever expected or imagined. Remember to finish your race well. That's what others will remember about your life.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe what it means to "guard your heart"? What does that look like practically in your life?
2. Consider the people who are closest to you. Are they people who will lift you up or tear you down? How can you guard your heart when it comes to your relationships?
3. Think of someone you know who is no longer living. Did he finish his earthly race well? In what ways? What can you learn from him?
4. How can you keep your heart devoted to the things of God?
5. We are all called to repentance. What does repentance look like for you over the course of the next year?