

March 11
Lesson 2 (NIV)

THERE IS NO GOD LIKE YOU

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 132

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 6:12-21

2 CHRONICLES 6:12-21

¹² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. ¹³ Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. ¹⁴ He said:

“LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. ¹⁵ You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

¹⁶ “Now, LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.’ ¹⁷ And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

¹⁸ “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! ¹⁹ Yet, LORD my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. ²⁰ May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. ²¹ Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

KEY VERSE

You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.—2 Chronicles 6:15

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Recount what Solomon said concerning the Lord’s character and faithfulness in keeping promises.
2. Explain how Solomon’s prayer can serve as a model for the Christian’s prayer life.
3. List scriptural promises that God has kept to him or her.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Big Sandals to Fill
- B. Lesson Background

I. Solomon’s Preparation

(2 CHRONICLES 6:12, 13)

- A. Place (vv. 12, 13a)
- B. Posture (v. 13b)

II. Solomon’s Prayer (2 CHRONICLES 6:14-21)

- A. Sovereign God (v. 14)
- B. Sacred Promises (vv. 15-17)
- C. Small House (v. 18)

Of Architecture and Attitudes

D. Sincere Plea (vv. 19-21)

The Need to Ask

Conclusion

A. Solomon's God Is Our God

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

Introduction**A. Big Sandals to Fill**

When someone who has been in a leadership position steps down after many years, the next person in the position often faces a daunting task. This is seen in sports, when a coach of a certain team resigns or retires after being in charge of that team for many years. Perhaps in the process the coach has become something of a legend and has led the team to several championships. That's often referred to as a "tough act to follow" or having "big shoes to fill."

Consider the position that Solomon was in when he became king of Israel. David, his father, was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). This is not to say that David was perfect (as the events involving Bathsheba and Uriah reveal). But the general direction of David's life was one well pleasing to God, and he had gained the admiration and respect of the entire nation. How does one follow such an individual who has set the bar so high?

It is certainly to Solomon's credit that he possessed a sense of unworthiness to fill his father's shoes (or sandals): "I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties" (1 Kings 3:7). Then came Solomon's request of the Lord for "a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (3:9). Thus Solomon recognized an important truth: the key to following in his father's footsteps was to follow his father's God.

B. Lesson Background

One of Solomon's primary tasks as king of Israel was to finish a project his father had prepared for: building a temple to the Lord. This was something that David himself had sincerely desired to accomplish. But God did not permit David to fulfill his desire, telling him in 1 Chronicles 22:8, "You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight." David did, however, provide valuable assistance and resources so that Solomon would have a head start in completing the massive building project (22:5).

Today's lesson from 2 Chronicles 6 records a portion of the dedication ceremony for the finished temple over which Solomon presided. As the ceremony began, "while the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them" (2 Chronicles 6:3). He then called attention to the Lord's fulfillment of his promise to David that his son, Solomon, would reign in his place and would build a house for the Lord (6:10). The Lord acknowledged that David "did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name" (6:8), but that was not the Lord's intention. Solomon understood that the completed temple was not a personal accomplishment for him as much as it was the keeping of a divine promise. The king was merely an instrument in the hands of the master builder.

The temple's arrangement was similar to that of the tabernacle in that there were three main parts: the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies), the Holy Place, and the outer courtyard (Exodus 26, 27). Prior to the ceremony of dedication, the priests had carried the ark of the covenant into the Most Holy Place (2 Chronicles 5:7). After they had done so, the temple was filled with a cloud signifying the presence of the Lord. So overwhelming was this presence that "the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God" (5:14).

I. Solomon's Preparation

(2 CHRONICLES 6:12, 13)

A. Place (vv. 12, 13a)**^{12a.} Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel**

The altar of the Lord before which Solomon stands is the "bronze altar" (2 Chronicles 4:1). This altar is to be used for the daily sacrifices as well as the various offerings and sacrifices brought by the people. Since this altar is situated in the outer courtyard, Solomon is able to stand *in front of the whole assembly of Israel*. This altar is not to be confused with the golden altar of incense, which is set within the Holy Place as described in Exodus 30:1-6.

^{12b.} and spread out his hands.

This gesture is noted elsewhere in Scripture when an individual calls upon the Lord in prayer (Ezra 9:5; Psalm 88:9; 143:6; 1 Timothy 2:8). Some suggest that the posture resembles that of a young child raising his or her arms to a parent. Solomon may be king of Israel, but he still seems to recognize his status as a "little child" (1 Kings 3:7) in need of his Father's guidance.

^{13a.} Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform

This verse adds a detail to the parallel account in 1 Kings 8:22-30. The reason for a *platform* is quite practical: it allows Solomon to be visible to those gathered (compare Nehemiah 8:1-5). With a cubit being about 18 inches, its horizontal dimensions compute to about seven and a half feet *long* and *wide*, with a vertical dimension of about four and a half feet. We assume this edifice to be temporary.

B. Posture (v. 13b)**^{13b.} and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven.**

The king adopts a posture of obeisance as he prepares to address the Lord in prayer. The position for prayer we see here is also found elsewhere in Scripture; one instance is in Psalm 95:6: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." It should be noted that this psalm is attributed to David, according to the quotation found in Hebrews 4:7. Perhaps Solomon can think of no better way to approach God in prayer than that which David recommended!

What Do You Think?

In what ways might one's physical posture in prayer reflect one's attitude toward God?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Considering looking up vs. looking down ([Matthew 14:19](#); [Luke 18:13](#))
- Considering lying prostrate vs. kneeling vs. standing ([Joshua 7:6](#); [Daniel 6:10](#); [Luke 18:13](#))
- Other

II. Solomon's Prayer

(2 CHRONICLES 6:14-21)

A. Sovereign God (v. 14)**^{14a.} He said: "LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—**

Solomon begins his prayer with an acknowledgment of the Lord's uniqueness. Those outside of God's covenant people worship many gods in Solomon's time and continue to do so today. But the king's declaration remains just as true today as when originally uttered: *there is no God like you*.

^{14b.} "you who keep your covenant

One way the Lord demonstrates his uniqueness is by dealing with people on the basis of *covenant*. That the Lord God of Israel desires a close covenant relationship with people is foreign to other religious mind-sets. Solomon has already recognized the covenant God made with Israel (see [2 Chronicles 6:11](#)) and with David ([6:10](#)).

What Do You Think?

What decisions do Christians make differently when their belief that God keeps his covenant promises grows?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding financial priorities
- Regarding witness to unbelievers
- Regarding changes in what is viewed as risky
- Other

^{14c.} "of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

This acknowledgment highlights an important ingredient of that covenant. The covenants that God makes with individuals require certain conditions to be met by the parties to the covenant. God's part is to show *love*; the people's part is to obey God *wholeheartedly* as they do as God commands ([Deuteronomy 7:12-14](#); compare [Mark 12:30](#)). Although he was not perfect, a good example of the latter is David (next verse).

B. Sacred Promises (vv. 15-17)**^{15a.} "You have kept your promise to your servant David my father;**

The example of God's faithfulness that hits closest to home for Solomon concerns *David*, his *father*. The record of God's covenant with David is found in [2 Samuel 7](#). The intended result of the covenant is stated with the Lord's promise in [verse 16](#): "your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

Imperfect King David faced severe consequences for his adultery and related sins ([2 Samuel 12:10-19](#)). Nevertheless (and this is Solomon's emphasis), the Lord continued to honor his covenant with David. A key reason God did so with David and not with David's predecessor on the throne, Saul, was because David's repentance was deeply sincere ([2 Samuel 12:13](#); [Psalm 51](#)) while Saul's repentance seemed hollow ([1 Samuel 13:8-14](#); [15:10-31](#)).

^{15b.} "with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

Solomon's description of God's commitment to keeping his word is noteworthy. The one true God both speaks and acts. The gods of other peoples and nations can do neither (compare [Numbers 23:19](#); [Jeremiah 10:5](#); etc.).

What Do You Think?

What can we do to be more mindful of the long history of God's faithfulness? Why is it important to do so?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- In worship contexts
- In small group contexts
- In family contexts
- During alone times
- Other

^{16.} "Now, LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.'

Here we see again the combination of the Lord's covenant faithfulness and the expected response of obedience. Regarding the former, Solomon reiterates the Lord's intent to keep his promise to David of *a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel* (again, compare [2 Samuel 7:16](#)). Ultimately that covenant promise is fulfilled in Jesus, a descendant of David (see [Matthew 1:6-17](#); [Luke 1:30-33](#); [Acts 2:29-32](#); etc.).

But participation in that promise by individual *descendants* of David is dependent on their living in obedience to the *law* of the Lord as David himself had *done*. If they fail to do so, they will be subject to the Lord's discipline.

Tragically, this is exactly what will happen to Solomon himself. When he grows old, he will allow his many wives to lure him into worshipping their gods. As a

consequence, the Lord will inform him that his kingdom will be divided ([1 Kings 11:9-13](#)). But the promise made to David will remain intact (compare [Psalm 89:20-37](#)).

17. “And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

Solomon recognizes that the primary impetus in God’s *word* coming *true* is God himself. People do serve as instruments in carrying out his plans and purposes, but ultimately it is God who must see to it that those plans and purposes are accomplished.

What Do You Think?

If God were to remind you to bring to fruition a promise that you have made, what promise would that be?
Why?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding a promise to him
Regarding a promise to someone else
Regarding a promise made to yourself

C. Small House (v. 18)

18. “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

Here Solomon expresses awareness of the sacred mystery surrounding the temple. God has indeed promised to place his name in this structure ([2 Chronicles 6:20](#)); however, his people must not conclude from this that God can somehow be limited to that structure. In fact, it is absurd to think that the Creator of *the heavens* and the *earth* and all the vastness that exists within them could ever be confined to any earthly dwelling (compare [2 Chronicles 2:6](#); [Isaiah 66:1](#) [quoted in [Acts 7:48-50](#)]; [Acts 17:24, 25](#)). He will put his name there, which is another way of stating that his presence will dwell in the temple. This is represented by the presence of the ark of the covenant (see the Lesson Background).

Sadly, God’s people will eventually associate his presence with the temple to the degree that it will become a kind of good-luck charm ([Jeremiah 7:4](#)). They will come to trust in it more than in the Lord himself. Isaiah will remind the people of his day that the place where God truly desires to dwell is with the person “who is contrite and lowly in spirit” ([Isaiah 57:15](#); compare [66:2](#)). That is no less true today ([Matthew 5:3, 4](#); [Luke 18:13, 14](#); [1 Peter 5:5, 6](#); etc.).

OF ARCHITECTURE AND ATTITUDES

Recent decades have seen Christians engaged in so-called worship wars. Some battles have been over architecture. Should a church building “look like a church”? Is it a good idea to worship in a rented strip mall location among secular businesses? Or should Christians worship in homes as they did in New Testament times? One cartoon showed two men looking up at a basketball goal that had a stained-glass backboard as one remarked to the other that it was a compromise between “traditional” and “multipurpose.”

For the Israelites of Old Testament times, the decision was easy because God had already made it. He is the one who specified how the tabernacle was to be constructed and furnished ([Exodus 25:8-27:21](#); [39:42, 43](#)). He is the one who specified it to be the only place for proper worship ([Deuteronomy 12:5-14](#)). In building the temple, Solomon followed the pattern for the tabernacle in an upscale way.

Which is more important to God: the style and location of the building where we worship, or how we view fellow believers whose choice of worship style and location differs from ours?

—C. R. B.

What Do You Think?

What steps can we take to maintain a sense of humility before God?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In learning from bad examples ([Exodus 10:3](#); [2 Chronicles 36:11-20](#); [Acts 12:21-23](#); etc.)
In learning from good examples ([Numbers 12:3](#); [2 Kings 22:18-20](#); [Matthew 11:29](#); etc.)

D. Sincere Plea (vv. 19-21)

19. “Yet, LORD my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence.

Is Solomon stunned by what he has just acknowledged about the one he is addressing? How can he request anything of God, let alone be speaking to him? Humbly the king confesses his status as a mere *servant* (twice) and asks that the Lord *give attention* to his *prayer* and to his *plea for mercy* and *hear* his *cry*. Solomon knows who the real king of Israel is and how dependent even he is on his provision.

20. “May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.

Solomon also recognizes that his own need for the Lord’s help and mercy can occur any time—*day* or *night*. He asks that the Lord’s *eyes may be open* and that he *hear the prayer* that Solomon offers *toward this* temple. Solomon knows that his allegiance must not be to a building, but only to the God who has placed his *Name there* and is committed to his covenant people.

21. “Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.”

In pleading not only that his prayers be heard but also those of God’s *people Israel*, Solomon contrasts *this place* (the temple) with *heaven*, the Lord’s *dwelling place*. In doing so, he again affirms that the true residence of the Lord is in Heaven. It can never be in a temple such as the one Solomon is dedicating, as

magnificent as it may be.

The last line of the verse seems to presuppose that the reason someone would be praying *toward this place* would be for forgiveness of sin. That is indeed the greatest need of human beings, even that of kings as wise as Solomon! The most meaningful prayer anyone can voice is a plea for forgiveness. Such a request is repeated within the remainder of Solomon's eloquent dedicatory prayer ([2 Chronicles 6:25, 27, 30, 39](#)).

The God of Israel must not be treated as though he were some kind of genie who automatically provides whatever his people demand. He is the holy God of Heaven, the one whose splendor and majesty have earlier filled the temple to the degree that the priests were unable to enter and render their service.

THE NEED TO ASK

A true story involves a couple we'll call Mary and Joe. They married too young, and probably not for the best of reasons. A child soon came; then Mary was pregnant again. During that pregnancy, Joe had an affair and left. Alcohol became an overpowering factor. He married again . . . and again.

One night after the third marriage failed, Joe held a bottle in one hand and a gun in the other. He prayed, "God, I can't go on like this. If you are there, please forgive and help me."

Joe went to a Bible study where he met a woman who introduced him to Jesus. His new life in Christ gave him the power to overcome his addiction. He also found the strength to seek forgiveness from Mary (now a Christian herself) and their teenage children. When they responded positively over the phone, Joe drove 1,000 miles to ask forgiveness in person. That was decades ago; today their relationships with Christ bind them in forgiving love.

A strange story? Perhaps. But forgiveness is how God deals with us, loving us and giving us the strength to do the same. Solomon's life experience taught him that God is gracious and forgiving. But we do well to remember two things: (1) it's better not to do things for which one needs forgiveness, and (2) God's forgiveness has its limits.

—C. R. B.

Conclusion

A. Solomon's God Is Our God

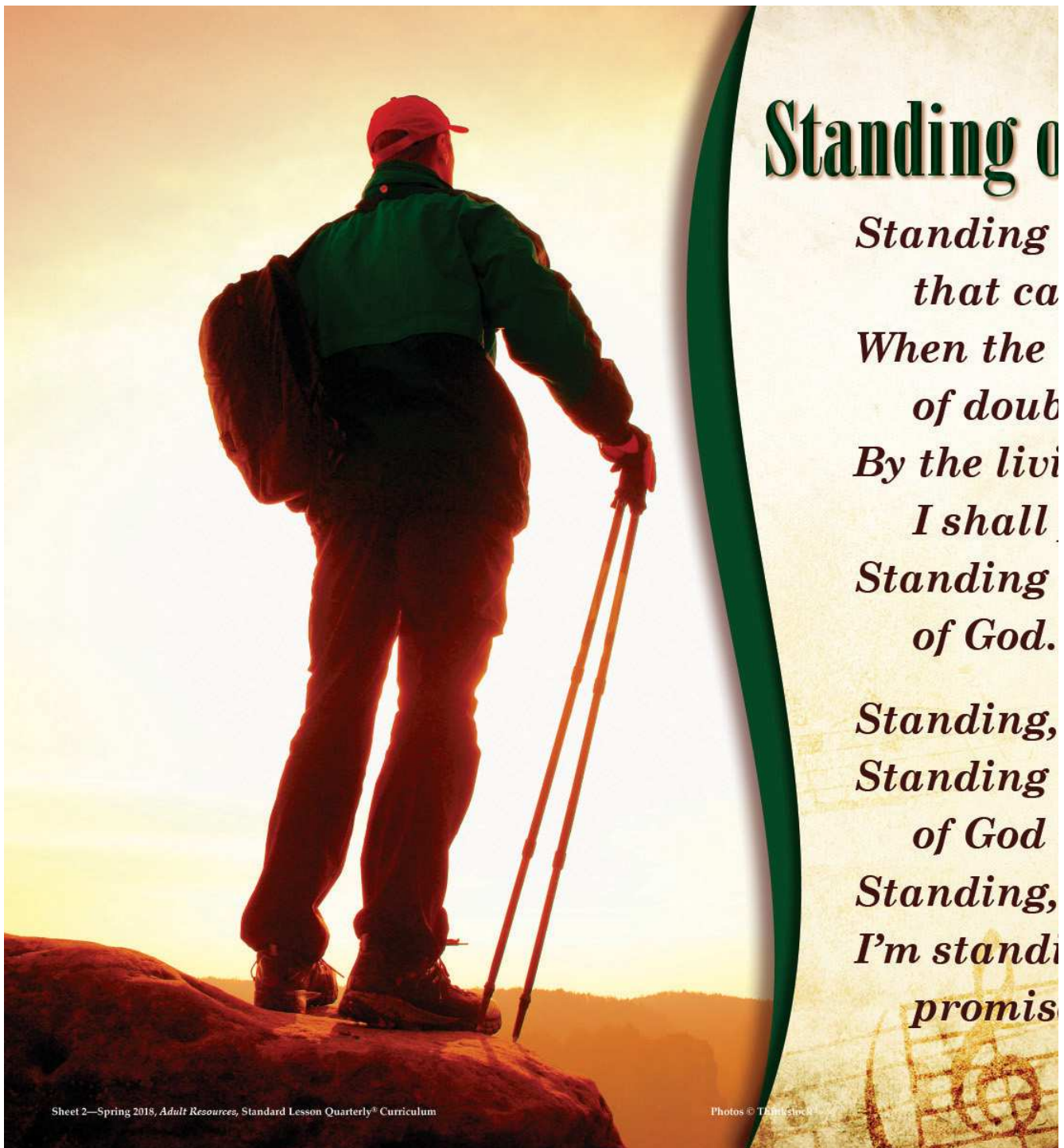
As we consider the portion of Solomon's prayer recorded in today's text, we have noted its primary themes. These are (1) God's fulfillment of his covenant promises to David and (2) Solomon's acknowledgment of the temple in Jerusalem as the place where he would put his name. It was a visual reminder of God's desire to hear the prayers of his covenant people Israel. But how does such a prayer apply to Christians?

It is important to note the manner in which Solomon begins his prayer: "Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth" ([2 Chronicles 6:14](#)). Those words can be prayed with the utmost confidence by any follower of Jesus today. The enduring truth is that there is no god like the God of the Bible.

This God is the one who has revealed himself to fallen, lost humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. As [Hebrews 1:2](#) tells us, "In these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son." Jesus is the superior and final revelation of God; despite the "many roads to Heaven" heresy that continues to deceive people, if anyone rejects him as Savior, that person rejects all hope of salvation and eternal life ([John 3:36; 14:6](#)).

God is also still in the covenant-keeping business. The covenant Solomon alluded to in his prayer was mainly the covenant God made with David; the new covenant established by Jesus fulfills that promise to David. God still requires of us, as he did of those under previous covenants, that we walk before the Lord "wholeheartedly" ([2 Chronicles 6:14](#)). Paul uses similar terminology when he tells Christians to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" ([Ephesians 4:1](#)).

We can also be certain that God will keep his promises to us as he did with David, a point noted by Solomon in his prayer ([2 Chronicles 6:15](#)). Paul declared that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken" ([2 Corinthians 1:20](#)). What God has spoken by his mouth he will carry out with his hand, as Solomon affirmed in [2 Chronicles 6:15](#). God continues to speak throughout the rest of Scripture, and his words and actions are as dependable for us as they were for Solomon. His God is indeed our God.



Sheet 2—Spring 2018, *Adult Resources*, Standard Lesson Quarterly® Curriculum

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Visual for Lessons 2 & 13. Post this visual before class begins. Use it to introduce any of the questions on pages 244 and 245.

B. Prayer

Father, we praise you as the covenant-keeping God of mercy. We thank you for the mercy offered through the new covenant established by Jesus' blood. May we walk before you daily with all our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God will keep both his promises and those who faithfully walk with him.

HOW TO SAY IT

Bathsheba Bath-*she*-buh.
 Chronicles Kron-i-kulz.
 Corinthians Ko-*rin*-thee-unz (*th* as in *thin*).
 Ephesians Ee-*fee*-zhunz.
 Deuteronomy Due-ter-*ahn*-uh-me.
 Ezra Ez-ruh.
 Isaiah Eye-*zay*-uh.
 Solomon Sol-o-mun.
 Uriah Yu-*rye*-uh.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Distribute a variety of magazines. Have students search through them to find examples of ads promising outlandish results. (For example: “Lose 20 pounds in 30 days!” “Earn a 6-figure salary while working one day a week!” or “Miracle cream makes you look and feel half your age!”) Write the promises from the ads on the board. Read through each headline and talk about which are even remotely possible. Erase those that are not. Invite students to talk about times they’ve been deceived by (or avoided deception of) unrealistic promises.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Promises Made, Promises Broken” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work individually or in small groups to match each United States president with a promise made and broken.

After either activity, transition to Bible study by saying, “People want to know that others will keep their word. Sadly, experience has taught us that such is not always the case. At the temple dedication, Solomon thanked the Lord for keeping his promises to Israel.”

Into the Word

You will need three cardboard boxes for this activity. No specific size is needed, and they don’t have to be identical. But you do need to be able to stack them on top of each other. You will also need a marker.

Invite volunteers to read aloud [2 Chronicles 6:1-11](#). Ask students to name the promises God made and kept to his people. Say, “The people of Israel had seen God keep his promises since the day he led them out of slavery in Egypt. This would become the foundation for their growing faith.”

Have someone read aloud [verses 12-15](#). Ask students to describe the promise mentioned in those verses. Write the word *STRUCTURE* in large letters on a box, and place the box on the floor or on a table. Ask, “Why was this temple *STRUCTURE* important to the people of Israel?”

Ask someone to read aloud [verses 16, 17](#). Have students describe the promise mentioned. Write the word *REIGN* in large letters on a second box, and stack it on top of the first. Ask, “Why was the *REIGN* of David’s descendants important to the people of Israel?”

Invite someone to read aloud [verses 18-21](#). Let students describe the promise in these verses. Write the word *PRESENCE* in large letters on a third box, and stack it on top of the second. Ask, “Why was God’s continued *PRESENCE* important to the people of Israel?”

Refer to the stack of boxes and say, “As God kept his promises, the people’s faith grew. Their trust grew. Their expectations grew. The building of the temple wasn’t about a physical building. It was about a building of relationship, a building of trust, a building of a future.”

Alternative. Read [2 Chronicles 6:1-21](#). Distribute copies of the “Scripture Scramble” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work individually or in small groups to unscramble words from the text and review the account.

Into Life

Say, “People want to know that others will keep their word. How can they respond to a fulfilled promise? At the temple dedication, Solomon thanked the Lord for keeping his promises. We can too.”

Distribute paper and pens. Ask class members to create an acrostic using the word *PROMISES*. Each letter should be included in a promise from God (examples: “Peace I give to you,” “I will give you Rest”).

Allow class members to share their completed work before closing the session.