

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Building the House of the Lord

1 Kings 5:1–6:38

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson stands at the heart of the Kings narrative and carries heavy doctrinal freight. The temple is not merely an ancient building project; it is the focal point of God's covenant with Israel, the visible sign that the Lord who brought His people out of Egypt had come to live among them. But the conditional word God speaks in 6:11–13 is the theological spine of the whole chapter: outward magnificence means nothing apart from obedient hearts. The teacher should help students see that God has never been impressed by structures as such. He is looking for a people who walk in His statutes and keep His commandments. That principle does not change in the New Testament; it deepens.

Doctrinally, the teacher must handle Q9 with care and precision. The Jerusalem temple was a divinely given shadow that pointed forward to its own fulfillment. Jesus declared His body to be the true temple (John 2:19–21). By His Spirit, the church is now God's dwelling on earth (Eph 2:19–22; 1 Pet 2:4–5). The Old Covenant temple arrangement has been fulfilled and superseded in Christ, not temporarily set aside to be resumed in a millennial era. There is no New Testament expectation of a rebuilt physical temple restoring God's earthly presence; the presence of God is now in Christ and in His people. Help students feel the weight of belonging to this living temple, and press toward the formation aim: that every student leaves seeing their own life as a dwelling place God wants to inhabit, and asking whether the 'if' of 6:12 is being met.

The formation aim is equally urgent. Solomon built for seven years with extraordinary care and cost. Most of us are tempted to give God our hurried leftovers. This lesson invites students to examine whether the quality of attention and devotion they bring to their walk with God matches the seriousness with which God takes His own dwelling among them.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 5:1–6. Solomon sends to Hiram of Tyre for cedar and skilled workers. What does this alliance tell us about God's ability to use relationships, even with those outside Israel, to accomplish His purposes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hiram king of Tyre is introduced as a man who 'had always been on friendly terms with David' (5:1, NIV). This prior relationship becomes the bridge for a major international alliance, but notice that the purpose of the alliance is entirely sacred. Solomon immediately frames his

request in terms of what David could not do and what God has now permitted. Diplomatic relationships in the ancient Near East were complex, but God's hand is visible in this one: the raw materials Israel needed did not exist in Canaan, and they came from outside the covenant people.

There is no hint in the text that Solomon's use of Hiram was a compromise or a spiritual risk at this point (that changes later). Rather, God sovereignly placed resources in the hands of a Phoenician king and gave Solomon the wisdom to negotiate for them. This is a pattern seen throughout Scripture: God uses the nations to accomplish His redemptive purposes without being limited to working only inside the visible covenant community. Think of Cyrus in Isaiah 45, or the magi in Matthew 2.

The cedars of Lebanon were the finest timber in the ancient world, prized across the entire Near East. By specifying that this wood would be used for the temple, Solomon is declaring that God deserves the very best the world can offer. Hiram's response is warm and joyful (5:7), suggesting he recognized the significance of what was being undertaken. The text says Hiram 'praised the Lord' when he heard Solomon's words, a remarkable detail.

For the teacher, the application is not 'use secular partnerships strategically.' It is deeper than that. God is not confined to working through only those who already know Him. His purposes are wide enough to draw in cedar from Lebanon, wisdom from Egypt, bronze from Tyre. Students should leave this question with a bigger view of God's sovereignty over history and relationships.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's sovereign use of relationships and resources outside the covenant community
- The appropriateness of international diplomacy in service of sacred purposes
- Solomon's wisdom in framing the request in terms of God's purposes, not personal ambition
- The distinction between using the resources of the world and compromising with the world's values
- God's ability to work through unexpected people and nations for His redemptive plan

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell us about God's sovereignty that the materials for His temple came from outside Israel entirely?
- How do you think Hiram understood what was happening, and what significance do you attach to the text saying he praised the Lord?
- Can you think of a time when God used a relationship or resource you did not expect to accomplish something clearly for His glory?

Question 2

Student Question:

Solomon organized 30,000 rotating laborers and a massive supply chain to build something that would honor God (5:13–18). What is a project, commitment, or habit in your own life that deserves more sustained effort precisely because it is for God’s glory rather than your own?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The logistics described in 5:13–18 are staggering. Thirty thousand men in rotating shifts of ten thousand per month to Lebanon. Seventy thousand carriers. Eighty thousand quarry workers. Over three thousand supervisors. This is not casual effort; it is the entire productive capacity of a nation redirected toward a single sacred goal. The text’s specificity invites us to take the cost seriously.

There is a subtle tension in the conscripted labor that the text does not fully resolve here but that becomes significant later. Israel’s request for a king had included the warning that the king would conscript their sons (1 Sam 8:11–17). Solomon is fulfilling that warning even while serving a holy purpose. The reader is meant to hold both things at once: God’s purposes are being accomplished AND the costs of kingship are real.

The self-reflection angle for students is this: we tend to reserve our most disciplined, organized, sustained effort for things that serve our own ambitions. When it comes to spiritual disciplines, Bible study, prayer, serving the church, or giving sacrificially, we often operate at a fraction of the intensity Solomon brought to building the temple. The question is not whether we can be this organized but whether we are willing to be.

It is worth noting that the labor here is not portrayed as joyless. The workers are serving the God of Israel in a project that will become the center of national worship for centuries. There is dignity in work done for God’s purposes, however demanding it is.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The relationship between sustained effort and genuine devotion to God
- The cost of discipleship and giving God our best rather than our leftovers
- The shadow side of kingship even in service of sacred ends
- Spiritual disciplines as organized, intentional effort rather than casual good intentions
- The dignity of labor offered to God

Discussion Prompts

- What does the scale of Solomon’s organizational effort tell you about how seriously he took this task?
- Is there something in your spiritual life that deserves this level of sustained, organized attention? What keeps you from giving it?
- How do you hold together the fact that this massive labor served a holy purpose while also representing the burdens Solomon’s kingship imposed on the people?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 6:1–10. The text notes that the temple was built with stones dressed at the quarry 'so that no hammer, chisel, or any iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built' (6:7). What does this detail reveal about the reverence and order God expects in approaching His presence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The prohibition of iron tools at the building site (6:7) is one of the most evocative details in the whole chapter. The stones were dressed miles away at the quarry, then transported and fitted together in silence. No hammering, no chiseling, no rough work was to be heard at the place where God would dwell. This detail appears in rabbinic tradition as a sign that the instruments of war (iron weapons) must not touch the house of peace.

The silence at the building site points to something deeper than mere decorum. It signals that approaching God requires a kind of preparation that happens before you get to His presence. You bring yourself ready; you do not do your preparation work in His courts. This is consistent with the Levitical regulations that governed who could approach the tabernacle and how. God's holiness sets the terms of access.

There is a New Testament resonance here. Hebrews 12:28 calls us to 'offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.' The silence of the quarry-cut stones is a picture of the kind of heart preparation that worship demands. We live in an age that often treats worship as casual, noisy, and improvised. The text of 1 Kings 6:7 challenges that posture without condemning contemporary forms.

For the teacher, this question can open a productive discussion about what reverence looks like in twenty-first century worship without becoming a debate about style. The issue is not volume or instrumentation; it is the orientation of the heart. Are we prepared before we gather? Do we come to give or only to receive? Do we recognize whose presence we are entering?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The holiness of God and the reverence required to approach Him
- Preparation for worship as something that begins before we arrive
- The relationship between outward order and inward reverence
- What New Testament worship that is offered 'in spirit and in truth' looks like (John 4:24)
- The danger of treating corporate worship as casual or primarily consumer-oriented

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God specified that no iron tool should be heard at the temple site? What was being communicated about His character?
- What does it look like practically to 'prepare' yourself before worshipping with the church on Sunday?
- How does the reverence built into the temple's construction challenge or shape how you think about the atmosphere of Lord's Day worship?

Question 4

Student Question:

The temple took seven years to build (6:38). Meaningful things for God often require long, patient obedience rather than a single dramatic moment. Where in your spiritual life are you tempted to rush or cut corners on something that God is calling you to build slowly and well?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Seven years. The number is significant in biblical literature as a number of completeness, and the text uses it deliberately. But beyond the symbolic weight, seven years is simply a long time. Solomon was a young man when he began; he was a seasoned ruler when the temple was finished. Long, patient, unspectacular faithfulness over years is a discipline that our culture consistently undervalues.

The Christian life has its dramatic conversion moments, but it is overwhelmingly composed of ordinary, repeated choices: getting up early to pray, returning to Scripture when it feels dry, serving the same people week after week, honoring commitments when they are inconvenient. Solomon's seven years of building is a picture of that kind of faithfulness. The temple did not appear overnight by a miracle; it was built board by board, stone by stone.

There is a specific application here for anyone who has given up on a spiritual goal because it did not produce results quickly. Bible memorization, a prayer discipline, a marriage that needs work, a habit of generosity, an area of personal holiness: these things are built slowly. The enemy of long obedience is the expectation of immediate results.

Note too that 6:38 records the completion almost matter-of-factly: 'In the eleventh month... the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications.' There is no grand ceremony yet (that comes in chapter 8). The completion itself is enough. God honors finishing what we start.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Long-term faithfulness versus the expectation of immediate results
- Spiritual formation as a slow, cumulative process
- The danger of giving up on godly goals that require sustained effort
- The virtue of finishing what we start in service to God

- How patience and perseverance function as spiritual disciplines

Discussion Prompts

- What spiritual discipline or relationship is God asking you to build slowly over years rather than fix quickly?
- Why do you think we find long-term obedience harder than intense but brief efforts?
- What would it look like for your small group or congregation to commit together to a seven-year vision for spiritual growth?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 6:11–13 carefully. God interrupts the building narrative with a direct word to Solomon: the conditional promise ‘if you will walk in my statutes... I will dwell among the children of Israel.’ What does this tell us about the relationship between God’s covenant presence and human obedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The divine word in 6:11–13 interrupts the building narrative at what feels like an odd moment: the structure is going up, and God stops to make a point about obedience. The interruption is itself the message. The building is not what matters most. ‘If you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel’ (6:12–13, ESV).

The word ‘if’ is the theological hinge of the entire passage and arguably of the whole book of Kings. The Sinai covenant was always conditional. God’s dwelling among Israel was not automatic or guaranteed by the presence of a magnificent building. It was contingent on the faithfulness of the king and ultimately of the people. This is not God being harsh or arbitrary; it is God being honest about the nature of covenant relationship.

This is precisely why the Babylonian exile is not a failure of God’s promises but a fulfillment of His warnings. The ‘if’ that Solomon heard in chapter 6 was the same ‘if’ that the prophets would thunder across the centuries of decline. When the people finally broke faith beyond recovery, the temple was destroyed, not because God abandoned His word but because the covenant conditions had not been met.

The teacher should resist any reading that treats God’s conditional promise as a threat or as evidence of divine inconsistency. The conditionality reflects the genuine, relational character of the covenant. God is not a vending machine that dispenses presence when you put in the right coins. He is a covenant partner who calls for genuine, sustained, heartfelt obedience.

For Christians today, the parallel is not that our salvation is constantly in doubt. Rather, the quality and depth of experienced fellowship with God is related to the quality of our obedience. The person who walks closely with God in daily obedience experiences His presence and blessing in ways the drifting Christian does not. The 'if' does not threaten our security in Christ; it calls us to the kind of faithfulness that makes that security feel real and alive.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The conditional nature of God's covenant presence in the Old Testament
- The relationship between obedience and the experienced reality of God's dwelling
- Why the 'if' of 6:12 is not a threat but a description of genuine covenant relationship
- The continuity between the Sinai covenant conditions and the prophetic warnings of exile
- How the New Covenant in Christ fulfills and transforms (not eliminates) the principle of obedient faith
- The danger of assuming God's presence regardless of the direction of one's life

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God interrupted the building narrative at this precise point to speak about obedience?
- What does the word 'if' tell you about the kind of God Israel was dealing with?
- How does this conditional promise in 6:12-13 help you make sense of what happens later in Solomon's life and eventually in the exile?

Question 6

Student Question:

The 'if' of 6:12 makes God's dwelling conditional on Solomon's faithfulness. In what area of your life does God's word function like that 'if' for you right now, calling you to a faithfulness that determines whether His presence will be felt fully or will seem distant?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The self-application of Q5 is the most personal moment in the lesson. Every believer has an 'if' in their life, a place where God's word speaks a condition and waits for the response of faithful obedience. The 'if' is not about earning salvation; it is about the felt reality of God's presence and the vitality of the relationship.

Spiritual drift is rarely dramatic. It happens in small compromises, in the slow neglect of prayer, in letting Sunday become less important, in the gradual replacement of God's word with entertainment. The person who experiences God as distant is rarely the person who had a single catastrophic fall; more often it is the person who stopped maintaining the habits of obedience over months and years.

The image from 6:12–13 is that God is always ready to dwell. The question is whether the conditions are being met. This is an invitation, not a threat. God is leaning in. He wants to fill the temple. But He will not fill a temple that has turned its rooms over to idols (as Solomon eventually does in chapter 11).

The teacher should invite honest, specific reflection here. Not general statements about 'being a better Christian' but actual named areas: a broken relationship that needs repair, a pattern of dishonesty in a specific context, a sexual temptation that has been given ground, a bitterness that has not been released, a neglect of the assembly of God's people. The more specific the application, the more transformative the discussion.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal accountability for the state of one's walk with God
- The connection between specific acts of obedience and the felt nearness of God
- Naming and owning the specific drift rather than speaking vaguely about 'growing closer to God'
- The difference between guilt (which paralyzes) and godly sorrow (which produces repentance and change)
- How the community of the church helps us maintain the 'if' conditions in one another's lives

Discussion Prompts

- What specific area of your life feels like the place where the 'if' is currently being tested?
- How does naming a specific area of drift feel different from a general commitment to 'do better'?
- How can this group help one another maintain the faithfulness that God's presence in our lives requires?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 6:14–35. The interior of the temple was lined with cedar, carved with cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, then overlaid entirely with gold. What is the theological significance of this overwhelming beauty and costliness in the place where God would dwell?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The interior description of the temple is overwhelming in its detail and beauty. Cedar from floor to ceiling, no stone showing. Carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, the same imagery found in Eden (Gen 2). Every surface of the inner sanctuary overlaid with gold. The Most Holy Place a perfect cube, twenty cubits in each direction, the same dimensions that appear at the end of Revelation for the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:16). These details are not accidental.

The theological significance of the beauty is this: God deserves the most excellent, most costly, most carefully crafted offering His people can give. The beauty of the temple was not for the comfort of worshipers (few Israelites ever saw the interior). It was for God. This is worship as an end in itself, not as a means to human spiritual experience. God is worth adoration even when no human eye witnesses it.

The cherubim (6:23–28) are a specific element that deserves attention. These massive figures, fifteen feet tall with wingspans of fifteen feet, filled the Most Holy Place with their outstretched wings. They recall the cherubim who guarded the entrance to Eden after the fall (Gen 3:24) and the cherubim over the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle. They signal that what is happening in this room is a reversal of Eden's exile. God is present again with His people.

The carved palms and flowers throughout the temple reinforce the Eden connection. The temple is paradise restored in miniature: a place where God and humanity meet, where worship replaces exile. Every carving pointed forward to a day when the full restoration of Eden would be complete, and that day arrived in the person of Jesus, who is both the new Adam and the true temple.

For the teacher, this question can move students from appreciation of the temple's beauty to a theology of excellence in worship. We offer God the best we have not because He needs it but because He deserves it, and because the act of costly offering forms us into people who increasingly value what God values.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The theology of beauty in worship: excellence as an expression of the character of God
- The Edenic symbolism of the temple and what it signals about God's redemptive purpose
- The distinction between worship-as-experience (for us) and worship-as-offering (for God)
- The cherubim as guardians of God's presence and symbols of the reversal of Eden's exile
- How the temple's glory anticipates the new creation described in Revelation

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God specified such elaborate and costly beauty for a room that almost no human being would ever see?
- What does the Edenic imagery of cherubim, palms, and flowers tell you about what God was communicating through the temple's design?
- How does the principle of offering God our best manifest in the way your congregation approaches worship today?

Question 8

Student Question:

Solomon gave the best available materials and craftsmanship to the house of God. How does the principle of giving God our best (rather than our leftovers) show up practically in your worship, your time, and your generosity today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The application question here runs against the grain of a consumer culture. We are trained to ask, 'What do I get out of worship?' The temple's construction asks a different question: 'What are you bringing?' Solomon brought the best timber, the best craftsmen, the best gold, the best seven years of sustained effort. What do we bring?

In the New Testament context, the 'best' we offer God is not cedar and gold but time, attention, talent, and treasure. The person who arrives at worship having prepared their heart is offering something. The person who gives generously and specifically rather than out of what's left over is building something. The person who shows up faithfully to serve in ways that no one notices is laying foundation stones.

It is worth pushing back gently on the common rationalization that 'God looks at the heart, so what I do outwardly does not matter much.' The temple's builders understood that the outward form of the offering matters because it expresses and shapes the inward disposition. The man who gives God his careful attention in Bible study and the man who gives God five distracted minutes before sleeping are both reflecting and reinforcing something about how they value God.

The teacher can encourage students to identify one specific area where they are currently giving God their leftovers and to name what giving their best would actually look like in that area.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The principle of offering God our best rather than our convenience
- How outward forms of worship express and shape inward devotion
- The contrast between consumer spirituality and sacrificial worship
- Specific areas where 'leftover' devotion is most common: time, attention, giving, service
- The formation power of costly offering: it makes us more like the God we are worshiping

Discussion Prompts

- In what area of your devotion to God are you most tempted to give Him what is left over rather than what is best?
- What would it look like to give God your best in that area this week in one specific, concrete way?
- How does the act of costly offering, whether in giving, serving, or showing up, change the one who offers it?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read John 2:19–21, 1 Peter 2:4–5, and Ephesians 2:19–22 alongside 1 Kings 6. The Jerusalem temple was a magnificent shadow, but where does the New Testament tell us the true and permanent dwelling of God is located? What does this mean for how we understand the church, and why does this foreclose any expectation of a future rebuilt physical temple restoring God's presence on earth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the theological center of the lesson and must be handled with full clarity. The Jerusalem temple was a genuine, God-given, magnificent dwelling place for the Lord's name among His covenant people. It was also always a shadow, a type, a pointer. The author of Hebrews declares that the entire Levitical system was 'a shadow of the good things to come' (Heb 10:1). The temple was the most visible part of that system.

Jesus made the claim explicit in John 2:19–21. When He said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' the text tells us plainly: 'He was speaking about the temple of His body.' The true and ultimate dwelling place of God on earth is not a building in Jerusalem; it is the incarnate Son of God, and by extension, the body of people He calls His own. This is not Christian imperialism over Jewish texts; it is the fulfillment the texts themselves anticipate in their Edenic imagery and their conditional promises.

Peter makes it personal. Believers are 'living stones being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Pet 2:4–5). Every member of the church is a stone in the temple. The community of believers gathered in Jesus's name is the dwelling place of God on earth. This is the fulfillment of everything Solomon's seven years of labor pointed toward.

Paul develops this in Ephesians 2:19–22: the church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.' Notice the present-tense growth: 'is being built together.' The true temple is not complete yet; it is still under construction, growing toward its completion when Christ returns.

This theological reality forecloses any expectation of a future rebuilt physical temple as the necessary or appropriate dwelling place of God. The Old Covenant temple arrangement, with its curtain, its Most Holy Place, its restricted access, was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matt 27:51). That curtain's tearing was not an accident or a tragedy; it was the announcement that the way into God's presence was now fully open in Christ and that the era of physical temples as God's dwelling was complete. To expect a rebuilt temple is to expect God to step backward from the fulfillment into the shadow. The New Testament gives no such expectation

and in fact argues against it. The true temple is here. It is Christ and His church, and you are part of it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temple as a type and shadow pointing forward to Christ and His church
- Jesus's identification of His body as the true temple (John 2:19–21)
- Believers as living stones in God's spiritual house (1 Pet 2:4–5)
- The church as God's dwelling place built on Christ the cornerstone (Eph 2:19–22)
- Why the New Covenant fulfillment of the temple forecloses premillennial expectations of a rebuilt physical temple
- The tearing of the curtain as the announcement that the era of the physical temple was complete (Matt 27:51)
- The present-tense reality: God dwells among His people NOW in Christ and in the Spirit

Discussion Prompts

- When Jesus said 'destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,' what was He claiming about Himself in relation to everything Solomon built?
- How does 1 Peter 2:4–5 change the way you think about your own place in the community of believers?
- If the church is now the true temple where God dwells, what does that mean for how we treat one another, how we gather, and how we behave when we are assembled?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across 1 Kings 5:1–6:38, what is one specific truth about God's desire to dwell among His people that Jesus is using this passage to form in you, and what is one concrete change that conviction should produce in how you live this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question invites students to move from study to surrender, from information to formation. The passage has offered many entry points: the costliness of worship, the patience required for long obedience, the conditional 'if' of covenant faithfulness, the beauty of what God deserves, and the overwhelming truth that the living temple is now us, the church of Christ.

The best responses to this question will be specific rather than general. 'I want to be more devoted' is a wish. 'I am going to set aside thirty minutes before Sunday to prepare my heart for worship because I realized I have been arriving distracted and treating the assembly as a box to check' is a formation step. Push students gently toward the specific.

The question also asks students to name what Jesus is forming in them, not just what they plan to do. This Christocentric framing is intentional. The teacher should reinforce that spiritual formation is not self-improvement; it is conformity to Christ by the power of His Spirit, in the community of His people. We are not building ourselves; we are being built by the master builder.

Close the discussion by reading Ephesians 2:21–22 aloud: ‘in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.’ Invite students to sit with the wonder of that: God wants to dwell in you. The question is only whether you are letting Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The move from biblical information to spiritual transformation
- Specificity in application as the mark of genuine conviction
- Spiritual formation as Christ’s work in us, not self-improvement
- The community dimension of transformation: we are being built together, not alone
- Ending in wonder and gratitude rather than merely in duty

Discussion Prompts

- What is the one truth from this passage that landed most deeply for you, and what specific change does it call for?
- How does knowing that you are a living stone in God’s temple change how you feel about the ordinary days of your week?
- What would it look like for this group to help one another become a clearer dwelling place for God together?