



Scripture



1 Kings 3:5-15, 23-28

5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” **6** And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. **7** And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. **8** And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. **9** Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” **10** It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. **11** And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, **12** behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. **13** I give you also what you

have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. **14** And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” **15** And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. ... **23** Then the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; and the other says, ‘No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” **24** And the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought before the king. **25** And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” **26** Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.” **27** Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.” **28** And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

Unit .12

Session .01

A Son Requests Wisdom

Intro Options



Main Point:
Wisdom comes from God,
and He freely gives it to
those who seek Him.

Option 1

What makes a great leader? We could list many things here: a prestigious education, high intelligence, a proven track record of achievement, a charismatic personality, or the ability to cast vision. These qualities could make a great leader, but they do not guarantee great leadership.

- **Take a few minutes to discuss some of the great leaders of history. What makes them great leaders?**

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goldman argues that what makes a great leader is not a high IQ or off-the-charts talent. What makes a great leader, he argues, is someone with a high level of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the sum of five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skill.

Though he sometimes misses the mark in his analysis, Goldman essentially describes what the Bible calls wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and acting on what is right. It's knowing what to do when—quite frankly—we don't know what to do. A good leader is a wise leader. Good leaders know how to manage themselves, relate well to others, and discern between good and evil. They know how to navigate in choppy waters.

As Christians, we believe that wisdom must go beyond the world's perspective because we believe wisdom comes from an all-wise God. God desires to give us wisdom as part of our relationship with Him. As we pursue Him by faith, He generously gives us the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

Option 2

Provide each student with paper. Instruct students to create a list of requests to God—requests for items, ideas, or skills. Allow a few minutes for this activity. As a group, discuss some of your student's requests. Make sure students know that God is not obligated to fulfill our desires but tells us to ask Him for what we need. Explain that requesting things from God requires our attitudes and motives to be aligned with His heart and His purpose. For example, Solomon asked for wisdom—a gift that would allow him to be a good leader for God's people. God blessed Solomon above and beyond what he requested because the request pleased God—it aligned with His heart and plan.

- **What are some requests people often make that are motivated by selfish desires? Why are those requests not pleasing to God?**
- **How can you make sure the heart, attitude, and motive behind your requests will honor God?**

TEACHING PLAN

Moving forward in the biblical story line, we turn to David's son Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel. In 1 Kings 3, we see Solomon asking God for the very thing that he needed to be the king God desired: wisdom. Neither power nor wealth nor charisma would be enough to reign over God's chosen people. Rather, wisdom would be the distinguishing mark of the kind of king God wanted for Israel. And Solomon displayed this reality like no other.

Read 1 Kings 3:5-15.



- **Imagine if God told you to ask for anything from Him. What immediately comes to mind? What would you most likely request?**

Most likely few of us have begun a new endeavor with as many issues and crises as Solomon faced when he began his reign. Nevertheless, we all can probably relate to the stress involved with starting something new. A new school year. A new school. A new summer job. The question is how will we handle those stressful situations? Where will we turn to for help and the ability to grind through the challenges we face? As we will see, God puts us in these challenging situations so that we would realize the answer is not found within us, or even around us, but above us—in trusting in Him for His strength and wisdom.

- **What do you do when you feel unprepared for a new responsibility?**

Solomon admitted his lack of leadership experience, which is all the more remarkable when you consider all the events that had happened in chapters 1 and 2. He admitted he had no experience in leadership (v. 7). He acknowledged the task in front of him was large—too large for him. So, he asked for a receptive heart and the ability to discern between good and evil. He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people, and he recognized that he was there only by divine appointment. God placed him there, and it was an act of His grace.

- **Why is Solomon's humble approach a good model for the way we should go before God?**

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom. Recognizing God's grace in our lives and admitting that the task before us is impossible in our own strength humbles us and causes us to reach out for divine wisdom. When we think too highly of ourselves, we are in danger of walking in our own wisdom and strength.

In addition to Solomon's posture in prayer, take a look at the purpose behind his praying. Solomon asked for God's wisdom in order to lead God's people well. He made a request for himself, but his intention was to use the wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. In other words, his motivation for wanting wisdom was other-centered. That's why his prayer pleased the Lord. 

- **What can we learn about prayer requests from Solomon's choice and God's response?**

COMMENTARY

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1 Kings 1-2

1:1–2:46. In most monarchies, the firstborn son is generally considered to be the heir to the throne. But Solomon wasn't David's oldest son. Far from it. In fact, Solomon was the tenth son of David, the youngest born of Bathsheba (1 Chron. 3:1-5). But God often violates our social norms to bring attention to His divine ways. Throughout Scripture we see Him choosing the younger sons in families for leadership. Isaac was Abraham's second born (Gen. 17:15-19). Jacob was Isaac's second born (Gen. 25:24-25). Joseph was Jacob's eleventh born (Gen. 29–30). Even David himself was the youngest of his brothers (1 Sam. 16:6-13). So we shouldn't be surprised that God chose Solomon to succeed David. As God Himself told Samuel, humans don't see as God sees (1 Sam. 16:7).

Apparently, however, it was a surprise to Adonijah, the oldest surviving son of David. (See 2 Sam. 13:28-33; 2 Sam. 18:9-17.) The Book of 1 Kings opens with Adonijah's bid for the throne. There is enough drama in the first two chapters of 1 Kings to fill several seasons of a television serial drama! Adonijah's coup was thwarted by Solomon's mother, Bathsheba (1:17-27); David himself organized Solomon's coronation parade (1:32-40); David, on his deathbed, made Solomon swear to kill two of his political enemies (2:1-9); Adonijah attempted a second coup and was executed for it (2:13-25); and Solomon fulfilled David's dying wish and put Joab and Shimei to death (2:26-40). Suffice it to say, Solomon had much on his mind during those first few days in office.

1 Kings 3

5-6. Interestingly, of all of Israel's and Judah's kings, the Bible records God appearing to only one in a dream: Solomon. Solomon, to his credit, humbly acknowledged that the only reason he was king in the first place was because God was faithful to the promise He had made to his father, David. Twice in verses 6 and 7 he uttered the Hebrew word "chesed", which is used throughout the Old Testament (usually translated as "faithful love") to describe God's faithfulness to His own covenant promises to His people. David was faithful in his obedience to God, and God was, in turn, faithful in keeping His promises to David. It took humility for Solomon to admit that he was in the position he was in because of his father's faithfulness and not because of his own abilities. Solomon's humility is further exemplified in verse 8 in which he didn't consider himself as specifically chosen by God for leadership, but only as one among the people God has chosen.



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 80, DDG)

God is Omniscient

Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who "has perfect knowledge" (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God's omniscience, we admit our finite knowledge and trust His decisions as wise and good.

TEACHING PLAN

▪ How have you responded to God's extravagant generosity in your life?

After Solomon's prayer for wisdom, we see him confronted with a situation that will test the depth of understanding God gave him. Two prostitutes approached the king to resolve a dispute. Let's look at the story and see how Solomon responded.

Read 1 Kings 3:23-28.



Solomon asked for a discerning heart, and that is exactly what he needed in order to settle a dispute between two prostitutes who had no standing in society. The details of their dispute are found in verses 16-22. The women, who lived in the same house, each had an infant son. When one son died in the night, his mother switched him with the living son, and then claimed that the living son was hers. With no witness to vouch for either woman, Solomon came up with a shocking, gruesome, and brilliant solution: cut the living child in half and give half to one woman and half to the other. Solomon was counting on the true mother's maternal instincts to win out over greed and deception. Sure enough, one woman had compassion for the living child while the other took the attitude of, "Well, if I can't have him, then neither can she!" When Solomon saw which woman wanted the child to live even if she couldn't have him, he knew who was the true mother.

Here we see an important truth: wisdom doesn't come simply from amassing human knowledge. It also comes from observing human nature. Solomon was able to look past the degrading label of "prostitute" to see that the woman was also a mother. Our wisdom, like all the other gifts of God, should be used for others, not merely for our own benefit. As we steward well God's gifts in this way, we follow the pattern He has set before us in giving the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection brought about great good for us, a people who had no standing before our holy God.

▪ In what ways have you seen God-given wisdom used to benefit others?

As we unpack the story of Solomon, we see a king who got it right in so many ways and who God used in a tremendous way. His story shows us much to imitate.

But more than anything, Solomon's life points to a King far greater than even himself—a King who would one day rule in perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Solomon points us to this perfect King, the one who would reign in wisdom and never falter in His trust in God. He points us to Jesus Christ, the true King who rules and reigns in infinite wisdom.

We can know a King who is even greater than Solomon. We can come under the reign and Lordship of this King. The wise person is the one who looks to Jesus and fully submits to Him in everything. You want to see wisdom? Then set your gaze on Jesus. May we live for our true King and announce His kingship to the world around us. 

COMMENTARY

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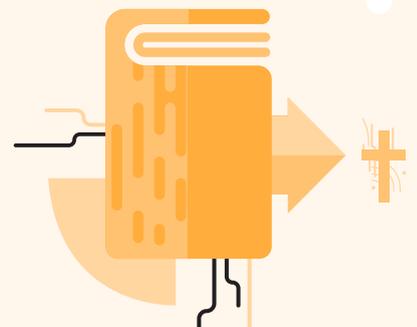
1 Kings 3

7-8. All throughout Scripture, God shows His heart for justice and His concern for the oppressed. (See Deut. 15:7-8; Isa. 58:6-7; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:9-10.) Instead of capitalizing on what appeared to be a golden opportunity to secure much for himself, Solomon focused on God's people and God's glory in what he requested. That is the heart posture of a person in whom God delights.

28. Verse 28 notes that all Israel stood in awe of God's wisdom displayed in Solomon. While this certainly established Solomon's credibility to lead the people, the people rightly understood that Solomon's wisdom came not from himself, but from God. Hiram, the pagan king of Tyre, would come to the same conclusion shortly thereafter, when he praised the Lord for giving David such a wise son (1 Kings 5:7). Another pagan ruler, the Queen of Sheba, was so amazed with Solomon's wisdom that she too gave glory to God (1 Kings 10:9). A person employing God-given wisdom never draws attention to himself or herself. Instead, God-given wisdom informs the purpose of that God-given wisdom: bringing glory to God. In much the same way, the Holy Spirit, which Isaiah 11:2 calls the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, always exalts the Son. Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of truth glorifies Him, because He takes from what belongs to Christ and declares it to them. True wisdom isn't like human knowledge, which puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1). Instead, wisdom builds up. When we speak God's truth to one another in love, we help one another grow (Eph. 4:15).

(p. 82, DDG) Christ Connection

Solomon reigned with great wisdom and insight, yet he was still an imperfect king who needed God's forgiveness. Solomon foreshadows the coming of a greater king—Jesus, in whom are hidden “all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What are some areas of your life in which you need to apply God's wisdom right now? How are we like Solomon in this regard?

Share about a time when you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision.

Heart



Do you value wisdom above things like money, power, or pleasure? Why or why not?

How will our humility serve others?

Hands



Why do you think God wants us to ask Him for wisdom instead of just giving it to us?

How will you seek and use wisdom this week to bless others in your life?

Main Point: Wisdom comes from God, and He freely gives it to those who seek Him.



Head

Solomon understood that to fulfill his God-given responsibility of reigning over God's people, he needed God-given wisdom. His task was daunting, so his request of God was desperate. Solomon was a powerful man, yet he knew that even as such he was in desperate need of God. Solomon is not alone.

God has given us the privilege and responsibility to rule over His creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:6). Paul described the children of God as heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). And if that isn't enough, there will come a day when we will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3). But if Solomon needed wisdom, should we need it any less? The great news is that as much as we need wisdom, God delights that much more in giving it to us. God was pleased to give Solomon wisdom so he could reign with wisdom and justice. He delights to give us wisdom as well (Jas. 1:5).



Heart

We cannot detach Solomon's request from his motive behind that request. In fact, James 4:3 tells us that our motives need to be the first thing we put under the microscope when we find our prayers are not being answered. Just as God looks beyond the external and lays bare the internal hearts of people in choosing whom to use, He also looked beyond the surface of Solomon's request toward his heart behind it. When He did, God was pleased by what He saw in Solomon. He was pleased with his motives. Verse 11 contrasts markers of selfishness with indications of selflessness. Had Solomon asked for long life, riches, or the death of enemies, it would have indicated that Solomon's chief preoccupation was himself. Instead, God saw that Solomon sought wisdom so he could administer justice for God's people. Solomon cared more about God's people than himself. This is another strong indication that a request we have made pleases God: when our desires align with God's desires.



Hands

Wouldn't you love to know that God was pleased with something you asked Him for? It's not always a mystery though. Like requesting gifts from our parents, one strong indication that what we have requested pleased God is whether or not He granted it. Here in the text, it seems that Solomon received instant feedback from the Lord that He was pleased with Solomon's request. While we may not hear an audible voice from God in response to our requests, we actually have something better: God's written guarantee that when we ask for wisdom, God will give it to us (Jas. 1:5).

Giving generously to His children is at the center of God's heart. This does not mean we should see Him as some cosmic candy machine ready to dispense whatever we desire whenever we pull the lever. But it does mean we should see Him as a loving Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children.