Vol 3
Session 5
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Introducing the Study

Despite being chosen by God and enjoying tremendous victory as a king, David shows us the danger of lurking sin and how we are all prone to its power in our lives. But at the same time, David also provides a model for repentance. David’s fall was great, but when he was confronted, he humbled himself before God, reminding us that we can have confidence that we will be forgiven because of the great grace of our God.

What are some of the marks of true repentance?

Despite his greatness, David was still an earthly king, as was his son Solomon, the heir to the throne. Though both enjoyed great prosperity and favor during their reigns, both were still ultimately dependent on God for everything they needed—including forgiveness of their sin. Even Solomon, who reigned with great wisdom and insight, only did so because God granted it to him. Once again, we are reminded of our need for a greater king, a perfect king—King Jesus, who never fails His Father or His people.

What are some ways we might guard our hearts from drifting toward independence from God?

Setting the Context
David was a great king. And yet, the latter years of his life read more like a tragedy. Despite all his military and political struggles, the greatest turmoil for David would come through his own family. First, the child David and Bathsheba conceived died while still an infant as a consequence of his sin.

Next, among David’s children from other wives, Amnon was infatuated with his half-sister Tamar, and his desire drove him to rape her. When Absalom, Tamar’s brother, learned what happened, he was enraged and eventually killed Amnon. After murdering his brother, he fled the country.

David mourned his son, but after some time, he allowed Absalom to come home, only to have Absalom mount a revolt against him to seize the throne. Though the rebellion was eventually quashed, David bore witness to the death of yet another one of his sons.

**How do we see the effects of David’s sin in the actions of his children?**

After reigning for forty years, near the end of his days, David named Solomon, a second son born to him and Bathsheba, as his successor. “Solomon’s Wisdom” (p. 59) highlights how this son, at least for a time, demonstrated extraordinary wisdom. He asked for wisdom from God because he recognized his need to depend upon the Lord in order to lead his people well.

**Why do you think it’s so easy for us to forget that we need to depend upon God?**

**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 is hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Continuing the Discussion

How would you define wisdom?

What are some differences between the wisdom that comes from God and the wisdom of the world?

As a group, read 1 Kings 3:5-9.

Based on this passage, what are some of the things Solomon believed to be true about God and about himself?

Why is God the only true source of wisdom?

What are some areas of your life right now in which you desperately need the wisdom of the Lord?
One of Solomon’s great characteristics displayed here at the beginning of his reign was a knowledge of what he lacked. Solomon recognized the task before him, and he knew that only through God’s help would he be able to rule with wisdom. We too have been given tasks by God, though perhaps not ruling a kingdom. We also need wisdom to parent, to work, and to make daily decisions that display the gospel in our culture.

As a group, read 1 Kings 3:10-15.

Why do you think this request pleased the Lord?

Why is wisdom such a necessary quality for anyone in authority?

What does God’s response teach you about what He values in His people?

Rather than asking for something that would selfishly fulfill a temporal desire, Solomon humbly asked to be equipped for what God had tasked him to do. This is the kind of attitude God honors—faithful dependence on God by one who wants to walk in His will, while acknowledging the inability to do so apart from God’s help.

As a group, read 1 Kings 3:16-28.

What led to this ruling by Solomon?
Why is this a good example of wisdom being exercised?

Why is it important, as we see in verse 28, that wisdom leads to justice?

Wisdom is about real life. We exercise wisdom when we are confronted with real life circumstances in which we must make a choice. God doesn’t intend for us to be paralyzed by indecision but rather that we make daily choices from His wisdom that He has given us. In so doing, we seek justice for all people in our spheres of influence.

MISSIONAL Application
Record at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as a recipient of the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ.
Personal Study 1

The king requests wisdom.
*Read 1 Kings 3:5-9.*

God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said: “Ask. What should I give you?” (v. 5). Most of us would love for God to ask us this question. Our minds would immediately consider all the possibilities; all of what we have ever wanted would be ready to fall from our lips. Solomon could have asked for all sorts of things as well, but he chose to request wisdom.

Notice first how Solomon saw himself as he prayed. He began by confessing that he was “just a youth with no experience in leadership” (v. 7). He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people. In addition, he recognized that he was there only by divine appointment: “You have now made your servant king in my father David’s place” (v. 7). God placed him there. It was an act of God’s grace.

Seeing himself and his weaknesses, Solomon felt compelled to ask for the one thing he knew he could not live without—God’s wisdom. Solomon was living out what he would write some years later: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. Don’t be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil” (Prov. 3:5-7).

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom as well. 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, which will lead to failure (see John 15:5-6).

So Solomon asked for God’s wisdom so he could lead God’s people well. He would be the direct recipient of this gift from God, but his intention was to use this wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. His motivation for wanting wisdom was others-centered, not self-centered. That’s one reason why his prayer pleased the Lord.

Similar to Solomon, God gives us wisdom so we can relate rightly to those around us. We need wisdom to be godly friends, neighbors, husbands, wives, parents, bosses, employees, and citizens.
James, the half-brother of Jesus, once offered a stark warning about asking for things only for ourselves when he wrote: “You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and don’t receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (Jas. 4:2-3). Often we want God to give us things because of what it does for us. Our comfort and our pleasure are at the center of our minds. But Solomon made a request because he had a godly desire to bless and lead others. And that should be the beat of our heart as well.

**In what areas of your life are you prone to feel self-sufficient?**

**In what areas would you most likely lean on your own understanding and not ask for God’s wisdom?**

**In what relationships in your life do you most need God’s wisdom right now? Why?**
Personal Study 2

The king receives wisdom.
Read 1 Kings 3:10-15.

Solomon’s request pleased the Lord. Why? Because in his request, Solomon acknowledged that God’s ways are right, and by requesting wisdom, Solomon was implicitly expressing His desire to walk in the ways of God and lead others to do the same.

How can we know that our requests will please the Lord like this? We measure them by what we know to be God’s will. We know that God wants us to walk in purity, love our enemies, and give generously. But we also know that in and of ourselves, we lack the internal resources to do any of these things. When we ask for these things, which we know are God’s will, we will find God ready to provide.

Requesting God’s wisdom should be a regular part of our prayers as we encounter various situations that reveal our need for it. And as we pray, we can be confident that God wants to grant our request for wisdom just as He did with Solomon. While we may not compose three thousand proverbs, we can trust God for wisdom as we talk to our neighbor about the gospel. We can wisely respond to our spouse who may be walking through a difficult season. We can navigate the rocky terrain of life as we receive the wisdom God provides.

This is why Solomon wrote so elegantly about pursuing wisdom: “Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire can equal her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant, and all her paths, peaceful. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold on to her are happy” (Prov. 3:13-18).

How true this is! We need wisdom more than we might realize. Too often we think that money, power, and approval are what we need most. But Solomon’s life is evidence that when all is said and done, it is wisdom from God that aids us best in our time of need. We must fight to believe this.

One area we especially need wisdom in is the area of mission. God gives us wisdom so we can better announce the gospel to the world. In other words, wisdom is for mission!
If we are going to be salt and light in the world, we need wisdom. We need it to relate rightly to the non-Christians around us. We need it to show how money, power, and pleasure are not what matter most in this life. We need it as we interact with those who are skeptical or even hostile to Christianity. This is why Paul said, “Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time” (Col. 4:5). It was because of Solomon’s wisdom, granted by God, that people came from everywhere to hear from him (see 1 Kings 4:34).

Wisdom makes us appealing and attractive to those around us. The world needs to see God-given wisdom. They need to see Christians walking wisely when it comes to money, parenting, and suffering. They need to see that the gospel has fully equipped us and empowered us to live righteous and upright lives in this world (Titus 2:11-13).

Think of your neighborhood. You are likely surrounded by people who do not know the Lord—and seem to have no desire to do so. You need wisdom to know how to talk with these men, women, and children and to live winsomely around them. They need to see wisdom on display in your life as you interact with your family and as you talk about the world. We need wisdom in order to serve, bless, and love those around us.

What are some ways you can celebrate God’s wisdom in your life?

How would you explain to someone that wisdom is more valuable than wealth, power, or approval?
Personal Study 3

The king exercises wisdom.

Read 1 Kings 3:16-28.

After Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, he was confronted with a situation that tested the depth of understanding God had given him. Two prostitutes approached the king to resolve a dispute. They both claimed that a baby belonged to them, and they had come to the king for a ruling.

This story shows that God truly answered the prayer of Solomon. The people of Israel saw their king reigning in wisdom and discernment in a way that could only be attributed to God. Here we have proof that God fulfilled His promise to Solomon, a reminder of God’s faithfulness. This is the kind of God we serve. One who does what He says He will do.

This story shows us that we should not only ask for God’s wisdom—we should expect it! James reminded us of this when he wrote: “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (Jas. 1:5-6). That is God’s wisdom at work. He gives it generously as we pursue Him by faith.

Parents understand the importance of asking for something. How tragic would it be if our children needed our help but failed to ask us for fear we would not grant it! Our God is a prayer-answering God. He responds to our cries for wisdom because it is something He loves to grant.

Jesus said: “Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him” (Matt. 7:9-11). Our God delights to see His people walk in wisdom for His glory and our good, which is why He is so eager to grant it when we ask Him for it.

It is highly unlikely we will be confronted with the same situation as Solomon, but we know we will face problems that lack a clear solution. For instance, a business deal comes your way that could change your life dramatically, yet it requires moving your family across the country. What do you do? Or one day your child asks you why his classmate has two mothers. What do you say? How do you respond?
There are countless situations in which we need wisdom. Thankfully, our God is the all-wise God. He alone has all wisdom and understanding. Let us go to Him and expect that He will respond to us.

When have you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision?

What are some specific arenas in life in which you should be regularly asking for God’s wisdom?