



Scripture



1 Kings 3:5-15, 23-28

Unit .12

Session .01

A Son Requests Wisdom

5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask. What should I give you?”

6 And Solomon replied, “You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity. You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today. **7** “LORD my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David’s place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership. **8** Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted. **9** So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?” **10** Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. **11** So God said to him, “Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, **12** I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. **13** In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be

your equal during your entire life. **14** If you walk in my ways and keep my statutes and commands just as your father David did, I will give you a long life.” **15** Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant, and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he held a feast for all his servants. ... **23** The king replied, “This woman says, ‘This is my son who is alive, and your son is dead,’ but that woman says, ‘No, your son is dead, and my son is alive.’” **24** The king continued, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought the sword to the king. **25** And the king said, “Cut the living boy in two and give half to one and half to the other.” **26** The woman whose son was alive spoke to the king because she felt great compassion for her son. “My lord, give her the living baby,” she said, “but please don’t have him killed!” But the other one said, “He will not be mine or yours. Cut him in two!” **27** The king responded, “Give the living baby to the first woman, and don’t kill him. She is his mother.” **28** All Israel heard about the judgment the king had given, and they stood in awe of the king because they saw that God’s wisdom was in him to carry out justice.

Intro Options



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

Option 1

Tell your students to imagine they've found an old brown bottle on the beach. Something is inside, but they can't quite see what it is. When they rub it, out pops a genie! But he doesn't look like a normal genie. He's actually a genie-in-training. He can't grant three wishes, but only one. Oh, and it has to be a wish you make within ten seconds of meeting him. Ready set go! Rapid-fire, ask your kids what they want their wish to be.

See what they come up with. Ask how many of them would change their wish now that they've had another moment to think. What would they wish for now?

On either the first or second round, how many students asked for wisdom? Point out that when Solomon was granted one request of God, he asked for wisdom. We'll see today how that wish turned out.

Option 2

A famous author has been tasked with writing a book entitled, "The Overwhelmed Person's Guide to Starting Things Off." This book is supposed to help people succeed when they're about start a new venture of whatever kind: a business plan, an athletic season, a musical production, you name it.

The author has gotten writer's block, and she's asked your students to submit some ideas, advice, or chapter headings to her to help her get her ideas flowing again. Give them some time to put together some ideas, and have them share those ideas with the class. If you wish, you can tell them partway through that the book is a Christian book.

See what counsel they give; is that counsel different once they found out it's a Christian book? Did any of them ask for wisdom? Today's lesson will be about Solomon, who shows us that asking for wisdom at the start of any venture is a good idea. In fact, it's probably a good idea to open this lesson by praying and asking God for wisdom!

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

Main Point:
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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

Main Point:
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1 Kings 3

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).

Activity

60-Second-Media is a (fictional) media-producing company that specializes in making 60-second public service announcements. They’ve hired your students out to make a “60-Second User’s Guide to Wisdom” PSA. Your kids can make a poster (that takes 60 seconds or less to read), a newspaper ad, a YouTube video (a skit), a radio commercial, or whatever other medium they can think of.

60-Second-Media wants the following components in whatever your students produce:

Where to Get Wisdom

How to Use Wisdom...

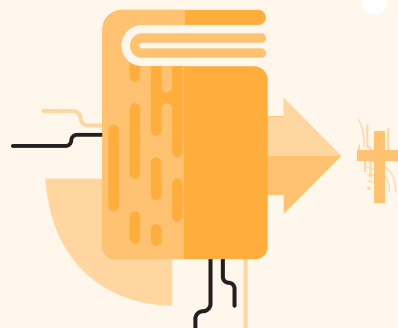
...for the benefit of people (at least one specific example)

...for the glory of God (at least one specific example)

The hammier and campier the ad is, the happier 60-Second-Media is. Make it fun. Your kids can work individually or in groups. Give them some time to make whatever their ad is, then let them show it. Debrief afterward about what they did particularly well.

(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.