

Kings Series #2 - "Choosing Wisely" 1 Kings 3:3-14

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Choosing Wisdom*

1. John and Dave were hiking one day when they spotted a mountain lion staring at them
 2. John froze in his tracks, but Dave sat down on a log, tore off his hiking boots, pulled a pair of running shoes from his backpack and hurriedly began to put them on
 3. John whispered, "For crying out loud, you can't outrun a mountain lion!"
 4. "I don't have to," shrugged Dave as he tied the laces. "I just have to outrun you!"
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5. There are two kinds of wisdom
 - a. common sense
 - b. and spiritual insight that sees below the surface of things to understand the heart and purpose of God
 6. Common sense is something anyone can have
 7. But spiritual insight is something only Christians who seek God can have

B. *Common Sense*

1. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that common sense isn't important
2. It is—it's very important
3. One morning the young new president of a bank made an appointment with his predecessor to seek some advice.
 - a. he began by saying, "Sir, as you well know, I lack a great deal of the qualifications you already have for this job. You have been very successful as president of this bank, and I wondered if you would be kind enough to share with me some of the insights you have gained from your years here that have been the keys to your success."
 - b. the older man looked at him with a stare and replied: "Young man, two words: *good decisions*."
 - c. the younger man responded, "Thank you very much, sir, but how does one come to know which are the good decisions?"
 - d. the elder replied, "One word, young man: *experience*."
 - e. the junior man asked, "But how does one get experience?"
 - f. "Two words, young man: *bad decisions*."
4. It's true that experience is a fine teacher if we are willing to listen to it.
5. In fact, a lot of people could make a fortune and retire in their senior years if they could only sell their experiences for what they cost them

C. *Wisdom*

1. But true spiritual wisdom isn't gained from experience
2. This wisdom has only one source - it is the gift of God

II. TEXT

A. V. 3

{3} And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

1. Solomon's story begins w/high commendation
2. He loved the Lord—and he sought to follow in the footsteps of his father David
3. But he did something David hadn't done
 - a. he worshipped God at the high places
 - b. because as we learn from v. 2, there was no central place of worship yet
 - c. the tabernacle Israel had made in the Exodus was by this time long gone
 - d. and the temple had not yet been built
 - e. David had brought the ark to Jerusalem and had built a tent for it and erected an altar there, and while it was called a tabernacle, it wasn't the same as before
 - f. so the people worshipped God and made their sacrifices on the tops of hills near their cities and villages
 - g. after the temple was built, these high places were abandoned

B. V. 4

{4} Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

1. 2 Chronicles 1 tells us that this was a special event
2. The entire leadership of the nation went with Solomon to Gibeon
3. In a sense, this was Solomon's "inauguration"
4. As king, he wanted the entire nation to know that it was his intent to carry on in the religious tradition of his father David

C. V. 5

{5} At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

1. On the night of the inauguration, God appeared to Solomon with a remarkable offer
2. Really, it is more than an offer; it's a command
3. "ASK! What shall I give you?"
4. We miss it in the translation but the language is clear -
 - a. Solomon understood that God was giving him Carte Blanche - a blank check
 - b. God told Solomon to ask, and *whatever* he asked, He would do!
5. Now, if God appeared to any of us with this same command, *what would we ask for?*
6. If we had to boil down our request into one word, or one brief phrase, to one thing, what would it be?
 - a. fame?

- b. wealth?
 - c. power -possessions - position?
7. Solomon chose something else

D. Vs. 6-9

{6} And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

{7} "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am 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 numerous to be numbered or counted.

{9} "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

1. Solomon was only 19 or 20 at this time
 - a. he was emerging into full manhood
 - b. but still had some of the naïveté of youth
 2. He was aware how great the challenge before him was and how impotent he was to fulfill his office
 3. The task was too large for his ability - so he asked for the wisdom to rule wisely
 4. You know what this tells us about Solomon?
 - a. he already had some wisdom
 - b. and the wisdom he had told him he needed more
 5. He who seeks wisdom *first*, is already wise
 6. It takes wisdom to see the importance of wisdom, and to pursue more
 7. Solomon asked specifically for the practical wisdom to rule
 - a. as king he was judge, ruler, and captain
 - b. he was mature enough to realize his youthfulness and lack of experience would hinder these functions
 - c. so he asked for the practical wisdom to rule beyond what his years had taught him
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8. Many young people think they know better than their parents how things ought to be done
 9. A young man went to the clubhouse of a large golf course and asked for a lesson by the club pro
 - a. one of the pro's friend was there and went along to watch
 - b. after a few swings, the pro started offering some suggestions for improvement
 - c. but each time, the pupil interrupted with his own version of what went wrong and how to correct it
 - d. After a few minutes of this interference, the pro began nodding his head in agreement
 - e. at the end of the lesson, the student paid the pro, congratulated him on

- his expertise as a teacher, and left—clearly pleased with himself
- f. the pro's friend was so astonished by the performance that he asked, "Why did you go along with him?"
 - g. the old pro replied with a grin as he placed the fee in his pocket, "I learned years ago that it's a waste of time to sell answers to a man who wants to buy echoes."

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10. There is a period in life between about 14 and 20, in which most people think the world should be turned over to them
 - a. as far as they are concerned, the history of the world up to that point has been a troubled course, but now, **THEY** have arrived,
 - b. they think everyone over the age of 35 is either brain dead or in a permanent state of altered consciousness
 - c. these young idealists prefer that their elders get out of the way and let them run things, cause they got things figured out
 - d. if God came to them as He did to Solomon, their request would be to be put to put them in charge of the world
 11. ***But then***, when these young idealists actually have to live on their own, and they get a chance to try their ideas, they realize the foolishness of their bright-eyed but naïve ideals
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12. Solomon lived under no such illusions
 13. He knew the task was greater than he was, so he asked for the wisdom to rule well
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A Critical Point!!!

14. Was this request the best thing he could have asked for?
15. Certainly it was a good request—even God was pleased with it . . .

E. Vs. 10-14

{10} The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.

{11} Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

{12} "behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

{13} "And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

{14} "So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

1. God gave Solomon his request—He gave him wisdom to rule and to judge
2. And he gave him all the things he could have asked for but didn't . . .
 - a. wealth
 - b. health
 - c. and great honor
3. But again, I ask: Was this the best thing he could have asked for?

4. Was it the highest gift he could have received?
 5. Close, but not quite.
 - a. his request for wisdom certainly was *good*
 - b. but it wasn't the *best*
 6. Surely the deep longings of his father for communion with God were *better!*
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7. Solomon sought wisdom / David sought wisdom's source
 - a. Solomon wanted to know how to rule / David wanted to know Him who rules
 - b. Solomon wanted to know how to judge Israel / David wanted to know the Judge of Heaven & Earth
 - c. Solomon asked for an understanding heart to know the people's need / David asked for a heart to understand God's desire

(Psa 27:4) One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life.

8. There is no sign in Solomon's story that he ever had the deep inward devotion of his father
9. And while he composed 3000 Proverbs and 100 songs, these never rose to the level of David's Psalms
10. Solomon's wisdom remains a milestone and proverb in the history of man
 - a. we say that someone who demonstrate remarkably good sense, has the "wisdom of Solomon"
11. But in all his great wisdom, Solomon's later years were marked by apostasy and gross sin
12. Indeed, it seems that to the degree he possessed wisdom, to that degree of foolishness he fell when he turned his back on God

III. CONCLUSION

A. What Lesson?

1. What is the lesson all this teaches?
2. Just this - while some desires are more noble than others, there is really only one thing we should seek
3. That one thing is neither gift nor promise *from* God
4. Rather, it is God Himself

(Mat 6:33) "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

5. If we seek God first, then everything else we might ever want or need will be ours
6. Just as God blessed Solomon with all he hadn't asked for --
7. So all shall be ours if we have Christ

(Psa 37:4) Delight yourself in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

B. A Secret

1. Can I share a secret with you?
 2. People who do not make pleasure and worldly good their first object are the only ones who can be most safely trusted with it and who get the most enjoyment out of it
 3. If a person lives for wealth, and sets all their desire on it, what they have and gain is never enough
 - a. a rich man was once asked when he would have enough
 - b. he said, "When I have a little more."
 4. When those who long for and strive for fame and fortune attain it, they find it isn't what they hoped it would be
 5. So they seek more, thinking *then* they will be satisfied
 6. But it is never enough!
 7. So they never are able to get full enjoyment out of what they *do* have, because it never seems enough
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(Psa 16:11) You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

8. The one who seeks God *first* finds that each blessing He gives is a surprise and a delight
9. They are free to enjoy it because they see it as a gift freely given and undeserved
10. Oh that God's people today would understand this!
11. Delight yourself in the Lord
12. Find your real joy and delight in Him
13. And because your desires will all flow from that, he will be well pleased to give you those desires
14. The only way to be sure of getting what we want, is to wish what God desires to give = HIMSELF!
15. And to ask it of Him!

C. Asking For The Best

1. There is a very old tradition that some families still follow when there is a baby in the family
2. At the child's first birthday, with all the relatives there and watching, they set the child in a chair in front of a table and put three objects in front of them: a shot glass, money, and a cross
3. The idea is that whatever object the child picks up first is their direction in life
 - a. if the cross - ministry
 - b. money - business
 - c. shot glass - bum
4. Now, here's the trick: depending on the parents desire for their child, they select versions of these three objects that they think will appeal to their child
 - a. if they want him to be successful in business they put out a nice shiny half dollar and a dull, small, wooden cross
 - b. if they want the child to be a preacher or priest, they put out a shiny

silver cross and a dirty, dull dollar bill

- c. and of course, they all select a plain, small shot glass and put it a bit further from the child's reach
 5. We are like that child—and there are an endless number of things that are set before us
 6. Depending on where we are and who we're dealing with, they objects vary in their appeal
 7. But above them all stands the best choice of all - to chose the Lord and to seek the wisdom of knowing Him
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8. We might think it would be pretty great if God appeared to us as He did to Solomon and ask us what we want from Him
 9. But you know what, while God doesn't appear to us in a vision or dream, we *have* that same choice every day
 10. In fact, we have that same choice every time we chose
 11. By His grace, may we choose wisely! MAY WE CHOOSE HIM!!!!

D. Getting Practical

1. Now, many of us this morning are of a practical mind - and want things spelled out in specific terms
2. So let's break this down
3. What this means is that we ask God to make us mindful of His presence
4. [Explain]