

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings

Lesson 2: Solomon Asks for Wisdom -- 1 Kings 3:1–4:34

Have you ever been handed something enormous and felt the weight of it settle on your shoulders like a stone? That is where Solomon stands at the beginning of 1 Kings 3. The old king is dead, the rivals have been dealt with, and the throne is his. He is young. The kingdom is vast. And the God of Israel appears to him in a dream at Gibeon and says something that must have made Solomon's heart stop: 'Ask what I shall give you.' Not a hint, not a suggestion, but an open offer from the Creator of the universe. What would you say?

What Solomon asks for has echoed through the centuries. Not long life, not the defeat of his enemies, not unimaginable wealth. He asks for an understanding heart, a listening heart, a heart wise enough to discern between good and evil so he can govern God's people well. It is a prayer that reveals a man who knows two things: that the task is beyond him, and that God is the only source of what he actually needs. Those two things together are the beginning of wisdom.

But before we get to the dream, the narrator slips in a quiet warning in verses 2 and 3 that we dare not skip. The people were sacrificing at the high places. And Solomon, who loved the Lord, was doing it too. This is not presented as crisis-level rebellion. It is presented as something almost understandable, a worship pattern not yet fully corrected, a compromise not yet fully felt. But the reader who knows what is coming in Solomon's later life recognizes the seed of it here. Worshiping God in ways and places He has not authorized is never as harmless as it looks in the moment.

In this lesson we will trace the gift of wisdom from a dream at Gibeon to a courtroom where two mothers argue over a living child. We will sit with Solomon's brilliant administration and marvel at the peace and prosperity God poured out on Israel. And we will press into the question that this passage presses into us: What would it look like for you to ask God, with that same humility and dependence, for the wisdom you need right now? Because the one who gave Solomon wisdom still gives it generously to those who ask (James 1:5). And the one greater than Solomon is standing by.

Group Discussion: If God appeared to you tonight and said 'Ask what I shall give you,' what would your honest, unguarded answer reveal about what you value most?

Personal Reflection: Where in your life are you currently relying on your own understanding rather than asking God for the wisdom to discern what is good and right, and what would it look like to bring that specific situation to Him this week?

Read 1 Kings 3:1–4:34

Study Questions

1. Read 1 Kings 3:2–3. The narrator says the people sacrificed at high places because no house had yet been built for the Lord's name, and that Solomon loved the Lord but also sacrificed at the high places. What does this brief note reveal about the relationship between sincere love for God and the pattern of worship He has authorized?
2. Solomon's worship at the high places is described almost neutrally here, yet it foreshadows deeper compromise later in his life. In what area of your own spiritual life have you found it easiest to let 'almost right' become 'good enough,' and what are the long-term costs of that drift?
3. Read 1 Kings 3:5–15. What does Solomon's request at Gibeon reveal about his understanding of his own adequacy for the task before him, and how does that self-assessment make his prayer a model for approaching God?
4. Solomon describes himself as 'a little child' who does not know how to go out or come in (verse 7). Think of a responsibility you are currently carrying that genuinely exceeds your own capacity. What would it mean to pray about it with Solomon's level of honesty before God?
5. Read 1 Kings 3:16–28. How does the judgment of the two mothers demonstrate the kind of wisdom God gave Solomon, and what does the outcome reveal about the nature of true wisdom in action?

6. The true mother was willing to give up her son rather than see him harmed. Her love overcame her right. Is there a relationship, a situation, or a conflict in your life where the wise and loving thing to do would cost you something you feel entitled to? How does Solomon's story press you toward that?
7. Read 1 Kings 4:20–25, 29–34. How does the description of Solomon's reign, the peace, the prosperity, the breadth of his knowledge, reflect God's faithfulness to His promise in 3:13–14, and what does it suggest about the connection between seeking God's wisdom first and receiving His other blessings?
8. The passage says that 'Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy' (4:20). Joy and abundance flowed from wise, God-given governance. When you have operated from a place of genuine God-given wisdom rather than your own cleverness, what did that look like, and what did it produce in the people around you?
9. Read Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 12:42, and Colossians 2:3 alongside 1 Kings 3:9–12. What is the source and ultimate purpose of true wisdom, and how does the wisdom God gave Solomon point forward to the one in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden?
10. Looking across 1 Kings 3–4, what is the one thing Christ is most pressing into your life through this passage, and what is one specific step you will take this week to pursue that wisdom rather than your own understanding?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Proverbs 1:7, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; James 1:5, God gives wisdom generously to those who ask; Matthew 12:42, one greater than Solomon is here; Colossians 2:3, in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; 2 Chronicles 1:7–12, the parallel account of Solomon's request at Gibeon

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