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## A Leader Prays for Wisdom

1 Kings 3:4-9

One of our own nation's greatest leaders made the following statement:

**"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day."**

Abraham Lincoln spoke those words as he wrestled with the tremendous issues facing our country and he recognized his need for wisdom to lead during very difficult times.

There often come circumstances and situations in our lives that should make us realize our own desperate need for wisdom. Whether as a legislator or leader serving in state government, or as a person struggling with the issues of daily life, we must understand our need for wisdom and the fact that true wisdom comes from God!

In today's study we will examine a passage in which a government leader realizes his own need for wisdom to fulfill the responsibilities God had given him. Solomon was the third king of Israel, selected by his father David himself as his successor to the throne. As he assumed that high position, we find the following account:

### 1Kings 3:4-9

**<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"**

**<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup> 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?"<sup>1</sup>**

### SOLOMON'S PREPARATION

- **Solomon Had A Right Relationship With God**

**Vs. 4** We find at the beginning of this account Solomon offering sacrifices to the Lord. In the Old Testament, the offerings and sacrifices were the means of maintaining a right relationship with God and worshiping Him. At this point in Solomon's life he recognized who God was and what his response needed to be.

We need to recall the theme verse from Proverbs found in 1:7; 9:10; and 15:33: **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..."**

**"The fear of the Lord is a reverence for God that expresses itself in submission to His will."**

The starting place, the foundation for true wisdom is an understanding of God as the creator of the universe, the sovereign over all things, and the one to whom we must answer and give account. It is only through this understanding that we begin to recognize that God and His Word are the source for true wisdom in our lives.

- **Solomon Remembered God's Mercy and Kindness**

**Vs. 6-7** Solomon remembered God's mercy shown to his father David and demonstrated in his own life. When one remembers all that God has done for him, he is much more open to respond in obedience and submission to God's Word.

- **Solomon Had a Heart of Humility**

**Vs. 7** Solomon clearly understood that he did not have the abilities within himself to handle the great task that lay before him. He considered himself as a little child (though he was most likely around 20 years old) and felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities of serving as king. In this attitude of humility he recognized his **need** for God's wisdom.

### **GOD'S OFFER**

**Vs. 5** God spoke to Solomon in a dream. During Old Testament times and even early New Testament times this was not an uncommon method for God to convey His will to men. With the completion of the Scriptures, however, the Word of God is the primary manner God communicates with his people. Even in Solomon's day when God spoke through prophets, dreams, and other means, there was still an emphasis on the written Word of God. **Deuteronomy 17:18-20** challenges the kings of Israel to read, study, and strive to obey God's written word.

In the dream, God makes an amazing offer: **"Ask! What shall I give you?"** God offered Solomon whatever his heart desired.

### **SOLOMON'S REQUEST**

Solomon demonstrated the priorities of his heart with his response. In **Vs. 9** his request was for an "understanding heart" in order to effectively judge the people and discern between good and evil. This is literally a **"hearing heart"**. The word refers to not merely the hearing of sound, but of listening critically, paying attention, and obeying. It is an expression of a heart attitude of willingness to listen to God and submit to His ways.

While God may not speak to us in a dream and offer us the desires of our heart, we should not consign this story to merely how God worked in the Old Testament. Let us consider the equivalent New Testament expression of this truth found in the book of James:

**James 1:5** **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

The context of this passage is dealing with the various trials that will come into our lives as believers. The purpose of these trials is to make us **"perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing" (vs. 4)**. When we face trials, we need wisdom in order to deal with them from God's perspective. When we lack wisdom, God promises He will provide it for us if we ask Him in faith and without doubting. **(vs. 6)**

### **GOD'S ANSWER**

When we read on in 1 Kings 3:10-13, we find that Solomon's request pleased the Lord. God not only gave him the wise and understanding heart he requested, but wealth and honor as well.

### **HOW DOES GOD SUPPLY HIS WISDOM?**

Was God's provision of wisdom in Solomon's life merely a "supernatural zap" apart from any study or effort on Solomon's part? Notice how God goes on to link His blessing of Solomon's life and reign with his continued obedience to God and His Word:

**1 Kings 3:14 - 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."**

In order to walk in God's ways and keep His statutes and commandments, you must study them and know them and understand them. While God clearly provided Solomon wisdom in a supernatural way, that wisdom was based on a thorough knowledge of God's Word. Throughout the book of Proverbs there is the challenge to grow in knowledge, to increase in learning, and to pursue understanding. Then God gives us the ability to apply the truth we have studied to situations and circumstances we face.

### **WHAT ABOUT US?**

Solomon recognized that he did not have the wisdom to handle the responsibilities into which he had been thrust. He knew that God alone was the source of the wisdom he needed to succeed.

What about the roles and responsibilities into which God has placed each of us? Your position of a legislator, elected official, or government leader invites ready application from this passage of scripture. What about those responsibilities that are of even greater importance in our lives such as a spouse, parent, or simply as a child of God living in a difficult world? These responsibilities and others should drive us to our knees in the realization that our wisdom is insufficient for the task.

What a joy to know that God's wisdom is available in our lives! He has provided the means for us to acquire it through the study of His Word and the ability to apply His truth to each and every challenge we may face!

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#### **BIBLE STUDIES**

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

MCMANUS (House) CONFERENCE ROOM

(252-M Located by minority offices near House chamber)