

# Get Wisdom (1 Kings 3)

**Big Idea:** Build your life on who God is, who you're not, and what matters most: God's wisdom.

If you could ask for and receive anything in life, what would it be?

Some people might wish for different circumstances. You may want something that you don't have. Maybe you wish you could go back and change something in your past.

If you could ask for anything, what would it be?

The 2005 television reality show "Three Wishes" asked that question in small towns across America. Then the producers made wishes come true, choosing three people to receive the one thing they wanted more than anything else in life.

The application for the show said, "We are looking for emotional stories of people in need. We want to help deserving people – people who always help others, but never think of themselves."

Then it asked the big question: "If you had one wish in the world and could ask for absolutely anything from the heart, what would it be?"

The television producers said that money was no object, which may explain why the show was canceled after only one season: making wishes come true can get very expensive.

So let me ask you again: what would you ask? Suppose someone came to you with unlimited resources and made you that offer. What would you choose?

That's exactly the question that Solomon had to answer.

# Solomon's Promising Start

We're working our way through the entire Bible this year. And we're at the point where God's plan to save the world by choosing a nation is on the upswing. The people now live in the land God promised. God had given them a king, not a perfect king, but a good king named David. And he'd made a promise to David: that he would not only build a house for David but that he would establish David's throne forever. One of David's descendants would always sit on David's throne forever.

Solomon was the first of David's descendants to do reign on his throne. You know the feeling of having a new, young leader. Imagine the excitement: a new king is on the throne! He's young; he's full of energy. It's a brand new start. But imagine the nervousness: how would he do? How would a young and inexperienced king perform? Would he have the skill and maturity to serve as a good king?

Things got off to a good start. As soon as Solomon was firmly in control of the kingdom, we read these words: "Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places" (1 Kings 3:3). Good start. The thing that Israel needed most was a leader who loved God. Nothing matters more.

Love doesn't just mean a feeling. Love is evidenced by obedience. So it's even better when we read in verse 4: "And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar."

Picture that. Picture the expense and work that would be involved in not just making a sacrifice to God, but to make a sacrifice of a thousand burnt offerings. Solomon is showing that he loves God and wants to obey and serve him.

There are a few warning signs that show up in this passage. Solomon is off to a good start, but we also see some warning signs.

*Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. (1 Kings 3:1)*

Not good. Israel had been rescued from Egypt. It's probably not a good sign that Solomon becomes the son-in-law of Pharaoh. Marriage was a way to make an alliance with a foreign power.

You also have Solomon worshiping God in high places. The high places were typically used to worship false gods. The reason why, according to verse 2, is that Solomon hadn't yet built a temple for God yet.

You've got Solomon compromised. The primary influence in his life is someone who worships another god. Already in this passage, you have the seeds of destruction that will cause him trouble later in his life.

But overall, things look pretty promising. There are a few warning signs, but the big picture is hopeful. Solomon loves the LORD and is committed to serving him. God's promises to David are coming true. Things are looking really, really good. The future looks bright for Israel.

## **The Question**

This makes the question that God asks Solomon in this passage really fascinating.

Early in his reign, Solomon had a dream, and God gave him an invitation. Read verse 5: "At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, 'Ask what I shall give you.'"

Can you picture God asking you this? Imagine God asking you: what do you want me to give you? You could pick anything. What is it that you want?

Picture the possibilities:

- Good health
- Wealth and financial stability
- Love and companionship
- Success and recognition
- Happiness and contentment
- Inner peace and spiritual growth
- Fulfillment of their dreams and goals

God didn't put any conditions on his question. Picture all the ways Solomon could have responded. This would be a major test of his character. How he answered would show a lot about who Solomon is, as well as what would happen in his life.

Think of all the things that Solomon could have asked for! How would you have answered God? If God asked you this question, how would you answer?

Listen to Solomon's remarkable answer. Solomon does three things.

## **First: he begins with God.**

Read verse 6:

*And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day."*

Solomon's request is based on his knowledge of who God is. If you're going to answer what you would like most in life, you've got to answer that question based on your idea of what matters most. Whatever you think is most important will determine what you ask for. If your career is the ultimate good in your life, then you'll ask for something career related. If pleasure is the ultimate good in your life, you'll ask for something related to pleasure.

Solomon begins by recognizing that the ultimate good is God. He begins with a very big picture of God, and this sets him off on the right foot as he makes a big prayer request to God.

What does he recognize? He recognizes that God has shown great and steadfast love to David and that God has shown the same great and steadfast love to him.

The place to begin in our quest for what we want most in life is to begin with God. Begin anywhere else, and we're on very shaky ground. This is the place we have to begin.

How do you decide what you do with your life? How do you make big decisions? If you begin anywhere except for where Solomon began, you're beginning in the wrong place. You have to begin with God. Start anywhere else, and you won't be able to answer this question well.

## **Second: he acknowledges his own limitations.**

You've probably heard about the different stages of incompetence. These stages are:

- **Unconscious Incompetence** – The person is unaware of their lack of knowledge or skill in a particular area.
- **Conscious Incompetence** – The person becomes aware of their lack of knowledge or skill in a particular area.
- **Conscious Competence** – The person acquires the knowledge or skill but must consciously think about it in order to perform it correctly.
- **Unconscious Competence** – The person has acquired the knowledge or skill to the point where it becomes second nature and can be performed without conscious thought.

Nothing is worse than the first stage: unconscious incompetence. They've named an entire condition after this stage: the Dunning-Kruger Effect. It's when people lack the knowledge or skills to recognize their own incompetence. As a result, they overestimate their abilities and believe they are more competent than they actually are.

In other words, it is healthy and spiritually mature to move from overestimating ourselves to actually admitting our need, and this is exactly what Solomon does in this passage. Look at what he says:

*And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. (3:7-8)*

In other words, Solomon begins with God and then moves on to realize how much he needs God. What an amazing place to begin.

Have you done this? Have you acknowledged that you don't have what it takes? Humility is a great place to begin. The world tells us to begin by being a big deal, of asserting our greatness. Solomon shows us that the place to start is to realize how big God is, and how much we need him because we don't have what it takes.

Have you done this? It's so freeing to recognize our limits and to ask God for his help.

Solomon does one more thing:

### **Third: he asks God for wisdom.**

Based on who God is, and his recognition of his limits, look at what Solomon asked for in verse 9: "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

Amazing. Solomon asked for wisdom. Solomon basically asked for something not for himself, but so that he might serve the people of God. He wanted a discerning heart so that he would know what was right, and so that he would be able to serve God and the people well.

And God is pleased with his request:

*Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. (3:12-13)*

And he does! We see this right away in this chapter as Solomon faces a very dicey situation. And we will see it in the coming weeks as we watch Solomon's life unfold.

## Your Question

But today I want to press home this question to you: what do you want for your life? If you could ask God for anything, what would you ask for? What's the ultimate good you're chasing with your life?

How you answer this question reveals much about you, and will determine everything about your life.

Solomon gives us a template for how we answer this question:

- Begin with God. You've got to begin here. Anything else is building your life on very unstable ground. Begin with who God is and what he's done. The most important thing you can do is to build your whole life on who God is. Then:
- Acknowledge your limits. Stop trying to be such a big deal. Admit that you can't do it on your own; that you need God's help. This is not a mark of weakness. This is the mark of true strength. Then:
- Ask God for wisdom. Ask him to show you what's right and wrong so that you can serve him and others. God will be pleased with this request.

**Build your life on who God is, who you're not, and what matters most: God's wisdom.**



That is the Christian life. We recognize who God is and what he's done. We recognize our utter and desperate need for him. And we ask him to give us what we lack. That's what we do to receive his salvation. It's how we live our entire lives.

Have you done this? You can do it today, and you can make this the way you live.

Father, we want to live based on who you are. We want the most decisive thing in our lives to be the reality of who you are and what you have done. Help us, God. Give us a big view of who you are and how much you matter.

And then give us the right view of ourselves. Help us to see that we need you. Help us to see that we come with empty hands, contributing nothing but need. We truly need you.

And then give us your wisdom. Help us to see rightly. Help us especially to see Jesus rightly, who has everything that we need. Help us to turn to him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.