

Lesson 2 | June 13, 2021

Prayer for Wisdom

Study Text: 1 Kings 3:1–28

Central Truth: God freely gives wisdom to those who ask.

Key Verse: Proverbs 2:6

The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (KJV).

The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (NIV).

Learning Objectives

- Learn the nature and value of wisdom and understand that it is available to anyone who asks for it.
- Acknowledge that you need God's wisdom in every area of your life.
- Actively seek God's wisdom when faced with life's challenges.

Introducing the Lesson

say: It has been said that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to add tomatoes to a fruit salad. It's one thing to know facts and sometimes quite another to know how to apply those facts to solving problems. Life presents a lot of opportunities to test our wisdom. Perhaps you had one of those opportunities this past week, or you might be wondering how to navigate a challenge facing you this coming week. Today, we'll focus on where you can turn.

Opening Activity—What would you pray for?

Ask: If God came to you in a vision and said you could pray for anything and He would give it to you, what would you ask for? (You may want to write answers on the board. Some may say "wisdom" is the right answer, but encourage variety. There are no wrong answers.)

say: Your answer is relevant to what you are going through and the challenges you are facing. Answers to our opening activity will depend on your stage of life and your individual concerns. Your prayer request may involve the salvation of your children or other loved ones. Or, you may be most concerned about the peace of the nation and the world. In 1 Kings, Solomon was at the

beginning of a new challenge, being the king of God's chosen people. So his prayer request related to that. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Solomon was the second son born to David and Bathsheba. Just before David's death, he had declared that Solomon would be the new king, much to the disappointment of another son, Adonijah, who was attempting to take over the throne. In 1 Kings 1 we find the account of Solomon's appointment as king.

Part 1—God's Offer to Solomon Solomon Showed Devotion to God

1 Kings 3:1–4

[1Ki 3:1-4 KJV] 1 And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 2 Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days. 3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that [was] the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

Say: Solomon is well-known for his construction of the magnificent temple in Jerusalem. In building the temple, he was carrying out a dream of his father, David. The events of this passage occur prior to the building of the temple, shortly after Solomon had become king. **He showed his devotion to God by offering great sacrifices at Gibeon, a normal place for Israel's leaders to worship.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Not long after his father had died, Solomon took steps to establish his place as king of Israel, part of which included establishing a treaty with Egypt that was sealed by his marriage to an Egyptian princess. Solomon brought her to live with him in Jerusalem. From that time, Solomon would work to build a palace, temple, and a wall around the city. His father had longed to build a temple to worship God, but God assured him that his role had been to deliver Israel from her enemies and establish peace in the land. His son Solomon would build the temple. (See 2 Samuel 7.)

Since a permanent temple for the worship of God had not yet been built, it was customary for the Israelites to worship at "high places" or hilltops throughout

Canaan. This was not ideal. In some cases, the high places had been used for pagan worship by the Canaanites. As a result, these high places were to be avoided. **It would be like going to a Buddhist temple or another false god to worship the Lord.** God had been quite explicit in His commands to the Israelites that, upon their conquest of Canaan, they were to, “Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places” (Deuteronomy 12:3, NIV). **Once a temple was built, the practice of using any of the high places should have come to an end.**

Solomon’s heart was devoted to the Lord. He desired to show his love for the Lord by carefully walking according to His statutes (verses 3–4). He demonstrated his devotion by regularly offering sacrifices and burning incense on the high places.

On this occasion, Solomon went to Gibeon, described as the most important high place, to offer sacrifices. Throughout much of David’s reign and into Solomon’s, Gibeon was the location of the Mosaic Tabernacle where, typically, military commanders, judges, and many leaders would gather for worship (see 2 Chronicles 1:2–3). Thus, we can understand the greatness of Solomon’s gift of devotion and worship: 1,000 burnt offerings.

Discuss

? Why was it urgent to establish a central place for worship among the Israelites instead of using high places? How might this apply to people today who disengage from a church and worship in their own way?

? Old Testament sacrifices were a vital part of praise and worship to God. Hebrews 13:15 instructs us to continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of our lips that openly profess his name. In what sense is praise a sacrifice? What is significant about the word “continually”?

God Appeared to Solomon in a Dream

1 Kings 3:5

[1Ki 3:5 KJV] 5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

Say: Solomon was devoted to God, and God met him where he had gone to worship. God knew Solomon’s heart, and He knew the tremendous responsibility Solomon had in leading the people of Israel. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God was clearly pleased with the extent and depth of Solomon's devotion to Him. During the night at Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream (1 Kings 3:5). Dreams were not an uncommon means of God's communication to His people throughout Scripture, and He can still use them today.

Resource Packet Item 1: Dreams and Visions

Distribute copies of "Dreams and Visions" from the resource packet. Invite various students to respond to specific passages on the sheet.

In the dream, God posed an offer of divine generosity to the king: "Ask for whatever you want for me to give you" (verse 5, NIV). While this was a very non-specific offer, undoubtedly—in God's sovereign wisdom—it was an offer founded on trust and foreknowledge. **Solomon's devotion in worship and determination to follow God's statutes had led him to a place of great favor with God. Solomon could be trusted—at least at this point in his life—to seek the right things, giving further honor and glory to God.**

Discuss

? Describe a time when God spoke to you or someone you know in a dream or vision. In what way is God using dreams and visions today to reach people lost in spiritual darkness?

? What does God's offer to Solomon say about His regard for and trust in Solomon? On what was that trust based?

Part 2—Solomon Prays for Wisdom

Solomon's Humble Petition

1 Kings 3:6–9

[1Ki 3:6-9 KJV] 6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as [it is] this day. 7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I [am but] a little child: I know not [how] to go out or come in. 8 And thy servant [is] in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

Say: Have you ever faced a task that was so overwhelming that you knew it was far beyond your own capabilities? That's where Solomon was as he approached the great task of leading God's people. As the son of King David, he, no doubt, had received the best education possible for the time in which he lived, yet he felt completely inadequate for the task ahead of him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

As one reads the account of King Solomon's petition to the Lord in the dream encounter, it is easy to be moved by the gratitude and humility with which he prayed. **There is no sense of arrogance or pride in Solomon's response to the Lord's gracious offer. Instead, the king was moved by God's great faithfulness to David and now to His faithfulness toward him as he fulfilled the privilege of serving as king of Israel. Solomon viewed God's goodness to him as a continued expression of His regard for his father David, and not based on his own merit.**

Solomon's humility and absolute dependence upon God are no more greatly expressed than in his declaration, "I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties" (verse 7, NIV). His sense of responsibility before God and Israel weighed very heavily upon him. A rendering in the King James Version captures his sense of inadequacy even more so with the words, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in." Though Solomon would certainly have possessed a high degree of wisdom and understanding of his own, he clearly recognized that he needed help far beyond his own abilities. He knew he could not fulfill his responsibilities in his own strength and wisdom. He needed God's help.

As Solomon weighed what he needed most, he prayed, "Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people" (verse 9, NIV). Solomon was very aware that his youth and inexperience only contributed to his inadequacy for the task ahead. Here again, Solomon's humility and sense of accountability are remarkable. **God had given him an opportunity to ask for anything he wanted. So many other things could have come to mind, yet, above all, he knew that he needed a supernatural measure of wisdom to understand how to discern between right and wrong as he governed the people of Israel.**

Resource Packet Item 2: Praying Like Solomon

Distribute the work sheet, and give students a few minutes to prayerfully fill it in. You might even want to wait and use this at the end of class as a time of personal reflection and commitment.

Discuss

? Describe a situation you have faced that required more than knowledge to solve. In what way did seeking God's help make a difference in the situation?

? Our minds can spin at the thought of receiving such an offer as God gave Solomon. Why was asking for wisdom the best choice, not only to please God, but for practical application in day-to-day life?

The Lord's Gracious Response

1 Kings 3:10–15

[1Ki 3:10-15 KJV] 10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, [it was] a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

Say: Solomon's request was utterly unselfish. As a young man in a position of power, he could have asked for many things that would have benefited him personally. **But his goal was to do the job God had given him in the best possible way, and he knew he would need God's wisdom to carry out the task. Because Solomon's motives were right and his request was unselfish, God blessed him far beyond what he had requested.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

While Solomon could have asked for grandiose blessings from God's hand, he did not. Understandably, hearing the young king's plea for wisdom and discernment above all else was greatly pleasing to the Lord (1 Kings 3:10), and He took note that Solomon had not asked for a long life, wealth, or the death of his enemies (verse 11). Instead, Solomon asked for a discerning heart so that he might administrate with wisdom and good judgment.

Because Solomon had not asked for the other things, **God was pleased to not only grant him wisdom, but a wisdom far and above what any other person in**

the world had or ever would have. That is demonstrated in passages such as 2 Chronicles 9 that carries the account of the visit by the Queen of Sheba who had heard of Solomon's reputation and came "to test him with hard questions" (verse 1, NIV). Despite the complexity of her test, Solomon was able to answer all of her questions. Verse 23 states, "All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart."

Upon awaking from the dream (1 Kings 3:15), Solomon responded to God's amazing blessings and favor by returning to Jerusalem, where he stood before the ark of the covenant and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. His heart was filled with praise and adoration to his gracious God, who had showered upon him blessings beyond compare. It was appropriate to celebrate God's goodness with those who served with Solomon.

Discuss

? Humankind has always valued power, riches, and fame. Why would a king's wisdom itself draw leaders from around the world to sit at his feet?

? Why did God place the conditions of obedience to His statutes and commands on his offer of a long life? Why may wisdom itself not guarantee obedient and righteous living?

Part 3—Solomon Shows Supernatural Wisdom A Tragic Case Is Presented

1 Kings 3:16–22

[1Ki 3:16-22 KJV] 16 Then came there two women, [that were] harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we [were] together; [there was] no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. 22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living [is] my son, and the dead [is] thy son. And this said, No; but the dead [is] thy son, and the living [is] my son. Thus they spake before the king.

Say: It wasn't long until Solomon's wisdom from God was put to the test. While a particular example is given in 1 Kings 3:16–22, certainly there were countless other

examples of his wise judgments regarding individual and national matters. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Not long after experiencing the amazing offer from God in the dream encounter, King Solomon was faced with a difficult case involving two prostitutes and a deceased infant. At the outset, it is significant to note that open access to the king was provided even to prostitutes (those among the outcast) in Solomon's day. We also do well to recall that King Solomon was especially known for having received great wisdom, insight, and understanding from the Lord (see 1 Kings 4:29). Such wisdom and insight would definitely be necessary at this time.

[1Ki 4:29 KJV] 29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that [is] on the sea shore.

In the case at hand, the two prostitutes shared a home. One had given birth to a child, and three days later the other gave birth as well. During the night, as the women were asleep, one of the women rolled over onto her child and smothered it. Upon discovering her infant was dead, she exchanged her child for the other woman's living child and placed the dead child near her roommate. The woman who received the dead child vehemently insisted the dead child belonged to the other woman. Given that there were no other eyewitnesses, and that these women were such who would be deemed to be of questionable character, this was a particularly difficult case.

Discuss

? In today's world, how does economic or social status affect the way justice is applied?

? Deception regarding the death of a child seems incomprehensible. What kinds of deception can you name that would call for the wisdom of Solomon to recognize?

Solomon Displayed God-given Wisdom

1 Kings 3:23–28

[1Ki 3:23-28 KJV] 23 Then said the king, The one saith, This [is] my son that liveth, and thy son [is] the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son [is] the dead, and my son [is] the living. 24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. 26 Then spake the woman whose the living child [was] unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, [but] divide [it]. 27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she [is] the mother thereof. 28 And all Israel heard of the

judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God [was] in him, to do judgment.

Say: Answers to difficult problems are seldom simple, but in this case, Solomon's answer was relatively simple—and quite dramatic. However, it showed the depth of wisdom he possessed. Human wisdom sometimes complicates issues that godly wisdom could easily solve. **Seeking God's direction is always the best way to make a decision.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Exercising the wisdom God had given, Solomon issued a surprising order that a sword be brought to him (1 Kings 3:24). Since both women claimed the live baby to be theirs, he would simply cut that baby in two and give each woman a half. One can only imagine the surprise among others within the court. At the king's declaration, the woman who truly was the mother, cried out, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!" (verse 26, NIV). When the other prostitute told Solomon to go ahead and cut the baby in two (which would leave neither with a child), the case was clear. Solomon ordered that the living baby be given to the true mother.

Once word of the king's dramatic ruling spread, the king was held in awe across all of Israel (verse 28). Truly he had been granted a supernatural measure of wisdom to administrate the affairs of the nation.

Resource Packet Item 3: The Attributes and Value of Wisdom

Distribute copies of "The Attributes and Value of Wisdom" work sheet from the Adult Resource Packet. If time allows, students may complete the entire work sheet individually or in groups, or you may assign specific passages for students to share. Note that Scripture strongly emphasizes the value of wisdom.

Discuss

? Take a moment to read James 1:5. What role do you believe prayer holds in obtaining and using godly wisdom?

? Describe a time when you faced an especially challenging decision and received from God an answer or direction that was beyond your understanding at the moment. What do you think would have happened without God's help?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God may not have appeared to you in a dream to tell you to ask for whatever you want, but He has invited all of us to "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7, NIV). That passage goes on to state that God, our Father, gives good gifts to those who ask

Him. Like Solomon, we should seek wisdom, even in what we pray for, so we are asking within the will of God (see 1 John 5:14). Scripture tells us that it is God's desire to meet the needs of His children.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Seek God's wisdom in decisions you make this week, and enjoy the peace of knowing He is in control.
- Look for ways that you can help bring God's answer to a conflict.
- Pray for leaders of your community and nation, that they will have wisdom from God.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Benefits of Seeking Wisdom.
Proverbs 2:1–12

[Pro 2:1-12 KJV] 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, [and] apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, [and] liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as [for] hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth [cometh] knowledge and understanding. 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: [he is] a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; [yea], every good path. 10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil [man], from the man that speaketh froward things;

Tuesday:

Wisdom for Living.
Proverbs 11:25–31

[Pro 11:25-31 KJV] 25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. 26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing [shall be] upon the head of him that selleth [it]. 27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him. 28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch. 29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool [shall be] servant to the wise of heart. 30 The fruit of the righteous [is] a tree of life; and he that winneth souls [is] wise. 31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Wednesday:

Wise and Foolish Words.
Ecclesiastes 10:12–15

[Ecc 10:12-15 KJV] 12 The words of a wise man's mouth [are] gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth [is] foolishness: and the end of his talk [is] mischievous madness. 14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? 15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Thursday:

God's Wisdom Versus Man's Wisdom.
1 Corinthians 2:1–10

[1Co 2:1-10 KJV] 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching [was] not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [even] the hidden [wisdom], which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Friday:

Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.
Colossians 2:1–7

[Col 2:1-7 KJV] 1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and [for] them at Laodicea, and [for] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Saturday:

Ask God for Wisdom.

James 1:5–8

[Jas 1:5-8 KJV] 5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.