

“Ask Me Anything” // 1 Kings 3:3–28 //

Solomon: The Man Who Had It All 1

Introduction:

The book of 1 Kings, if you have your Bible... Start a series: *Solomon, man who had it all.*

Good to see you all, I've been off for a few weeks. I had **some ministry stuff I was doing**, and I also took a couple of family trips.

- (Y'all know I don't I call them vacations anymore, because calling them that just makes me mad. Because at my kids' age there ain't no vacating that happens; I come back more tired than I went...
 - (And if I don't, I probably need to repent for not being a very good dad.
- So, I was on a **family trip**, which was awesome, but it's great to be back with you, too.
- And **just in time for SERVERDU...**

1 Kings 3: I'd bet that at some point in your life, you've had to answer the question of what you'd wish for if a genie in a lamp appeared and offered you 3 wishes. And you know the rules: you can't wish for more wishes, or to make someone fall in love...

Last weekend I shared with you that while I was out West for a meeting **my family and I spent about a week** cruising through some of the Arizona and Utah National Parks in an RV with a couple of other families.

Works Consulted:

“A Prayer for Wisdom,” Kevin DeYoung

“A King's Wisdom,” Tim Keller

“Christ-Centered Exposition: Solomon's Wisdom,” Tony Merida

“How to Pray for Wisdom,” David Jeremiah

“Why Can't We Be Friends?,” Andy Stanley

- (3 different RV's, not 1, that could be a whole 'nother experience. We were in Mormon country so it probably wouldn't have seemed that weird...).

But to get into Zion National Park (which was by far my kids' favorite btw.). Well, **to get into Zion, you have to pass through a tunnel**, and the guide told our kids that if they held their breath while we went through it they would get a wish. That night at devotions one of our kids, who I guess was just feeling really spiritual (which doesn't happen all the time), said, “You want to know what I wished for? I wished that God would use me in his global mission.” I was touched. I guess that set-off a little spiritual-competition, and so my daughter Ryah, not to be outdone, said, “*I wished that God would let me become a NICU nurse helping kids in poor countries.*” One of the other kids was like, “I wished for a dog!” (And I was like, “**That would have been me as a kid.**”)

What would you ask for if God told you that you could ask him for 1-thing, anything? Because that is basically what God did with Solomon at the beginning of his reign as king.

1 Kings 3:5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask. What should I give you?”

Before we dive into Solomon's answer, let's talk a little bit about Solomon: **Solomon was David's son**, and in 1 Kings 3 he finds himself the newly appointed heir to the throne.

In one sense, Solomon was a man born into privilege; in another, he was the product of a pretty messed-up family. **He was the son of**

Bathsheba, the wife David stole from his best friend after he had had him murdered. (So, that relationship was a little complicated).

Solomon was not David's only son, or even his oldest, so there was a lot of jealousy and infighting among the brothers about who was going to get to replace David as king.

- **Amnon, David's oldest**, raped his half-sister, and so one of David's other sons, Absalom, killed him for that.
- **Then Absalom, who was clearly David's favorite**, got impatient while David was still alive and led a revolt trying to overthrow David and got killed in the process.
- Then, when David was on his death bed, **Adonijah, a third son**, tried to claim the throne, and attempts to marry David's favorite concubine to prove he was up to the job. And he ended up getting killed for that.

You feeling better about your family yet?

(I always like to point this stuff out because some of you come from messed up families. Good news: Most of the people that God chose to use in the Bible did too.

Listen: Your past family history doesn't have to define your future.

God wants to start a legacy of blessing in your family line *with you*. Today. *You can become someone greatly used by God to bless others, like Solomon was.*

And Solomon shows you how to get there.

First, let's look at how Solomon responded to God's offer...

(1 Kings 3:3–10: Solomon's Request)

3:6 And Solomon replied, "You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David... You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today. **7** "Lord my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David's place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership. **8** Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted. **9** So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?" **10** Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this.

First in this passage, we should note both WHAT he asks for and WHY he asks for it.

First, What he asks for: Wisdom

- Probably the simplest definition of wisdom is: Wisdom = the ability to see things from God's perspective.¹
- Look at the words Solomon uses to request wisdom (vs. 9)
 - Give your servant a "receptive" (lit., a 'hearing' or 'perceiving' heart). Give me the ability to perceive things like you perceive them.
 - The most common Hebrew word that Solomon uses for 'wisdom' in Proverbs (which is the book he wrote on wisdom) means training, or coming under authority.
 - **To be wise is to have your thoughts trained** in a God-shaped view of the world so that you know what God wants even before you know what he says.
 - It implies something like 'instinct.'

¹ Adapted from Chuck Swindoll, *Solomon*.

- Which leads to the second word he uses **“discern”** (*between good and evil*)
 - **He’s asking for the ability to discern the right paths from the wrong ones;** specifically *when the answer is not laid out clearly.*
 - **When the Bible is clear** on something, it is easy. **But a lot of life’s big decisions** are not spelled out clearly in Scripture. Like whom to marry. Or what job to take. Or which financial choices are best. Or the best way to handle certain relational conflicts.
 - **Wisdom is knowing what to do** in those situations where it is not clearly spelled out.
 - **Tim Keller: Wisdom is knowing how to navigate the realities of life when the rules don’t help.**
 - You’ve got some **illustrations of this** in Proverbs. For example:
 - **Prov. 26:4** tells you it is *disastrous to try to answer a fool* when they are saying foolish things. **Prov. 26:5, the verse right after it,** tells you it is disastrous *not* to answer a fool. **So, which is it? You need something more than just a rule** to help you in that moment. You need wisdom to know if you are in a Prov 26:4 or 5 situation.
 - **Another example: The story right after this one in 1 Kings 3** is included to show you the mind of wisdom God gave. (*It’s one of the most famous stories in the OT.*) Two prostitutes come in with a baby... *What’s the right thing to do in that situation? So, Solomon said, “Go bring me a sword”...*
- **The point is not to give you who work in the legal profession some new jurisprudence techniques.** If you are judge, I’m not suggesting you try this... **Solomon asks God** to give him the *ability to know what God wants even when it’s not clear.*
- **(BTW, before we move on to why Solomon asks for this,** let me point out that Solomon’s posture in his prayer was the exact **opposite of what Adam and Eve had done** in the Garden of Eden. They had stolen fruit from the forbidden tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which promised them the ability to determine for themselves what was right and wrong for them. **Solomon’s request goes 180 degrees the opposite direction.** He says, “I want to perceive what you want, God. And when it’s not clear, let your Spirit give me wisdom.”)

So that is **WHAT** he asked for. But, just as important is...

Why he asks for it: 9 So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. *For who is able to judge this great people of yours?”*

- He’s not asking for his sake, for himself—so he can **write books** or make **shrewd financial** decisions and make lots of money—but for the people’s sake, and ultimately for God’s sake, because the people belong to God.

In fact, there are **3 ingredients to Solomon’s prayer** that that should serve as a template for your prayers:

1. **Solomon prays, understanding that he is little**—Solomon recognizes that he doesn’t have wisdom. Listen to what he says in vs...
 - **7** “Lord my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David’s place. Yet I am just a youth (some translations even say, “like a little child”) **with no experience in leadership.**

- **This is so smart for him to do, because God promises never to turn away the humble** who cry to him for help.
- **If you could learn this**, it would change your life—because it goes **contrary to everything else** society teaches us. Right now, I am memorizing a slew of verses about this, just to help me:
 - **Ps 146:5, Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God.**
 - **Psalm 55:22, Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you.**
 - **Ps. 28:6 Blessed be the LORD, because he has heard the voice of my supplications! 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; (because) my heart trusted in him, I was helped;**
- **God never turns away those who look to him for help.** And he gives wisdom to Solomon because he confesses he doesn't have it.
- The irony is that the smarter and more naturally savvy you are, the more likely you are to miss out on the wisdom of God.
- Kevin DeYoung says, If you think you are really smart, you are on the path to becoming a fool, but if you feel that you don't have it all together, you have begun down the path to becoming wise.
 - There is almost nothing more malleable in God's hand than a humble, teachable spirit, and there is nothing with which God will do less than a proud, arrogant heart.²
- James says it this way, **"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** James 4:6
 - He **doesn't just ignore** you, he resists you. Which means not only does he withhold his wisdom from you, he *frustrates* your plans.
- Blessed are you when you have empty hands, because they will be filled with God's strength!
- 2. **Solomon prays, recognizing that God's purposes are paramount** (As I pointed out, he asks for wisdom "for the sake of this great people.")
 - He asked for a big thing, but God rewarded it because it was kingdom focused.³
 - What do you dream about and why do you dream about it? **There is nothing wrong with asking for greatness. But do it for the sake of God's great name, not your own.**
 - I've lamented to you most Christian prayers you hear prayed in public:
 - **First, we feel them up with stupid** clichés and platitudes that don't make any sense (I know you're going to use these to judge people in your small group—don't do that. I can't stop you but don't do that.)
 - **We use phrases like, "Lord, just be with us."** God says, "I promised you I will never leave or forsake you. So, read your Bible and stop asking me for things I already promised I would do."
 - **Or phrases like, "Lord, bless this food for the nourishment of our bodies."** You can thank him for it, but you don't need to really ask him to bless it—God did that in Gen 1 when he called it good.⁴ **Food is already pre-blessed.** At least, certain kinds. **If you're eating a Double Whopper** with onion straws and washing it down with a 64oz. Coke, I'm not sure prayer will change anything.
 - "Lord, you turned water into wine; transubstantiate this cheeseburger into

² Kevin DeYoung, 1 Kings 3

³ D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*

⁴ <http://acts242study.com/why-do-we-bless-our-food/>

broccoli and this Coke into a veggie shake as I eat it.”

- Or our **prayers are filled** with endless, banal repetitions.
 - Oh God, we just thank you God, just for your presence, God.
- **Imagine if we talked to our spouse the way that most people pray to God:** “Babe, could you just pick up some milk, babe, while you’re at the store?”

Just go ahead babe and just, just go to the milk section, babe.

Just grab a gallon of milk and just, just place it right in your cart, babe.

*Babe, just thanks, Babe. Just.*⁵

- So that’s the 1st problem... Nothing theologically wrong with it, it just sounds weird.
- **The second problem I have is that** our prayers are so incredibly me-focused: **Gimme, gimme, gimme.**
 - Like we are going through a laundry-list of items we need God to pick up for us at the divine supermarket.
 - God, give me this, give me that. And make him behave this way. And smite her for saying that about me.
- **Prayer is the means God gives us for seeing his will done on earth. It’s a weapon of spiritual warfare**, not a heavenly dumbwaiter, which means we ought to **spend most of our time praying for the advance** of God’s purposes on earth...
- **Is this what the thrust of your prayers are about?**

- If God answered all the prayers you prayed last week at 12:01, how many new people would be in the Kingdom?
- **Listen: there’s nothing wrong with great, grand, audacious prayers.** We should be praying more of them!
 - Don’t be shy in your prayers.
 - **Thou art coming to a King...!**
- **But what or whom are you ultimately praying them for?**
 - **This passage has been a big one in my life, personally—why am I praying to for my kids?** To validate me as a dad? So, they’ll live close and make me proud? Or is it for the purposes of God’s kingdom? God, raise them up and send them out for your purposes!’
 - **And** as your pastor, because I am praying for the greatness of our church. **To reach a lot of people**, so many that we change the climate of RDU spiritually. To reach generations of college students. To see families at Summit raise up a godly generation of high school and college students. To have our church be a miracle of racial (and other types of diversity). To make monumental differences in countries around the world!
 - But **why** am I praying these things? This is a familiar story to those of you here... God confronted me on my non-Solomonic motives...
 - **So, Solomon recognized that God’s purposes were paramount.**
- 3. **Solomon prays, believing that God will do what he said**
 - Solomon really believed that God would give this to him!
 - (*And this is really important*) **Notice what Solomon grounds** his confidence in: **3:6** And Solomon replied, “You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David... You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today.”
 - **See what he did?** He **reviews** the past activity of God and **repeats** back to God a promise that God had

⁵ <http://adam4d.com/lord-just/>

already made: God, you promised my dad that his kingdom would prosper and he would never lack a descendant to sit on the throne.

- (Honestly, if I were Solomon, and I were trying to establish a basis for why God should answer this prayer, I would have started with, “Well, God, just a second ago you said I could have anything. So, pinky-swear, no take-backs.”
- But Solomon recognizes there is an even stronger claim than that—and that is what God had promised in his word.
- And that’s good news, you see, because that’s a promise we can share.
 - You may never have had a dream where God appears to you and says, “ask me anything,” like he did with Solomon—I haven’t.
 - But we have all the promises made to Jesus, David’s ultimate Son, and we can ask in his name.
 - “God, you promised Jesus that you would build him this kind of people on earth... do it in my family.”
- Honestly, when I read passages like this, I get fired up:
 - Psalm 2:8
 - James 1:5
 - 1 John 5:14, and this is the confidence...
 - Matthew 21:22, and whatever things you ask in prayer...
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- “Pastor J.D., I thought you didn’t believe in the prosperity gospel? I do believe in the prosperity gospel, just the prosperity of God’s kingdom, not yours.”
-
- I read these promises and I think, God if you did it for people in the past, won’t you do it for me?
 - You did it in their generation, won’t you do it in mine?
 - Jesus, **you are the same yesterday, today and forever**, so do in my generation what you did in theirs.

As I’ve told you, **we make a big mistake** when we think God’s greatest works are a thing of the past. **They are not, my friends.** He wants to work today. (Amos)

- He wants to work in your family. In our church.
- **Could it not be that you were placed here** at this exact moment, in this exact place, to ask God for something great?
- **This generation of believers is responsible for this generation souls all over the world! And we need him to move in our generation!**

James 1:5–7

So Solomon, guided by these 3 principles, asked God for wisdom.

You may read this and think it was a one-time occurrence and say, “Well, if God ever appears to me in a dream like this. If so, I’ll know what to do!”

(Well, first, Jesus is the GREATER SOLOMON, and through his Spirit in us we can be even wiser than Solomon.

Second, **the promise of this story is repeated for us in the NT: James 1:5, Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.**

In this verse, we see... (James 1:5–7)

- God’s **impartiality** in bestowing wisdom: “...he should ask God—who gives to all...” All. You.
- God’s **individuality** in bestowing wisdom. “...if any of you lacks wisdom...” He’s not saying, “If the human race lacks wisdom,” but if you, in a situation you are in uniquely, lack wisdom, you can ask God.

- Thirdly, we see God’s **indulgence** in bestowing wisdom.⁶ “...who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly...” Some translations say “without reproach.”
 - That means “**without lecture.**”
 - It means that when I pray God is not up in heaven shaking his head, turning to Jesus and saying, “Can you believe Greear? He’s gotten himself into another sitchiashun, just from being an idiot like he usually is. Why does he think I’d help him? I’d like to give him a piece of my mind.”
 - Do you ever have a friend whom you go to for help and before they give you any help they want to give you a lecture how stupid you are for getting yourself in the situation where you need help? Or maybe your parents were like that.
 - God never does that. He responds to your cry for help immediately.
- Some of you feel like you can’t go to God because you have messed up your life so bad and you think surely you need to do some clean-up and repair before you ask God for help.
- The gospel is that Jesus took the full punishment your sin.
 - You don’t have to suffer or endure a lecture to make up for what you did. All that was poured out on Jesus.
 - So, now, the moment you call, God has nothing for you but help.
- When it comes to your relationship with God, repentance doesn’t start you on a path home, it places you fully at home, immediately!
 - Cleaning up the effects of sin may take time, but restoration with God, getting God on your side, working to help you repair the situation—that happens immediately when you humble yourself and call on him.

Now, there are a couple of qualifications that James gives you—a couple of things you have to do while you are asking God to help you so that you don’t short-circuit the development of wisdom.

- I knew it! The fine print. No, they’re obvious.

The first, he says, is:

- **Don’t doubt:** ⁶ But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being double-minded and unstable in all his ways. Be confident God will do what he said. If you don’t believe he’ll do it, he won’t help you.
- **Don’t defy:** see vs. 7: Don’t be double-minded? That means you are not sure if you’ll obey him.
 - “Let me hear your option, God, and I’ll consider whether I want to do it.”
 - In order for God to hear your prayer, you have to be pre-surrendered.
 - Psalm 66:18, “If I cherish iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”
- **Third: Don’t disregard:** (Doubt. Defy. Disregard. You say, “That’s a lot of alliteration, Pastor.” Yes, I know. But between the last time I preached here and this time I attended the SBC and I think I caught something while I was there. I’m trying to see if I can shake it).
 - Don’t disregard the means God has given you for wisdom.
 - The chief of those, of course, is his Word.
 - One of our family’s memory verses for the summer is Psalm 119:9, “How can a young man keep his way pure (or remain wise)? By taking heed to your word.” (KJV: Wherewithal) You grow in wisdom as you grow in your knowledge of the Bible.
 - Some of the other means God has given us to obtain wisdom: the church, which is why we are always pushing

⁶ I owe this little outline to David Jeremiah from *When Wisdom Turns to Foolishness*.

you to get connected because in a multitude of godly counselors there is wisdom (Prov 13:20); specifically, listening to the **counsel of older people** (Job 12:12).⁷

- **The point is that God promises to answer when you pray, but part of praying in faith is availing yourself** of the means God has given you to obtain wisdom.
 - Illus. **Guy hanging by a branch**, prays to God, save me! Another hiker comes along and drops a rope. No, I prayed to God and believe he'll send a miracle. Branch breaks, he dies. God, why didn't you answer my prayer? I did.⁸ We say, that's dumb. Everyone would recognize that was the answer to your prayer.
 - Yet you ask God for wisdom and cut yourself off from his prescribed means of gaining wisdom, the church.
 - It is insincere for you to ask God for wisdom and then cut yourself off from the means of making those decisions.
 - **Some of you know you need wisdom, but you neglect** the God-given means he's given you to obtain it. You neglect relationships within the church, some of you are even **avoiding them** because you don't like what other believers have to say.
 - Let not that man think he will receive anything from the Lord.

Let me take you to one other passage where Solomon applies this to the question of guidance in our lives, probably his most famous writing of all time...

Prov 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely* on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Don't be wise in your own eyes...

- **I love this promise. It has everything I need in it for guidance.**

⁷ Job 12:12 "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" Letting God in prayer **search your heart for false motives** (James 3:17).

- It shows me I have a part, and he has a part. **MY PART:**
 - Trust in his willingness to lead me: Don't doubt.
 - And don't rely on your ability to figure it out.
 - In all your ways acknowledge him: Do everything you believe he is telling you to do, don't doubt, defy or disregard.
- Then, the comma! Best comma in the Bible!
- **His part: to make straight my paths!**
- **Most of my worry** comes from doubting whether he will keep us his part. God: get back in your part of the sentence.
- One of my mentors in college: **draw a wall**
- **A prayer I've learned to pray in decisions**—I call it my sheep prayer, and it goes like this: "God, in your word you've told me that I am a sheep. Sheep are idiots. (They really are.)
 - **And if I'm a sheep**, I don't have the ability to figure out what I should do.
 - But you are a great shepherd. And I trust in your ability to guide me.
 - **So, give me wisdom** to know what to do in this situation, and if I'm too dumb to recognize it, guide me in the background.
 - I'm going to do everything I know you want me to do, and trust you're making my paths straight."
 - Then I make the best decision I know how to make, and trust that God has answered my prayer. And I don't stress.
- **I have done what he told me to do; I trust he'll do what he promised he would do.** (I trusted, didn't rely, leaned on him...)

This is such a liberating way to live! I'm not sure if you realize just how large a burden this would take off of you if you believed it.

⁸ <https://storiesforpreaching.com/i-sent-you-a-rowboat/>

Well, let's close by asking, "What happened? Did God answer Solomon's prayer?"

Oh, did he ever!

(God's Answer: 1 Kings 3:10–13)

1 Kings 3:10 Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. **11** So God said to him, "Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, **12** I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. **13** In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be your equal during your entire life.

Because Solomon prioritized God and his kingdom, God threw in all these other things as a bonus.

- **Now, I want to be careful** because I don't want to imply that you pray this prayer and next week you'll win the lottery.
- But this **does show you something about the character** of God, something Scripture attests to again and again: *If you seek first God's kingdom for God's kingdom's sake*, he throws in so much joy.
- **What does Matthew 6:33 say?** "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

What are 'all these things'?

- Provision
- Abundance
- Joy

These God supplies for you **when you seek him above everything.**

~~I learned this week that the word "serendipity" comes from an English ruler named Sir Horace Walpole (1700's). He had heard a children's story about King Fafer of Serendip, who wanted to prepare his sons to rule the kingdom, so he sent them on an expedition. As they traveled, they noticed one of their camels was missing. As they tracked him, they figured out he had a paralyzed leg because it left a very peculiar trail. He only ate grass on one side of the road, so they figured out he was blind in one eye. He left little tufts of grass where he ate, so they figured he was missing some teeth. The king was delighted, because in searching for the camel, they had found knowledge. Sir Walpole, impressed with the lesson in the story, termed this process "serendipity," where you obtain one thing in search of another.⁹~~

In Scripture, when you search for Jesus, you find happiness, peace in your relationships, contentment in your possessions.

- **Start out searching for those things**—great sex, lots of money, contentment in life, even a great marriage or a happy family,—and you won't find them.
- **Seek Jesus and his will**, and you'll find not only him but he will fill your life with so much joy and satisfaction and abundance, you won't know how to contain it all.

How can I not quote C.S. Lewis here? "In life, there are **1st order things and 2nd order things...**"

CONCLUSION:

⁹ In David Jeremiah, *When Wisdom Turns to Foolishness*, 42.

BOW HEADS: God says to you, “What do you most want? If you ask for wisdom to do my will, not only will I give it to you, you’ll be shocked at what else I will throw in.”

Why don’t I give you a chance to ask God for that right now?

- Ask for **wisdom to do his will**—say, “I want to do that more than anything. More than money. Career. Children. Good health. A boyfriend...”
- Ask for **him to make you “great”** in those things—as a dad, a worker, a leader, a witness.
- Ask God to **make our church great** for the sake of this great city he’s given us to reach, and nations around the world he wants us to impact!

