

In Position for God's Yes

**I Kings 3:1-15** <sup>1</sup> Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. <sup>4</sup> The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

<sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." <sup>6</sup> Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. <sup>7</sup> "Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.

<sup>8</sup> Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. <sup>9</sup> So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" <sup>10</sup> The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

<sup>11</sup> So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, <sup>12</sup> I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for--both riches and honor--so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. <sup>14</sup> And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life." <sup>15</sup> Then Solomon awoke--and he realized it had been a dream.

1. At the root of many of the requests made is not a desire to please the giver of the yes.
  - A. Why is this reality problematic when making requests to people and God
2. People ask God for a multitude of things wisdom being low on the list. Why do you feel that most requests to God are not granted?
  - A. Other than wisdom what do you feel a request that God would honor and why?
3. What does it look like to make a deal or try to bribe God to respond yes to our request?
  - A. Why is this mentality dangerous
4. **John 14:13** Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; **John 14:14** If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.
  - A. The sermon spoke about this passage has been recklessly taught out of context and it has come devastating consequences because of what it promotes. What is that and why is it reckless?
5. In positing ourselves for a yes from God what does it mean to:
  - A. Learn to love the Lord
  - B. Learn to Follow the Lord
  - C. Learn to Serve the Lord
  - D. Learn to listen to the Lord
  - E. Learn what to ask of the Lord
6. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

## **The Request for Wisdom by Solomon and His Wise Justice: A Lesson on Wisdom and Discernment, 3:1-28**

**(3:1-28) Introduction:** Does wisdom dwell on the earth today? Are there many wise men and women within society serving in governmental, business, educational, and other leadership positions? Are there many husbands and wives who possess genuine wisdom, who develop wise relationships between themselves and with their children?

Wisdom is the ability to understand and to discern what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Wisdom knows what to do and does it. Wisdom knows right from wrong, and always does what is right. Wisdom recognizes wickedness and has nothing to do with sin and evil. Wisdom knows what responsible behavior is and lives responsibly, turning away from all acts of irresponsibility.

Wisdom was the great concern of Solomon. Remember that Solomon had just consolidated the power of his throne. He had shattered a rebellion, a coup against the throne by his half-brother Adonijah. And he had executed all the powerful, influential conspirators who had supported the uprising of Adonijah. The nation was now unified under his leadership, and peace swept through the land. Solomon's father, King David, had recently died, and Solomon sat all alone upon the throne of the nation. Sensing deep inadequacy and helplessness to handle the task laid out before him, he felt the need to seek the face of the LORD. He desperately needed wisdom, a very special ability to understand and to discern what to do as he governed the great nation Israel. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: *The Request for Wisdom by Solomon and His Wise Justice: A Lesson on Wisdom and Discernment, 3:1-28*.

1. A glimpse into the attitude of Solomon: planting the seed that leads to a carnal life (vv.1-3).

2. A request for wisdom: a lesson on the assurance of answered prayer (vv.4-15).

3. A demonstration of wise judgment: the importance of wisdom (vv.16-28).

**1. (3:1-3) Carnality, Caused by— Mind, Carnal, Caused by— Attitude, Carnal, Caused by— Attitude, Carnal, Example of— Carnality, Example of— Solomon, Carnality— High Places, Discussed:** a glimpse into the attitude of Solomon during the early years of his reign is given by Scripture. And the seeds that lead to a worldly, carnal life are already seen implanted in the heart of Solomon. Three attitudes in particular are spelled out:

1. Solomon had an attitude that allowed him to make a political alliance with Egypt and to marry an unbeliever (1 Kings 3:1). Under David's reign and now Solomon's, Israel had gained worldwide prominence—so much so that even Egypt was willing to make a peace alliance with Solomon. By this pact, Solomon was able to secure the southern border of the nation. His marriage to Pharaoh's daughter was obviously a political marriage, a marriage that sealed the alliance.

But note this fact: Solomon was marrying an unbeliever, bringing an unbeliever into the palace as his wife. He was exposing himself and the nation to her false gods and false religion. He was not as careful as he should have been in protecting himself and the Israelites from idolatrous beliefs. A worldly, carnal seed was already planted in the attitude and heart of Solomon.

2. Solomon had an industrious attitude that drove him to undertake massive, extravagant building projects (1 Kings 3:1). He was industrious, and for this he was to be commended. For it was his industrious spirit that drove him to complete the building of his own palace, the temple of the LORD, and the wall that surrounded the entire city of Jerusalem. Once he had completed these building projects, he built a special house or palace for his wife (1 Kings 7:1-51). But note this fact: several factors suggest an extravagant, indulgent, and unrestrained attitude and spirit within Solomon:

⇒ the ornate, costly structure and furnishings of his buildings (1 Kings 7:1-51; 9:10-28; 10:14-29)

⇒ the heavy taxation he placed on the people in order to complete his projects (1 Kings 10:14)

⇒ the labor policies he adopted, which included *forced*, *slave* labor and *drafted* labor (1 Kings 9:20-23)

The extravagance of Solomon, this seed of carnality that was planted within his heart, was to lead to a life of luxury, pleasure, compromise, and disobedience (1 Kings 9:10-28; 11:1-43).

3. Solomon had an attitude that was divided spiritually (1 Kings 3:2-3). He allowed the people to continue worshipping at the high places throughout Israel. High places were usually open-air sanctuaries where altars and shrines were constructed for worship. These open-air sanctuaries had been constructed by the Canaanites on various hilltops throughout all Israel, including the countryside, towns, and cities. However, God had forbidden the Israelites to use the pagan altars and high places for worship of the LORD (Numbers 33:52; Deut. 7:5; 12:2-6, 13). The reason for this prohibition, this commandment, was to prevent the infiltration of false worship into Israel. If they worshipped at the high places, there would be the danger, even a tendency, to allow the infiltration of false belief and practices into their lives. Thus they were to destroy the high places and never participate in the worship of false gods. They were not to take over the pagan altars and high places that had been used by the nations they conquered. They were to construct worship centers only at the places chosen by God.

Solomon loved the LORD and obeyed the commandments of the LORD. But in this one area he failed: he worshipped the LORD at the high places, not only in the tent or worship center before the Ark of God. The seed of a worldly, carnal worship had been implanted in the life of Solomon.

**Thought 1.** The lesson for us is self-evident: we must guard against the seeds of a worldly, carnal life. When the urges of our flesh are aroused, we must restrain and subject them. We must keep our bodies under control. If we fail to discipline our bodies, the urges of our flesh will run wild, urges such as...

- eating a third or fourth helping
- committing immorality
- reading pornographic literature
- looking when we should control our eyes
- stealing or shoplifting
- deceiving or lying
- becoming angry or hostile
- seeking revenge or retaliation
- assaulting or murdering
- misusing or abusing
- subjecting or enslaving

The lust and arousal of the flesh will lead to a carnal life. For this reason, we must control, discipline ourselves. We must guard, protect ourselves against carnality, a fleshly, worldly life. This is the strong teaching of God's Holy Word:

**"And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14).**

**"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19-21).**

**2. (3:4-15) Wisdom, Prayer for— Prayer, Answered— Assurance, of Answered Prayer— Solomon, Prayer of:** Solomon began his reign in worship and prayer, sensing a deep need for wisdom to lead and govern the nation. With his power now consolidated and all the nation unified in supporting him, Solomon could now celebrate his inaugural ceremony or coronation service (2 Chron. 1:1-13). What happened at the ceremony changed Solomon's life forever.

1. Solomon traveled to Gibeon to worship God and to conduct the inaugural ceremony (1 Kings 3:4). Attending the ceremony were the officials of the royal court, the military commanders, the judges and governors of the nation, the clan leaders, and, no doubt, a vast multitude of citizens (1 Kings 3:4; 2 Chron.

1:1-13). A thousand burnt offerings were sacrificed to the LORD, indicating a huge and joyful occasion in celebrating the crowning of Solomon as king. It should be noted that the Tabernacle itself was located at Gibeon during these days of Solomon's reign (2 Chron. 1:3). Once the worship service had been conducted, Solomon and the multitude of people retired to their tents and campsites for the night.

2. After having fallen asleep, Solomon was suddenly confronted by the LORD who appeared to him in a dream (1 Kings 3:5). Being very pleased with the worship and sacrifices Solomon had offered, the LORD told Solomon to ask for or make any request he wanted.

3. But note what Solomon did: instead of making an immediate request, he acknowledged two great facts (1 Kings 3:6). His heart was overflowing with gratitude to the LORD for His wonderful goodness to him as king. For that reason he expressed his gratitude and thankfulness for what the LORD had done:

- ⇒ that God had been very kind to his father David because David had been faithful to the LORD and lived a righteous and upright life
- ⇒ that God had given a son to continue David's dynasty

Solomon knew that he had been given the privilege of ruling only by the grace of God and only because his father David had lived a righteous life. With a heart full of praise and thanksgiving, Solomon expressed his gratitude to the LORD for the wonderful privilege of ruling and sitting upon the throne of David.

4. Solomon also expressed a very essential attitude or spirit—that of humility (1 Kings 3:7). He was gripped by a deep, intense sense of helplessness and inadequacy for the awesome task given him. Knowing how inexperienced he was in government, Solomon referred to himself as being "only a little child." Within the halls of government, he simply did not know how to go out or come in, how to find his way around, how to carry out his duties and perform his task as king. Solomon was gripped by a sense of desperate need, for God's chosen people were too numerous and too great a people for him to serve. He was helpless, too unqualified for the task.

5. Having shared his gratitude and his sense of inadequacy, Solomon then made a striking request of the LORD (1 Kings 3:8-9). He requested an understanding, discerning heart so that he might govern God's people and discern between good and evil, right and wrong. Without this wisdom—the wisdom of an understanding and discerning heart—Solomon stated that he would not be able to govern the great nation Israel, the people of the LORD. Keep in mind that Solomon had become the ruler of the nation once led by great leaders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and his father King David.

By an understanding and discerning heart, Solomon meant a heart that could understand issues and discern the truth, a heart that could judge between...

- good and bad
- right and wrong
- truth and falsehood
- righteousness and evil

He was asking for a heart that would listen and be patient with all sides of an issue and that could discern and judge the truth. He needed a tender, patient heart and a sharp mind that had the ability to reason and think issues through.

6. Solomon's striking request pleased the LORD immensely (1 Kings 3:10-14). Responding to Solomon, the LORD reviewed and confirmed Solomon's request. He had not requested what most people would have: health and a long life, wealth and prosperity. Instead, Solomon had requested an understanding, discerning heart so that he might minister justice among the people. Because of Solomon's wise and humble request, the LORD made an astounding promise to Solomon:

- ⇒ he would be given a wise and discerning heart, a heart that never had been nor ever would be surpassed (1 Kings 3:12).
- ⇒ he would be given wealth and honor above all his contemporaries (1 Kings 3:13).
- ⇒ he would also be given a long life, but this promise was conditional: it was based upon obedience.

Solomon must walk in the ways of the LORD and obey the LORD's commandments.

7. When the encounter with the LORD was over, Solomon immediately awoke from his dream and returned to Jerusalem (1 Kings 3:15). He was stirred to worship before the Ark of God because of God's wonderful promises to him. After standing there before the Ark, he offered two types of sacrifices to the LORD:

- ⇒ He offered burnt sacrifices, which symbolized the atonement, that he had been reconciled to God through the substitute sacrifice.
- ⇒ He offered fellowship or peace offerings, which symbolized that he wished to grow in the peace and fellowship of God, ever seeking a deeper life with the LORD (see outline—' Leviticus 1:1–7:38 and notes—' Leviticus 1:1–7:38 for more discussion).

After his personal worship before the Ark of God, Solomon held a great feast for his court officials (1 Kings 3:15). What a memorable experience his inaugural ceremony had been, an experience that led to a dramatic, life-changing encounter with the LORD!

**Thought 1.** There is an encouraging lesson for us in this worship experience of Solomon. When we are facing desperate and critical situations or are feeling incapable and sensing deep, intense inadequacy, we can cry out to the LORD and He will answer us. The LORD will meet our desperate need, and He will help equip us to handle the difficult situation. The LORD will empower us, making us sufficient and adequate so that we can handle the task. Never will the LORD abandon us and leave us to plow through life by ourselves.

Prayer is the answer. When we pray, the LORD hears and answers us, meeting our need. Whatever the need is, the LORD will hear our cry and answer our prayer, strengthening and empowering us to conquer whatever problems confront us. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

**"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*" (Mark 11:24).**

**"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).**

**"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).**