

In 2005, the reality TV show *Three Wishes* asked people in small towns across the US if they could wish for anything in the world, what would they ask for. In each episode, the producers made those wishes come to reality with heartwarming stories, choosing three people to receive the one thing they wanted more than anything in life. Helping out needy people who deserved a break because they were always helping others made the story touching and moving. Knowing that money was no object, the producers lacked the wisdom to see that this show couldn't last more than one season because of how expensive the costs would become!

If you could ask for anything in the world, what would it be? Some people would want wealth. Some would want different circumstances in their lives. Still others want different abilities so that they could do something different or great.

But there was one man who asked for something greater, and his request continues to impact you and me today.

When we left the Story of Everything, we had walked from the beginning of the Bible, seeing how God created everything, placing a man and woman in his garden temple to rule the world. But because they did not listen to God and make right judgments but listened to the unclean and evil serpent, they were cast out of the Garden Temple, away from the presence of God. But God, in his goodness, promised that he would make a way for humanity to come back to him and that evil would be crushed. The way he would bring about his presence with his people is through a commitment to be their God – to rescue them from sin and death. He chose a man named Abraham whom he promised a great name, a great family, and a great land. But his family ended up in Egypt, where they became slaves. The only way they could be delivered was by the mighty hand of God. Bringing them up and out of slavery, they rebelled and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. When they came into the land, they settled it, but not being fully obedient. They suffered until David came to the throne. David, a man who chased after God's heart, brought peace and a kingdom that God promised would always have a son of David on the throne. So when Solomon, David's son, was appointed king, he acted decisively by getting rid of his enemies. But what kind of heart did he have? 1 Kings 3:3 tells us that he loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of his father David. He was a man who offered sacrifices to the Lord, a man who prayed, and a man who wanted to bring the blessings of God to the nations.

But how can you live a life that brings blessings to the world and has an impact for eternity? You've got to ask for the right things. So what is it we should be asking for, and what difference will this request make?

### **Ask for Wisdom (1 Kings 3:4-15)**

We can't get in to all the issues around vv. 1-4, but what we can see very clearly is that God responded to Israel's worship by coming to Solomon and offering him anything he would desire. The God who offers himself to his people comes and is the God who is radically

## **The Story of Everything: Wisdom – 1 Kings 3&4**

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall  
September 12, 2021

generous. There is something about seeing how good and generous God is that he invites us to pray. He invites us to ask of the Lord.

So when Solomon begins praying, notice how he starts. He doesn't begin with his requests. He begins with the past, with what God has done (READ vv. 6-8). He recalls the Lord's faithfulness, his covenant promises, and how God is keeping even recent promises that he made to his father David in 2 Sam. 7. That promise is already coming to fulfillment, and Solomon can look back to the promises God made to Abraham – to give him descendants more numerous than can be counted (cf. Gen. 13:16 & 32:12). And this is where Solomon starts.

So much wisdom can be gained here from how Solomon prays. Notice how his prayer is rooted in the character of God. Too often we find prayer stuffy and boring, we find our requests so urgent, that we begin there. Instead of beginning with God, we begin with us. Prayer lacks the vigor and passion because it is self-focused. We are needy. And it is good for us to pray about our needs. But this is short-sighted. Prayer runs out of steam quickly when we begin with ourselves. There is no inspiration to pray when we start with all of our needs and requests. What happens is that the focus stays on us and we lose hope. Instead, notice how Solomon prays: he looks at the character of God – a faithful, promise-keeping God who is worthy of praise. For so many people, they are cynical about prayer and God because they start with themselves.

Not only do we need to pray in light of God's character, but we need to ask in light of God's purposes. Notice the priority of Solomon's prayer: Ask whatever you want! And what does he ask for? In vv. 7-9, Solomon's requests are rooted in something great: he's young (v. 7b), he's inexperienced in leadership (v. 8) and he has a huge responsibility (v. 8). So he prays, "Give me an understanding mind to rule your people, to discern good from evil." We will come back to this phrase in a moment, but for now we see how Solomon sees how needy he is for God to come and help him to rule well. He needs the Lord's wisdom. So what does he do? He asks his generous God to liberally give him wisdom.

And the Lord's response is that he is pleased (v. 10). Because of what he did ask for and what he didn't ask for, God expresses his pleasure in Solomon (vv. 11-13). He loves to give to his people when they ask rightly. So he gives him more than what Solomon could have ever asked for or imagined.

Solomon asks because God is generous, because God is good in keeping his promises, and because God's people need help. And when we ask in light of these things, God is pleased to give far more than we could ask or think.

**Use Wisdom (3:9, 16ff; 4:20-24, 33-34)**

The difference that this request makes is immediately seen. Two women come to Solomon with a baby that they both claim is theirs. One has stolen the baby away from the other after her baby died. And Solomon, with great wisdom, can discern that there is a great evil here. One of them is lying. So he gets to the heart of the matter – give each woman half a baby! The mother of the living child does not want her son killed, so she willingly gives up the right to her baby. But the mother of the dead child wants nothing other than for the two of them to be the same. Jealousy reveals the evil intent of her heart, and Solomon can see through the charade immediately.

How can Solomon do this? He has received the wisdom that is from above. God has given him a hearing heart. Solomon is doing what Adam failed to do. Adam was to come to God at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to discern right from wrong – for wisdom was found there as Genesis 3:6 suggests. Adam was not to decide by his own eyes what was good and evil because wisdom is not found inside of us. Wisdom comes from above. Wisdom is living skillfully and applying God’s truth to all of life. So when Solomon asks that he would have discernment to know good and evil, he is echoing Genesis 2:17. Adam was to rule the garden by protecting it from good and evil, but he failed to do his kingly task. But Solomon governs and protects the kingdom by discerning good and evil immediately. For this reason, Solomon is called the greatest king in Israel (1 Ki. 4:21, 24), greater than the kings of the earth (4:34). He is doing what Adam failed to do – exercise dominion over all the earth. He is bringing the promised blessings of God to his people and to the people of the earth (1 Ki. 4:20).

And the wisdom that Solomon used is given to us. Great sections of what we call “The Wisdom Literature” in the OT was written by or handed down by Solomon. How should we raise our sons so they don’t fall into the temptations of lust and desire? Proverbs 1-9 are the teachings of Solomon to ensure that the promises given to David are exercised with wisdom. They are to seek wisdom and revere the Lord. How should we live in a world full of sin when we despair? Ecclesiastes are the sayings of the great son of David, Solomon, teaching us how to find joy in a world where Adam’s fall corrupts everything – including us. How do we live in light of the steadfast love of the Lord? Solomon retells the story of the love of Eden and how that can be enjoyed today in the Song of Songs.

Wisdom needs to be applied to all of life. Seek it out. Ask for it. The Lord will give it. And the reason we know that God will give it is that there is one who is greater than Solomon who has come. And so we...

### **See the Glory of Christ**

Along would come another son of David – one who would rule with wisdom. And when he arrived, we are told that “one greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). With all of his heart he sought the Lord, with all of the steadfast love he lived for God, and with all of the wisdom of God he ruled. He ruled in such a way that the great apostle Paul would call Jesus Christ “the

## **The Story of Everything: Wisdom – 1 Kings 3&4**

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall  
September 12, 2021

wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30). But the way of God's wisdom doesn't look like the way of this world. The way of wisdom looks like foolishness; it isn't the power that holds on and minimizes risk. It is the wisdom that embraces foolishness and sacrifice because the wisdom of God is vulnerable, weak-looking, and cross-embracing. Jesus goes to the cross and looks like he gives up all power. But he does so because he is the wisdom of God for us.

By being the wisdom of God for us, we can come to him and ask for wisdom. This is the reason that James says in James 1:5 that if anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously. But he shouldn't ask like a double-minded man. Instead, he should have a heart that seeks after God.

Wisdom comes not from us adding a little bit of knowledge to our lives. Wisdom comes from being devoted to the Lord. This is the language of Proverbs – seek wisdom, find understanding, and fear the Lord (Prov. 1:7). The heart of Solomon is the heart of Christ, which is to be our heart. Our heart is to be devoted to the Lord. Our heart needs to seek one thing. This is the reason Paul says he made it his aim to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). The wisdom of God lives in light of the cross; the wisdom of God enables us to live joyfully in a sinful world; the wisdom of God enables us to love with radical love. Why is that? Because the wisdom of God begins with us having a worshipful heart that reveres the Lord.

And when we love God, he gives us his wisdom. The wisdom of Solomon, and for that matter the wisdom of Christ, is not inaccessible to us. It isn't found within us. It's found in Jesus Christ. We open the Word of Christ and we find the wisdom of God for us. Wisdom to apply to all of life. The wisdom that God has given us through Solomon and ultimately in Christ leads us not to some wish, but to a reality that is greater than anything in this world. It brings about what James 3:17 says: "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."

You don't have to wish for wisdom. You can ask for it. You can seek to live a Godward life. And you will find that when you receive wisdom, you won't have your program cancelled after one season. You'll leave a legacy for generations that makes an eternal difference.