

Heavy is the Head that Wears the Crown

May 26, 2024

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

1 Kings 3:5-15

Session Outline

1. A Wise Request (1 Kings 3:5-9)
2. Pleasing to God (1 Kings 3:10-12)
3. Even More Blessed (1 Kings 3:13-15)

Theological Theme

Solomon took over the throne as king of Israel following David. He felt the heavy weight of what it takes to lead and responded with humility when God invited him to request anything he desired.

Call to Action

What wisdom do you seek? From where do you seek it? Identify one thing in your life for which you need wisdom and consider what God's Word has to say.



Leader Guide

Heavy is the Head that Wears the Crown

Introduction

What would you wish for if you knew it would be granted? If you polled people on what they would wish for you would find a variety of answers. A quick search online suggests many different responses including personal wealth, riches, happiness, good health, and ease of life as the topmost popular wishes.

Granted wishes is a fun idea in fairy tales, but rarely in life do we find ourselves with the opportunity to pick what we want in that way. In 1 Kings, God assured Solomon that he would receive whatever he asked for, and Solomon responded differently than we might guess.

- ❓ What are some other popular things you think people would wish for?
- ❓ What would you wish for if you were assured it would be granted?

Session Summary

Being king of a country is an important and weighty position of leadership. When Solomon succeeded his father David, he realized how much he needed the Lord to lead well. God visited Solomon in a dream and offered to grant him anything that he requested. In response, Solomon asked for wisdom and understanding.

This request pleased the Lord so much that He didn't stop at fulfilling His promise to Solomon: He went above and beyond. The Lord also gave him great riches and honor. God declared that this wealth and honor accompanied by wisdom would cause Solomon to stand out from any king in the past or future.

1. A Wise Request (1 Kings 3:5-9)

Following the death of David, Solomon was crowned king and quickly realized the weight of the task before him to lead. Imagine the pressure to follow a beloved and successful king like David.

Sometimes the reality of what you wanted or expected to happen can be overwhelming when it comes to pass. While dealing with the new position of leadership, Solomon had a powerful dream. The Lord visited Solomon and asked what he desired from God. God would bless the young king in the way he desired. Solomon's heart was surrendered to the Lord and God planned to do something special in and through his reign.

- ❓ When has the reality of a situation not matched what you hoped for or expected? How did you respond?

Before asking for anything, Solomon acknowledged the Lord's faithfulness both to his father, David, and to him. Solomon also displayed humility regarding the position and power granted to him. He recognized his dependence on the Lord to fulfill the role he had been given. Solomon knew he would fail in his leadership if he were not led by God.

There were so many ways Solomon could have asked the Lord to bless him, but Solomon sought God's wisdom. He didn't ask for mere knowledge; he asked to have a receptive heart. The Hebrew word for receptive means "hearing." Solomon asked for a heart that heard and, therefore, understood better. He wasn't settling for ears or a brain that merely took in knowledge but desired a heart that heard and understood God.

- ❓ How would you describe the difference between hearing with your head and with your heart? What is an example of this from your life?

Solomon recognized that a ruler needed wisdom and discernment. To make the vast number of decisions he faced, the king needed God to do a work in him. Many in power do not make decisions out of wisdom and discernment but out of personal motivations and agendas. It is often obvious when wisdom is neglected, and leaders govern without discernment. Solomon took advantage of the Lord's invitation by making a request that revealed a godly heart.

- ❓ Application: What do you need to request of the Lord to fulfill the role He has given you?

The Wisdom of Solomon


Solomon requested in a dream the wisdom needed to serve the people of God. God granted him wisdom and more (1 Kings 3:4-15). An example of his wisdom was his ability to settle a dispute between two prostitutes in the passage immediately following the one we are studying today (1 Kings 3:16-28).

2. Pleasing to God (1 Kings 3:10-12)

Solomon acknowledged his great need for wisdom, discernment, and understanding with the request he made of the Lord, and his humility pleased the Lord. Any time we acknowledge our need for God, it pleases Him. Though the world tends to dismiss or neglect humility, God honors it. Having a humble heart before the Lord should be our desire. When we willingly admit that we need God, we set ourselves up for Him to work in and through us beyond what we could have imagined.

 Why is humility often overlooked or dismissed by the world?

It is safe to assume God was also pleased by what Solomon did not ask for. Think about all the things that might have occurred to Solomon. He could have asked for more wealth and power. He could have asked for protection from his enemies and warring armies. He could have asked for a peaceful reign without opposition or stress. He could have asked to be a greater king than David had been. But God was pleased he asked for something that reflected his heart and positioned him for godly leadership.

 How is the attitude of your heart connected to God's work in and through you? What would you say is the most common attitude or posture of your heart right now?

Solomon's request centered on the successful accomplishment of God's calling and not on worldly or self-centered desires. God listed three requests a self-focused king might have made in Solomon's situation: long life, riches, or the death of enemies. God promised to give Solomon a wise and understanding heart. He granted Solomon's request above and beyond what was asked, beginning with the kind of "heart" that would equip Solomon to rule effectively and justly over God's people. Because Solomon asked for things on behalf of God's people (v. 9), God gave the honor and prestige of a worthy monarch.

This passage is also a reminder that the Lord always does what He says He will. Though Solomon would not use the wisdom he was given rightly at every point in his life, God was faithful to give Solomon what He asked for and needed.

Solomon's request showed his heart for God and his desire to serve the Lord in his position as king. This request also acknowledged the Lord's favor in giving Solomon that role. David's successor could have been several other people, but God chose to anoint Solomon for this important task. In asking for something to help him rule and reign, Solomon demonstrated his desire to please God was greater than his desire for his own pleasure.



Application: Where do you need to focus on pleasing God over pleasing yourself?

3. Even More Blessed (1 Kings 3:13-15)

Through this account, we learn about the heart of God and what He values. God heard Solomon's request and gave him wisdom that equipped him for the daunting task of leading as king. To judge rightly, wisdom and understanding were necessary. King Solomon's voice would have the most weight among God's people and his request for wisdom would not just benefit him but the entire nation.



How does wisdom (or the lack thereof) in our lives also impact those around us?

As is often the case, God went above and beyond human expectations. He promised to give wisdom to Solomon, not in conservative measures, but in abundance—greater than anyone else had received. God declared that Solomon would have a wise and discerning mind that no other could compare to. He would be set apart from kings who had come before him as well as those who would follow him.

Not only did the Lord give what Solomon asked for, but God also blessed him in ways he did not ask for. The Lord poured out further blessings in the form of riches and honor. Both were possible requests that Solomon could have made, yet he chose the better course. But God gave him abundantly more and set him apart by the measure of earthly wealth and prestige as well.




What do you learn about God from how He blessed Solomon beyond what he requested? How has God gone "above and beyond" for you?

These events bring to mind two New Testament passages. In Matthew 6, Jesus addressed concern over God providing for our daily needs. In 6:33, He promised that if we give our focus first to the kingdom of God, we will have everything we need. This isn't a guarantee of earthly wealth and prosperity, but we can be certain that God will provide everything that we truly need as we devote ourselves fully to Him. In Ephesians 3:20-21, Paul gave glory to God, "who is able to do above and beyond all we ask or think." Often, our problem is not that we ask too much of God but that we settle for too little. We remain content with temporal blessings that will ultimately fade, but God desires to give us abundant life with Him beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

Near the conclusion of this dream, God took one step further to motivate Solomon to stay faithful and to trust in Him. The Lord promised the king He would lengthen his days if Solomon made wise choices. God compared the right path for Solomon to that of his father David. Solomon had a front row view of how David, though imperfect, had ruled with a heart for God. Solomon would not be able to claim ignorance when he went off the path of godliness because he had seen this displayed firsthand.


Following His dream, Solomon responded in worship and celebration. He believed God's promise to Him and acted in accordance with it. Likewise, when we experience God's blessing, the appropriate response is worship and celebration with others.


 Application: Who has God given as an example of wise and godly living in your life? How can you follow their example?


Conclusion

Solomon took over as king following David and realized he needed help. When visited in a dream by the Lord, Solomon was invited to ask anything he wanted from God. Solomon recognized the importance of the moment and asked for wisdom and an understanding heart.

The fact that Solomon didn't ask for wealth, fame, or personal gain pleased the Lord. By requesting wisdom, Solomon showed that representing the Lord and ruling with honor and godliness was more important to him than exalting himself. This pivotal interaction led God to grant his request in a way that exceeded anything he could have imagined. God gave Solomon what he asked for, but he also gave him what he didn't ask for and promised even more if he would stay faithful to God through His life and reign.

 Where do you need to seek help from the Lord right now? What keeps you from asking Him?

 When have you experienced the reality that the pursuit of God often leads to other areas of blessing in life? What might this include that are not material blessings?

 How can you seek a gospel conversation with someone by sharing about the wisdom of Solomon?

Prayer of Response

Praise the Lord for the ways that He exceeds your expectation and equips you for the things He has called you to in life. Make your requests known to Him and believe He wants to grant what you need.

Memory Verse

“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?”—1 Kings 3:9

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings* by Tony Merida
- *Be Responsible* by Warren Wiersbe
- *1 Kings: Power, Politics, and the Hope of the World* by John Woodhouse

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of 1 Kings

Purpose

The theological perspective of 1 and 2 Kings is expressed in a number of themes: (1) the sinfulness of the kings and the nation; (2) the conflict between the demands of practical politics and the demands of faith; (3) the glory that God gave to the obedient covenant kings; (4) God's harshness in judgment on some occasions and leniency on others; and (5) the conflict between the worship of the Lord and the worship of other gods.

Author

Scholars cannot identify the authors of any portions of these books. Traditional guesses such as Samuel and Jeremiah lack evidence, although a prominent worshiper of the Lord like Jeremiah would have been influential in the circles that produced these books. Since the books clearly incorporated many earlier documents, the complete authorship would include all writers who contributed to the source documents of this work. At some point, the Holy Spirit worked in the human authors to authenticate the inspired, inerrant books of 1 and 2 Kings. The final stage of composition or compilation had to come after the release of Jehoiachin from Babylonian imprisonment (ca 562 BC). That edition may have added only a postscript to a work completed years earlier, or it may have involved significant additions.

Setting

The history recorded in 1 and 2 Kings covers approximately 410 years. First Kings begins around 970 BC with the death of King David, and 2 Kings ends around 560 BC with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison. During this time, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms (930 BC), and both kingdoms went into exile (Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 587 BC).

Special Features

The titles of these books are certainly descriptive of their contents: the history of the kings and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. First and Second Kings are part of the twelve Historical Books (Joshua-Esther) of the Old Testament. Originally, these two books were just one, but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament; aka LXX).

Extended Commentary

1 Kings 3:5-15

3:5. Gibeon was the last of the pre-temple national shrines. It was located about six miles north of Jerusalem. How did it become a sacred city since it passed into Hebrew control by deception (Jos 9)? Holy places tended to remain holy through changes in time and local population. The Hebrews acknowledged its holy status when the tabernacle and the bronze altar were put there.

3:6. Faithful love (Hb *chesed*) almost always refers to covenant faithfulness. David was faithful in his obedience to God; God was, in turn, faithful in giving and keeping his covenant promises to David. Covenant faithfulness is a key concept in OT theology.

3:7–11. Solomon’s prayer marked a major cultural shift in Hebrew life, a shift to peaceful values involving wisdom and skill rather than military craft. Solomon reflected these new values in asking for a heart that would be receptive (to the covenant) in judging the nation. Solomon’s request was a request to discern. That a ruler of a great empire would desire an obedient, wise heart signaled a major change in values. These new values are also reflected in the royal psalm, Ps 72. The old values are reflected in the title “man of war” (1Ch 28:3), assigned to David. In the old ways, prowess in war made a political leader mighty.

3:12–14. Solomon thus got the best of both sets of values, the wisdom that marked the wise man or effective businessman, as well as the riches . . . honor, and power that marked success in the older values.

3:15. Solomon celebrated this oracle with a great sacrificial feast of fellowship offerings for his servants—perhaps for all the resident palace staff.¹

References

1. Andrew C. Bowling, “1 Kings,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 508–509.