



“Wisdom”

-1 Kings 3-

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Wisdom. One could question whether such has gone the way of the dinosaur and now joins the long list of species having passed into extinction

at the hands of mankind. Knowledge? Knowledge we like, knowledge we respect. But wisdom?

Hmmm...perhaps we having trouble recognizing an application? Immanuel Kant once remarked “Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life.” Indeed. Certainly there are a lot of very smart people out there...*at least in terms of knowledge*. I knew this guy in High School that was “top of the charts” kind of intelligence. Private schools came recruiting. He certainly had the knowledge. But application? Not so much. He had a hard time “connecting the dots” sometimes. He sells insurance now.

Another guy I used to know went to college for 15-20 years. He had so much “book learnin’” they must have had to get him a bigger internal hard drive. A *very* intelligent guy...but once again, in terms of knowledge only. Today he’s still single, half unemployed, socially awkward, writes bad sci-fi books he sells independently on the internet, and pretends to be a private detective. And he’s angry. Dangerously so. Then there has been people who passed through my life that had little official schooling, who were incredible wise about the world around them. My father for one, with his 8th grade education. Obviously there is a large chasm of difference between someone with knowledge and someone with wisdom.

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. (Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible)

It seemed that while Solomon was a smart guy with plenty of knowledge, it was wisdom that was his great concern. Despite all that Solomon had recently accomplished and endured, including a rebellion against him... a coup against the throne by his half-brother Adonijah, he was unwilling to trust in his own abilities alone. He had executed all the powerful and influential conspirators who had supported Adonijah in his attempt to take the throne. The nation was now unified under his leadership, and there was peace throughout the land. His father David had recently died and now Solomon was suddenly the “man-in-charge.”

Despite his success, Solomon still felt inadequate and lacking when he considered the task before him. Solomon felt he needed to seek the face of the Lord. In doing so, he could have asked for anything...riches, more power, a bigger army, better weapons. But out of that seemingly bottomless bucket of possibilities and choices, Solomon asked for wisdom. He *wanted* wisdom, and further he knew he *needed* wisdom! He needed a help that stretched beyond the human realm into the supernatural. Help in understanding and discerning how to govern these great nation of Israel.

Despite Solomon's wisdom, it seems the "seeds of destruction" were planted early. Seeds of carnality that stemmed not from a battle with poverty or hard times. No, these seeds found root because Solomon had it good. Because of his "blessings"...*or what he would have no doubt perceived as great blessing*, he had the power, the money, the position and the opportunity to feed his flesh. He began to establish alliances with the world... attempts at "peace" with the enemy. Instead of "putting to death" the flesh, he attempted to make an alliance with such. A calm albeit "middle-road" approach. To acquiesce rather than fight.

One of Solomon's mistakes was attempting to follow the "letter of the law" while also trying to circumvent the spirit of the law. We often do the same...dancing as close to the 'flame' as possible without getting burned! He had no mandate that he could not marry the Egyptian woman but uniting in such a way with a culture and religious system that was contrary to Jehovah God, it would be his undoing as he became entangled in the belief systems of those wives. God also had given explicit directions as to *where* and *how* He was to be worshipped. So while Solomon went through the outward motions of Jehovah worship, he ignored to greater directives on such and disobeyed God even as he worshipped and sacrificed.

De 12:1-5 *"These are the decrees and regulations you must be careful to obey when you live in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must obey them as long as you live. "When you drive out the nations that live there, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods — high on the mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree. Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Completely erase the names of their gods! "Do not worship the LORD your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. Rather, you must seek the LORD your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes — the place where his name will be honored."*

This is yet a common pursuit today, with a generation that wants to "worship God wherever they want...I can worship God at the lake or in the woods..." But God has given us specific directions to guide us to not only do the right thing, but to do it the right way. HOW we do Christianity...how we live out our faith, does indeed matter to God! This is a crucial principle to wrap our minds and hearts around. For many folks are busy "doing the right thing" spiritually speaking but are "doing it the wrong way" and will ultimately fail to please God. The story of Cain and Abel is a good example of this. Both made offering to God, but only Abel's offering was acceptable to God.

Gen 4: 3-7 *When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. Abel also brought a gift — the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."*

Despite Solomon's life shortcomings, no one would argue that Solomon had much going for him and he did in so many ways embody the word "wisdom." When God spoke to him early in this chapter, Solomon abandoned his own ideas of worship and submitted to the directives of God on the matter of worship and the dealing with the "high places."

God asked Solomon "ask for whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." I wonder how such a scene would play out if each of us individually were put in that same scenario. It was here...when the "world was his oyster" that he expressed true wisdom and love for His God. (Perhaps they must go together?) Each of us it seems has some sort of similar crossroad in their lives...A moment where that even with a truckload of knowledge, the lack of wisdom will change the trajectory of your life for the remainder of it.

It can come at any point in our lives really. Questions on the table could range from marriage, children, a financial endeavor, educational pursuits, career pursuits, where to live, what to give priority place in my life. And while the decision we make may not bear the marks of blatant sin, the spirit of the directive will be violated and what we do from there will never be blessed. We will of course be left wondering what the problem is because we hadn't "sinned." Perhaps that is true in the strictest interpretation, but we failed to place God first in that decision. While we allowed Him the position of God of our lives, we failed to make Him Lord of our lives. We had the knowledge of church, bible, and religious order. We just failed to have the wisdom to apply that knowledge in a righteous and glorifying manner.

Solomon had the "head stuff" to be sure. But he had the "heart stuff" to apply it in a worshipping and glorifying manner, and God blessed him for it. We will find ourselves in his shoes...perhaps more than once in our lifetime. Will we be "smart" in our decision? Or will we be "wise?"

1 KINGS 3: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Love is more than a feeling. *In what tangible and practical ways did Solomon demonstrate and express his love?*
2. Solomon's affectionate prayer is a model for our own love life with the living God." *What is instructive to you about the way in which Solomon begins his response to the gracious offer of God?*
3. James 3:13-17 also speaks to this issue of wisdom. *What are the characteristics of true wisdom, according to James, and how do they coincide with the motives of Solomon when he asked for wisdom?*
4. In 1 Kings 3:5, God told Solomon to ask for anything. *If God asked you that question tonight, how would you answer it?*
5. "It may seem tempting to envy Solomon for the invitation he was given to ask for anything he wanted from God. But God is ready to grant us Solomon's wish." *What do the following texts teach us about the wisdom which is available to us today, how is it acquired, and why would this be more valuable than the wisdom Solomon was given?* (Psalm 90:12; Matt. 12:42; 2 Tim.3:15; 1 Cor. 1:18-30; Col. 2:3, James 1:5)
6. In asking for wisdom, Solomon was refusing to ask for any of the things that most people want out of life.....Not that it would have been wrong for Solomon to ask for any of these things. Life is good; money can be useful; it is better to ask God to take care of your enemies. Solomon could have requested these for the sake of his kingdom. *What truth does Solomon express in Prov. 4: 7-9, 8:11 & 16:16, which must have guided his decision to ask for wisdom?*
7. *Share a time in your life when you were fulfilled by following God's wisdom. What has happened in your life when you didn't following God's wisdom?*
8. There was one promise that came with a condition—an "if". *What condition was placed on the promise of a "lengthened life?"* Why do you think God placed a condition on this promise?
9. **Why would it matter HOW we accomplished something for God as long as we accomplished it?**
10. *What examples can you think of where one could be obedient to the "letter of the law" while still violating the spirit of the directive?* (Note: tithing miniscule amount, non-intercourse sexual contact before marriage, being "tipsy" on alcohol but not "drunk", going to church on Sundays but not actively committing oneself and participating in service, not premarriage sexually active but involved in porn, we are deep in debt (Prov 22:7, Rom 13:7, Ecc 5:4), going on vacation instead of on mission, watching TV yet claiming no time to serve Christ and church, not sharing our needs and difficulties with others in the body, etc)
11. *What steps can you take to develop a heart that is devoted to God?*
12. *If a biographer wrote 1 Kings 3:3 about your life, how would it read?*