

IF YOU WALK BEFORE ME

WITH A HEART OF INTEGRITY

“The Lord Will Fulfill His Promise”

by Josh Hayes

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“You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain.”

These are the words of Harvey Dent, the Gotham City District Attorney played by Aaron Eckhart in the 2008 blockbuster *The Dark Knight*. Though these words apply within the story to Batman, Commissioner Jim Gordon, and Dent himself, this memorable line also applies to the biblical figure of King Solomon.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Consider the range of descriptions the biblical authors use to describe this beloved yet notorious king:

- Solomon loved Yahweh, walking according to His statutes like his father David did, but he also offered sacrifices and burnt incense on the high places (1 Kings 3:3).
- Yahweh gave to Solomon a wise and understanding heart to the extent there has never been anyone like him before or since (3:12).
- Solomon led the people in a festival of worship after the dedication of the temple for fourteen days, and the people went home with happy hearts, rejoicing over the goodness that Yahweh had done for his servant David and for his people Israel (8:65-66).

- King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the world in wealth and wisdom. People all over the world wanted to meet Solomon and hear the wisdom that God had granted him (10:23-24).
- In addition to Pharaoh’s daughter, King Solomon loved many foreign women. These women came from the Canaanite nations that Yahweh had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with because of the likelihood that they would turn the Israelites’ hearts away to follow other gods. Yet Solomon was deeply attached in love to these women, and when he was old, his many wives indeed turned his heart away to follow other gods. He was not singularly hearted to Yahweh as his father David had been (11:1-4).
- In summary, Solomon was described as doing what was evil in God’s sight; in contrast to David, he did not remain loyal to Yahweh (11:6).

A life of renown, a life of compromise, and at times, a life of outright arrogance and rebellion. That is what we see in Solomon—a mixture that, if we’re being honest, we sadly and alarmingly see in ourselves.

As image-bearers, we have the capacity to live as wise stewards who seek God’s fame and renown with our talents and resources, and yet, we also act as

presumptuous tenants who so often squander the Lord's gifts on luxury and self-aggrandizement. Lest we esteem ourselves too highly, we should see ourselves in the Solomon story—the good, the bad, the ugly, warts and all. We see in Solomon a wise king, a worshiping king (sometimes worshiping the wrong thing), and a failed king.

In short, in Solomon's life, we observe not only a wide range of what it means to be a king but also of what it means to be a human. Solomon lived long enough to see himself act as both the hero and the villain. The king who humbly requested wisdom from the Lord for the good of his people was the same Pharaoh-like despot who resorted to mass forced labor in an effort to build the temple and also his own palace, among other ambitious projects (see 1 Kings 5:13-16; 9:15ff; cf. 12:14b). Because of Solomon's pride and waywardness, God would eventually tear the kingdom away from him (11:11). Out of God's forbearance, and according to His faithful regard for David, He nonetheless promised to preserve a Davidic line in some form (11:12-13).

Solomon confronts us with the reality that is human nature this side of the fall—and the fall affects everyone high and low, princes and paupers, CEOs and suburbanites. Mighty kings like Solomon are not the only ones who descend into the villain role. We do too. We, like Solomon, need someone to play the hero for us, someone to rescue us from our own villainy.

WHERE IS DAVID'S GREATER SON?

All parents should want better for their children than for themselves. The same goes for kings. Sadly, this did not happen for Solomon, or at least not with any real longevity. In the covenant that God made with David, He promised that He would establish the throne of David's descendant forever (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). And at points during Solomon's reign, it looked as if this promise might already be coming true. Indeed, after the consecration of the temple, God spoke to Solomon saying that if he walked before

Him as David walked, doing what God commanded, He would establish Solomon's throne forever. Just as Yahweh had promised to David, the family would never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel (1 King 9:4-5).

We, like Solomon,
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As we have noted, however, Solomon would not remain faithful to God throughout his life, and this would result not just in the split of the kingdom within a generation but would set the course for the eventual exile of Israel and Judah. In other words, not only would Solomon become the villain, but so would Israel and Judah as collective nations. So what does this mean for God's promise? What about David's descendant?

Thankfully, something greater than Solomon would come (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). And this descendant of David would remain the hero, even when being condemned to die like a villain (Isa. 53:12). In reading about the downward trajectory of Solomon, we should do so with a view toward the upward ascension of Jesus, the greater Son of David, King of kings and Servant-King, the Hero who died and rose again.

While we were still villains, Christ died for us.



SOLOMON, THE WISE KING

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. A covenant charge is given to a son (1 Kings 2:1-4).
2. A gracious offer is made to a son (1 Kings 3:4-9).
3. A generous gift is given to a son (1 Kings 3:10-15).

Background Passage: 1 Kings 1–3

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God is generous in giving wisdom to His people.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Solomon reigned with great wisdom and insight, yet he was still an imperfect king who needed God's forgiveness. Solomon foreshadows the coming of a greater king—Jesus, in whom are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have received God's perfect wisdom in Christ Jesus, we depend on His wisdom from above to live as a testimony to our all-wise God.

GROUP TIME

NOTES



INTRODUCTION

SETTING: The crown is falling on your head. You're about to be the leader of a nation that is finally settling into peace and prosperity. Your father is one of the greatest leaders of all time, but you're young, inexperienced, and naive. Your brothers want your position; your father's generals are nervous about your leadership skill. The expectations over you are higher than they have ever been for anyone in your position before. How will you possibly meet and even exceed those expectations? Welcome to the first days of the reign of King Solomon, son of David.

INSTRUCT: Imagine you are starting a college to train new kings. In groups of 3-4 people, write down in the margin of your DDG a list of three to four classes you would offer. What knowledge and skills would your student kings need?

DISCUSS: Share your course list for this "King's College." If a specific course was repeated, what does that say about the importance of those skills or leadership qualities? (War 101; How to Make Just Laws; Living with Integrity; How to Handle Conflict)

TRANSITION: Often we can find ourselves in circumstances that are over our heads. We don't know what to do, what we need, and how to solve the problem. Our insufficiencies show up and we feel inadequate, ashamed, even embarrassed that we can't accomplish what we are expected to do. The same can be said for spiritual situations. Solomon became king and felt overwhelmed, but the Lord was there to help.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: What do you do when you find yourself in spiritual situations where you don't know what to do? (read the Bible; pray; ask for help; consult a friend for advice; search for the answer on the internet; talk to a pastor)



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POINT 1

A COVENANT CHARGE IS GIVEN TO A SON

(1 KINGS 2:1-4).

1 When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, **2** "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, **3** and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, **4** that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 2:1-4** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 1-3** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

At the end of his life, David ordered Solomon to be **strong**, be mature, and keep the **commands** of the Lord to be **successful** as king.

DISCUSS: Why were expectations for Solomon so high? (he was expected to lead with integrity and competence; he had a successful father who had led well; other people wanted his role; as a kingly representative of God, Solomon was obligated to represent the holiness and integrity of God)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 4** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Another reason Solomon was to **walk** in God's ways was to keep the kingly **lineage** in the family as part of God's **covenant** promises.

DISCUSS: Why is it important to walk in God's ways? (it's good and right to be obedient to the Lord; to stay on the straight path; as Creator, God set out the proper way to live in His world and interact with His creation and creatures; as image-bearers of God, we should make it our aim to please Him; so we display to others the greatness and holiness of God)

TRANSITION: The bar was set high. The expectations from King David, and ultimately from God, were laid out before Solomon. His faithfulness to the law of God would give him success as well as confirm the covenant relationship of God with His people. God has good reasons for demanding obedience from us. Whether we choose holiness or not is up to us though.

NOTES

THE LAW OF MOSES

The Law of Moses can refer to both the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) and the various aspects of the Mosaic covenant contained in the Pentateuch. In 1 Kings 2:3, the Law of Moses is most likely referring primarily to the law code in the Book of Deuteronomy. The Law of Moses detailed how the Israelites were to live in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-3 / As King David's death became imminent, who would be the successor to the throne? This question was answered in 1 Kings 1 as David confirmed his son Solomon and had the prophet Nathan anoint him as king. As David's days progressed and his death drew closer, he sought to give one more word of instruction to his son.

The term **"commanded"** here is the same term used to describe how God had "commanded" David to be king; it is also used in reference to Saul's failure to do what the Lord had "commanded" (1 Sam. 13:14). In the same way, David was commanding Solomon and passing along the instruction of the law to guide and lead him in ruling God's people. There is a similarity with the transition from Moses to Joshua in both the way Joshua was "commanded" and the content of the instruction given (Josh. 1:6-9). In the same way that Moses gave the law to the people and then was succeeded by Joshua, so David had received the kingship of Israel and was now passing it along to Solomon with all the covenant responsibilities and promises it entailed.

David's instruction to Solomon included a preamble and three commands. In the preamble, David metaphorically declared his impending death. **"Go the way of all of the earth"** describes the reality of death coming to all humankind and was the Hebrew way of speaking about moving into the afterlife (see Josh. 23:14).

The first command of David to Solomon, **"be strong,"** echoed God's command for Joshua to "be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6). Here, David was directing Solomon to lead by conviction as the king of Israel. Because God had chosen Solomon to this role of king above his older brothers (1 Chron. 22:9-10), Solomon was to lead with the confidence and courage of God's blessing. Therefore, it was time for Solomon to grow up in maturity and **"show [himself] a man,"** the second command. He was the rightful and God-appointed heir to the throne. The third command, **"keep**

the charge of the LORD your God," marked out the character Solomon was to have in his leadership. As king, the representative leader of Israel, Solomon was to obey God's law first and foremost.

David further described Solomon's obedience to God's law as being careful **"[to walk] in his ways"** and **"[to keep] his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies."** In layering on the terms describing **"the Law of Moses,"** which was God's law, David was trying to communicate to Solomon the need for obedience at every point. The law could not be side-stepped nor ignored. For this reason, God included as part of the law the command that a new king was required to write out a copy of the law himself and read it every day so he would remember and obey it (see Deut. 17:18-20).

With these commands, David then turned to the reason why Solomon needed to be careful to obey the law of Moses—so he would **"prosper"** in all the decisions he made as king. This promise was linked to the covenant promise God made to Israel as they entered the promised land. If they obeyed God's law, they would enjoy prosperity and flourishing in the land (Deut. 29:9). David understood the principle that "as the king goes, so goes the people," and Israel's future success was largely dependent on the character of the king.

VERSE 4 / David added one more clause to explain why Solomon needed to obey God's law. This reason was personal yet also covenantal. If Solomon (and his sons after him) followed the law of God, then a son of David would always sit on the throne of Israel (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). Solomon's obedience to God's law would result in the blessings of both the Mosaic covenant as well as the Davidic covenant. The link between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants in this instruction from David expresses the continuity of God's redemptive plan through the ages.

POINT 2

A GRACIOUS OFFER IS MADE TO A SON

(1 KINGS 3:4-9).

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. **5** At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” **6** And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. **7** And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. **8** And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. **9** Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 3:4-9** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 4-5** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

In telling Solomon to “**Ask**,” God was demonstrating His infinite love and **grace** toward the son of David.

DISCUSS: Why is it sometimes difficult to ask God for things? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 6-9** commentary to emphasize Solomon’s need and humility in asking for wisdom from the all-knowing, omniscient God, as described below (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #20: *God Is Omniscient:* Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who has **perfect** knowledge (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God’s omniscience, we admit our **finite** knowledge and **trust** His decisions as wise and good.

TRANSITION: God is gracious and kind. He isn’t stingy or miserly. He is the loving Father who invites us to come to Him and ask Him for what we need.

NOTES

HIGH PLACES

Usually located on hills and mountaintops, high places were sites where worship and sacrifices were offered to deities. Upon their entry into the promised land, God commanded the Israelites to destroy all the high places dedicated to the Canaanites’ false gods (Num. 33:52). The high place at Gibeon seems to have been a tolerated exception, given that it was dedicated to Yahweh and contained the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering (1 Chron. 16:39-40; 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3-6).

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that He is wiser than we are. To be sure, we may say that He is; but when it comes to a showdown, we do not want to act on what we say.”¹

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

COMMENTARY

VERSES 4-5 / Solomon, having now been established as king in the wake of David's death (1 Kings 2:10-46), decided he was going to make sacrifices to the Lord like the people were doing at various high places throughout the land (3:2). "**Gibeon**," a city a few miles northwest of Jerusalem, had become the most popular high place for worship in all of Israel. Saul had built an altar there, the first altar built by a king of Israel (1 Sam. 14:33), but the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 1:3-5 also records that the tabernacle and its bronze altar were in Gibeon, though the ark of the covenant was in Jerusalem.

At first glance, it looks as if Solomon's worship with "**a thousand burnt offerings**" was abundant and appropriate, but something was off. Solomon had dueling desires. On one hand, Solomon loved the Lord, following in the steps of David (1 Kings 3:3a). But on the other hand, he disobeyed God by following the lead of the people and sacrificing on the high places (1 Kings 3:3b; see Deut. 12:1-7) and by taking a foreign wife—from Egypt, no less (1 Kings 3:1; see Deut. 7:2-4; 17:14-17). Solomon, like each of us, had a divided heart.

Yet in spite of Solomon's disobedience, God's grace still poured down: "**the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream.**" This kind of appearance demonstrated Solomon's special standing before the Lord. God had previously revealed Himself in visions and dreams to Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David. Distinct from prior visitations, however, God did not give instructions or commands but invited Solomon to "**Ask what I shall give you.**" This opened gift to Solomon stemmed from God's infinite grace and love to the son of David, not from anything Solomon did or didn't do.

VERSES 6-9 / Solomon's response to God's offer began with a focus on the "**steadfast love**," or *hesed*, that God had shown David. This Hebrew term describes God's loyal, covenant love toward His people. Solomon reflected on the truth that his father was

the recipient of that steadfast love of God because God honors those who honor Him (1 Sam. 2:30). David had made it the pattern of his life to walk before the Lord "**in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart.**" So God honored this man after His own heart, first by anointing him as king, then by making him king, and also with a covenant that would impact his descendants. Solomon recognized himself to be the next recipient of that covenant love. Notice that Solomon didn't point to his lavish sacrifice or anything else he had done as the reason for his place on the throne. His circumstances were a fulfillment of God's promise to David to have "**a son**" on the throne.

Solomon then went on to explain his rationale for what he would eventually ask of the Lord. In being given David's throne and the responsibility that carried, Solomon pointed out two significant challenges to his leading well: inexperience and abundance. Solomon understood that as a young man, he was inexperienced in serving as king. To be placed in this position was a gift of grace, but his résumé wasn't very long. Solomon also noted that he was now king among the vast multitude of God's chosen people. Israel had been fruitful and multiplied and now numbered in the millions.

Inexperienced and overwhelmed, Solomon needed to ask God to graciously provide the means for his success. He desired to lead well, so he had to be able to know what was "**good**," what was "**evil**," and how to administer true justice. Therefore, Solomon asked for "**an understanding mind**," literally "a listening heart" or "an obedient heart."² To possess the ability to discern between what is right, true, and good versus what is evil, false, and wicked requires the skill of listening and getting underneath to the heart of the matter. Solomon understood that without this ability no one would be able to serve as a good king over the people of God. And who better to ask for such knowledge than the all-knowing, omniscient God?

POINT 3

A GENEROUS GIFT IS GIVEN TO A SON (1 KINGS 3:10-15).

NOTES

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. **11** And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, **12** behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. **13** I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. **14** And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” **15** And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 3:10-15** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 10-14** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

God’s **gift** to Solomon was what he requested and **more**—discernment and wisdom, and riches and honor. Long life came with a contingency, but all of it demonstrated God’s **grace**.

DISCUSS: Why do you think God blessed Solomon in this way? (because of His covenant promises; because Solomon was humble in asking for discernment; because God is gracious; because God is generous)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 15** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Solomon responded to God’s gift with true worship, understanding the undeserved grace and love given to him. When we experience God’s **grace**, we should respond with **worship** to God and grace to **others**.

TRANSITION: Because of God’s grace, Solomon was fully equipped to lead the people of Israel. Yet he failed (as we will see in future sessions). Solomon was not the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise, but he points us toward the true Son of God who fully obeyed and fulfilled all of God’s will and commands.

WISDOM

Wisdom is usually understood to involve the study of life with the goal of learning how to live a good and successful life. However, Scripture declares that true wisdom begins with “the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7). At its very essence, wisdom is spiritual in nature, begins with faith in God, comes from God, and involves the knowledge and understanding of God that leads to the living of a life of righteousness (Prov. 2:5; 9:10).³

COMMENTARY

VERSES 10-14 / God was “**pleased**” with Solomon’s request for “an understanding mind,” considering what Solomon could have asked for. At this early point in his life, Solomon understood the Lord was more than a personal genie that gives whatever the human heart longs for. He rightly saw God as the sovereign and great “I AM” (Ex. 3:14), the true king over Israel, and himself as the Lord’s agent and servant to execute that reign.

God’s answer to Solomon’s “ask” highlighted a contrast between two routes Solomon could have chosen. Solomon did not request the things that would have benefited himself exclusively: long life, wealth, or the defeat of his personal enemies. These were not inherently evil, but requesting one of them would have betrayed a self-seeking, self-glorifying desire. Instead, God noted that Solomon had asked for “**understanding**” for himself “**to discern what is right.**” The ability and skill to lead and provide God’s justice for God’s people could only come from God Himself. This request would bless and benefit all the people of Israel.

In being pleased with Solomon’s response, God told the young king that He would do what Solomon asked. But the gift of God was even greater than the request that was made. God gave Solomon not just “an understanding mind,” but “**a wise and discerning mind.**” Beyond merely being able to listen and discern what was good and evil, God gave Solomon wisdom. “This is not simply knowing things but is acting with wise justice (as the following narrative [see 1 Kings 3:16-28] will go on to demonstrate).”⁴ The blessing of this gift of wisdom to Solomon was a profound grace. It was also abundantly beyond the bare minimum of Solomon’s request. Solomon wanted the ability to perceive what was right and wrong to judge well. But God’s gift of wisdom gave him the ability to act and carry out the implications of what was right and wrong for the good of others. He would be able to judge people and circumstances in truth and respond accordingly.

And God still gave more grace. Not only would Solomon be given wisdom, he would be unique and famous such that there would never be anyone like him. His renown for wisdom would be unparalleled in history.

Yet the Lord’s blessing didn’t stop there. Solomon had honored the Lord by asking for discernment to lead the Lord’s people well, so God also would honor him. The very things that Solomon could have requested but did not, God graciously gave to him: both “**riches**” and “**honor.**” By God’s grace, Solomon would find himself to be the greatest of all human rulers during the time of his reign.

But verse 14 hints at the potential for trouble on the horizon for Solomon. Instead of unconditionally promising long life, God reminded Solomon of his obligation to “**walk in my ways,**” obeying God’s commands. If Solomon followed the pattern of David’s obedience to the Lord, then he would find himself enjoying a long life. But the opposite could also happen—if Solomon failed to obey, his life could be cut short.

VERSE 15 / The narrative concludes with Solomon waking from his dream and returning to “**Jerusalem**” to worship God. In standing before “**the ark**” of the covenant and offering sacrifices in Jerusalem, likely what he should have done in the first place, Solomon showed gratitude and worshiped God and gave a feast for his servants. And in this, he followed in the steps of his father, David (2 Sam. 6:17-19).

Solomon’s actions reflected an understanding of God’s provision, grace, and undeserved favor upon him. The gospel order is displayed here in that Solomon was given God’s love and kindness first, even despite his misled actions. God’s love and grace pours out freely first, and our response should always be true worship and the giving of grace to others. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

MY RESPONSE

PACK ITEM 11: DISPLAY WISDOM: Hand out copies of this bookmark to help your group members remember that wisdom is not just a matter of what we think or what we say but also what we do in the name of Jesus Christ.

Because we have received God's perfect wisdom in Christ Jesus, we depend on His wisdom from above to live as a testimony to our all-wise God.

HEAD:

God is the giver of wisdom. Where we look for insight, discernment, and understanding today, God alone gives us wisdom to live well for His glory. Solomon was put in position to lead the kingdom of Israel and charged to follow God's ways, yet he did not possess the experience and wisdom to do so. Despite this, God supplied great wisdom and discernment to lead well, much greater than Solomon could have produced on his own. Wisdom that we need for our lives comes from God in Christ Jesus. He is our wisdom and life (Col. 2:3; John 14:6).

What are some ways we should seek the wisdom God supplies, instead of merely relying on our own wisdom and insight?

HEART:

God gives! He is a lavish and gracious giver to His children of everything they need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Instead of believing that God is withholding good from us or believing that God does not have our best interest at heart, we see God's gracious gifts to us most clearly in His gift of His own Son, Jesus. This giving, gracious disposition of God toward His people should lead us to follow Solomon's example of faith, worship, and thanksgiving to God for His many gifts and grace.

Where have you seen evidence of the grace of God in your life? How are you worshiping and thanking God for His grace?

HANDS:

Like Solomon, we can acknowledge our own need and inadequacy, especially in living with wisdom. And like Solomon, we can ask God to supply His abundant wisdom to help us live for His glory and the good of our neighbors. James 1:5 teaches us that "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." God has not ceased to give wisdom to those who ask.

Where do you need God's wisdom in your life right now? Pray now and ask Him for what you need.

NOTES



VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"He that has done so much for us, as to take us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put his gospel into our hearts, may be trusted for the rest."⁵

-Charles Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

POINT 1: A COVENANT CHARGE IS GIVEN TO A SON (1 KINGS 2:1-4).

+ COMMENTARY

“There can be no doubt that much of Solomon’s early spiritual vitality and dedication to God may be attributed to David’s deep personal relationship to his Lord and his desire to honor him. Proverbs 4:3-9 indicates . . . that David spent time with Solomon as he was growing up, teaching, and admonishing him from the Word of God. It is not clear just how strongly David instructed his other sons, though [1 Kings 1:6] indicates that David did not properly discipline Adonijah. It is probable that since David knew from the time of Solomon’s birth that he was to be his successor, he gave him special instruction to prepare him for kingship.” **6**

+ ILLUSTRATION

The charge that David gave Solomon is similarly experienced today in our culture through various oaths of office that are taken when a political leader enters office or when a man is newly ordained into pastoral ministry. Many times, a new pastor will be publicly charged in a worship service by a senior and more experienced pastor to honor and fulfill his calling as a pastor. The charge can include statements regarding the high requirement of character for a pastor, the duties that they must discharge and enact in the local church, and the accounting before God that they will give on the last day. Some denominational traditions require the person being ordained to publicly affirm their commitment through affirming certain oaths regarding the office of a pastor. One denominational service manual presents the following questions that a potentially ordained minister would affirm:

Do you believe in your heart that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the pastoral ministry? Yes, I do.

Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures are God’s inerrant Word and your daily guidebook for equipping this flock? Yes, I do.

Do you recognize the special burden of responsibility you carry for this church, knowing, according to James, you shall be judged more strictly, and according to Hebrews, that you keep watch over this flock as one who must give an account of your work? Yes, I do.

EXTRA

Will you guard your life and doctrine closely, with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us? Will you be unashamed to testify publicly of Christ our Savior? And will you do your best to present yourself to God as a workman who correctly handles the Word of truth? Yes, with God's help, I will.

Will you pray consistently and thoroughly for your flock and for the work of God in this church? Yes, with God's help, I will.

Will you care for your own family, loving your wife as Christ loves the church, and shepherding your own children in the Lord? Yes, with God's help, I will.

Will you be an agent of God's grace to your people, loving them personally, and seeking to walk among them humbly and authentically for Christ's sake? Yes, with God's help, I will. **7**

POINT 2: A GRACIOUS OFFER IS MADE TO A SON

(1 KINGS 3:4-9).

+ COMMENTARY

"It is Solomon's request, however, that is the most impressive feature of this section. The king asks God for 'an understanding mind' to enable him to lead God's people well and in particular to allow him to 'discern between good and evil.' One of the marks of the messianic reign is justice (an idea prominent particularly in Isaiah; cf. Isa. 9:7; 10:2; 16:3,5; 32:1; 42:1,3,4; 51:4), and Solomon asks for the wherewithal to rule in this fashion. The Hebrew phrase is "a listening heart," which may refer back to 1 Samuel 13:14 (although the translation of this verse is disputed) or, more likely, 1 Samuel 16:7. In any case, in light of verse 6 the connection with his father, David, is strong (1 Kings 9:4). Solomon is asking for the ability to rule in the way David did."**8**

+ ILLUSTRATION

The group leader should share a personal story of a time a need of theirs was met by God through someone else. Then ask the rest of the group to think about and share stories of God graciously providing for them. Talk about how God met their needs through His grace as an act of sharing "evidences of grace." One story for example: A minister and his family had just moved into a new city. The young family had lived in a smaller community previously and found that they were able to get to their respective jobs and responsibilities with only one car. Upon their move to the larger city, they discovered that two cars were needed. A member in their congregation discerned that they had only one vehicle and inquired about their need. Going over to the home of the pastor, he decided to ask a singular question, "What is one thing you need to make your job easier?" When the member asked the question, the pastor considered and responded, "I know I need to love my church more, but a car would be really helpful." Knowing this was exactly what the pastor needed, the church member gave the pastor one of the four cars he already had. Out of the abundance of his own wealth and resources, he was able to provide exactly what the pastor desired and needed to serve his church, family, and city more effectively.

POINT 3: A GENEROUS GIFT IS GIVEN TO A SON (1 KINGS 3:10-15).

+ COMMENTARY

“‘All’ Solomon must do to secure these blessings is to follow David’s example of adherence to the Sinai covenant. If he keeps the ‘statutes and commands,’ Solomon will honor his father and thereby have ‘a long life.’ This reference to Exodus 20:12 underscores the continuity of God’s covenant with Israel, with David, and with Solomon, the new generation. It also emphasizes the conditional nature of Solomon’s kingship, an idea that is repeated every time God addresses Solomon directly (cf. [1 Kings] 6:11-13; 9:3-9; 11:11-13) . . . God’s covenant with David is eternal, but Solomon can be replaced with another ‘son of David’ if he disobeys the Lord.”⁹

+ COMMENTARY

“The attribution of the book [of Proverbs] to Solomon (Prov. 1:1) sends us to the notice in 1 Kings 4:29-34 that he received his wisdom as a gift of God. That text praises Solomon’s wisdom and insight as he is credited with speaking three thousand proverbs, composing a thousand and five songs, and exploring the world of nature. Earlier in that book, we read that Solomon asked God for this wisdom (3:2), and earlier still, David charged his son Solomon to act in wisdom, repaying those who had done evil to his father (2:6,9). Solomon’s epitaph lifts up his wisdom as the most notable aspect of his reign (11:41), portraying him as a ‘wise son who brings joy to his father’ (Prov. 10:1).”¹⁰

+ ILLUSTRATION

Sometimes the gifts we receive are far better than what we originally asked for. In His wisdom, God gives us more than what we think we need, according to His perfect insight into what we truly need. In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, J. R. R. Tolkien presented an insight into this kind of wise giving. After suffering through the Mines of Moria, the Fellowship had come to the enchanted forest of Lothlórien, where the elves gave the group rest, refreshment, and encouragement. As they prepared to depart and continue their mission, the Fellowship was supplied with food (lembas bread), cloaks, and boats to continue their journey. One elf in particular, though, had the insight to give each member of the Fellowship a unique item, tailored to each individual, that would be of specific help or importance. The elven gifts helped give the Fellowship hope when they were sure there was no hope, strength when all had run out, skill when theirs had failed, and even light when they were in the dark.

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