

The Kind of Person God Blesses with Wisdom

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[0 : 00] Who is the wisest person to ever live? We're going to stay here until somebody answers.

Solomon. I heard Angie Hester say, Brian Hester. You can stop laughing now.

Wise person to ever live? King Solomon. Now, when you read what various Bible writers say about him and what he personally wrote in the book of Proverbs in particular, there is no doubt that he was smart and well-educated.

But Solomon's wisdom was due to more than just his natural intellect. Solomon had a God-given wisdom that provided him with the spiritual insight to understand how God intends for life to work in this world.

Now, think about it. Solomon was a highly intelligent individual. He had a great education.

[1 : 29] He had all kinds of life experiences. But it was because God gave him this special endowment of wisdom that he was able to write the kind of things that he did in the book of Proverbs that deal with how we really live our lives.

I mean, he gave us wisdom as we've seen over the last several weeks about how God intends for us to use our tongue and how he intends for us not to use it.

We've seen such things of how to value money, how to value money, how not to value it. There's a lot that Solomon taught about having healthy relationships.

Having healthy relationships with people you're close to, family members, neighbors. He wrote a lot about developing a strong, healthy work ethic, not being lazy.

Proverbs, the major wisdom writing of the Old Testament, was written by someone that God had given him something special.

[2 : 52] Special insight and wisdom. Now, how did that happen? How did it come about that God gave this man such wisdom?

Well, we read about it in the book of 1 Kings. I want you to turn with me, and we're going to stay there throughout this message. The book of 1 Kings, chapter 3.

What we're going to do today and next week, we're going to conclude our study of the book of Proverbs by looking at Solomon. We're going to look a little bit at his life, do a sort of a brief character study today and next week.

Today, we're going to look at Solomon as a model of the kind of person God blesses with wisdom. Today, this is a very positive message. We're holding Solomon up as a model, as an example of the kind of person God blesses with wisdom.

Next week, we're going to take a totally different look at this same man. Now, we need to understand here at the beginning, Solomon was unique.

[4 : 13] We're not going to be little Solomons no matter what. God chose him to be king over his chosen people, the people of Israel.

You are not going to be king. You are not going to be queen in the days to come. I don't want to burst anybody's bubble. That's just not going to happen. Solomon also was, what you might say, specially endowed with God-given wisdom.

I mean, he was so favored by God, so gifted, that he really is considered the wisest man who ever lived.

You nor I are ever going to acquire that kind of wisdom. No one's going to ever go out and write books about your and my wisdom. We're not going to be like Solomon in this respect.

But we can. We can be wise to some degree. That's why God gave us the book of Proverbs and the other 65 books of the Bible God wants us to grow in our knowledge, our wisdom, our understanding of him and life and how to live life in a way that pleases him.

[5 : 47] I want us to look this morning in 1 Kings 3, verses 1 through 15, some of the character qualities found in Solomon that were an obvious prerequisite to his receiving this special wisdom from God.

And as we go through this, we need to understand that these same character qualities need to be found in our lives if we expect to receive God's wisdom or grow in the development of wisdom.

So let's go ahead and read 1 Kings 3, verses 1 through 15. Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the wall around Jerusalem.

The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord. Solomon loved the Lord.

Walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place.

[7 : 20] Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give you.

In other words, ask what do you want me to give you? 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 towards you.

Let's just pause for a moment. Most of you here are familiar with the life of David. David was not a perfect model of any of those things. David is known for some major moral failures in his life.

But David never ceased to be known as the man after God's own heart. David is still considered here as one who walked in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart before God.

That should give us hope. That should give us an encouragement. We do fail God, but God doesn't disqualify His people when they fail, if they're truly His, because they'll repent.

[8 : 49] They'll come back to Him. They'll renew their faith and their commitment. David did such things. Let's read on. And you have kept for Him this great and steadfast love, and have given Him a son to sit on His throne this day.

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, in place of David my father. Although I am but a little child, I do not know how to go out or come in.

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.

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?

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 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, behold, I now do according to your word.

[10 : 06] Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has ever been before you, and none like you shall arise after you.

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.

And if you will walk in my ways, notice here, there's a requirement. 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.

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 of his servants.

What we're going to look for in these verses are the character qualities that we should consider to be prerequisites for receiving God's gift of wisdom.

[11 : 21] Number one, God's wisdom is a gift given to those who love God wholeheartedly. That's what we see in verses 3 through 6. Look at verse 3 in particular.

It says that Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David, his father. This is a more powerful statement than it really appears to be, as Philip Ryken, who's now president of Wheaton College, points out in his book on Solomon.

Look at what he's saying. He's describing how Solomon loved the Lord. He says, this is virtually the highest praise that any person could ever receive. In fact, Solomon is the only man in the entire Bible who is said to have loved the Lord in so many words.

He's not saying that Solomon's the only person in the Bible who ever loved God, who ever talked about loving God, but he is saying this is a unique way of describing Solomon, saying that Solomon, just real simply, Solomon loved the Lord.

He's describing a genuine, heartfelt love that this man had for God, and it wasn't just an emotional feeling. You know, a lot of people have emotional feelings related to God or spiritual things.

[12 : 46] Something happens in their life, and it causes an emotional crisis. Some people maybe hear a certain song, and it affects them emotionally.

Some people come to a worship service, maybe something that's said touches them in the moment. A lot of people have emotional feelings, and they'll talk about their love for God or their belief in God, but when the emotions subside, that love can't be found.

Those feelings don't remain. Solomon had a genuine, heartfelt love for God that he expressed in tangible ways.

Note in verse 4, he is described as worshiping God, and as a part of his worship, he offered costly sacrifices. Look at it in verse 4.

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.

[13 : 56] Now, I want you to think about this. He's just been described as loving God, He's now being described as worshiping God. As a part of his worship, he offered an extravagant, costly sacrifice, or numerous sacrifices, actually.

I want you to think about the great expense that would have been. Think about how much trouble the labor involved in sacrificing a thousand animals.

But this was intentional. Solomon wanted to demonstrate his love to God by offering to God something that was valuable to him, something that cost him something.

You know, it appears that God accepted Solomon's worship as an expression of genuine love by the way God responds in verse 5.

Look at that. At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give you.

[15 : 03] Ask what you want. If God was not pleased with the sacrifice Solomon has made, sacrifices he's been making, why would he offer such?

Well, Solomon continues his heartfelt worship and prayer to God in verse 6. Look at that. 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 towards you.

And you've kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. He's talking about himself. Solomon is praising God for the faithful love that God has shown to his father David in allowing Solomon to take over, in allowing Solomon to succeed his father as king over all of Israel.

What we see in the way that Solomon declared and demonstrated his love for God is a model for how we should express our love for God.

I want you to think about how you express your love to God. Rehearse.

[16 : 30] Think about it for a moment. Do you regularly express your love to God in words? Do you talk to God, and do you say to him things like, I love you?

I love you, Lord. I love you, Jesus. If you have a relationship with someone, I mean, if you have a real relationship with your spouse, your children, different people, don't you tell them, at least every now and then, that you love them?

Isn't it natural to look at someone that you really do love, you really do care about, and say to them, I love you.

You want to communicate that verbally what Solomon did in his relationship with God. And I think if we really and truly have a relationship with our Heavenly Father, with Almighty God, if He is our Heavenly Father, if Jesus Christ really is our Savior and our Lord, it should just be natural for us to want to say to the Lord Jesus, to our Heavenly Father, I love you.

Do you regularly do that? If you don't, why don't you? Do you regularly express your love to God in your actions? Solomon did by the way he worshipped God.

[18 : 04] He worshipped God privately. He worshipped God publicly. Do you? I mean, we're here in a worship service. Is this something that you normally do, you want to do, gather together with God's people and join together to worship and praise God because you love Him?

Do you do this privately? Get up in the morning, around lunchtime, at night? Do you regularly just get before the Lord, maybe driving down the road for you or walking somewhere, and you just have a time of personal worship, praise, thanking God?

Do you do like Solomon? Do you faithfully give to God offerings, offerings that cost you something? I've been in church all my life.

There's never been a time when I didn't go to church as a kid. Some of my earliest remembrances of people, preachers preaching on giving, I remember being, hearing something like this.

A preacher described our giving in terms of giving a tithe or a tip to God. For some reason, it's always stuck in my mind.

[19 : 24] Is your giving a tithe or is it a tip? Which most accurately describes you?

But I don't want you to think that giving offerings is the only way we can visibly express our love to God. It is one way, but it's certainly not even the most primary way, the most important way.

Jesus made it clear that the most important way we can express our love to God is by obeying Him. Look with me. There's three verses I want to look at real quickly from John chapter 14.

I mean, how much clearer and forcefully could He say this than bam, bam, bam? If you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. Jesus answered him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word. It's good if you have a heartfelt love for the Lord Jesus.

[20 : 33] It's good if you spend time praising Him. It's good that you want to give offerings that cost you something to Him.

But bottom line, Jesus is saying, if you love me, you'll make it a habit of obeying me. you'll make it a habit of knowing how I expect you to live which is revealed in His word.

And it'll be your desire to do God's will, to put into practice the things that He teaches us in His word that please Him, that serve His purpose.

God's gift of wisdom is given to those who truly love God. That was true about Solomon. It's true about anyone who's going to experience God's wisdom.

But we also see from Solomon's example that God's wisdom is a gift given to those who humbly seek it. Verses 7 through 9, we see that again.

[21 : 38] God responded to Solomon's expression of love and worship by inviting him. God invited him to ask for anything.

Look again in verse 5. Ask what I shall give you. Now Solomon responded with one of the most well-known expressions in the Bible in verse 9.

Look at it. 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? Solomon, when asked, you can have whatever you want. He responds here, I want an understanding mind.

Other translations say an understanding heart or a discerning heart. What's happening here in 1 Kings 3 is summarized in 2 Chronicles.

[22 : 38] In chapter 1, verse 10, this statement or Solomon's response is summarized like this. Give me now wisdom and knowledge.

That's what Solomon wanted. Now understand, God didn't place any conditions on Solomon's request. God didn't tell Solomon, I want you to be a good little Jewish boy.

I want you to act like a king and think like a king as you respond. I want you to be spiritual with your response. It was an open-ended request. Solomon could ask for anything.

Now of course, we know God would not have answered his prayer for just anything. God never acts contrary to his holy character. God's always going to be faithful to be who he is.

He's never going to violate the truth of his word. He's never going to do anything that's contrary to who he is, our holy God. God's offer to Solomon was genuine.

[23 : 44] But it was also a test of Solomon's character. Now note that Solomon didn't just ask God for wisdom. He humbly acknowledged his own limitations.

Look at verse 7. And now, O Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father.

Although I am but a little child, I do not know how to go out or come in. Now Solomon's not being literal here.

He's not a little child. We don't know exactly how old he was but probably around 20. He's a young man. Solomon is saying by making this kind of statement, he's just letting God know, I know that I'm inexperienced.

I know that I do not know how to be king over these people. Solomon's saying, Lord, you have entrusted me an awesome responsibility and I'm just not equipped to do it.

[24 : 54] I need for you to provide me with the wisdom to enable me to be a good and wise and faithful king to these people.

I need for you to provide me with the wisdom so that I'll be able to discern between good and evil and provide and provide good government for your chosen people.

Solomon was praying. Solomon was going to God with genuine humility. He knew how limited he was but he had confidence that God could meet his needs.

That's why he asked God to supply him with what he needed and he would do this job. We can learn a lot from Solomon's example, can't we? We can learn to admit our limitations and seek God's wisdom.

You know, we have been given an awesome responsibility to live in this world, the world today as God's people and as Jesus said, we have a responsibility to be salt and light in the world today.

[26 : 09] I mean, you and me living in today's world, we have a responsibility to have a preserving effect. We have a responsibility to add flavor.

We have a responsibility to shine the light of truth, God's truth in this spiritually dark world. How do you do that?

Husbands, how do you love your wife as Christ loved the church? That's what, as Christian men, we're commanded to do. We need to ask God to give us the wisdom to know what that looks like as we live together every day.

Wives, you are told, this is in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, both of these statements. You've been told to submit to your husband as unto the Lord. What does that look like in 2017?

Do you ever ask God for the wisdom to help you to be that kind of godly wife? And you know, as parents, Scripture's very clear that it's our responsibility to be the primary spiritual teachers of our children?

[27 : 22] We need help, don't we? We need help to know how to train them according to the way that they should go. There is no cookie-cutter approach to training children, is there?

They're all different. And we need God to help us to do it in a way that's appropriate for each child and it's true to His Word.

And to do it in a way that we don't provoke our children to anger, one of the passages says. And that's sometimes hard to do, isn't it? To be the right kind of leader in the home as a parent, the right kind of attitude, be the right kind of example.

And you know, a lot of you work in a place where you're expected to keep your, what we'll call religious views to yourself.

I mean, in this day, it is very, very difficult in some settings for us to actually talk about what the Bible teaches concerning morality.

[28 : 36] There's some settings where we really need God's wisdom to know what to say and the way to say it.

And there's just a lot of settings where we just need God's wisdom to know if we should say anything at all. See, we've got a, there's a fine line we've got to balance today.

We cannot be afraid of people. We cannot deny the truth of God. We cannot compromise who we are as God's people.

We can't compromise His Word. But at the same time, we've got to be there and be salt and light and have as good an influence as we can.

And a lot of times that means we don't say everything that we think. It means that we say things precisely, lovingly, trying to convince, not beat somebody over the head with it.

[29 : 47] We need God's wisdom to know how to live in this world today. And if we want it, we need to just ask Him for it.

We need to admit to God our inability, our limitations, our weaknesses, and ask God to give it to us because He promises in James chapter 1 that He will look at it.

James says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given to him. James says that in the context of talking about how to deal with hardships in life, how to live with difficulties, how to live with trials, just like what we're talking about.

God will give us the wisdom to live in this world in the midst of hard situations. We've got to learn to ask Him. But also, we need to ask God the right way.

James goes on in this letter, if you go ahead and read, say, chapter 4, to point out that God requires that when we ask for wisdom or we ask for anything, we ask for the right motives.

[30 : 56] We ask for the right purposes. James refers what we see in 1 Kings. There are prerequisites for receiving God's gift of wisdom.

Let's look at one more real quickly in verse 9. God's wisdom is a gift given to those who want to use it to benefit others. Note what he says in verse 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?

Solomon asked for wisdom so that he could be a benefit, a blessing to God's people. He wanted to be a wise and godly leader for the good of his country, for the good of God's people, for the good of families that he was responsible for, for the good of individuals.

Solomon did not ask for wisdom so that he could become a famous wise man. I want you to understand that. What's happening in 1 Kings 3 has nothing to do with Solomon seeking anything for himself.

[32 : 09] It's all about the glory of God and the good of others. God's. What are your prayers focused on? The glory of God and the good of others like Solomon.

Now this does not mean we can't pray for ourselves. Solomon in doing all of this, he was praying for himself but he was not being selfish. He wasn't being greedy.

He wasn't being worldly with his request. He was asking God to make him a wise leader so that God would be honored. So that God's people would be taken care of for the good of other people.

That's what he was praying for. We need to learn to pray like Solomon. Openly admit our limitations and our needs and then ask God to meet those needs in a way that will please him and be of benefit to the people around us that God has put in our lives.

You know after giving Solomon this wisdom, God proceeded to give him even more than he asked for or could have imagined. Look at verses 13 and 14. He says, 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.

[33 : 41] 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.

God just blessed him. Solomon serves here as an example of an important principle that Jesus stressed in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6.

Look at it. Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. That's what Solomon did.

Now as I said at the beginning of this message, Solomon is unique. Solomon is totally different than you and me. We should not expect God to make us the wisest and wealthiest person in Pickens County.

That is never a request, a proper request. It was just a byproduct in Solomon's life of God's grace. God's grace. But here's what you need to think.

[34 : 49] God is able to surprise us with his generosity. Even us writing much, much later to the church in Ephesus. Paul said this.

It's in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20. It's really an expression of praise worshiping God. A doxology. He says, now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, some translations say, or imagine, according to the power at work within us.

Paul, as he thought about God, as he prayed, he thought about God as being able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine. you know, the best way for us to follow Solomon's example is to seek the wisdom of God in its highest form, which is the person of Jesus Christ.

As wise as Solomon was, the Lord Jesus Christ is far wiser, for he is the Son of God. The wisest thing that any person can ever do is to give their life, to Jesus Christ, in total surrender, trusting him as Savior and Lord.

Have you done that? If you haven't, would you like to? You can, if you will do like Solomon there and admit your need, admit your sin, turn from that, change your mind about living that way.

[36 : 29] Put your faith in Jesus, that as God's Son, he came into this world, lived a perfect life, obeyed God with no flaws. Then he died on the cross, according to God's purpose from the foundation of the world, he died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins if you'll trust him.

Think about him dying as your substitute, taking your sin upon himself, experiencing the punishment you should have experienced. If you'll trust him and what he did that way and call upon him to save you, he will.

God will forgive you because the penalty for your sins has been paid in Jesus. God will see you as completely right with him because of the righteousness of Jesus. If you don't know him as your Lord and Savior, I encourage you, right now, the wisest thing that you could do would be to call upon Jesus for your salvation.

But I know that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of most people in this room, but what I want to ask you is, are you looking to him seriously day by day and asking him to give you the wisdom that you need for the day, for the family, for the workplace, for school?

Are you looking to him to give you the wisdom you need to live like a child of God in a hard world and really be salt and light?

[38 : 09] If you're not asking him, why not? And what would you need to change in order to start asking him? You know, if there's sin in your life, if there's something in your life that you're just bowing up, rebelling against God about before anything ever changes, you've got to confess that, you've got to repent of that.

If there's some priorities in your life that you know are not right, you've got to admit that to God and ask him to help you to rearrange those priorities. But I want to encourage you now, respond to God in loving obedience as he shows you how he wants you to respond to this message about developing the kind of wisdom that Solomon did.

Would you pray with me? Dear God, help us to see in Solomon, not someone that we're ever going to be, but help us to see in him, Father, someone who had the kind of character, the kind of heart that enabled him to see his need for wisdom and ask for it so that he could use it in a way that would please you and help people.

Help us to see, dear God, that we need to be people who love you with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Help us to see that wisdom, like what we're talking about, this gift from you is something that you give to your children.

It's a loving gift. Help us, Father, to desire it, to ask for it. Help us, Father, to desire it and ask for it because we want to please you in how we use it, and we want to be a value.

[40 : 19] We want to be a blessing to people by the way that we use it. In attitude of prayer, you just listen to the Lord and respond to Him.

If I could pray for you during this time, I'll be here at the front and be happy to do that. Let's just be still and quiet before the Lord and then respond to Him.