



07

SESSION 7

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we examine Solomon's prayer for wisdom and the incredible blessings God granted him in response. We will see how he requested God's wisdom, reigned in wisdom, and the blessings that resulted from his wisdom. We will also see how desperately God's people still need the wisdom and insight that only comes from walking with God.

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 3:5-28; 4:29-34

THE POINT

Wisdom comes from God, and He freely gives wisdom to those who seek Him.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

What makes a great leader? We could list many things here: a prestigious education, high intelligence, a proven track record of achievement, a charismatic personality, or the ability to cast vision. These qualities could make a great leader, but they do not guarantee great leadership.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goldman argues that what makes a great leader is not a high IQ or off the charts talent. What makes a great leader, he argues, is someone with a high level of emotional intelligence. *Emotional intelligence is the sum of five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skill.*

Though he sometimes misses the mark in his analysis, Goldman was essentially describing what the Bible calls *wisdom*. *Wisdom is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.* It's knowing what to do when—quite frankly—we don't know what to do. A good leader is a wise leader. Good leaders must know how to manage themselves, relate well to others, and discern between good and evil. They know how to navigate in choppy waters.

As Christians, we believe that wisdom must go beyond the world's perspective because we believe wisdom comes from an all-wise God. God desires to give us wisdom as part of our relationship with Him. As we pursue Him by faith, He generously gives us the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

- **Take a few minutes to discuss some of the great leaders of history. What makes them great leaders?**

Option 2

Provide each student with lined paper. Instruct students to create a list of requests to God—requests for items, ideas, or skills. Allow a few minutes for this activity. As a group, discuss some of your student's requests. Make sure students know that God is not obligated to fulfill our desires, but tells us to ask Him for what we need. Explain that requesting things from God requires our attitudes and motives to be aligned with His heart and His purpose. For example, Solomon asked for wisdom—a gift that would allow him to be a good leader for God's people. God blessed Solomon above and beyond what he requested because the request pleased God, it aligned with His heart and plan.

- **What are some requests people often make that are motivated by selfish desires? Why are those requests not pleasing to God?**
- **How can you make sure the heart, attitude, and motive behind your requests will honor God?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Wisdom comes from God, and He freely gives wisdom to those who seek Him.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Solomon** - son of David who succeeded him as king over Israel. Solomon is known for his God-given wisdom—having authored many books in the Old Testament wisdom literature—and his building of the temple

PLOT

Moving forward in the biblical story line, we turn to David's son Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel. In 1 Kings 3, we see Solomon asking God for the very thing that he needed to be the king God desired: wisdom. Neither power nor wealth nor charisma would be enough to reign over the people God had called out for Himself. Rather, wisdom would be the distinguishing mark of the kind of king God wanted for Israel. And Solomon displayed this reality like no other.

TIMELINE

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Solomon becomes known for his God-given wisdom.

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

Solomon instructs on how to walk in wisdom.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon constructs the temple, and God fills it with His presence.

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

This is one of the most remarkable stories in the Old Testament. God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said, “Ask what I shall give you.” (v.5).

- **Imagine if God told you to ask for anything from Him. What immediately comes to mind? What would you most likely request?**
(p. 48, PSG)

Solomon could have asked for all sorts of things, but he chose to request wisdom. Below, we will look closely at two things about this prayer: Solomon’s posture in the prayer and his purpose for the prayer.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall 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 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. 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. 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. 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. 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, 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 his servants. (1 Kings 3:5-15)

Notice how Solomon saw himself as he prayed. He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people, and he recognized that he was there only by divine appointment. God placed him there, and it was an act of God's grace.

- **Why is Solomon's humble approach a good model for the way we should go before God?** (*p. 48, PSG*)

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom. Recognizing God's grace in our lives and admitting that the task before us is impossible in our own strength, humbles us and causes us to reach out for divine wisdom. When we think too highly of ourselves, we are in danger of walking in our own wisdom and strength.

In addition to Solomon's posture in prayer, take a look at the purpose behind his praying. Solomon asked for God's wisdom in order to lead God's people well. He made a request for himself, but his intention was to use the wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. In other words, his motivation for wanting wisdom was others-centered. That's why his prayer pleased the Lord.

- **What can we learn about prayer requests from Solomon's choice and God's response?** (*p. 48, PSG*)

SOLOMON DISPLAYS WISDOM

After Solomon's prayer for wisdom, we see him confronted with a situation that will test the depth of understanding God gave him. Two prostitutes approached the king to resolve a dispute. Let's look at the story and see how Solomon responded.

Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king. Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was

brought before the king. And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.” Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.” And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. (1 Kings 3:16-28)

This story shows that God truly answered the prayer of Solomon. The people of Israel saw their king reigning in wisdom and discernment in a way that could only be attributed to God. Here we have proof that when God promised to give Solomon wisdom, He was committed to fulfilling His promise. This is the kind of God we serve, one who does what He says He will do.

I highly doubt you will be confronted with the same situation as Solomon (let’s hope not!). But I can promise that you will face problems in which wisdom (and the application of wisdom) is critical. Maybe you need wisdom to respond to an atheist at school or to explain the biblical view of sexuality to your friends. There are countless situations where we need wisdom. Thankfully, our God alone has all wisdom and understanding.

Of course, Solomon’s wisdom wasn’t just noticed by his own people; rather his reputation spread the surrounding nations. Solomon’s knowledge of the world seemed to have no limits. We see here the wonderful blessings that came to him when he humbly submitted himself to God and walked in the wisdom God provided.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29-34)

We are always at our best when we walk in God’s wisdom. While we may not compose 3,000 proverbs, we can trust God for wisdom as we talk to an unbelieving friend about the gospel. We can wisely respond to our friends who

TIMELINE

SOLOMON’S FALL INTO IDOLATRY

Foolish decisions ultimately lead to idolatry.

MEANING OF LIFE IN ECCLESIASTES

Solomon reflects on the purpose and meaning of life.

THE SUFFERING OF JOB

The suffering of Job and the mercy of God.

may be walking through a difficult season. We can navigate the rocky terrain of life as we receive the wisdom God provides.

- **Solomon was not the only one who needed wisdom. What requests would you make to God in the situations you're currently facing?**

CHRIST CONNECTION

As we unpack the story of Solomon, we see a king who got it right in so many ways and God used him in a tremendous way. His story shows us much to imitate.

But more than anything, Solomon's life points to King far greater than even himself—a King who would one day rule in perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Solomon points us to this perfect King, the one who would reign in wisdom and never falter in His trust in God. He points us to Jesus Christ, the True King who rules and reigns in infinite wisdom. In fact, Paul said “in whom [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3).

We can know a King who is even greater than Solomon. We can come under the reign and Lordship of this King. The wise person is the one who looks to Jesus and fully submits to Him in everything. You want to see wisdom? Then set your gaze on Jesus. May we live for our True King, and announce His kingship to the world around us.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Truthful

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our Creator. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God, whose Son is the Way, “the Truth,” and the Life (John 14:6).

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think people rarely pray for wisdom?** *Often times people pray for specific outcomes, like physical healing or help on a test. While it is good to pray for specifics, it is also helpful to pray for wisdom as one faces the everyday demands of life. By doing this, one is able to prepare and respond correctly to whatever comes his or her way.*
- **What are some situations in your life (relationships or otherwise) for which you most need God's wisdom right now?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Share about a time when you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision.** *Responses to this will vary.*
- **How has this session challenged you when it comes to seeking wisdom in your own life?** *Answers to this will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

As we saw with Solomon, one of the reasons God gives us wisdom is so that we can rightly relate to those around us. We need wisdom to be godly sons, daughters, friends, athletes, and students, etc. James, the half-brother of Jesus, once offered a warning about asking for things only for ourselves when he wrote: “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (Jas. 4:2b-3). Often we want God to give us things because of what it does for us. Our comfort and our pleasure are at the center of our minds. Solomon made a request because he had a godly desire to bless and lead others.

- **Which relationships in your life could benefit from wisdom right now?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can begin to think about the needs of others before your own?** *Answers to this will vary.*



HEART

Jesus told His disciples: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned” (John 15:5-6). What a good reminder for us when it comes to our prayer life. We truly are nothing without Him, though many of us have a hard time admitting this. We must trust that humbling ourselves before God in this way is always the best for us. We will never regret fully depending on God and casting all our care and anxiety on Him.

- **Why is it important to remember that apart from Him we can do nothing good?** *Wisdom begins with a humble heart rooted in a healthy fear of God and recognition of our dependence upon Him. By constantly reminding ourselves of this truth, we are in a better position to grow in wisdom and live it out for both our good and for those around us.*
- **How will humility within us serve others?** *By being humble, we are able to put others' needs before our own.*



HANDS

Another reason God gives us wisdom is so we can better announce the gospel to the world. In other words, wisdom is for mission! If we are going to be salt and light in the world, we need wisdom. We need it to rightly relate to the non-Christians around us. We need it to show how money, power, and pleasure are not what matters most in life. We need it as we interact with those who are skeptical or even hostile to Christianity. It was because of Solomon's wisdom that people came from everywhere to hear from him (1 Kings 4:34).

- **Do you value wisdom above things like money, power, or pleasure? Why or why not?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **Solomon's wisdom pointed people to the greatness of God. How might your own life and actions do the same?** *Answers to this will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #7, which contains an interactive poster of various things students may pray for on a regular basis. One way to use this poster during group discussion would be to ask your students to rate these prayer topics based on how often they pray for them. Chances are that praying for wisdom will score low in comparison with the other topics. This emphasizes the fact that wisdom, though absolutely necessary, often receives little attention in our personal prayer lives.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPKingsSUM16)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject