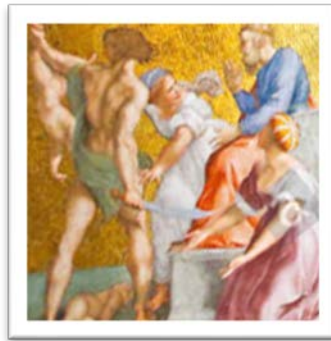


Lesson 43

The Wisdom of Solomon

1 Kings 3:3-28; 4:21-34



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
3. Theme
4. Lesson introduction
5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
7. Attention grabbers to choose from
8. Possible Activities to choose from
9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. See point 7.
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children. See point 8.

2. Choose memory verse

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5 (NIV)

3. Themes

God will give us wisdom if we ask for it so that we can help others!

4. Lesson introduction

To the teacher: This is a **combined lesson** on Solomon and his wisdom. God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, “Ask! What shall I give you?” What a question! Basically, God is saying, “Solomon, ask from Me whatever you want.” What if God asked you the same question? How would you answer it? In today’s lesson, we will see how Solomon responded. And we will see how he used the wisdom of God to solve a difficult problem in his kingdom.

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

1 Kings 3:3-4

Solomon was off to a great start as king. He loved God and “walked in the statutes of David his father.” David instructed Solomon in 1 Kings 2:3, “*And keep charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His ordinances, 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 yourself.*” Solomon took his father’s advice and walked with the Lord; therefore, the Lord blessed Solomon. Yet, even though Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of his father, he sacrificed and burnt incense upon the high places (altars that were dedicated to false gods), something David would never have done. Offerings were only to be brought to the tabernacle as God had instructed. Although Solomon obeyed most of the way, he did not obey all of the way.

How important that we obey the Lord fully! When we allow sin in our lives—an area of disobedience—we give the enemy a foothold with which to draw us away from the Lord.

1 Kings 3:5

God pays Solomon a visit in a dream by night!—What an honor that God would come to Solomon and speak to him in a

dream. God comes to him in the quiet of the night, appearing to him as he sleeps. God speaks to him saying, "Ask! What shall I give you?" All Solomon had to do was ask and God would give him anything he asked for!

Have you ever heard the story of the man who finds the magic lamp and out pops a genie to give him three wishes? How many times have we thought about what we would wish for if we could wish for anything? Of course, Solomon had an encounter with the true and living God, not a make-believe genie, but it helps us to imagine what Solomon may have been thinking. Would he ask for a lot of money? Or would he ask for all the power in the world? Maybe he would ask for a big palace and lots of servants to wait on him. What do you think Solomon would ask for? What would you ask for? [God will give us wisdom when we ask for it so we can help others.](#)

1 Kings 3:6-9

In verse 6, Solomon looks back at his father. David made a lot of mistakes with his children as we have seen in the lives of Absalom and Adonijah; but still, there was something Solomon saw in his father, King David. Solomon saw David's love and commitment to the Lord, and he had observed God's mercy, faithfulness, and kindness towards David.

Next, we see that Solomon recognizes that he is not able to rule God's people well (verse 7), stating that he is an inexperienced youth (Solomon was about 20 years old at this time). Could you imagine becoming king at such a young age? He is still humble at this time, and realizes that he needs help in order to be a good king. He did not know how to act as a king, or to govern the people; he felt himself totally inadequate to govern God's great nation. Note, he calls himself "God's servant", not the great king of Israel, thus establishing the relationship he had with God.

Sometimes people will think highly of themselves and try to serve God without recognizing their weaknesses. May we be people that are humble before the Lord. The Bible says that if we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will exalt us in due time (1 Peter 5:6). Solomon did not ask for lots of money or a big palace. Solomon asked God for wisdom--"an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad." [God will give us wisdom when we ask for it.](#)

Solomon wanted a hearing heart, a heart that would give heed to God's Word. He wanted understanding, not to impress people, but to rightly judge God's people. He wanted to be able to rightly discern between good and bad, right and wrong, sin and duty, truth and lies. He knew the awesome responsibility he now had as king, and he wanted to do a good job. He knew he needed God's help. What a wonderful example Solomon gives for us today to follow.

Now think of what you would have asked and compare it to what Solomon asked. We may be tempted to ask for something selfish. Perhaps Solomon had this same temptation, but he knew that if he was going to be a good king he needed God's wisdom. Let us examine our own hearts. [God will give us wisdom when we ask for it.](#)

1 Kings 3:10-14

Solomon's prayer pleased God! In Solomon's heart, there was more desire to be good than great and more desire to serve God rather than please himself. God desires to bless us. Do we have our priorities right? It is better to desire spiritual blessings than earthly ones. Matthew 6:33 tells us, "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." God tells Solomon, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life, nor riches, nor the life (the destruction) of your enemies (which are all things worldly people might try to obtain), but understanding to hear judgments, behold I have done according to your word." In other words, God answered Solomon's prayer—God granted him wisdom. [God will give us wisdom when we ask for it so that we can help others.](#)

Not only did God graciously grant his request, but He also gave him the things he did not ask for—riches and honor. How God wants to bless those who have a right heart! God also promised that he would exceed all those who had gone before him and all those after him in wisdom. If Solomon would faithfully obey God's commandments, he would give him long life also. (Note, this was the one blessing with a condition). God does not promise the same kinds of material blessings to us in the church because we are not the people of Israel. But He does promise to give us wisdom if we ask Him. Remember our memory verse: **"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."** James 1:5 (NIV)

Wisdom is valuable and necessary, not only for us, but also to help others and point them in the right direction. Solomon had to rely on God's wisdom to get at the truth of the matter in our lesson today. How then did King Solomon use the wisdom God promised him to help others? Let's find out. . .

1 Kings 3:16-23

Two women who came to Solomon had two very different stories. King Solomon needed God's wisdom to be the judge between them. Both stories could not be true. Who was lying? A good decision, the right decision, would make all the difference in the world to the real mother of the baby. [God gives us wisdom when we ask Him so we can help others.](#) If you had been asked to solve this problem, what would you have done? How would you decide who is telling the truth?

1 Kings 3:24-28

King Solomon asked for a sword. What do you suppose these two women thought about that? God had given Solomon the wisdom he needed to get to the bottom of the matter and find the truth. By using the threat of death for the child, King Solomon would draw out the true mother. In the heart of one woman, Solomon found love and compassion--love that was so strong she was willing to give her baby up to another woman in order to see him live. Saving his life was the most important thing, even if saving his life meant not being able to raise him herself. She was taking the chance that she might not be able to ever see her baby boy again. But at least she knew that he would be alive. Did he find the mother? The other woman's heart was full of covetousness--the strong desire to have what someone else has. She wanted the baby boy so bad, she lied to try get him. She felt bad that she had lost her own child and thought that by stealing the other woman's baby, she would be happy again.

How did Solomon know that the first woman was really the baby's mother? He knew that a real mother would try to save her baby's life no matter what. She was willing to give up her baby in order to see him live. It was clear the other woman was lying because it was no problem for her to see him killed. What can we do when we have to decide between two sides of an issue to determine which is right? Especially, when we have two very different and someone must be lying to us? We need to go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for His wisdom through His word so that we can make the right choices. How important it is that we not just look at what seems right or even feels right, but base our decisions on God's Word.

1 Kings 4:21-28

King Solomon ruled over a very large kingdom. The Euphrates River to the north was almost 400 miles from Jerusalem. The Bible says he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Jordan River (located in the middle of Israel), and he had peace on all sides. It would take a very wise man to keep peace with all the rulers of all of these kingdoms that his father, King David, had fought with all his life (Philistines, Jebusites, Hivites, Ammonites, etc.). In the middle of all that territory was Israel, from Dan to Beersheba! That area would be about 150 miles. "And every man had his own vine and fig tree." This implies that each family had their own property. King Solomon used his wisdom to help his people have peace all the days of his life.

How about those daily provisions? Thirty kors of flour and 60 kors of meal translate into enough bread dough for around 17,000 loaves of bread!!! That's enough for 15,000 people to have bread at breakfast, lunch and dinner! And what about all those cattle and sheep and deer and fowl, etc.?

In a cookbook we found around 22 different cuts of beef on a cow. Thinking about how a rump roast can feed 4 or 5 people for one meal, one cow might feed 300 people and 30 will feed maybe 10,500. Add to that 100 sheep and goats along with all those other animals...maybe 15,000 people? That's a lot of people! Where did all those people live? Did they all eat together? Well, verses 26-28 talk about his district officers, and 2 Chronicles 9:25 talks about his chariot cities. Not only did King Solomon have a very huge household with wives and lots of children, but he also had a huge palace with lots of servants to feed and care for. In addition, there are visitors, religious leaders, ambassadors, advisors and visiting dignitaries from other lands to feed and take care of. Many people were needed just to care for of all those horses in the chariot cities.

Solomon was greatly blessed as a Jewish king under the promises God had given to the Jewish people through Moses (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). When we live by God's wisdom, we will be blessed too, even though we are not guaranteed to be rich in visible things. We may not have all the chariots or servants that King Solomon had, but we will be blessed with the peace and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In future lessons, we will see that Solomon did begin to stray away from God's wisdom; and he ended up with a lot of misery because of it. Let us keep following God's wisdom all of our lives.

1 Kings 4:29-34

God gave King Solomon a very great gift--more wisdom than any other man in history. Who is the most famous man you have ever heard of? What was he or she famous for? A lot of people may be famous for only one thing, but Solomon knew music; he was a writer (verse 32); he was a scientist (verse 33, Proverbs 20:10); he was an engineer; and he was a businessman (2 Chronicles 2-8). King Solomon used his wisdom to help other nations as well as his own. He was so wise

that men of all nations (ambassadors) came to learn from him. He was a teacher. Think how much learning those ambassadors went home with. He taught them how to build better cities, have organized governments, healthier farms and gardens, and stronger families (Proverbs 3, 4:1-10). King Solomon used his wisdom to help other nations as well as his own. King Solomon used his wisdom to help him judge, make decisions, and teach the people. In Proverbs 4, Solomon says he listened to his father's advice to "get wisdom and understanding." May we, while young, have a heart to pursue wisdom and understanding. Not only will our own lives be blessed, but God can use us as an instrument of blessing in the lives of others. [God gives us wisdom when we ask for it so we can help others.](#)

6. Prayer:

Lead the children in a prayer to ask the Lord for wisdom—wisdom for themselves and wisdom to bless those around them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

What Would You Ask For? (Part One)

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Small sheets of paper and pencils for each child. Five index cards, a chalk or dry erase board and chalk or dry erase markers.

To begin today's lesson give each child a small piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them the following question, "If you could ask the Lord for anything in the whole world, what would you ask for?" Have them write their answer on the small sheet of paper. Give the children a few minutes to write down their answer. Next, collect the answers and hold onto them to use later. Explain that today we are going to learn about a king who was given the same opportunity one day. What will his answer be?

What Would You Ask For? (Part Two)

Explain to the class that you will take out the responses they had given earlier in the class to the question, "If you could ask the Lord for anything in the whole world, what would you ask for?" Read a few to the class. Of course, do not embarrass anyone, but use it as an example of the kinds of things that we naturally think of when given this kind of opportunity. Encourage the children to pray and ask the Lord for wisdom. Remind them of James 1:5 which talks about how that we can all ask the Lord for wisdom when we need it.

Watch Your Choices

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Three paper bags, a few small plastic bugs, a few small prizes and marshmallows.

Enough small prizes (pencils, erasers, stickers, etc.) for the number of children in your class.

Blindfolds (4-5).

Enough "yield sign" templates as the number of children in your class, yellow or red construction paper, scissors, glue and large tongue depressors.

The object of this activity is to show the class that sometimes we make choices a certain way for the wrong reasons. You will need three paper bags or small boxes. Decorate one bag beautifully, make it look very attractive, but put small plastic bugs inside. Make the next bag look ugly but put in some small prizes. Just leave the third bag plain and fill with marshmallows.

Have the children take a look at all three bags (but not inside!). Take a show of hands to indicate which bag as a whole the class wishes to choose. Choose a couple of volunteers to reach into the bag that was chosen at the same time (count to three and have them reach in). Next ask the children what happened. When making decisions, we sometimes go with what looks best, but that is not always the best choice. Sometimes, the best choice may be the one that looks the worse on the outside or even the most plain on the outside. As we make important decisions, it is a good thing to seek wisdom from God and not rely on our own thoughts. When faced with choices, King Solomon relied on God's wisdom.

8. Activities:

Following Wise Advice

Explain to the children that it is important to listen to our parents. It is the wise thing to do. King Solomon had to listen to his father's advice in order to be a good king. Before King David died he gave some wise advice to Solomon. Turn to and read to the class 1 Kings 2:1-4. Contained in these verses is some wise advice. Here are some key words:

strong
walk
statutes (law, word or Bible will also do)
prosper
heart

Choose five volunteers from your class. Without sharing with the rest of the class give one word to each child on an index card. Tell them that they are need to draw the word on the chalk or dry erase board and have the rest of the class guess what the word is. Give them a hint: They were all found in 1 Kings 2:1-4. Continue until all 5 words are guessed. Share with the class that these 5 words represent 5 wise phrases given to him from his father to help him to be a good king. Here are the 5 phrases:

Be strong.
Walk in the ways of the Lord.
Keep His statutes, commandments and judgments as written in His law.
That you may prosper (be blessed).
Do these things with all your heart.

Use this game to show how that Solomon needed great wisdom and how he needed to find that wisdom in the Lord.

No Sight, No Shoes

The object of this game is to demonstrate how difficult it is to find your shoes while blindfolded. In the same manner, we can't live our lives in the right way without God's wisdom. Have the children get into a big circle. Ask the children to take off their shoes. Have them place all of their shoes into a big pile. Next, you will need 4 or 5 blindfolds (only allow a small number to play at a time so that no children will get hurt trying to grab their shoes). After the 4 or 5 are blindfolded, tell them that they will have 1 minute to find their shoes and put them on (younger ages can just find their shoes). Tell the other children not to give them any help.

After everyone has had a chance to play, gather all of the children back together. Have them all put their own shoes back on. Discuss the game. Was it easy or hard to find your shoes in a big pile when you were blindfolded? Explain that there are so many choices in life. If we try to make those choices without God's wisdom it is kind of like trying to find shoes in that big pile with a blindfold.

Seeking For Treasure

By using some small prizes, illustrate how we need to search for wisdom like searching for a treasure. Before class you will need to take enough small prizes to have one for each child in your class. Hide them throughout the room by taping them under chairs, under the chalkboard/dry erase board tray or under desks (be creative). But make sure that they are out of sight. When ready, explain to the class that there are several small hidden treasures throughout the class. When you say "go" let them search for the hidden treasure. When everyone is done, make sure that they all share so that everyone gets one. Explain what Solomon talked about in Proverbs—when we find or are given wisdom, we have a great treasure. We need to value that treasure and hang on to it because it will be very valuable in our lives. Wisdom is more valuable than all of the riches in the world.

9. Bible text (NIV):

1 Kings 3:3 Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

⁴The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

⁶Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

⁷"Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹²I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” ¹⁵Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream.

He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

A Wise Ruling

¹⁶Now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷One of them said, “Pardon me, my lord. This woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there with me. ¹⁸The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us.

¹⁹“During the night this woman’s son died because she lay on him. ²⁰So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I your servant was asleep. She put him by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. ²¹The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn’t the son I had borne.”

²²The other woman said, “No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours.”

But the first one insisted, “No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine.” And so they argued before the king.

²³The king said, “This one says, ‘My son is alive and your son is dead,’ while that one says, ‘No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.’”

²⁴Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword for the king. ²⁵He then gave an order: “Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.”

²⁶The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, “Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!”

But the other said, “Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!”

²⁷Then the king gave his ruling: “Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.”

²⁸When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

Solomon’s Daily Provisions

4:21 And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life.

²²Solomon’s daily provisions were thirty cors of the finest flour and sixty cors of meal, ²³ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl. ²⁴For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. ²⁵During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.

²⁶Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses.

²⁷The district governors, each in his month, supplied provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king's table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking. ²⁸They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses.

Solomon's Wisdom

²⁹God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. ³⁰Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³²He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.