

What we most need! 1 Kings 3v1-28

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[0 : 00] Okay, our reading is 1 Kings chapter 3. I'm just going to read from verses 1 to 15. And that's on page 337 of the Church Bible.

So 1 Kings chapter 3. Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and married his daughter. He brought her to the city of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the Lord and the wall around Jerusalem.

The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places because the temple had not yet been built for the name of the Lord. 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.

The 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.

At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, Ask for whatever you want me to give you. Solomon answered, You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you, and righteous and upright in heart.

[1 : 22] You have continued this great kindness to him, and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. 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. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.

So 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? The Lord is pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

So 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, I will do what you have asked.

I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, 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.

[2 : 35] And 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. Then 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.

Thanks very much, Chris.

I think they ran out of little notes, so the two guys, the younger people, mightn't have any, so if you're an older person, you don't mind just giving one to one of the guys, if you could just...

Oh, thanks, Sandra. Yeah. Thank you very much. Thanks. Well, let's pray.

[3 : 50] Father, you are good, and you are generous. So help us now. Give life through your words.

Give us more of Christ, we pray. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you could ask for anything you wanted, and you knew you would get it, what would you ask for?

What do you most want in your life? You can ask for whatever you like, and you know you're going to get it. What are you going to ask for? Well, in the true account of King Solomon, God comes to Solomon with an offer.

Have a look at verse 5 of chapter 3, the end of verse 5. Ask for whatever you want me to give you. Whatever you want, just ask me.

Well, Solomon asked for wisdom. Have a look at verse 12. God responds, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart.

[5 : 20] And jump over to chapter 4, verse 29. God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East. And greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. What would you ask God for?

Well, let's put it another way. What do you ask God for? You see, if Solomon is going to rule the kingdom well, well, he needs God's wisdom.

And if we are to enjoy life in God's kingdom, if we're going to receive the blessings of God's kingdom, well, then we too need wisdom.

So, three things we're going to look at. First, discerning what true wisdom is. I think the first part of chapter 3 shows us there's two kinds of wisdom.

[6 : 34] There is a worldly wisdom. Look at chapter 3, verse 1. Solomon has just started his kingship, and he gets straight down to work.

Verse 1. Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and married his daughter. Seems like a good move, doesn't it? Make friends with your enemies by marrying off one of their daughters. Politically, it all makes sense. Build good allies with the surrounding nations. And then there seems to be something else that's wise in verse 2.

We're told there the people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places because a temple had not yet been built for the name of the Lord. Well, everything in its own time.

The temple will be built. We'll see that in chapter 6. But for now, it seems Solomon is content with worship at the high places. These high places were literally on high mountains, but they were old pagan worship sites.

[7 : 46] Religiously, it all seems to make sense. There's no temple, so let's keep all the people happy, especially those of, you know, pagan religions, and we'll all worship on the high places.

Now, it all seems quite wise. Wisdom of the world is measured by things like good business deals and keeping people happy.

For others, wisdom is intellectual ability or material success and social status. If we have these, well, then we are exceedingly wise.

Well, while some of them may be good and nothing wrong with some, it's worldly wisdom. There is another kind of wisdom we should seek.

Godly wisdom. Look at verse 3. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David.

[8 : 54] Do you remember those instructions that David had given? Have a look back at chapter 2, verse 3. As David was handing on the kingship, he gave this reminder, this command.

He says, Observe what the Lord your God requires. Walk in obedience to him. Keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the law of Moses.

Chapter 3, verse 3. So, well, Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David.

Except, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. You see, God's word was very clear about worshipping at the high places.

And God's word was also very clear about marrying and making alliances with foreign nations. It was clear. God said, No! These foreign nations and pagan religions, well, they're going to lead you away from God.

[10 : 08] Don't do it. So, godly wisdom is not just knowing what God's word says.

It's putting God's word into practice. Solomon, Solomon, obviously, from verse 3, knows about God's word, but it's about putting it into practice.

We might know every Bible story. We can know our eschatology and our soteriology, but mere knowledge of God's word is not wisdom.

It's not just knowing what God says. Wisdom is obeying God's word and putting God's word into practice. True wisdom, the wisdom from above, is wisdom that enables us to live life God's way and choose the things that are right and best for us.

Remember the words of Jesus? Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

[11 : 33] The rains came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock.

That rock is the wisdom of putting God's word into practice. So, discerning what true wisdom is. Then receiving true wisdom from God. Solomon, well, he was a bit unwise, wasn't he, in some of his decisions. But that doesn't hinder God's goodness to his people.

Look at verse 5, chapter 3. At Gibeon, so here's Solomon carrying out his sacrifices on one of the old pagan sites, which he had been told not to do.

At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream and God said, ask for whatever you want me to give you. What amazing generosity.

[12 : 37] Solomon's prayer that follows is very instructive to us in terms of receiving wisdom.

Look at how Solomon prays. Solomon doesn't launch into an I want and give me this.

No, look how he starts, verse 6. Solomon 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 to this very day. God is not a begrudging, selfish, mean tyrant.

he's not the kind of God who is constantly looking out for faults so that he can refuse our requests.

No, God is a kind God who acts in great mercy.

[13 : 47] God's offer is open and generous. Ask for whatever you want me to give you. In fact, God is so kind that he gives to Solomon more than he asks.

Look down at verse 13. God answers, moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for, both wealth and honour, so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.

Sometimes we don't ask and we don't receive because we have a wrong view of God. We think he's mean.

We maybe think that he looks at all our faults and he's not going to give. Well, for Solomon, his understanding of God, that God is kind, shaped his request.

He could ask of a kind and generous God. But there's something else we learn as he prays.

[14 : 59] He comes in great humility. He recognises his own weakness and inability. Verse 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 I do not know how to carry out my duties.

Yes, he's a king. Yes, he's a mature adult. But for the task of ruling God's kingdom, well, he's just a little kid.

He's aware of his inadequacy and he knows that he should come to God. I can't do it is basically his cry.

Too often we can be so proud, can't we? We don't ask God for help, we don't commune with God because, well, I can do it and I've got all the resources within myself to get things done.

But for Solomon, he sees that he cannot live or lead in God's kingdom, he desperately needs God. I'm only a little child and I do not know how to carry out my duties.

[16 : 12] in the eyes of the world, to admit that you're weak and that you need help is a sign of great weakness.

You're not employable, you're not needed or wanted. Well, weakness is the way in which we do receive.

I have a friend who sometimes says to me, as the good book says, God helps those who help themselves.

Well, the good book doesn't say that. Look it up in your Bible. But what the Bible does tell us is that God longs to help those who admit they can't help themselves.

He longs for us to come with open hands, admit our weakness, and receive generously from our good God. As one author put it, when human weakness meets divine grace, God is pleased.

[17 : 25] So, look at how Solomon makes his request. He recognised God's kindness, he knows his weakness, and now he makes his request, verse 9.

So, give, give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and it's distinguished between right and wrong.

For who is able to govern this great people of yours? Verse 12, God answers, I 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.

It's an extraordinary request, isn't it? Remember what God's offer was. Solomon, ask for whatever you want me to give you.

Wow. well, I'd like a new car. Actually, a self-drive Tesla. Have you seen them? That new phone, iPhone X, that six-inch screen, that new version.

[18 : 46] And I could do with a better salary as well. Six figures, just six figures would be fine. And since I'm here and you're offering, well, I'd love good health.

No more annoying work colleagues. And by the way, if you could make it possible, get rid of all my neighbour's cats as well. No, it's not what he says, is it?

Look at verse 9. Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and distinguish between right and wrong, give me wisdom so I can discern what is right and what is wrong and what is best.

Give me wisdom so that I can live life God's way, in God's kingdom, enabling me to choose what is right and what will bring life and what will bring blessing.

Solomon doesn't ask for what he wants. he asks for what pleases God. Verse 10. The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

[20 : 03] So 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 and administering justice, I will do what you have asked.

You see, we mustn't think of God as some magic genie that we have to kind of caress and do good things for and, well, he will just give then at our demand.

Prayer actually isn't about me and my wants. Prayer is about what pleases God and what pleases God is always what is best and right for us.

Now, we mightn't be a Solomon, but aren't we all called to live well in God's kingdom? Aren't we called to make good and right choices for what will be best for our life?

Well, this same generous offer that we see in chapter 3 verse 5, ask for whatever you want me to give you, in a sense is given to us.

[21 : 23] Look what it says in James, if any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding faults and it will be given to you.

God is not on the lookout for our faults so he can refuse our requests. He gives generously, he gives to all without finding fault.

He faithfully gives to those who are weak and know they need help. we would be wise, wouldn't we, to pray the kind of prayer Solomon prays, asking for our good and generous God, for that wisdom to live life as God has called us to.

So Solomon receives this wonderful gift of wisdom and as we'll discover on receiving wisdom it brings great blessing.

It brings great blessing. We have, it wasn't read, but we have this extraordinary account of two prostitutes. You may have come across this account before.

[22 : 48] Let's read this whole account starting in verse 16 as we see the blessings that flow from wisdom.

Verse 16, now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before them. One of them said, pardon me my lord, this woman and I live in the same house.

I had a baby while she was there with me. The third day after the child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone.

There was no one in the house but the two of us, no other witnesses. Okay, go on, go on. Well, during the nights, this woman's son died because she lay on him.

So 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.

[23 : 53] The 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 he wasn't the son that I had born.

The 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. Now we can only imagine the heartache and helplessness of this poor mother.

She knows her son. She's felt his heartbeat. She knows his unique little features. this is her baby and she longs for justice.

But rather than things get better, they seem to get worse. Verse 23, the king said, this one says, my son is alive and your son is dead.

[25 : 02] While that one there says, no, your son is dead and mine is alive. I mean, which one is it? How am I supposed to know? then the king said, bring me a sword.

What on earth does he need a sword for? So they brought a sword for the king. Then he gave an order, cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.

what? A terrible injustice is about to take place. She came looking for justice and now she seems powerless.

There's nothing she can do about it. Verse 26, the 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. Then the king gave this ruling.

[26 : 16] Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him. She is his mother. Now Solomon's threat to cut the baby in two may cause us some kind of distress, understandably.

but that's not Solomon's intention. His threat merely uncovers the truth so that justice can be done.

The true mother would do anything to save her son, even if that meant giving it to someone else.

The false mother would just let the child die.

Their responses proved who was the real mother. Solomon's wisdom brought blessing to this broken mother.

She received the justice she longed for, life for her baby son and life with her son. Wisdom speaks into the chaos and disruption and brokenness of her life and her future has been transformed.

[27 : 29] verse 28, when all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe because they saw he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

isn't this the kind of king we too long for? A king that we could go to who is so wise, who welcomes people, it appears, whoever they are, no matter what their background, whatever is going on in their life, and one who will always do what is right and just and fair?

A king with the wisdom of God who will put all wrongs to right? Well, in Christ, we have the ultimate and wise king, don't we?

I mean, look at this woman here. We don't even know her name. She's just referred to as that prostitute. An occupation like hers could have had her sentenced to death for coming to the king. Ignored, abused, and rejected. But in coming to the king, she finds justice and life and peace.

[29 : 06] How much more will we receive the blessings of the kingdom as we come to Christ? You see, as we come to Christ in all our brokenness and in all our mess, as we come seeking justice, well, we don't need to argue our case, because the good news is when we come to Christ, we actually find that justice has already been done.

God in his wisdom, before the foundation of the world, before we existed, before we came to be, had sent his son the plan to come into the world for us.

A king who came who did not threaten with the sword, but a king who would come and take the sword for us. He would give his life on the cross, taking the blame for all the wrong that we have done, so that we could be forgiven and receive life and peace, not just for now, not just temporarily, but for eternity, the blessings of the kingdom, all ours, given from the king.

Turn with me, please, to Colossians chapter 2. First there can give me the page number, if you have it, Colossians chapter 2.

1183. 1183 Colossians chapter 2. You see, in Christ we have the ultimate wise king.

[31 : 08] For in Christ, wisdom itself is personified. Look what Colossians chapter 2 verse 3 tells us.

in whom, that is, in Christ are hidden, what do we find in Christ?

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All of wisdom, everything, in Christ.

verse 8. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces or the principles of this world, rather than on Christ.

Be careful that you don't get led astray by worldly wisdom that says you can do it and you have the power and you have the strength to make the right decisions for life and for all that you need.

[32 : 21] peace. No, turn to Christ, for Christ is our wisdom. Verse 9. For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

All of God, his greatness, his power, his beauty is all in Christ. Verse 10.

And in Christ you have been brought to fullness. Everything that we would possibly need to receive life and to live life God's way is all in Christ and we have it all in Christ to the point of fullness to overflowing.

A wise king, more than we could ever expect or imagine. If you could ask for one thing and you knew you would receive it, what would you ask for?

Or let me change that slightly. Who would you ask for? More of Christ. Lord, more of Christ.

[33 : 50] The treasures of all the wisdom, the fullness of God, everything that we could possibly ever need for life today and for life to come.

The wisdom that is Christ's. Choose wisely and live life well. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Father, we have seen that you are good and kind and generous.

you give to all without finding fault and so we humbly come to you with our hands open.

We don't bring anything. Rather, we long to receive all that you would give to us and we pray that we might know more of Christ in our life.

[35 : 11] That we would discover the depths and the beauty of the riches that are in Christ. All that we need, available and offer to us as we look to you.

Help us that we would not only hear your word, but listen to it and put it into practice. Asking for your Holy Spirit's help to enable us to do so.

Thank you for life today. Thank you for life in your kingdom and thank you for the blessings that are to come. Thank you.

In Jesus' name we all pray. Amen. a pretty good man. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.