



Granted

God offers wisdom to those who ask Him.

1 KINGS 3:4-15

MEMORY VERSE: 1 KINGS 3:9

STUDY 1 Kings 3:4-15, noting Solomon's dream and his conversation with God. Use Explore the Text (pp. 15-19) to better understand God's offer to Solomon and Solomon's response to God. Reflect on Solomon's understanding of his need for God's wisdom.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 20-22. Focus on helping the group see Solomon as a young man who had all the world's resources at his disposal, yet he still looked to God for wisdom. Look for ways to encourage the group to ask God for His wisdom in their own lives.

GATHER the following items:

- Extra *Personal Study Guides* (PSGs)

Prepare to display:

- Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*)
- Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of 1, 2 Kings*)

Make copies of:

- Pack Item 7** (*Handout: 1, 2 Kings Time Line*)
- Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)
- Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Comparison: Kings and Chronicles*)

CONSULT the weekly Explore the Bible adult podcast to gain insights on the go about this week's study on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

REINFORCE the study by contacting group members you haven't seen in awhile. Remind them that a new study is starting and encourage them to become involved from the beginning.

FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Psalm 8:3-6; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.)

Some of our choices are life altering. Deciding to get a side order of peas instead of carrots, though, is not. Neither is choosing where to park at the store, what socks to wear, or whether to mow the yard today or tomorrow. But choosing whether to stay in school, who to marry, where to live—these are decisions with life-changing ramifications. God gave young King Solomon an opportunity to make a decision that would affect the course of his life. Solomon's selection may seem surprising, but it has lessons for us today.

(In PSG, p 10) **If God promised you that He would fulfill one request, what might it be and why?**

BIBLE SKILL

Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.

Read reflectively God's invitation to Solomon in 1 Kings 3:5. Suppose God appeared to you and offered you the chance to have one thing from Him. Consider the many good things you could ask for. How would your life be different if it were fully aligned with God's purpose?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 KINGS 1:1–4:34 (2 CHRON. 1:1-17)

As King David neared the time of his death (1 Kings 1:1-4), Adonijah, David's oldest son, sought to become Israel's next king (1:5-10). Nathan the prophet discovered Adonijah's plan and consulted with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (1:11-14). Bathsheba and Nathan went before David, who confirmed Solomon was his choice to become the next king (1:15-31). David summoned his key officials and commanded them to organize a coronation for Solomon at once (1:32-35). The officials carried out David's orders and all Jerusalem rejoiced at Solomon's accession to the throne (1:36-40).

David instructed Solomon to follow the Lord all his days but also guard himself against enemies (2:1-9). David then died, and Solomon took control of the kingdom (2:10-12). He followed his father's advice and dealt with his and David's enemies (2:13-46).

Solomon was a powerful king, and the king of Egypt made an alliance with him (3:1). Solomon then took a delegation to Gibeon, the site of the tabernacle, to offer sacrifices to God (3:4; 2 Chron. 1:3,6). At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and invited Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted (1 Kings 3:5).

Solomon responded humbly (3:6-9). He asked for a wise and discerning heart to judge well. The king's response pleased God (3:10-14). Soon after, the king powerfully displayed his wisdom by rendering a judgment between two women who claimed the same baby (3:16-28).

Many officials served King Solomon (4:1-6). He divided the land into twelve districts, and these districts supplied the expenses for the king's household one month out of each year (4:7-19). David had conquered the entire region from Egypt into Syria; Solomon took advantage of his position and brought prosperity to his kingdom (4:20-28).

Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wise men of his day (4:29-31). The king composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, and also commented on and wrote about many topics related to animals and agriculture (4:32-34).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

GOD OFFERS (1 KINGS 3:4-5)

Verses 4-5

After Solomon solidified his hold on the kingdom, **the king went to Gibeon**. Gibeon lay approximately seven miles north-northwest of Jerusalem in the tribal territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:25). During the days of Joshua, Israel's great leader after Moses, the Gibeonites deceitfully formed an alliance with the Israelites so the Israelites would not kill them (Josh 9:3-27). When a southern coalition of Canaanite kings then attacked Gibeon, Israel's army intervened and defeated those kings (Josh. 10:1-11). During that battle, the Lord stopped the sun in the sky at Joshua's request (Josh 10:12-14)!

The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles informs us Solomon invited many leaders to join him at Gibeon in this special act of dedication (2 Chron. 1:3). The king traveled to Gibeon **to sacrifice there because it was the most famous high place**. Again, the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 1 mentions that Gibeon was the location of the tent of meeting, the key part of the tabernacle (2 Chron. 1:3). When God's people first entered the land, they camped at Shiloh in Canaan's heartland, where they set up the tent of meeting (Josh. 18:1). Later, the tent was moved to Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-6), and at some point was relocated to Gibeon.

Immediately south of Gibeon stood a large hill; today it is called "Nebi Samwil," which in Arabic means "the prophet Samuel." Some interpreters believe the tent of meeting was there, and if it was, the site would have afforded Solomon a wonderful view of the kingdom he now ruled.

Solomon offered **a thousand burnt offerings** on the altar. The bronze altar of burnt offering stood in the courtyard outside the tent of meeting (Ex. 27:1-8). Solomon brought sacrifices to the God who had appointed him king of Israel. He desired to begin his reign with a time of worship.

Worship of our God is always appropriate but especially when we face a major decision or enter a new chapter of life. Worship reminds us that God is guiding our lives and puts us in a better frame of mind to hear from Him.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. The Bible mentions many times when God revealed His will to people through dreams. God guided the patriarch Jacob in this way (Gen. 28:12-15), as well as Jacob's son Joseph (Gen. 37:5-11). He also revealed His will to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, through dreams Joseph interpreted (Gen. 40:1-7; 41:14-32). God guided Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, through dreams on several occasions (Matt. 1:20; 2:13,19-20, 22). Not all dreams communicate God's will for our lives, but God can work this way if He chooses.

VERSES 4-5

⁴ The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there because it was the most famous high place. He offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask. What should I give you?"

In Solomon's dream, the Lord said to him, **Ask. What should I give you?** God's favor clearly rested on Solomon, and through this offer, God was challenging Solomon to define his reign as king. What would be most important on Solomon's agenda? What would he ask?

When we worship God, we affirm He is sovereign over all. We also acknowledge our own dependency on Him to guide our lives for our good and for His glory (Rom. 8:28).

(In PSG, p. 13) **How does our worship help prepare us to hear from God? What do our prayer requests reveal about our hearts?**

SOLOMON ANSWERS (1 KINGS 3:6-9)

Verse 6

VERSE 6

⁶ And Solomon replied, "You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity. You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today.

Solomon replied to God's gracious offer, and the king's answer revealed his character. Solomon affirmed, **You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David.** The word *you* here stresses God's personal role in showing faithful love first to David and then to Solomon. Solomon knew God's relationship with Israel did not begin with him; rather, his father David had a relationship with God. The word translated *faithful love* also can mean "lovingkindness," "faithfulness," "mercy," or "favor." David was one of Israel's greatest kings; yet Solomon described him as God's servant. The apostle Paul later would describe himself as God's servant and encouraged all believers to embrace this role (Rom. 1:1; 6:17-22).

Solomon said of his father, **he walked before you.** The Bible says Enoch and Noah also walked with God (Gen. 5:22; 6:9). Walking with God describes a personal relationship with God in the New Testament as well (Col. 2:6). Does walking with God characterize your life?

Solomon testified that David demonstrated **faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity.** The word translated *faithfulness* is related to the word "amen" in Hebrew. Consistency marked David's relationship with God. The term *righteousness* describes a positive characteristic of goodness, and David had demonstrated that quality on many occasions. David also walked before God with *integrity* (literally, "uprightness of heart"). David's heart pursued God faithfully. David was by no means perfect; yet, overall, his life displayed a desire to walk with God.

Solomon also affirmed of God **you have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne.** The king highlighted God's favor that now extended to him. What God began with Solomon's father He now continued in Solomon's life. God had promised David that one day, David's descendant would rule Israel, build God's temple, and receive God's favor (2 Sam. 7:12-15).

Verses 7-8

The words **LORD My God** stress Solomon's personal relationship with God. His affirmation **you have now made your servant king in my father David's place** highlighted God's special attention to the process, as it also did in verse 6.

Solomon must have experienced a sense of wonder as he pondered his new role. He articulated his humility with his confession: **Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership**. The word translated *youth* does not imply Solomon was a young child or teenager. However, Solomon considered himself a youth in terms of his preparedness to reign over Israel. The expression translated *no experience in leadership* literally reads, "I know not how to go out or come in." It denotes the conducting of ordinary matters of life, including perhaps leadership skills (Ps. 121:8). Solomon felt inexperienced for life, let alone to assume Israel's throne.

Solomon's response to God displayed true humility. Godly leaders know they are only effective when they lean on God for direction. Solomon was beginning a big task, and he knew he needed God's help.

Solomon also declared of himself, **your servant is among your people you have chosen**. Over a thousand years earlier, God had called Abram (later Abraham) to Canaan and promised to bless him greatly and make of his descendants a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3). God indeed had chosen Solomon, but long before, He had chosen Israel as His covenant people. By God's grace, Israel had become **a people too many to be numbered or counted**. Solomon recognized his people would look to him to lead well. How could one man do this?

I once heard a pastor say, "The Christian life was not designed to be easy or to be difficult. It was designed to be impossible." Another pastor once asked, "What's going on in your life right now that only God's presence can explain?" It was a great question to ponder. God calls us to live for Him and serve Him by the Holy Spirit's power in us (Rom. 8:10-11). Only that way can we live the life God calls us to live.

Verse 9

Solomon asked God, **give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people**. The expression *receptive heart* literally means "listening heart." Solomon knew a good leader listened to the people he ruled. He desired to issue decisions that reflected God's character and justice, so he needed to listen well. The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles mentions Solomon included in his request a desire for godly wisdom and knowledge (2 Chron. 1:10).

Solomon desired the ability to **discern between good and evil**. The word translated *discern* is related to the word "between." The king desired the ability to distinguish clearly between good and evil courses of action.

Solomon's question **for who is able to judge this great people of yours?** was rhetorical. Solomon knew no one was able to judge God's people effectively apart from God's hand on his life. He needed God's help, and he humbly asked for it.

We need God's wisdom to face life's challenges. To be sure, God does give His children intelligence and the ability to think and discern issues.

VERSES 7-8

⁷ "LORD my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David's place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership." ⁸ Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted.

VERSE 9

⁹ So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?"

At the same time, He often places before us opportunities and challenges too great for natural human wisdom to handle. James, a half-brother of Jesus, wrote that any of us who lacks wisdom should ask God, and He will give it to us (Jas. 1:5).

VERSES 10-14

¹⁰ Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. ¹¹ So God said to him, “Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, ¹² I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. ¹³ In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be your equal during your entire life. ¹⁴ If you walk in my ways and keep my statutes and commands just as your father David did, I will give you a long life.”

What is the relationship between humility and understanding our need for God’s wisdom? How can God demonstrate His power and glory by giving us His wisdom?

GOD PROVIDES (1 KINGS 3:10-15)

Verses 10-14

God heard Solomon’s reply and looked on it with favor. The king knew he needed God’s help to fulfill God’s purpose, and God was pleased Solomon recognized this.

God commended Solomon for the things he did not request. First, Solomon **did not ask for long life**. A king’s reign could be short-lived, particularly if a rival sensed weakness and decided to overthrow him.

Solomon also had not asked for **riches**. Many kings accumulated much wealth, and Solomon might have desired wealth either for selfish means or to use it to bless others. Regardless, Solomon recognized that other things were more important than riches.

Solomon had also not asked for **the death of any enemies**. Often when kings came to power, they put to death potential rivals, including the former king’s descendants (1 Kings 15:28-29; 16:10-11). Solomon had already put to death Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei, who had opposed either him or his father David (1 Kings 2:24-25, 28-34, 36-46). Nevertheless, Solomon had not asked God to kill other enemies.

God confirmed Solomon’s request: **you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice**. He assured Solomon, **I will therefore do what you have asked**. The Hebrew verb tenses in verse 12 are in the perfect tense. We could render God’s words: “I have therefore done what you have asked and have given you a wise and understanding heart.” Solomon would use these gifts and talents in the future, but God had already given them to him.

God’s declaration, **there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again**, revealed the extent of His gift to Israel’s new king. Solomon had asked for a listening heart, discernment, knowledge, and wisdom to lead God’s people, and God would give it to him so the world would know Solomon’s God was the true God.

God also assured Solomon, ***I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor.*** God granted Solomon's request but also would bless him materially and with a great reputation. He again affirmed ***no king will be your equal during your entire life.*** Indeed, Solomon's reputation grew greatly during his reign (1 Kings 4:29-34; 10:1-9).

God also issued Solomon a spiritual challenge: ***walk in my ways and keep my statutes and commands just as your father David did.*** David had charged Solomon to follow the Lord faithfully in every respect (1 Kings 2:3-4). David understood that blessing would come to Solomon to the degree he was faithful to God's commands. God's charge to Solomon probably reminded him of his father's words. If Solomon maintained spiritual faithfulness, God assured him, ***I will give you a long life.*** Solomon would know the blessing of long life so he could bless Israel for a long time.

God did give Solomon forty years as king over Israel (1 Kings 11:42). He promised to bless Solomon as long as Solomon aligned his heart with God's purposes. Solomon could ensure that by following God's statutes and commands faithfully.

Verse 15

Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. Nonetheless, he recognized the dream communicated God's voice to him. His encounter with God laid a significant foundation for his reign over Israel.

Solomon then ***went to Jerusalem,*** where he ***stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant.*** His father David had brought the ark to Jerusalem during his reign so he could worship before it (2 Sam. 6:12-17). Solomon now stood where his father had as he worshiped God.

Solomon further demonstrated his sincere heart when he ***offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.*** The Law of Moses commanded *burnt offerings* for general dedication to God (Lev. 1). Solomon was dedicating himself to God just as he had done at Gibeon. *Fellowship offerings* were offered to give thanks or in response to an unexpected blessing. Solomon could not have imagined the blessing God would give him at Gibeon. Solomon then ***held a feast for all his servants.*** They took time to celebrate the great work God had begun to do through King Solomon.

God answers prayers that align with His purposes. The apostle John told his readers that when they prayed according to God's will, God heard them and would answer (1 John 5:14-15). Solomon asked for wisdom so he could serve God's people better. His request fully aligned with God's purpose for his life, so God was pleased to grant it.

The Bible assures us God is able to do beyond what we can ask or even imagine (Eph. 3:20). Likewise, our attitude and alignment with God's purposes greatly impact our prayers. Imagine if believers everywhere prayed, "Lord, however you want us to serve you, give us the grace we need and we will do it." What is God waiting on us to ask Him for?

VERSE 15

¹⁵ Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant, and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he held a feast for all his servants.

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

BEGIN: Introduce the session by explaining that God gave young King Solomon an opportunity to make a decision that would affect the course of his life.

ASK: *If God promised you that He would fulfill one request, what might it be and why?* (PSG, p. 10)

TRANSITION: *Today we begin our study in 1 and 2 Kings. In a dream, God asked Solomon an intriguing question: “What should I give you?” We will examine how King Solomon—a man with great wealth and power—responded to God’s question.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXTUALIZE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: 1, 2 Kings Time Line*). Note the time frame of Solomon’s reign—about a thousand years before Jesus was born. Using **Understand the Context** (PSG, p. 11) and **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*), point out that Solomon ruled over a united kingdom, like his father David. Use **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of 1, 2 Kings*) to give an overview of the study of 1, 2 Kings.

OVERVIEW: Explain that 1 Kings 1 and 2 describe Solomon’s rise to power (PSG, p. 11). Note that David’s death-bed instructions to Solomon stressed continued obedience to God. Point out that this call to obedience is an important theme throughout 1 and 2 Kings.

TRANSITION: *We learn in 1 Kings 3:3 that “Solomon loved the LORD by walking in the statutes of his father David, but he also sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.” This verse hints at the divided loyalties Solomon would struggle with throughout his reign.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 3:4-5**, and instruct the group to listen for the question God posed to Solomon in his dream.

GUIDE: Refer to page 12 of the PSG to explain the role Gibeon played as Israel’s worship center.

HIGHLIGHT: Note that Solomon’s lavish worship of God was immediately followed by the dream where God asked Solomon, “What should I give you?” Solomon’s response would reveal his heart, his intention, and his desire for his kingdom and kingship.

DISCUSS: *How does our worship help prepare us to hear from God? What do our prayer requests reveal about our hearts?* (PSG, p. 13)

TRANSITION: *Worship was Solomon’s first step toward God and His blessings.*

READ: Read **1 Kings 3:6-9** aloud, directing the group to listen for Solomon’s response to God’s question.

IDENTIFY: On a board or large sheet of paper, create a chart with these headings: *A Right Attitude Toward God*, *A Right View of Himself*, and *A Humble Attitude*. Lead the group to identify phrases in these verses that give evidence of Solomon’s right attitude toward God, his right view of himself, or his humble attitude. Record these phrases in the appropriate column (some phrases can be listed under two headings).

SHARE: Call attention to verses 7-8 where Solomon described his youth. Note that he was likely in his early 20s.

ASK: *Identify other examples in Scripture when people felt inadequate for the job or task that God had called them to do. Why*

might God call people who feel inadequate for the task? (PSG, p. 15)

EMPHASIZE: Focus on Solomon's response to God's question, found in verse 9. Refer to page 14 of the PSG to help the group understand the passage. Note that Solomon's focus was not on himself but on the Lord. Solomon knew the Lord had given him a God-sized task and that success would come only because of God's ability and strength, not because of his own.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to turn to a neighbor and respond to the following question: ***How does remembering God's past faithfulness help us to trust Him when we face challenges?***

TRANSITION: *Despite his power and position, Solomon saw the need for God's wisdom in his life.*

READ: Direct the group to read 1 Kings 3:10-15, looking for ways God's response exceeded Solomon's request.

EXAMINE: Note that God was pleased because of the things Solomon did not request. Guide the group to name those things.

ASK: How can what a person doesn't ask for when praying be just as telling as what is requested? (PSG, p. 15)

GUIDE: Lead the group to identify the things God promised Solomon. Use pages 16–17 of the PSG to help the group better understand what God offered Solomon. Emphasize that God was the source of all the good things that would come in Solomon's life—wisdom, understanding, wealth, honor, and length of days.

DISCUSS: Does God always give us what we ask for? What might affect whether or not we receive from God what we request? (PSG, p. 17)

TRANSITION: *God answered Solomon's prayers in ways that aligned with His purposes and His heart. Solomon responded by turning to God again in worship and praise.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Invite a volunteer to read the bulleted statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 18). Encourage the group to consider living out these statements as believers: Ask: ***What is one action that could be taken in light of each statement?***

MEMORIZE: Read 1 Kings 3:9 aloud as a group. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Encourage the group to memorize the verse as a reminder of our need for God's wisdom.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to the third question set under Apply the Text on page 18 of the PSG. Discuss the first question in the set as a group. ***What would you say is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?*** Encourage the group to write a private response to the second and third questions in the margin of their PSG. ***Is there an area in your life in which you need God's wisdom because of a challenge you face? If so, this is something you are going to want to add to your personal prayer list.***

PRAY: Conclude with prayer, acknowledging our need for God's wisdom, and thanking Him for the abundant wisdom He provides if we will just ask.

OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

Locate a copy of “Be Thou My Vision” by Mary E. Byrne. Prior to the session, enlist four volunteers. Ask each volunteer to read one verse of the song when requested. To conclude the session, call for the volunteers to read each of the verses again. Play the song as the group adjourns.

PRESENTATION

Pre-enlist a volunteer to research online or use other Bible resources to prepare a brief overview of the similarities between Kings and Chronicles. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Comparison: Kings and Chronicles*) as a supplement to this presentation.

DRAMA

Pre-enlist two people to present the conversation between God and Solomon in a dialogue format. Divide the dramatic reading this way: Reader for God’s part—verses 5,11-14. Reader for Solomon’s part—verses 6-9.

REFLECTION

Focus on 1 Kings 3:4-5 and lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 12) to reflect on God’s invitation to Solomon. Call for volunteers to share some of the good things they could ask for. Discuss: ***How did God’s question to Solomon allow Solomon to define his reign? How do the things we pursue help to define who we are?*** Encourage them to write a private response to the question: ***How would your life be different if it were fully aligned with God’s purposes?***

WORD STUDY

Bible dictionaries

Create teams of two to four, and give each team a Bible dictionary. Note that in 1 Kings 3:9, Solomon’s request was that God give him “a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil.” Explain that where this story is recorded in 2 Chronicles 1:10, it reads as, “Now grant me wisdom and knowledge so that I may lead these people.” Direct the teams to use the Bible dictionary to learn more about the words *wisdom* and *knowledge*. Each team could be assigned one word or both words. Call for representatives from each team to share what they learn.

VISUAL

Paper and pencils

Provide paper and pencils for the group. Call attention to the three bulleted statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 18). Instruct the group to select one of the statements and sketch an illustration that depicts the statement. Invite volunteers to share their sketches.