

Praying for Wisdom

What if God gave you the sweetest deal of the century? Maybe the best offer in the millennium? Suppose God said to you, "Ask Me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

Can you imagine? "Ask Me for whatever you want—anything at all, nothing is too big—and I will, not might, or could, but I will give it to you."

What would you ask for? Would it be truckloads of money (not to be used selfishly, of course)? Would you want to be able to pay off your bills, help out some friends, secure your children's future, help your church, support a bunch of missionaries, and pay for finding a cure for cancer? It may cross your mind that having a new house and luxury car might be a way to let people know that God is not a stingy God. After all, it's okay to have money as long as it doesn't have you.

Or would you go for an ultimate makeover? Would you want a younger, sleeker, stronger, healthier model? Maybe you desire a tall, blonde, and beautiful version, or would you ask for the tall, dark, and handsome edition? Of course, the reason you would want this wonder body would be so you could share your faith more confidently and serve the Lord more effectively.

Or, you might ask for some superpowers. Think of all the people you could help if you could heal crowds of sick people as Jesus did. Raising the dead certainly could glorify God. Feeding thousands with a small boy's lunch is a beneficial ability.

Hearing God tell you that He would gladly give you anything you asked would be a mind-boggling prospect. Impossible, you say? Not so. Nearly three thousand years ago, God gave that exact opportunity to a man named Solomon (1 Chronicles 1:7).

Solomon had his hands full. As the second son of the fateful David and Bathsheba union, he was born with a stain on his record. His home life wasn't easy with five stepmothers and some wild half-brothers. One half-brother, Amnon, raped his half-sister, Tamar. Her brother, Absalom, then sought revenge and murdered Amnon (2 Samuel 13). Later, Absalom made a violent, and ultimately suicidal, play for the throne (2 Samuel 14–18).

Yet, Solomon was to be given the reins of the kingdom of his father, King David. David was the action superhero of 1000 BC. He was good looking, dashing, intelligent, hugely talented, and a larger-than-life living legend. He was a man's man and a ladies' man, and yet he was a man after God's own heart. David's résumé reads like a fantasy. He was a boy shepherd, military hero, gifted songwriter, folk legend, national spiritual leader, and king. He had killed Goliath, eluded Saul's army, recruited a band of merry men, become the king, led a tiny nation to become a world power, written many Psalms, created the "Bathsheba-gate" scandal, survived an ugly military coup plotted by his own son, and he planned to build God a great temple.

When David died, the weight of a young nation rested on the untested shoulders of his son, Solomon. He had to step up and take David's place as king. Talk about big shoes to fill!

Yet, God knows when we are facing more than we can handle, and He knows just what we need. So God appeared to Solomon in a dream and made him the unconditional proposal: "Ask Me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." To his credit, Solomon knew what to ask for.

That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, Lord God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a

people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" 2 Chronicles 1:7-10

Give me wisdom.

Solomon asked for what he believed to be the most important gift anyone can receive—wisdom. He ranked wisdom ahead of money or looks or miracle powers.

Solomon was a diligent student, and he used his time growing up in the court of a king to study from the greatest minds of his land. He accumulated the teachings of the ages and collected the parables of the sages. It was his conclusion that the road to blessing leads through the doorway of wisdom. In his book, Proverbs, he wrote the following:

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. Proverbs 3:13-18

To Solomon, if you can only acquire a single gift, the gift to get is wisdom.

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Proverbs 4:5-6

In his mind, wisdom was life's most valuable pursuit.

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a

garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. Proverbs 4:7–9

A careful study of the book of Proverbs reveals wisdom to be the diligently acquired art of skillful living. It is the careful cultivation of a God-centered, Christ-like, character-driven, common-sense way of living. Wisdom is the path that leads to God. It is characterized by righteousness, mercy, tact, humility, discipline, respect for authority, “teachability,” and honesty.

So, when given the opportunity to ask God for anything, Solomon asked for wisdom. “Give me wisdom” is one of the most effective prayers found in the pages of Scripture, and one God loves to answer. The Book of 1 Kings records God’s response.

The Lord was 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 that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.” 1 Kings 3:10–12

In 2 Chronicles we read this record of the Lord’s answer:

God said to Solomon, “Since this is your heart’s desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.” 2 Chronicles 1:11–12

Soon after, Solomon’s wisdom was put on display. Two harlots came to Solomon for a verdict. They both lived in the same house and both were mothers of newborn children. Woman number one claimed that woman number two’s baby died in the night, so

woman number two switched babies while woman number one was still asleep. Woman number two denied it. It was up to Solomon to decide who was right.

Shrewdly he ordered a man to cut the living baby in half and give each woman a half. The first woman cried out, "Give her the baby. Don't kill him!" The second woman said, "Neither of us will have a living baby. Cut him in two."

The ploy worked perfectly. Solomon ordered, "Don't kill that baby. Give him to the first woman. She obviously is the real mother."¹ Not surprisingly, Solomon's reputation for unusual wisdom spread throughout the nation.

Solomon asked for wisdom and God said, "Yes." In the Book of 1 Kings we can read a summary of the amazing way God answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom.

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 men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. 1 Kings 4:29–33

Solomon became known as one of the wisest and richest men who ever lived. The "wisdom" books of the Bible—Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes—came from his divinely inspired pen. It was God who answered his prayer for wisdom.

Like Solomon, Jesus' adolescence and young adult years were characterized by progress in wisdom (Luke 2:52). If Jesus as a

mortal being needed to grow in wisdom, how much more do you and I?

Making It Personal

Asking God for wisdom and receiving it is not a one-time deal that only Solomon was able to cash in on. “Give me wisdom” is a prayer all of us can pray with confidence. The New Testament book of James gives us the encouragement to ask for wisdom with this promise: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

Of the twenty-one most effective prayers, the one I use most often is “Give me wisdom.” I am a pastor, a professor, and an author, and I lead a global digital ministry. There is always a need to make an important decision or give someone necessary advice. I have learned to ask for wisdom, and God is faithful to answer.

With what decisions are you currently wrestling? Do you need wisdom to carry out your ministry more effectively? Are you trying to figure out how to lead your family? Do you need insight into a relationship? Do your job responsibilities require you to make decisions that affect the livelihoods of other people? Are there other areas where you need wisdom?

When Solomon prayed, “Give me wisdom,” God answered, “Yes!” Pause right now and ask God to give you wisdom for every decision you are encountering and every situation you face today.

Notes

1. See 1 Kings 3:16–28.

–David Earley from *The 21 Most Effective Prayers in the Bible* (PrayerShop Publishing 2023). This book is being used by

hundreds of churches and thousands of believers in The 21 Day Prayer Event, January 1021, 2024. Why not join them.