



THE
WORD

SESSION SNAPSHOT

HOW TO BE THE WISEST MAN IN THE WORLD

NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

1 Kings 3:1-15

GOSPEL FOCUS:

James 1:5

TAKEAWAYS:

- A wise person is a praying person
- A praying person depends on the Lord for everything

LAST WEEK'S READING:

- Psalm 119:129-176; 139
- Psalm 148-150
- 1 Kings 2
- 1 Kings 3; 6
- 1 Kings 8; 9:1-9

KNOW THE WORD

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Solomon is a man who is famous for his unparalleled wisdom and physical wealth, both of which were gifts from God. Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba, was chosen to be the king of Israel after David died, but the beginning of his rule was fraught with threats of an insurrection. Solomon was quick to heed his father's advice, though—and wise enough from the beginning to understand he needed help.

COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

- v.1 Most writers who cite Jewish tradition agree that Solomon did not break the law in his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, though Deuteronomy 7 seems to suggest that wives taken from foreign lands should convert to Judaism. It is also worth noting an important distinction to remember when reading Scripture: Descriptive vs. Prescriptive language. Descriptive language is when the reader is being told what happened in a situation, often without making a moral judgment on it. Prescriptive language is used when the text is telling the reader to do a certain thing. Solomon had multiple wives and was a man full of godly wisdom, yes but he was also deeply flawed. It was always God's intention for marriage to be between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19).
- v.2 A high place is an open-air sanctuary usually found on hilltops. Since there was no temple yet, the Israelites had to use what was available to them in order to sacrifice to the Lord. God never expressly condemned using pagan sites for His worship, though He did command that all of the pagan equipment be destroyed (Dt. 7:5) and that the site should be explicitly accepted by God (Dt. 12:5).
- v.6 We must remember that Solomon was born to Bathsheba after David had repented of his famous sin with her and that child had died. Every memory Solomon would have had of his father was that of a man who was living a second-chance life. Just because David had committed numerous egregious sins, he was not beyond redemption.
- vv.7-9 When Solomon asked for wisdom to be able to rule wisely, it was not so that he could amass anything for himself, but so that he could rightly rule God's people. He knew that he could not accomplish the task in a way that would please God without God's help. He wrote later in his life in Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." He proved it here in 1 Kings: his request for wisdom began with a right understanding of his relationship with God.

STUDY THE WORD

If you got three wishes right now, what do you think you would use them for?

It is a silly game to play, but at the back of most of our minds is the lingering question: “what would I want if I could have anything?” It is a revealing question, one that shows us where our heart lies--even if we don’t particularly like the answer that we end up leaning toward.

In today’s passage, we will see someone who was asked this same question, see what he chose, and discover what we can learn from his answer.

OUT LOUD, READ 1 KINGS 3:1-5

Solomon is David’s son, and at this time he was the King of Israel. As you read this section, you’ll probably recognize the story, but it is important to notice that perhaps the most famous story of Solomon’s life began with an unwise decision: marrying a daughter of the Egyptian king.

We see here that Solomon had a pattern of faith that he watched in his father. What kind of faith--if any--did you grow up learning from your parents?

How have you seen actions, whether positive or negative, pass from generation to generation?

Solomon was the son of Bathsheba, the woman with whom David had an affair. He was born by the very same sin that would plague his own life. But he was also born to David, a man who was far from perfect but about whom it could still be said was a man after God’s own heart. We learn all kinds of things from the generations that come before us, but we also have a chance to make our lives ones that are worth emulating.

OUT LOUD, READ 1 KINGS 3:6-9

Notice the way Solomon responded to God. What kinds of things he brought up. How well it seems as though he knows his Heavenly Father.

Who taught you how to pray? How have you seen the way you pray change throughout your life?

When Solomon had a chance to get anything he asked for, he prayed for an obedient heart and godly discernment. What kinds of things do you pray for?

Solomon approached God with admirable humility and absolute selflessness. He petitioned for discernment not so that he would be able to get rich or famous, but so that he could be able to do what God had appointed him to do well.

A useful question to ask ourselves is if we are more concerned about God's will or our wellbeing. Do we ask for blessings without asking for the wisdom that precedes them? Where is our focus when asking God for something? Are we more concerned about the blessings than the Blesser?

Solomon learned faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity from watching his father. Do you find yourself doing anything the way your parents did it? What is it?

What is something you hope you'd be able to pass on to someone after you?

Read Psalm 139 for an example of something Solomon would have grown up hearing his father saying out loud. David was a passionate king, vocal about his faults and about God's goodness to him despite that. He would have grown up knowing how to pray because he'd heard his father model it for him. This is a sobering reminder for us: everything we do, whether good or bad, influences those around us, especially if those people are our children.

OUT LOUD, READ 1 KINGS 3:10-15

God gave Solomon more than he asked for as a result of Solomon's request. But it wasn't about the request Solomon made--it was because of the attitude of Solomon's heart. God will always give discernment to those who want it.

What does "discernment" mean to you?

Why do you think Solomon desired discernment?

How does discernment benefit the people around you?

Discernment is the God-given ability to distinguish right from wrong. He wasn't asking for himself; he wanted to be able to rule Israel in a way that brought God glory even though he knew he wasn't up to the task on his own (v.7). When we realize that we are not good enough on our own and that we have to rely on God to help, we're exactly where He wants us to be. His petition for wisdom wasn't a selfish request, he wanted the people of God to benefit from it. So much of what we ask for tends to be for us, and we forget entirely about the One we are asking it of.

APPLY THE WORD

Whether you had a legacy of faith to follow or if you are beginning one yourself, we can all start from the place where Solomon did: by asking God to grant us discernment.

On your own, turn to and read James 1:5. Then, on your own, spend some time in prayer for these things:

Ask God to grant His discernment to you.

Ask God to reveal blind spots and darkness in your heart.

Ask God to begin making you into the type of person who practices the things you want to pass to someone after you.

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Next Week's Reading:

- ***Proverbs 1-2***
- ***Proverbs 3-4***
- ***Proverbs 16-18***
- ***Proverbs 31***
- ***1 Kings 11-12***