18-24 August 2024 Receiving wisdom as a gift

! Kings 2: 10-12; 3:3-14

**10**Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. **11**He had reigned forty years over Israel—seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. **12**So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established…

**…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.

**4**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. **5**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.”

**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 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. **8**Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. **9**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?”

**10**The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. **11**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, **12**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. **13**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. **14**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.”

 **Bible notes**

Solomon succeeded his father, David, as king of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah. Accession is often difficult for new monarchs because of internal and external challenges to their legitimacy. This early mention of Solomon becoming fully established is a ruthless declaration, meaning that all his enemies were either put to death or banished (2:10-12).

Solomon’s love for God is not disputed but affirmed. ‘Only’ raises the question of whether his mode of worship was appropriate (3:3-4). The high places host the worship of other deities, idols and all forms of sacrifices. The God of Abraham had no exclusive temple; therefore, King Solomon continued the tradition and the symbolism of worshipping at the most prominent high place. In this regard, God’s people were indistinguishable from other nations and cultures. The distinguishing feature of their worship was the extravagance of the sacrifices (3:4).

The visitation in Solomon’s dream shows God’s approval. A generous God is willing to offer the king his heart’s desire. Instead of hiding his insecurities, Solomon reveals his vulnerability to God; he was incredibly young, possibly not much older than a teenager, and the kingdom had passed over his older brothers. He was not versed in its administration or defence (‘I do not know how to go out or come in’, v.3:7). He needed an ‘understanding mind’ (v.9) – wisdom and knowledge – to govern God’s people.

Solomon’s understanding and regard for God are significant. He has an idealistic view of his father, but his understanding of God’s faithfulness is sound (3:7). His insight was sufficient to make a request that pleased God. It was not selfish because he desperately wanted the best resource, capability and capacity to lead God’s people. God establishes a covenant with these series of promises to Solomon. However, long life is conditional on walking in the ways of God.

 **Reflection**

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

The wisdom God gave Solomon was a gift to serve God and the people. The Old Testament passage offers an opportunity to explore what wisdom is needed by those who serve the church. Encourage staff and volunteers to be honest with themselves and God about the areas where they feel vulnerable and to ask God and others for help. Explore also what people need to properly belong to this congregation. This might be a good way to consider what needs to be done or changed to enable greater participation by all.

Questions for reflection

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* If you had three wishes, what would they be?
* Who is the wisest person you know? What do you admire about them?

## How can you help those around you grow in wisdom?

##  Prayer

## Adapt to your local context.

God, who is wise:
**we worship and adore you!**
God, whose ways are so far above ours:
**we worship and adore you!**
God, whose Spirit flows through all things:
**we worship and adore you!**
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

King of kings, you have all the wisdom, the glory and the majesty.
Continue to give us your gift of wisdom each day
so that we might serve you in all that we do.
**Amen.**