

Ask for What God Will Give You

1 Kings 3:5-12

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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. 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 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 3:5-12 NIV)

Dear friends in Christ, the Lord our God:

If a multibillionaire came to you with a blank check and promised to give whatever you request, what would you ask for? How many zeroes should go on that check: A million dollars? Ten million? Or perhaps you'd ask for something more tangible: To have all your debts paid off; a larger, nicer home; a fancy new car or boat and the insurance that goes with it, all paid for.

In a way, King Solomon received a blank check from someone he knew could pay it: The Lord. 20-year-old Solomon had recently become king after the death of his father David, who ruled Judah and Israel faithfully for forty years. He was offering sacrifices to the Lord when the Lord came to him in a dream and made him this offer: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

But Solomon is not the only one who gets a blank check from the Lord. Jesus himself promises his disciples, "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matt. 7:7a), and, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14). Let's learn from Solomon's answer to the Lord how to **Ask for What God Will Give You**.

We notice in Solomon's reply first of all his demeanor and attitude in making his request. He humbly gave the glory to God: "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart." Solomon recognized how gracious God was to his father, and to himself: "Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David." Solomon called himself the Lord's servant, and also a "little child," who did "not know how to carry out my duties." Solomon wasn't complaining, but simply acknowledging that he lacked the experience and the wisdom that comes from age to govern—especially to "govern this great people of yours," "too numerous to count or number."

Let us also learn from Solomon to ask humbly from our God. When he invites us to pray, let's remember that he is the Lord and we are his servants, and not to switch the two in our prayers (which we could fall into when we pray, "God, get me this job I'm looking for; Lord, take away my

pains; God, do this, and do that”). No, let’s always come humbly as the Lord’s servants, and recognize that he has been so kind and merciful to us. We really don’t deserve to even be in his presence, much less to ask for whatever we want him to give us. For we know, and God knows, that we are sinners who deserve his anger and eternal punishment for our sins.

But as Solomon noted in his prayer, the Lord our God has shown great kindness and mercy to us. God the Father sent God the Son to open the gates to heaven for us when he came down to earth and became our brother, the God-man to obey his Father’s will perfectly for us, and to suffer and die for the sins that we had done. And on the third day Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Even now he is interceding for us, and sending the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts and give us faith. The Holy Spirit prompts our prayers; the Son of God transmits our prayers; and the Father will hear our prayers in Jesus’ name, that is, through faith in Christ. For this reason we come humbly, but also confidently, because God will answer our prayers for Jesus’ sake.

So when God invites us, “Ask for what I will give you,” and we’ve humbly confessed our sins and praised him for his faithful love that forgives us, what will our faith lead us to ask for? We learn from Solomon to ask what is pleasing to God.

Solomon put it simply to the Lord: “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?” Again, Solomon wasn’t asking this for his own glory, that he could show off how smart he was. It was for God’s glory, that he could govern God’s people well in Israel.

“The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.” He was pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom rather than wealth, or a long life, or the death of all his enemies who would try to take the kingdom from him. So God gave Solomon “a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.” Still today, nearly 3,000 years later, Solomon is famous for his wisdom. The bulk of the book of Proverbs, plus Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, were written by this wise king. 1 Kings describes how Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and knew and spoke about plant and animal life. His fame reached even the Queen of Sheba, who marveled, “How happy your people must be!”, and glorified God, “Praise be to the LORD your God, because...he has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness” (1 Kings 10:8,9).

What makes for a God-pleasing prayer today? When we listen to God’s Word and recognize that he’s not really asking us to say what *we* want, but what God wants. (The phrase, “whatever you want,” isn’t actually in the original; the emphasis is: “Ask what *I* will give you.”) Jesus teaches us to ask for God’s will to be done in the Lord’s Prayer: That we keep his name holy and live godly lives by his Word, that his kingdom comes and that he rules in our hearts. He also teaches us to ask for those things that we need: Not huge riches (which can rob us of faith), but our daily bread; and spiritual needs like forgiveness, guarding us from temptation and all evil. When we’re given a blank check from God, ask for those things that will spiritually benefit us and those around us.

Like Solomon, let’s keep asking God for a discerning heart, not for our glory, but for God’s. Wisdom is not being a big brain; it’s using the gifts and knowledge God has given us so that we can carry out our tasks and responsibilities, all to the glory of God. So grant us wisdom, Lord, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.