

## LESSON 3

## SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND JUDGMENT

I Kings 3:1-28, I Kings 4:20-34

**“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”**

(I Kings 3:9)

Solomon Asks for an Understanding Heart



After Solomon became king, the Lord appeared to him “in a dream”. This means that the Lord opened Solomon’s spiritual eyes and ears so that he could see and speak with the Lord, and could hear the Lord talking to him from heaven. The Lord told him that he could have anything he wanted.

*If the Lord gave you such a promise, what might you ask for?*

Solomon asked for only one thing: **“An understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.”** (I Kings 3:9)

Solomon asked the Lord for this one thing because he had become ruler over a large kingdom. His father had conquered many countries. All the conquered countries paid tribute every year to Solomon. Though they still had their own kings, Solomon ruled over those kings. He needed guidance to understand the feelings of the people, why they did things, and what things were right or wrong so that he could be fair and just at all times. This is wisdom.

The Lord was pleased with Solomon’s request—so pleased that He promised Solomon riches and honor as well. The Lord also promised Solomon long life if he would walk in His way and keep His commandments. The Lord renewed the covenant He had made with so many Israelitish leaders before Solomon. Solomon began his reign as a righteous leader.

### Two Women Ask for Judgment

Soon after Solomon asked for wisdom, he was put to a very difficult test. Two women came to him with one baby. They had given birth to boys just three days apart, but one of the babies had died. Each of the women claimed that the baby they brought to Solomon was hers. One of the women told Solomon a story of what had happened. She said that the other mother’s child had died during the night, but she had taken the living child and put the dead baby into her arms. The other woman denied having done

this. You can imagine that both women were very emotional and that it would have been very hard for Solomon to know which of them was telling the truth.

What Solomon suggested did not seem wise at first, but something that you might think was cruel and threatening. He said that he would divide the child and give each woman half of the baby. Solomon knew that a person who would steal someone's child might not have the compassion that most mothers would have.

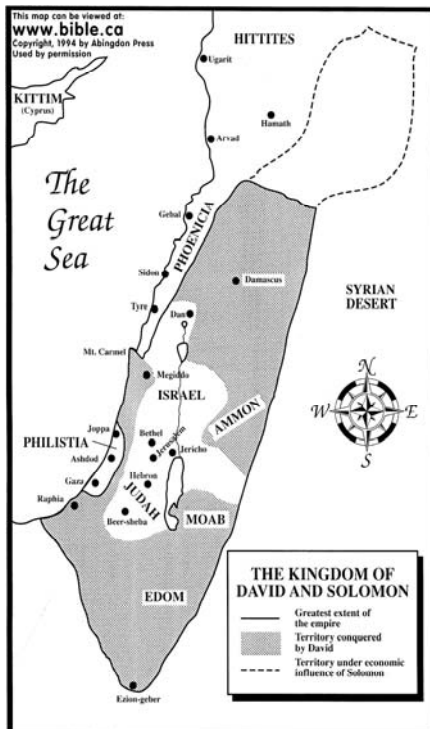


He was right. The actual mother was willing to give up her child so that he might live, while the thief was willing to let Solomon divide the baby. Solomon never would have allowed the living child to be divided and killed, but his threat revealed which woman was the mother and which was not.

*Can you think of any other ways Solomon might have discovered who was the real mother?*

When the People of Israel heard of Solomon's judgment, they could see that the

**“wisdom of God was in him to administer justice” (I Kings 3:28).**



### Solomon's Wealth and Power Grow

As the Lord promised, Solomon became powerful and wealthy. The kingdoms around him that had been subdued by David paid him taxes and left Judah and Israel in peace.

**“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” (I Kings 4:25)**

*Can you list some of the things described in the Word that illustrate Solomon's wealth and power?*

Solomon had many horses, chariots, and people to serve him. The people under his rule provided him with an abundance of food, both for those who ate at his table and for his livestock. He had everything he needed. As long as Solomon followed the Lord and kept His commandments, the Lord blessed him with power and riches.

## Solomon's Wisdom Grows

**“God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.” (I Kings 4:29)**



The Word tells us that Solomon was wiser than all the other wise men of his time. He was famous for wisdom throughout all the surrounding kingdoms. People from all nations came to hear what Solomon had to say.

Solomon expressed his wisdom in proverbs and songs. While Solomon's proverbs are not Divine revelation or part of the Word of God, you can read them in the Bible following the Psalms. The proverbs often are very beautiful and full of useful ideas of how to live a good life. They tell of the value of education, of helping the poor, of being a good friend, and of working hard. The proverbs also warn of things a person should avoid such as envy, gossip, and pride. They give instructions to both kings and servants—to all people.

### Asking For an Understanding Heart

Usually when people think of wisdom they think of being smart—of being able to learn quickly and do well in school. When people think of a part of the body associated with wisdom, they might think of the brain. Why, then, did Solomon ask for an understanding heart? What thoughts and feelings do you identify when you think of the heart? Possibly love and caring come to your mind. When heart/love and brain/understanding are put together, you can begin to see what Solomon was asking for and what you might want for yourself.

It is good to love and care for people, but there are intelligent ways to do this, as well as useless ways. An older sister might always want to help her little brother so he doesn't make mistakes, but if she does everything for him he'll never learn to do things for himself. A friend could ask you to steal something from a store, and say you aren't really a friend if you don't go along. If your heart is not ruled by your brain you might join in because you want to show what a good friend you are, but an understanding heart will know better.

We do not know if Solomon was suddenly much wiser than he had ever been before, but we do know he was wise and caring enough to know he needed loving wisdom to rule his people well. He wanted to follow the Lord, and he had some idea of what the Lord wanted of him. Perhaps he had been taught by a priest or some other caring adult to read the Word, the source of true wisdom. The Lord can give you an understanding heart if you read the Word, heed the words of wise and caring friends and adults and pray to the Lord to help you follow Him.



## ACTIVITIES

### LESSON 3: SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND JUDGMENT

#### ❖ REFLECTIONS ON GEMS FROM THE WORD

“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”  
(1 Kings 3:9)

1. Write about times in your life when it would be good to have an understanding heart. For example, a younger sibling gets into your room and accidentally breaks a special belonging of yours. How might you respond with an understanding heart?
2. Describe someone in your life whom you think shows an understanding heart—give reasons why you think this is true.

#### ❖ ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

#### ❖ CHART OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Note any more facts that you have learned about Solomon.

#### ❖ RICHES AND HONOR

The purpose of this activity is to help you understand why people see riches and honor as rewards. You will also have the chance to see what might be considered better and more useful rewards.

#### ❖ SOLOMON'S MAZE

Follow the directions. Think carefully about what the passage from the Word might be telling you to do. Look for directional words such as right and left.

#### ❖ HEART QUOTATIONS

Choose one (or more) of the heart quotations and print it in calligraphy or your best writing in the middle of a piece of paper. Then create a decorative border around the quotes. Hang it somewhere where you will be reminded to use an understanding heart when you make decisions.

### Questions: Lesson 3—Solomon's Wisdom and Judgment

**After each question write the number of the verse from I Kings chapter 3 in which the correct answer is found. The questions are not in the order of the verses. Use your copy of the Word to find the answers.**

1. What did Solomon command should be done to the living child claimed by two women?
2. What did the Lord give Solomon in a dream by night?
3. What did the Lord give Solomon that he had *not* asked for?
4. Whose daughter did Solomon marry or make “affinity with”?
5. How did one woman's child die in the night?
6. What did Solomon ask of the Lord?
7. How many burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon the alter “that was the great high place”?
8. What weapon did Solomon command be brought to him?
9. Why did the people sacrifice in high places?
10. Who received the living child?
11. What was the reason Solomon gave for his special request of the Lord?
12. What did Solomon have to do to have his days lengthened?

## RICHES AND HONOR

When a person is young and learning to do what is right, the adults in his or her life often offer worldly rewards such as gifts, food and special privileges. Write down some of the rewards you have been offered for doing things like cleaning your room, doing your homework, caring for a younger brother or sister, *etc.*

Though Solomon did not ask for any rewards, the Lord told him he would receive riches and honor as well as an understanding heart. From your lesson and from other things you might know about the times in which Solomon lived, what sort of riches did Solomon have?

Compare the riches Solomon had to the type of riches people have today. Note how some are the same and some are quite different.

The Lord also gave Solomon honor. What are some of the things that happened that illustrate how Solomon was honored?

In what ways are people honored today?

As people become older they begin to understand that riches and honor are not the most important rewards they can receive for the good things they do. Instead, the Lord gifts people with special feelings of accomplishment, a delight in other people's happiness and the knowledge that they have chosen well. Tell about a time you did something that gave you joy in someone else's happiness and/or the knowledge that you had made a good decision.

The Lord's final reward to people is living in heaven to eternity doing the good things they most love to do. What might some of those things be for you?

## Passages from the Word for Solomon's Maze

We have many decisions to make in life. When you come to a time of making a decision or a coming to a crossroad, you can let the Lord guide you through His Word. Can you find your way through this maze? Follow the line starting in the lower right corner. The passages from the Word will give you clues about which way to go. If you follow the guidance of the Word, you, like Solomon, will gain a wise and understanding heart.

Exodus 14:15 And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward."

Numbers 20:17 "Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

Deuteronomy 17:19-20 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Joshua 1:7 "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go."

Psalms 31:8 You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place.

Psalm 60:5 That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me.

Jeremiah 26:3 Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.

Jeremiah 31:21 Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities.

Ezekiel 1:12 And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"

Luke 13:24 Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

# Solomon's Maze

