

Wisdom Like Solomon

**1 Kings 3:3-9
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Do you know the best source of news these days? I bet you do; I bet you can tell me where to get the best information about COVID, politics, local news and world news. And yet, if we took a poll, there would be almost as many different news sources as there are people here in worship right now.

The sad truth is too many people today don't know which news sources to trust, whether that's TV news or on the internet or from friends, neighbors or even family. And that's a problem. If we're going to be part of making the best decisions for the future of this nation, the future of our community, the future of our families, we have to learn how to learn. We have to learn how to sort through different perspectives, how to evaluate information, how to discern what's true, and decide how to apply that truth to our lives.

Alvin Toffler, in his book, "Future Shock," puts it this way, saying, "By instructing students how to learn, unlearn and relearn, a powerful new dimension can be added to education Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the (person) who can't read; (it) will be the (person) who has not learned how to learn."¹

In order for us to learn how to sort through differing perspectives, evaluate information, discern what's true and apply that truth to our lives, let's look today at how Solomon became the wisest king Israel has ever known.

Looking at today's Old Testament lesson, we see that Solomon faced many of the same difficulties we face trying to make the best decisions possible. Like us, Solomon had to contend with his past in making decision for his future. Specifically, he had to consider what he learned from his parents, from his father King David.

Scripture tells us, "Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David...." How many here can trace their love of God to their upbringing? Almost all of us. And that's good. Love of the Lord is a good place to stand when discerning what's true and useful these days.

¹ Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (Bantam, 1971), 367.

If you want to be wise like Solomon, make sure all your decisions come from a place of love, love of God and love of neighbor – and not love of self. Solomon learned that from the best of who his dad was.

But Solomon also learned from the mistakes of his father. King David famously took another man's wife as his own, and then he sent that man to die in battle, only to have the Prophet Nathan condemn his actions in the sight of God. Looking at how his father put his own desires ahead of basic human decency, Solomon surely learned what not to do.

And yet, too many people today blindly follow the misguided ways of others. They refuse to even consider another perspective. They don't try to think what's best for all concerned. If you want to be wise like Solomon, learn from the mistakes of others, and your own mistakes, as well.

Another thing Solomon did that we can learn from is he turned to God in thanksgiving. Solomon considered the blessings of his life, who he was in the sight of God, and he made decisions that reflected the best of who he was. When God said to Solomon in a dream, "Ask what I should give you," Solomon responded, saying, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David ...; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today." Solomon thanked God for bringing him to the place where he stood that day, a place of responsibility, carrying on the good that had gone before him. We, too, should stop to appreciate what God has done for us and what God would want for us, particularly when we're faced with making a decision.

Consider a certain minister -not this one- who made a terrible decision, and then doubled down on it. This guy was driving downtown to see a show, and he gets pulled over for speeding. The police officer smells alcohol on his breath, and then he sees an empty wine bottle on the floor. "Sir, have you been drinking?" he asks. The minister says, "Just water." "Then why do I smell wine?" asks the officer. The minister looks down at the bottle and says, "Good God, Jesus has done it again!" ... Water into wine. That minister made a very bad decision, on both fronts, doubling down by refusing to recognize and learn from his dangerous and illegal actions.

By looking back at how we got to where we are in life, we can better see our way forward, deciding how to honor and increase our blessings, rather than double down on our mistakes.

Solomon looked at and learned from his past, and then he took a good look at where he was in the moment, what God expected of him now, saying, “And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.”

When Solomon refers to himself as a little child who doesn’t know how to go out or come in, he’s acknowledging his dependence on God. Solomon knows he needs God’s guidance to make the best decisions.

How often do you turn to God when making a decision? How often do you stop to consider that God brought you to that precise moment because he’s counting on you to make the best decision for all concerned? Sadly, in this fast-paced world with instant communication at our fingertips, few people stop to make a thoughtful decision. They react in the moment for better or worse, rather than stopping to consider what they learned from the past that could be helpful in the future. Faced with a decision in life, too few people stop to consider how blessed they are, and that God has brought them to this moment to make a faithful and wise decision – not for themselves alone – but on behalf of all concerned.

In making wise decisions, Solomon avoided past mistakes while honoring the blessings he received, he humbly looked to God for guidance, and finally, Solomon based his decisions on his desire to bless those around him and bless future generations to come. He turns to God, and says, “Give your servant ... an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” Solomon knows it’s not about him. It’s about God and the people God put in his life. It’s about being a blessing to them and to the generations that will come after him.

If we followed the pattern of Solomon in making decisions – stopping to learn from the past, count our blessings and all that’s at stake, turn to God in humility for guidance, and then make decisions based on what’s best for others, this world would be so much better off, our lives would be so much better. Unfortunately, that’s not how most people approach decision making. Most people don’t stop to think; they just decide.

Most people don't consider other points of view; they just latch on to one side or the other with no middle ground, no compromise, no discernment.

But you and I have an opportunity to change that. If we become wise like Solomon in our decision making, then our families, our workplaces and classrooms, our communities and our nation will be all the better for it.

So, the next time you're faced with a decision great or small, realize that how you respond makes a difference, who you listen to makes a difference, and most importantly, who you're mindful of makes a difference. Are you thinking only of yourself and your point of view, or are you willing to prayerfully consider others, and then make your decision in keeping with God's will, God's point of view. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, you have enriched and enlightened us by the revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Comfort us in our mortality and strengthen us to walk the path of your desire, so that by word and deed we may show forth the gracious news of your faithfulness and love.

Holy Father, who tested the heart of your servant Solomon by saying to him, "Ask what I should give you," reveal your deepest desire to our hearts that it would become our deepest desire, always. For those who are suffering, O God, let us point to Christ through expressions of comfort and care.

We ask your sense of eternal peace upon those struggles with health issues and earthly vitality. We pray for all those struggling with illness, disease and other health issues...

Almighty God, whose Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is the embodiment of grace and mercy, wisdom and light: Grant that your people may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped and followed to the ends of the earth.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.