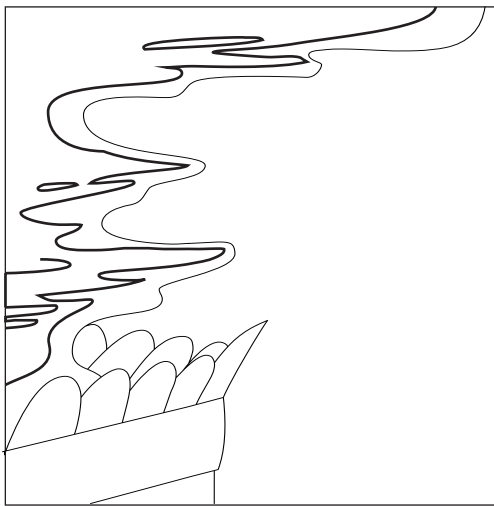


The Wisdom of

Solomon



Colour me!



1 Kings 3:5-15

After the death of his father David, Solomon became king of Israel. He was young and inexperienced, that why he asked God for help to lead his people in the right path.

One night while Solomon was in Gibeon, the Lord God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Solomon, ask for anything you want, and I will give it to you."

Solomon answered: "My father David, your servant, was honest and did what you commanded. You were always loyal to him, and you gave him a son who is now king. Lord God, I'm your servant, and you've made me king in my father's place. But I'm very young and know so little about being a leader. And now I must rule your chosen people, even though there are too many of them to count. Please make me wise and teach me the difference between right and wrong. Then I will know how to rule your people. If you don't, there is no way I could rule this great nation of yours."

God said: "Solomon, I'm pleased that you asked for this. You could have asked to live a long time or to be rich. Or you could have asked for your enemies to be destroyed. Instead, you asked for wisdom to make right decisions. So I'll make you wiser than anyone who has ever lived or ever will live. I'll also give you what you didn't ask for. You'll be rich and respected as long as you live, and you'll be greater than any other king. If you obey me and follow my commands, as your father David did, I'll let you live a long time."

Solomon woke up and realized that God had spoken to him in the dream. He went back to Jerusalem and stood in front of the sacred chest, where he offered sacrifices to please the Lord and sacrifices to ask his blessing. Then Solomon gave a feast for his officials.

Commentary

This was not the first time that God had spoken to someone in a dream. Abraham, Jacob and Joseph had all heard God's voice in this way; and even though Solomon had been worshipping extravagantly and with all his heart that day, it was only when his conscious mind was resting that he heard God speaking to him.

God's invitation to Solomon is amazing! He can ask for whatever he wants. The very fact that Solomon does not take selfish advantage of this generous offer underlines that he is God's choice and David's true successor. His prayer reveals both humility and a deep sense of responsibility about his new role as king.

Asking for wisdom is not the same as asking for knowledge. Wisdom is about how we use what we know and, in particular, how we make good choices in life. Anyone in authority knows how important this is as they are faced every day with competing requests for their time and attention. God granted Solomon's prayer and a lot more besides. He became one of the richest kings in Israel's history, but, more importantly, he was a man who acted with justice and integrity toward God's people. 'The wisdom of Solomon' has become a byword for the ability to know the right thing to do in the most difficult of circumstances. This sort of wisdom is a gift from God.

Bible text taken from Contemporary English Version. Anglicised edition copyright © British and Foreign Bible Society 1997, 2012. Reproduced with permission from The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF). Taken from The Barnabas Family Bible © Martyn Payne and Jane Butcher 2014.

Questions

- ▶ What would you ask for if you could have anything you want?
- ▶ Solomon knew that he was still very young and being a good king would be hard work. What help do you need from God as you face each day?
- ▶ It is not always easy to decide what is right and what is wrong. Can you think of some choices that are particularly difficult to make?
- ▶ Solomon is given all he asks for and more. What do you think might have happened if he had asked for riches or long life instead?



Visual aid

Use a pillow as a symbol of rest and dreams. Why do you think God might sometimes choose to speak to us when we are asleep?



Activity idea

Sometimes people keep something particularly precious under their pillow. Take turns to hide something precious under the pillow, then let the others rest their head upon it and try to guess what it might be. For Solomon, it was his trust in God that was his most precious possession.



Prayer idea

Traditionally, Christians have used special prayers before they go to sleep. A well-known Jewish prayer from the Psalms is one that Jesus himself might have used: “Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Psalm 31:5, NIV). Work together to compose a goodnight prayer that you can use as a family and say it before you go to bed each night.

Key verse

Please make me wise and teach me the difference between right and wrong (1 Kings 3:9).

New Testament story link

James 3:13-17: James describes what wisdom from God is like.



Colour me!

