

BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL: Wise Solomon

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1 Kings 3

Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the wall around Jerusalem. ²The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord.

³Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. ⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt-offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' ⁶And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he

walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And 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. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.'

¹⁵Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem, where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. He offered up burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

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16 Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

¹⁷One woman said, 'Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house.'

¹⁸Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. ¹⁹Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne.' ²²But the other woman said, 'No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours.' The first said, 'No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine.' So they argued before the king.

²³Then the king said, 'One says, "This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead"; while the other says, "Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one."' ²⁴So the king said, 'Bring me a sword', and they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵The king said, 'Divide the living boy in two; then give half to one, and half to the other.' ²⁶But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—'Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!' The other said, 'It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it.' ²⁷Then the king responded: 'Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother.' ²⁸All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king,

because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. Solomon marries an Egyptian princess. In one way, this brings Israel "back to Egypt" (the place they escaped from with God's help) and signals a future downfall (Israel would be conquered and divided in two). How might this reality about Solomon complicate our sense of him as truly "wise"?
3. What is wisdom? Who do you turn to for "wise counsel" and why?
4. If God were to appear to you and grant the desire of your heart, would you choose wisdom, or something else? Why?
5. What do you make of the story of the two women who come to Solomon? Do you find Solomon's tactic truly wise? Why or why not? What else might a wise judge do to get to the truth?
6. Where do you find wisdom in the bible? Are there any stories or teachings that you return to often?

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