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David Anointed King

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Theme: God looks at the heart, not the outward appearance

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "The Wisdom of a Broken Heart" In 1 Kings 3:5, 15, King Solomon, though still young, demands wisdom from God, not power or wealth, revealing an audacity rooted in his own humility and the weight of his past failures. This passage challenges students to confront their own intellectual pride: wisdom isn't just knowledge or cleverness, but the ability to discern truth and discern oneself, seeing how one's choices reflect God's character in their lives (e.g., Solomon's earlier rebellion in 1 Kings 2:13). For high schoolers, this invites reflection on how their academic pursuits or moral struggles might mirror (or resist) wisdom: What do they ask God for? How might their "wisdom gap", the gap between their gifts and God's calling, be bridled by vulnerability? The real-world application? A call to volunteer work where wisdom isn't just learned but lived, perhaps in mentorship, social justice, or leadership, where decisions have tangible consequences. Encouragement for Teachers: Pair this with discussion questions like "Where do you struggle to 'ask for wisdom', even when it's clear you need it?" or challenge them to journal how Solomon's prayer contrasts with their own (e.g., "Do I pray for 'success' or 'clarity'?"). Use the story to model intellectual honesty: The Bible isn't just a textbook, it's a mirror.

Bible Story

Sunday School Lesson: Solomon's Wisdom Pray (1 Kings 3:1-15)

King David, Solomon's father, was a man of faith who trusted God with his life, his kingdom, and his legacy. Though he had already ruled wisely, God saw his heart as one who sought Him, not for power, wealth, or fame, but for understanding. The Bible says, "The heart of Solomon sought God" (1 Kings 3:12b), a phrase that carries weight: true wisdom begins not with knowledge of facts, but with a posture of dependence on God. Solomon's early years in Jerusalem were marked by prosperity, he built the Temple, expanded the kingdom, and even achieved military success, but his spiritual growth was still in its infancy. When God offered him anything he desired, He didn't promise

Solomon an easy path; He gave him the opportunity to demonstrate whether he would seek God's way. This wasn't about luck or divine favoritism; it was about testing Solomon's integrity. The question is: Would he make a request that was truly for himself, or would he ask for something that exposed his heart's alignment with God's will?

God presented Solomon with a dilemma: "Ask for whatever you want" (3:5). The offer was provocative. If Solomon asked for wealth, his motives might be selfish; if he asked for military power, his focus would be on domination. But Solomon chose an alternative: he asked for "wisdom to govern your people fairly" (3:9). This wasn't an empty prayer, it was a deliberate choice to prioritize justice over his own desires. The Bible doesn't record Solomon's exact words of prayer, but the result speaks volumes: God granted him wisdom beyond measure, even to the point of discerning between false and true prophets (3:12). Solomon's prayer wasn't just a request; it was a confession of dependence: "Give your servant an understanding mind" (3:9, NIV). This wasn't arrogance; it was humility, recognizing that wisdom is a gift, not something earned through human effort alone.

Theologically, Solomon's prayer connects deeply to the nature of wisdom. The Bible distinguishes between "worldly" and "divine" wisdom (James 3:15-16). Worldly wisdom often seeks power, prestige, or control, while divine wisdom seeks understanding, specifically, the kind that leads to righteousness (Proverbs 1:7). Solomon's request exposed his commitment to God's standards. The Bible later records that he kept the Law of Moses and sought God's counsel in all decisions (1 Kings 10:23). His wisdom didn't erase human limitations, Solomon still made poor choices (e.g., marrying foreign wives) and faced consequences, but his initial act of prayer set a foundation for a life of spiritual growth. This raises a critical question: What would we ask God for if we truly desired to live with wisdom? Would we ask for success, or would we ask for the ability to govern with integrity?

The story of Solomon's prayer resonates with real-world implications. In a culture that often glorifies intelligence as self-sufficiency, Solomon's choice to ask for wisdom (not knowledge) reminds us that true intelligence is relational. Wisdom, in biblical terms, is more than academic or professional skill, it's the ability to align actions with values. For high school students navigating college applications, social media, or moral dilemmas, Solomon's prayer offers a countercultural challenge: Instead of asking for status or validation, ask for discernment. The Bible promises that God will honor such requests (3:12), but the fruit of wisdom is tested in daily decisions. Solomon's legacy reminds us that wisdom isn't just a destination, it's a journey of trust. If we ask God for wisdom, we must be prepared to use it to serve others, not ourselves.

Why does this story matter? Solomon's prayer challenges us to confront our motivations. In a world where ambition often overshadows humility, his example invites us to ask: What do I truly desire? Is it for power, or for the ability to rule with righteousness? The story also connects to modern struggles, such as decision-making under pressure, navigating relationships, or discerning truth in an age of misinformation. Solomon's wisdom wasn't perfect, but his initial act of prayer set the tone for a life that honored God. For high schoolers, this means taking the first step: acknowledging our need for guidance and asking God to help us see beyond the world's priorities. The question isn't just "What will I ask for?", it's "How will I live in response?"

Key Verse

1 Samuel 16:7

This verse from 1 Kings 3:9 reflects Solomon's prayer of humility and wisdom-seeking, not as a request for worldly success, but as a deliberate surrender to God's purpose in his life. Solomon recognizes that true leadership isn't about raw power but about judging with integrity, protecting the vulnerable, and upholding justice, mirroring God's own character as the ultimate "right and wrong" arbiter in history. In a world obsessed with influence and power, this verse challenges us to ask: How do we govern, not just with authority, but with discernment that reflects God's moral compass? It's not just about being smart, but being honest in judgment, especially toward those society often overlooks. Solomon's prayer becomes a blueprint for leadership, ethics, and even personal decision-making: When faced with ambiguity, we must ask: Is this aligned with God's standard of justice and mercy? The real question isn't what can I achieve, but how will I steward power with integrity?

Activities

Activity 1:

Students visually map out Solomon's dilemma in 1 Kings 3:5, 9, creating a branching tree diagram to explore what he actually sought (power, wealth, or wisdom) and its theological implications for moral decision-making.

1. Divide the Group: Split into small teams of 3, 5 students. Assign one student to be the "leader" (to guide the discussion).
2. Define the Roots: Ask: "What were Solomon's three options in 3:5, 9, and which one did he choose to pursue?" (Write the options on the paper, power, wealth, or wisdom, as root labels). Let students debate which option was most evident in his words.
3. Create Branches: For each option, have students draw a branch with 2, 3 sub-branches (e.g., "Power" "Legitimacy of the throne," "Defeating enemies," "Capturing spoils"). Highlight how Solomon's choice could have been framed as self-serving vs. God-directed.
4. Reflect theologically: Under each branch, ask: "How does this connect to wisdom as 'knowing how and when to act' (Proverbs 16:9)? What 'wild' questions did Solomon ask that show his heart was aligned with God?" (e.g., "God, give me discernment"). Discuss how his request was both humble and bold.

Activity 2:

Students role-play Solomon's dilemma by writing hypothetical scenarios where wisdom fails, then "test" his commitment to choosing God's path through a debate or creative exercise.

1. Prep Scenarios: Write 2, 3 scenarios on slips of paper (e.g.):
2. "A rival king offers Solomon a truce on terms that would divide his kingdom. Do you agree?"
3. "Your people demand you build a temple to their gods. Do you obey, or follow God?"
4. "You're offered power to suppress a rebellion, will you use it, even if it means killing?"
5. Randomly hand one scenario to each team.
6. Debate Solomon's Response: Teams must answer:
7. "How would Solomon act in this situation?" (Refer to 3:12, 13: "If you seek me with all your heart... I will be found by you.")
8. "What would his true wisdom look like?" (Use Proverbs 16:9: "The heart of the wise is at rest.")
9. Construct the "Wisdom Jar": Teams glue their scenario onto a jar, labeling it with their answer. Discuss:
10. "If Solomon had chosen power/wealth, how might his 'wisdom' have been a lie?"
11. "What does this show about wisdom as a lifestyle, not just a prayer?"
12. Theological & Real-World Connections:
13. For

Discussion Questions

- Here are four intellectually engaging, open-ended discussion questions for high school students (ages 15, 18), weaving theology, ethics, and real-world application into their reflection on King Solomon's wisdom prayer (1 Kings 3:1, 15). These questions invite critical thinking while fostering honest exploration of faith, leadership, and human complexity:
- 1. Wisdom as a Gift vs. a Right: What Does It Mean to Pray for Wisdom Differently?
- The passage shows Solomon as a young king who seeks God first for wisdom, not just power or fame. Many people today pray for success, wealth, or comfort without explicitly asking for discernment. If Solomon's prayer were to be repeated today, how might modern culture distort the why and how of asking for wisdom? Consider:

- Theological: Does wisdom in Scripture often require suffering, humility, or vulnerability? (e.g., Proverbs 1:7; James 1:5). How might this challenge us to redefine what we “need” from God?
- Real-world: What “success” metrics (money, social status, influence) do you often prioritize over wisdom? How could asking for clarity about these choices align with Solomon’s example?
- 2. The Test of Divine Wisdom: How Does Solomon’s Request Challenge Our Understanding of God’s Sovereignty?
 - God’s response to Solomon’s prayer is striking: “Because you asked for this, not for long life, wealth, or the death of your enemies, but for wisdom, I will give you understanding too” (v. 11, 12). Some might argue this implies God needs our prayers to fulfill his purposes. Others see it as God rewarding specific desires. How does this tension play out in your own faith?
 - Theological: If wisdom is a gift, why does God specify Solomon’s motive? Does this suggest God values our attitude toward him more than our desires? How might this challenge you to re-examine why you pray for certain things?
 - Ethical: If wisdom is given to those who seek it humbly, what “petition” (e.g., anger, selfishness) might God reject even if it’s common in culture? How do you guard your heart from asking for the wrong things?
- 3. Solomon’s Wisdom: A Tool or a Duty? How Does This Story Reflect on Leadership and Responsibility?
 - Solomon’s wisdom is given, but it’s also used, he governs the nation, builds temples, and faces moral dilemmas (e.g., 1 Kings 10). Many leaders today (political, religious, or personal) use their position for power, prestige, or control. How does the story of Solomon’s wisdom challenge you to think about leadership?
 - Theological: Does wisdom in Scripture often imply righteous use? (e.g., Proverbs 16:9: “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes the steps.”) How does this interact with modern ideas of “free will” and agency?
 - Real-world: Think of a time when you or someone you admire used a privilege (time, money, influence) for the wrong purpose. How might Solomon’s story prompt you to ask: Was their wisdom truly “from above,” or was it corrupted by human desires?
- 4. The Paradox of Divine Wisdom: How Does Solomon’s Wisdom Point to a Broader Theological Question About Human Understanding?
 - Solomon’s reign is often seen as the high point of Israel’s history, yet his later life includes idolatry and moral failures (e.g., 1 Kings 11). Some argue this means God’s gifts don’t guarantee holiness. Others see it as a reminder that wisdom without grace is incomplete. How does this paradox inform your understanding of God’s plan?
 - Theological: If wisdom is a gift, how does it intersect with the fall of humanity? Does God’s wisdom in Scripture always resolve moral conflict, or is it a tool within a broader story of redemption? Consider how this might challenge you to think about justice, grace, and human limitations.
 - Personal/Real-world: Reflect on a time when you or someone else sought wisdom, only to face hardship or failure later. How does this story of Solomon’s rise and fall (in some ways) encourage you to trust God’s timing, even when his ways seem unclear?
- Follow-Up Discussion Tips:
 - Invite personal stories: Ask students to share their experiences of seeking wisdom (or failing to do so) and how it shaped their faith.
 - Compare with culture: Contrast biblical wisdom (e.g., Proverbs 15:22: “Plans are not decided by wisdom alone”) with modern advice columns or social media’s emphasis on “self-actualization.”
 - Artistic expression: Challenge them to write a poem, song, or short story from Solomon’s perspective as he sits on the throne, how would his wisdom feel to articulate?

- These questions aim to avoid simplistic answers while encouraging students to grapple with the tension between Scripture and their own lives. They also invite them to consider how their own prayers, decisions, and aspirations align (or don't) with the broader story of God's wisdom in history. Would you like any of these refined further for a specific focus (e.g., more emphasis on justice, or cultural critiques)?

Prayer Focus

"Lord, we come before You with the weight of this season, intellectual curiosity that sometimes feels like climbing a steep mountain, where our understanding is fragile yet hungry for truth. Like Solomon, may we ask not for power or riches, but for wisdom that guides us to discern, to weigh the words of this world against the Word that endures, to seek justice in its purest form, and to carry Your truth with integrity in a culture that demands more than hollow knowledge. Teach us to pray like we wrestle with You: honestly, patiently, and with the humility to admit when we don't yet see all the answers." (Theological echo: Solomon's prayer mirrors Jesus' own words in John 16:13, wisdom as divine guidance, not just academic brilliance. Real-world tie: wisdom here means ethical action, how do we use our minds to serve others, not just to be smart?)

>> Missions Spotlight

The Akan people of Ghana have a rich tradition of proverbs and wisdom sayings. Missionaries have found that Solomon's story resonates deeply, and the concept of 'wisdom from God' opens doors to share about Jesus, the Wisdom of God.

-> To the Cross

Solomon asked for wisdom and God was pleased. But the Bible says, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' True wisdom leads us to Jesus, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2:3).