

Teaching Point 1: A WISE KING who KNOWS God

I wonder how you came to be in church today? What is your story? Many of us are here because we were brought along by, or have come with, our friends or family. We have grown to know God and love him through others telling us about him.

In 1 Kings 3: 1-3 we hear Solomon's story.

Bible Reading 1: 1 Kings 3:1-3

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem. ² The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the LORD. ³ Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

There is no temple – or church – for Solomon to worship God in. However, Solomon had watched how his father, King David, trusted in God throughout his life; in the good times, in the bad times. He had listened when David sang about God's goodness, his great love, his patience and mercy. We can read David's songs today in the book of the Bible called Psalms.

As a boy, Solomon would have listened to stories of God keeping promises, loving the outcast, being patient with the foolish. He would have learned that God was a holy God to be listened to and obeyed. From his father, Solomon learned faith and trust in God. **PPT Slide 3** In verse 3 we read, "Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David." So, Solomon knew God – he showed his love for the Lord, trusted him and walked in God's ways, just as his father had done before him.

PPT Slide 4 'EXCEPT THAT he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.' (verse 3)

Solomon was worshipping God, but he was also copying the behaviour of those who didn't love God! Solomon knew God; but he didn't always do things God's way. He was *learning* to be king. He had to learn that God's ways needed to be at the centre of his life, every day. Learning is what all of us do, especially those of us who are at school. God wants each one of us to learn what He is like, to get to know Him, to trust Him and learn to live His way; when at home with our family – and in school with our friends and teachers.

Sometimes Solomon did what other people who didn't love God were doing. We face that challenge too, don't we? All of us face pressures to live the way others do – particularly those of us who are at school. God challenges us to live a different way.

Further on, in verse 15 of our Bible passage, we are told that Solomon chooses to follow God and worship Him with honour, praise and glory before the ark of the Lord's covenant. He is a WISE KING who KNOWS GOD. He chooses **not** to compromise and do what others are doing. He worships God where God has instructed; he is doing things God's way at last. Let's pray that all of us – at home, work, and at school – choose God's ways too.

Teaching Point 2: A WISE KING who KNOWS HIMSELF! Bible Reading 2: 1 Kings 3:4-9

⁴ The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'

⁶ Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.'

⁷ 'Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?'

We read in verse 5, *"the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you!"* **PPT Slide 6**

As you listened to the Bible reading, I wonder if your mind went to a kind of Genie in a lamp scenario... 'I can grant you 3 wishes!!'

This is not a made-up story of genies inside magical lamps. Here is an account of someone who has a relationship with God and wants to please God and bless others more than anything. It is not random, it is not based on rubbing a lamp...it's about a God of grace and love, deepening his relationship with Solomon.

Wow! What a chance for Solomon to ask for something amazing! And we aren't talking here about some vague wish that might or might not come true. This was God asking him what he wanted! God was *more* than able to answer.

PPT Slide 7 Solomon knew who he was – a young king. Imagine writing 'King Solomon' on your new pencil case or Facebook profile, or hearing 'King Solomon' called when your teacher takes the register. How important you would feel!

But did you notice how Solomon identifies himself in the passage? Three times when talking to God he identifies himself not as 'the king', but as 'your servant'. Yes, King Solomon calls himself a *servant*. How can that be? What does he mean?

Back in history, a king was very powerful. A king could have anything he wanted, and do anything he pleased. Yet here Solomon is showing that although he *is* a King, he knows that there is a greater King who is far more powerful. **Click PPT Slide 7 to animate** Before **that** King, Solomon is only a servant. That King is God.

Solomon is a WISE KING who doesn't just know God; HE KNOWS HIMSELF. Solomon isn't full of his own importance, even though he is a king. He realises he is *"only a little child, and doesn't know how to rule."* (v.7). **Click PPT Slide 7 to**

animate He is humble before God. He recognises he needs help. He knows that God is God, and that he is not.

PPT Slide 8 So, in answer to God's question, (v 9) *Solomon says to God, "I want to be wise! I want to know how to tell wrong from right."*

Why? Not so that everyone will say what a great king he is, but so that he can tell right from wrong and rule his country well. He wants things which are right to be praised and things which are wrong to be stopped. He wants those being mistreated to be helped, and those doing good to be encouraged. He wants to think the way God thinks and to see the world the way that God sees it. Solomon wants to be the best king he can be – a servant king who has God as his King.

PPT Slide 9 If God were to say to us today, *'Ask for whatever you want me to give you!'* what would your answer be? What would *my* answer be? Would we be like Solomon, and not pray to be rich or successful, but to be wise – to know right from wrong? That's a great prayer!

Left side is wise - right side NOT wise!

Statements:

- Washing your hands after playing football. **WISE** – or UNWISE?
- Staying up all night and getting no sleep. WISE – or **UNWISE**?
- Taking something that doesn't belong to you. WISE – or **UNWISE**?
- Looking both ways before you cross the road. **WISE** – or UNWISE?
- Eating a whole packet of biscuits all at once. WISE – or **UNWISE**?
- Ignoring your homework and pretending it got lost. WISE – or **UNWISE**?
- Saying 'sorry' when you do something wrong. **WISE** – or UNWISE?

Teaching Point 3: A WISE KING who PLEASES GOD

Bible Reading 3: 1 Kings 3:10-15 (slide 10)

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for – both wealth and honour – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴ And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.'

¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke – and he realised it had been a dream.

He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

How do we know when someone is pleased? They might give us a big smile, or a hug, or say 'Well done!'. At school, we might get a 'smiley face' sticker, a 'treat', a homework voucher or be allowed to do something special. God was pleased with what Solomon asked for. How did Solomon know God was pleased? The Bible tells us! **PPT Slide 11** Verse 10 says, '*the Lord was **pleased** that Solomon had asked for wisdom.*' Because he asked for that and not a long life, or riches, or anything selfish, God gave him the wisdom he asked for as well as many other good things. In the rest of the chapter we find out how he was able to solve a very tricky problem – one he could not have worked out without God's help. God did indeed make Solomon very wise. He was not just a WISE KING, but a WISE KING who PLEASED GOD.

But what is wisdom? **PPT Slide 12** We talk about knowledge – knowing a lot of things; but wisdom is something different! Solomon asked God for wisdom, that he would know how to tell wrong from right. For Solomon, wisdom was knowing the right thing to do and doing it. Solomon wanted to please God and follow his ways.

When it comes to what it means to be wise, Proverbs 9:10 gives us a big clue: **Click PPT Slide 12 to animate**

"Wisdom begins with respect for the Lord. And understanding begins with knowing God, the Holy One." (International Children's Bible)

PPT Slide 13 Wisdom begins with knowing God and realising HE is God and we are not. The wisdom of Solomon comes not from a chance meeting with a genie, or a quick Google search. It doesn't come from listening to a blogger, reading an encyclopaedia or asking the best teacher you have ever had. It is the result of meeting and getting to know the living God!

What might wisdom look like in the classroom tomorrow? If I have wisdom from God, does it mean that I have better marks than anyone else? Will I become much cleverer than I was before? Perhaps not! Will I always know how to answer the teacher when she asks a hard question? Will it mean getting 100% in all my exams? Does God's wisdom put me at the top of the class? No, it doesn't promise that!

God answered Solomon's prayer and gave him so much wisdom that he was able to share it with us. Some of Solomon's wise sayings are written down for us in the book of the Bible called Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is proof that God answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom. Solomon was therefore a WISE king who PLEASED GOD, who realised that even though he was a king, he couldn't live properly without **God** being in charge.

So, what will God-pleasing wisdom look like in the classroom, or where we work or spend our time? Let's find out!

- Wisdom is... trusting in God

- Wisdom is... being a good friend
- Wisdom is... reading the Bible
- Wisdom is... including others
- Wisdom is... listening
- Wisdom is... talking to God
- Wisdom is... giving your best
- Wisdom is... making good choices
- Wisdom is... telling the truth
- Wisdom is... asking God for help
- Wisdom is... saying thank you
- Wisdom is... loving God

I think the man who asked for his son to be healed in the story we read earlier was wise. We don't know but I wonder if he had tried to find help from doctors or other people for his son. When he heard about the amazing things Jesus had been doing he decided to ask him to heal the boy. When Jesus told him to go because his son would live he could have pleaded for Jesus to come and see the child, or touch the child – instead John says, "He took Jesus at his word." I think that is the wisest thing any of us can do – wherever we are, and however old we are!