

## **A WISE AND UNDERSTANDING HEART**

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*Lesson: I Kings 3:5-15*

Solomon was the king who followed King David, the mighty warrior who had made Israel into a great nation by conquering all the countries round about him, and making them pay tribute to Israel. During the time of David and Solomon the Children of Israel were very strong indeed and ruled over a lot of people.

Then David died and Solomon, his son, became the king. The Lord appeared to him in a dream and asked him what he would like the Lord to give him. Now, as the Lord later said, Solomon could have asked for anything. What would you have asked for in his place? He could have asked to be the richest king there was. He could have asked to be able to beat all his enemies. He could have asked to be able to live a very long life, so that he could enjoy all the things of this world.

But these things were selfish. Solomon wanted to be a good king, not just to enjoy himself with riches and power and long life. He wanted to rule his people well, and he knew that the most important thing he needed was not money or strength. He asked the Lord to give him an understanding heart, so that he could know what was right in ruling the people. The Lord was very pleased with his answer and said that because he had not asked for selfish things He, the Lord, would give him lots of things. He would give him the wise and understanding heart he asked for, but he would also give him great riches, power over all his enemies and long life.

So the people of Israel were lucky in King Solomon at first; for they had a king who was not only powerful and rich, but one who had a wise heart, and knew how to rule them well.

We might think to ourselves that a wise and understanding heart is something a king needs, and we might not stop to realize that it's the one thing above all other things that each one of us needs too. More than anything else in the world, this is what we should ask for from the Lord.

We too, like Solomon, can wish for many other things. When we think what we would like to be when we grow up, there might be some who would say, "I want to have lots of money." Others might say, "I want to be strong, so that I can always defend myself, and people will admire me." Some others will say, "I

want to be healthy and live to be an old man.” Others will say, “I want to be very clever and always come out on top.”

To be rich or strong or healthy or clever can help us to live in this world, it is true. But the most important thing of all is to be wise—to have an understanding heart. Why is this? It’s because if we are wise, if we know what is right and how to be kind and understanding with people, then we can be sure that wherever we go, and whatever we do, we will be bringing happiness to the people who know us. That is why an understanding heart is the most important thing of all—because a person who has one will bring happiness wherever he goes.

Another thing is that a person who has a wise heart will be loved by all the people he knows. This isn’t so if you have those other things. People often say of a man, “He’s rich, but I don’t like him; he’s not a nice person.” Or, “He’s very clever, but he doesn’t care for anyone but himself; I don’t like him.” But no one will ever say “I don’t like him, even though he’s got an understanding heart.” Everyone likes and admires a person who cares for other people and is wise in what he does for them.

So just like Solomon, we too should pray to the Lord to give us, more than anything else, a wise and understanding heart, so that we can learn to bring happiness wherever we go in life. Then the other things won’t matter. If we are rich it will be nice, but if we’re not we’ll still be happy. If we are strong and healthy that’s nice, but we can be quite happy if we are just ordinary. We don’t have to be clever either; any person can be given an understanding heart by the Lord, whether clever or not.

And, last of all, let us never forget that only the Lord can give to us this great gift—an understanding heart. Only He can flow into us and fill our hearts with His truth and make them warm with His love, so that we can really be wise and understand and care for the people around us. A wise person is humble before the Lord because they know that only the Lord has made them wise. They are not proud of being wise; they are grateful that the Lord has made them this way. *Amen.*