



If God offered you the wisdom to resolve a complicated situation you're facing, that would be great, wouldn't it?

What if you were given two tickets to a Giants playoff game at the last minute? Your spouse doesn't like baseball at all, and it's your anniversary. What do you do?

We need more wisdom all the time: parenting, in-laws, holiday plans, juggling or planning your family schedule, finances—buy a house or rent, buy the more expensive more reliable car or the less expensive less reliable car. The list can go on and on. The scripture we'll be looking at today offers each of us hope that God wants to give each of us more wisdom.

Last week we saw how Solomon, when offered anything from God, asked for a discerning heart to govern the people and the ability to discern between right and wrong. In essence he asked for wisdom. And God gave it to him.

As the story unfolds today, we'll see an example of just how wise Solomon was.

Now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. One of them said, "Pardon me, my lord. This woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there with me. The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us" (1 Kings 3:16–18).

The scene is a common one, minus the prostitutes. A disagreement between two people. No witnesses. Two very different versions of what really happened. It's like the TV show *Judge Judy*.

In these situations, a wise judge will look at the following to establish who is more credible:

- » Details of the story. The more detail, the better.
- » Trustworthy character. In this case, neither are better or worse than the other because they're both prostitutes.
- » Past behavior. Their past behavior won't help either because they are equally tarnished.

The scene is set in such a way that it's nearly impossible for a judge to determine the truth. That's probably why this case has been brought to Solomon. A lower judge probably heard this case first and didn't know how to resolve it. Normally, the property would be split and the situation would be concluded. But you can't split a baby. So this case has been brought to the

highest authority in the land. Prostitute One is now going to tell her version of the story.

"During the night this woman's son died because she lay on him. So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I your servant was asleep. She put him by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't the son I had borne."

The other woman said, "No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours." But the first one insisted, "No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine." And so they argued before the king.

The king said, "This one says, 'My son is alive and your son is dead,' while that one says, 'No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.'" Then the king said, "Bring me a sword" (verses 19–24a).

There would have been a gasp in the courtroom. There could be no other purpose for a sword except to cut the property in half and in this case the property is a baby. King Solomon isn't wise, he's mad!

So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other" (verses 24b–25).

I don't think Solomon had any intention of cutting this baby in half. I think he was testing these women to determine which of them had the love of a mother for her child. Parents do "tests" like this too. So the order has been given, a court official is moving toward the baby with the king's sword and ...

The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!" But the other said, "Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!" (verse 26).

Wow. The hearts of the two women have been revealed with this simple test. A situation that seemed impossibly difficult to solve is now as simple as 1+1. The first woman has the deep mother's love for her child. The second woman, lost in the despair and pain of killing her own child, wants to spread her despair to others.

Then the king gave his ruling: "Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother." When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they

saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice (verses 27–28).

Let's answer the question: Why is this story in the Bible? Answer—God's stunning wisdom is available for each of us.

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones” (Proverbs 2:1–8).

“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her” (Proverbs 3:13–15).

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you (James 1:5).

What situation are you facing right now that seems ridiculously complicated? God is offering you his wisdom. Ask him. He gives wisdom generously. Remember, God promises us that he'll impart his wisdom to us. And his wisdom is more valuable than anything!

So the first reason this story is in the Bible is to show us that God's stunning wisdom is available for each of us. There's a second reason. To see it, let's put ourselves in the shoes of the original audience of 1 Kings. 1 Kings was written to Israelites, God's chosen people.

Despite being given more wisdom than any other person in history, Solomon made a lot of mistakes. If Solomon couldn't obey God's laws perfectly, if Solomon couldn't make right decisions all the time, if Solomon's actions resulted in hurting others, what chance do we have? We're not even as wise as Solomon!

God had a specific reason for including this story in the Bible, something specific he wanted to teach the Israelites. God wanted to teach the Israelites that as valuable as wisdom is, it will never be enough. They will be perpetually flawed. And that's a big problem because God requires perfection from people in order to have a relationship with them. That's impossible!

So the story of Solomon's wisdom is designed to teach the Israelites that they need something else, something more than the wisdom of Solomon. They need a Messiah. So they looked ahead to the coming of a Messiah who would nullify their failed attempts to be right all the time. Someone who would wash away their sins and give them a perfect, righteous standing before the God of the universe.

As the Israelites looked forward for a coming Messiah, we look back to Jesus, the one and only Messiah.

So what's the second reason God put this story in the Bible? Even with the wisdom of Solomon, a Savior is needed. *“Jesus said ... and now something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal. 5:6).*

God's stunning wisdom is available for each of us, but even with the wisdom of Solomon, a Savior is needed. Here are some examples of how this affects our lives:

Prayers for our children. I pray that my children will understand and experience grace more than I pray that they'll be wise, moral, strong and pure. You may question this approach. I understand, I do pray for these good qualities. But no matter how much I pray that they'll be wise, moral, strong and pure they are guaranteed to fail, just like every one of us. And when they fail, I want their heart to be prepared with years of prayer and teaching to understand and experience grace.

When people disappoint us, we're not surprised. If Solomon made mistakes, why am I surprised when my wife makes them? When my boss makes them?

When I blow it, I don't blow it off (because God requires perfection) but I don't beat myself up. When I make mistakes it's important to recognize the gravity of my actions. God hates sin. Wrongful actions and motives are in complete opposition to everything about God. So when I behave in this way, there's a gravity to it. I shouldn't blow it off. However, I also shouldn't beat myself up over it. If Solomon made mistakes, why am I surprised when I make them?

I turn to Jesus Christ and him alone for my only chance of pleasing God.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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