

If God appeared to you in a dream extending the same open ended offer he did to Solomon, what would you ask for? This hypothetical opportunity serves as spiritual Rorschach test. Dr. Hermann Rorschach, a Swiss psychologist, put his artistic side to work and started using images like [these] to help identify and analyze what was happening in someone's unconscious mind. What did these look like to the patient, what impression did they give? The answers could help reveal what was already there.

What would you choose? Solomon asked for wisdom. Solid choice. Would I ask for the ability to heal, to end hunger or disease, to provide shelter for our neighbors without it? Would I ask for Superman like powers? Would I ask for so much money that the thought of something being expensive became a silly one? Death of enemies? Seems a bit much, so maybe just the chance to get em back real good consequence free would be nice. Because the sinful nature is wont to sin at such opportunities, these last couple things appeal to us too! As we look at this dream conversation, keep this passage in mind:

Proverbs 27:19, *“As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.”* Wisdom was already in Solomon's heart.

One of Solomon's first official acts as king of Israel was to invite the leaders to a sacrifice at Gibeon where the Tabernacle and altar were. There, Solomon offered 1000 burnt offerings. There, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, *“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” (I Kings 3:5)* How'd he answer? Honestly and humbly. Twice he says he's grateful to the Lord for the kindness and faithful love he showed to his father, David, and now to him in making him king. High honor, sure, but one which presented Solomon with the dilemma of actually having to rule a nation! Owing his insufficiency, he tells God he's a little kid who doesn't know how to go out or come in, formal king stuff. In other words, “I have no idea what I'm doing and people aren't going to listen to me because I have no experience! That's where I'm at, Lord.”

Can you relate?? “Lord, you’ve given me some honorable tasks, but I have no idea what I’m doing!!” The prayers don’t stop there. We pour our hearts and anxieties out to God. Wise King Solomon with all his wisdom is no exception. He goes on, “*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?” (I Kings 3:8, 9)* The people are many and they are God’s! That increases the urgency of Solomon’s blessed dilemma big time.

Judgment, discernment, a heart that seeks first to understand, this is what Solomon asks for so he can do proficiently the work God gave him. What better request could there be? To really actually thoroughly understand a person, thing, or situation would be a marvel. When we have understanding, we know what to do, but what we so often do is not understand something only to decide we do and then how we’ll be acting to a person or in a situation based on our decision about it, which all started with our misunderstanding. Not exactly integrity, is it? It’s not, it’s bad business, but we’re good at it! The learning is work! We don’t usually feel excellent about admitting our limitations or ignorance, but doing so is wisdom so knowledge and understanding can be sought and found. This won’t ever happen if there isn’t humility to say first to ourselves, “I don’t know everything,” and then, “I don’t know about this. I need more time to learn so I can understand before having an opinion on it,” to others later. Solomon asks for the expedited version of the knowledge acquiring process, for the innate ability of mind and heart to understand, to see down to the core of things past all the stuff that gets in the way to what’s really going on, to distinguish between good and evil, and make judgments from there.

Solomon’s request delighted the Lord. Solomon told God that he wanted to do good, not to be great, that he wanted to serve God’s honor, rather than advance his own. This outside of self mindedness is praised by God from cover to cover in the Bible, it’s a primary gospel directive for Christian living. If Solomon’s request is pleasing in God’s sight, what kinds of things should we ask for? The abilities to better do the will of our God within the various callings he’s placed us. I’m not a king. I don’t administer

justice or make alliances with other nations. I'm a Christian whom God decided, with his divine sense of humor, to make a pastor, so I ask to better know my Lord and his saving love for me, to better know his Word, and to be better able to share it with those whose paths intersect with mine saying what God would have them hear. I pray to be a better listener to really understand what someone is saying, where they're coming from. What about you? What are your callings? How can this prayer be personal for you?

Back the train up though, how can we, people who display a great lack of wisdom on the daily, ask God for anything at all? Because we are his children. We are adopted into the family of God by faith in his Son who loved us and gave himself up for us to death on a cross to purify us from all sin and who now lives to intercede for us at God's right hand in glory. This is how. Jesus sends his Spirit to preserve us in his Word so that we might continue to receive faith through it and faith might continue to receive everything God promises in the very same Word.

We can readily see exactly why God delighted in Solomon's request. He 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.*" (**I Kings 3:11, 12**) Solomon didn't ask for selfish things: long life, wealth, or the death of his enemies. Even though he asked for something for himself, he asked for it so others would benefit. Can't you see a smile on God's face and hear joy in his voice as he talks to Solomon here? So much wisdom did God give that no one would ever be as wise as Solomon whose inner self, his heart of hearts, had now come to be defined by wisdom, understanding, and discernment. We benefit from the wisdom God gave Solomon! If you lack wisdom, we all do, read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes a whole bunch of times and then just ask for it! **James 1:5** says, "*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.*" God answers that prayer generously! Let's all make that a part of our daily prayers for the next ever and watch how God blesses us! Ask for wisdom. Ask for a heart which pursues God's kingdom, his righteousness, and trust, as Jesus says, that all the other things of way lesser importance, will be given as well.

Remember how we started? What you'd choose from God if given the chance? You have been, no need to be envious of Solomon. Jesus says in **John 16:23**, "*Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*" This isn't a onetime offer and you don't have to wait for God to appear in a dream for it either. You can go to God directly asking anything at any time trusting that for Jesus' sake God will do for you better than you can ask because he is good, kind, and generous, because he loves you and delights in you. Amen.