

+ 1 Kings 3:5-15 + God Wants You to Ask + 10th Sunday after Pentecost + 12 August 2012 +

“If there’s anything you need or any way I can help, just let me know. Don’t hesitate to ask.” I’m sure you and I have heard a statement like that any number of times. In all likelihood, you’ve probably made a similar statement to a friend or loved one or even someone you just met. You and I make such statements with a genuine desire to help, support, or provide for someone we care about or with whom we’ve made a connection.

Unfortunately the person who hears that promise rarely acts on it. You and I know that from personal experience, whether that’s never getting that request for help or not asking for help yourself. There’s a reason for that. You don’t want to impose on someone who’s been so kind and so generous. You don’t want to trouble them with your needs or problems when you think they have more important things to do. Maybe you don’t realize you need help or don’t it or don’t know how to ask. So even though someone able to help you is more than willing to do so, you never ask.

We’ve probably all done that with friends and loved ones at some point or had it happen to us, but even more so, you and I as Christians have done that to our almighty, heavenly Father. When it comes to your needs, your troubles, even your hopes, how often don’t you fail to ask your heavenly Father for help or blessing? How poor and sporadic is your own prayer life because you forget what your gracious God has promised you and how he has richly blessed you in the past and still blesses you in the present? Today as our gracious God speaks with young King Solomon, we learn **GOD WANTS YOU TO ASK** too, that is, to pray boldly because God blesses you richly.

King David, ancient Israel’s greatest king, had finally died. Before he died, he passed his kingship on to his son Solomon, a young man in his early twenties. Very quickly the Lord established his rule over the entire kingdom of Israel. Already he was considered wise for his age, but most importantly he loved the Lord—the God of free and faithful grace, the God of his father David. **“Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David...”** (1 Kings 3:3) He had high regard for the Word of God and he brought sacrificial offerings to the Lord.

Shortly after he became king, Solomon invited all the people of his kingdom to come to a place called Gibeon, where the Lord’s altar was in those days. There **“Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.”** (1 Kings 3:4) That means he sacrificed a thousand animals in thanksgiving to God for making him king. Countless Israelites witnessed that tremendous sight, but you wonder what was going through the mind of young King Solomon. He was now the king of an increasingly important kingdom in Israel with countless souls under his care. Following the kingdom building work of his father David, Solomon’s reign would usher in one of the most glorious chapters in the entire Old Testament history of Israel, but the young king needed help to rule.

When Solomon went to sleep that night, the Lord appeared to him in a dream. God said to him, **“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”** Basically, “I know you need help as king of Israel, so I’m going to give you that help. All you need to do is ask for whatever you want.”

Imagine that! The Lord of heaven and earth opened up his treasury of blessing and told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted. Would he ask for power, including the death of his enemies, so he could conquer vast lands and expand his kingdom? God could give him that. Would he ask for a long life, because after all young kings in that day and age didn’t always last very long? God could give him that. Would he ask for great wealth beyond his imagination and become the richest king in the whole world? God could give him that too. God could give him anything he wanted, but in the end, Solomon prayed for something you probably wouldn’t expect—wisdom.

“Now, O 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. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern you people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

Solomon prayed boldly as he took God up on his promise to help when asked. Solomon was no more experienced at being a king than a little child, so he prayed for a very practical gift—a “listening” heart by which he would be able to govern his people wisely.

Did you know that God wants you to ask for whatever you want him to give you too? Now God does not come to us through dreams or visions to give us that opportunity, but he does come to us through his Word and he tells you to ask of him whatever you need or even want. How is that even possible that the Lord of heaven and earth would throw open his limitless treasury of blessings to make them available for you?

It’s certainly not because there’s something in you that makes God want to do that for you. You see, you and I are sinful human beings going all the way back to conception. You and I daily disobey the holy will of our holy God, so on our own praying to God is like trying to have a conversation through a 36-inch-thick wall of steel, concrete and brick. Our heavenly Father does not hear the prayer of unbelievers and would not hear ours, because sin separates

us from our God as Isaiah once wrote, **“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”** (Isaiah 59:2)

By nature, our prayers are nothing more than babbling to a brick wall, so God in his mercy did something about it. He sent his Son Jesus, who had complete access to his heavenly Father and to all God’s blessings of grace. This Jesus busted through that wall of sin between you and the true God with a perfect life and an innocent death so you could have full access to your heavenly Father and his treasury of blessings. The Apostle Paul explains, **“Since we have been justified** (or declared not guilty in God’s sight) **through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”** (Romans 5:1-2) Now by faith you have the privilege of bringing all your requests, your concerns, your needs, and your hopes to your heavenly Father.

God through his Word gives you promise after promise of grace. As with Solomon, he tells you, **“Ask for whatever you want me to give you”**, but how often don’t you think you’re burdening God if you bring your requests to him? How often don’t you think your problems are too small for God, because he probably has bigger concerns on his mind, or that your needs and hopes are too big for God, because he won’t do anything about them anyway so it’s foolish to even ask? How often don’t you lack the confidence to make bold requests of a God who has given you everything?

That’s your sinful nature talking. It tries to blind you to the reality that God wants you to ask him for anything and about everything, whether that’s helping you with something as minor as taking a test in school or with something as big as your concerns about the spiritual challenges your children will face in the future or the possibility that our little congregation could daughter another congregation and more than double the size of our present facility within the next two years. Yet consider these words of the Apostle John. **“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”** (1 John 5:15)

You can be confident because you have access to God and all his grace through Jesus. That means you can be confident knowing that God pays attention to every prayer you make to him as his child. Like Solomon, you can pray boldly taking God up on his promise to help when asked. You can also pray boldly because God blesses the prayers of his people richly.

After Solomon prayed for wisdom, God was pleased. He was more than willing to grant the young king such a precious gift, but God had even greater blessing for him. **“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. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equals among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”** What a response! Not only did God grant Solomon’s request for **“a discerning heart”**, but he blessed him with much more.

When God promises to answer your prayers – your every request, every concern, every need, every hope you bring to him in prayer, he promises to bless you richly through that answer. Now that does not mean God will give you everything you want, but instead he gives what’s best for you according to his will.

Sometimes God’s answer is yes, but you have to wait for it as you learn to depend solely on him through difficulty and hardship. Sometimes he answers yes in his own way rather than your way. Sometimes the Lord answers yes in a way you may never personally see, but others will. Sometimes, as he did with Solomon, our Lord answers yes by opening up the floodgates of blessing beyond your imagination. Sometimes the good Lord even says no to a prayer, because he can bless you in a far greater way through that no answer than if he granted your request. No matter how your heavenly Father answers your prayers, he always blesses you richly in a way that shows his undying love for you, his child through faith in Christ.

Yes, the Lord richly blessed King Solomon with great wisdom, great wealth, great honor, and a long life, through which the Lord blessed his people. More importantly, the Lord blesses us through Solomon’s descendant—our Savior Jesus. When you bring your prayers and petitions, great and small, to the God of grace, your Lord responds with great blessing too, blessing that may go beyond you to people you know or who come after you. So pray boldly because God wants you to ask for his help, for his blessing, for his gracious mercy. You’ll never overburden him. You’ll never impose. You’ll never give him something too small or too big to handle. All God wants is that you come to him as his child and no matter what, don’t hesitate to ask. Amen.