

Discernment and Asking In Prayer

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking discernment through prayer, drawing parallels between Solomon's request for wisdom and the New Testament teachings on asking, seeking, and knocking. It encourages believers to ask God for discernment, to recognize their insufficiency, and to seek wisdom in governing their roles and relationships. The sermon highlights the need to pray with expectation, persistence, and faith, trusting in God's promise to answer prayers according to His will.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Philippians 1:9, Psalms 19:12, Romans 12:2, James 1:5, 1 John 5:14, Luke 11:9, Proverbs 17:24, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Discernment through Prayer", "Seeking Wisdom"

Description

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Transcript

Well, let's open our Bibles. God's Word to 1 Kings 3. I am very grateful that, again, we have a hope in Christ this morning. I've had two phone calls to the church phone since I've gotten here.

And one of them was, again, a person who is fearful they've committed the unpardonable sin that there's no hope of salvation. And the thing they mentioned, nowhere in the Scriptures do you find that's unpardonable. But it's just the mercy of God that if we believe God this morning and we're trusting in Christ, because there's a lot of people who are being deceived, and they're not finding that sweet rest in what Christ has accomplished on the cross.

And what a hope we have to point people to. So we're going to read 1 Kings verses 1-15. And the majority of this section is a dream that Solomon had.

And I want to look at the topic a couple of things this morning, but one thing we're going to look at is discernment, but also asking in prayer. Asking God things in prayer. 1 Kings 3. So let's read, starting in v. 1. Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt.

He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the wall around Jerusalem. The people were sacrificing at the high places. However, because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord, Solomon loved the Lord.

Walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. And God said to him, in this appearing in this dream, God said, ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said, you have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David, my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness and righteousness and in uprightness of heart toward you.

And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father. Although I am but a little child, I do not know how to go out or to come in.

And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen. A great people. Too many to be numbered or counted for multitude.

Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people. That I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this, your great people? It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.

And God said to him, because you have asked this, and you have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but you've asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right. Behold, I now do according to your Word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall rise after you.

I give you also what you've not asked, both riches and honor, in order that no other king shall compare with you all your days. And if you will walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days. And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings and made a feast for all his servants." There's a lot there. You could have a sermon on five things in this passage. And so there might be some things that stood out to you as we read that I might not target in on in this message, but let's pray.

Father, Lord, thank You for giving us this great and marvelous privilege to gather here together with other Christians to stir each other up to love and good works, to exhort one another that we not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, to exercise our gifts as we're eager for manifestations of the Spirit. As Paul said, Lord, I just pray that You would give me more of Your Spirit right now, that I would speak truthfully, Lord, that I wouldn't lack discernment on a passage like this. Lord, keep me from doing that.

So we just look to You. Lord, You be with us in this meeting. Help us, Lord.

Help those teaching the children in the back. We pray that You would show us Your glory. In Jesus' name.

So Solomon. It's a pretty intense dream and appearance. The Scriptures say that this twice happened to him.

Two times Solomon had these dreams, these appearances where God came in such a clear way where it was unmistakable, but it was the Lord. Twice this happened. This is the first time.

And here, the Lord comes to Solomon and He says in v. 5, God said, ask what I shall give you. Ask. It's kind of an amazing statement, right? It would be right of us in a way to put ourselves in Solomon's shoes.

If that was us, what would we have said? If we were in Solomon's shoes and his position, and God came to us and said, ask, what shall I give you? What would you say? You know, there's this idea of make a wish. There's a Make-A-Wish Foundation. A kid who has cancer, he's able to ask for something, and people are going to go out of their way to help that children enjoy his time in Disney World or wherever it might be.

He's dying of cancer. They want to give him a happy time. They want to make that wish possible.

Here, God is coming to Solomon and He's saying, ask. Ask. Ask what I shall give you.

And then He says, all the more amazing, v. 12, when the Lord responds, He says there, behold, I now do according to your word. That's Solomon. God's doing according to Solomon's word.

What Solomon asked, God meant it, and He does according to what Solomon asked. And what Solomon asked, it says in v. 10, it pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. We can please God by what we ask for, and here Solomon did that.

He asked for something that pleased God. Obviously, if he would have asked for the other things that God ended up giving him, if he would have asked for the death of his enemies, if he would have asked for riches, it seems the implication is that it would not have been as pleasing as what Solomon asked for. And Solomon wasn't flippant in what he asked for.

He had reasons for why he asked for what he asked for. So we're going to think more on the end about this idea of God coming to Solomon and saying, ask. Ask what I shall give you.

We're going to think about that a little later on. But let's think for a moment about what Solomon asked for. So we find that in v. 6 is when Solomon kind of starts speaking, and he actually starts by praising the Lord.

And this is a very interactive dream, appearance. He starts praising the Lord. He knows the history of God's faithfulness to His Father.

And then v. 7, And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king. So Solomon recognizes the reason I'm king, I didn't put myself here. You see, I didn't ball in here for this.

God, You put me here. I'm Your responsibility. You've made me Your servant king in the place of David my father.

And You've done this although I am but a little child. Now a little child, how old might that be? Maybe some would say 12, but there's other places this word is used and the person is 20. So different commentators would say maybe around 20.

Can't be exact. But his point, he goes on to say, I'm a little child. I don't know how to go out or how to come in.

He's referring to this task of governing this nation. He doesn't know how to do it. He doesn't have the knowledge.

This isn't something he's done before. This is beyond him. And then he says in v. 8, and Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen.

And what's his view of God's people? A great people. Too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. And then he says in v. 9, so he's just said all these facts.

He's acknowledged in humility. He is not sufficient for the task. He says in v. 9, Give Your servant therefore... therefore an understanding mind.

So he's asking for an understanding mind to do what? What's the purpose? To govern Your people. In order that what might happen? That I may discern between good and evil. Because who is able to govern this? Your great people.

I'm insufficient. So Solomon asked for an understanding mind because he wanted to do the task that God had put him in. He wanted to do it and not to fail in doing it.

He wanted to be able to discern between good and evil. He recognized where he was at. He had a humble perspective of himself.

And his purpose here, was it self-serving? No. No, it was to govern God's people. So Solomon has this idea that if I'm going to be in a leadership position, I want to be doing a right job and making right judgments.

I don't want to be failing and have some distorted view of partiality where I don't make a right judgment. I actually call good evil, and I actually call evil good. Solomon wants to be kept from that.

In one way, everything Solomon is praying here comes from the heart apparently of a man who doesn't want to sin. He doesn't want to sin and fail at the task that God has given him. He does not want to show prejudice in some case.

He wants to be faithful in the position that the Lord has put him in. Why did he ask for this? Some of the reasons are here, but here another reason is. In 1 Chronicles 22, let me just read that.

You don't need to turn there. 1 Chronicles 22, it appears this is something David actually prayed would happen for his son. 1 Chronicles 22.

Now, my son, the Lord be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the Lord your God as He has spoken concerning you. Only may the Lord grant you discretion, not discernment, but discretion, there's similarity, and understanding. Grant you understanding that when He gives you charge over Israel, you may keep the law of the Lord your God.

Then you will prosper if you are careful to obey the statutes and the rules that the Lord God commanded Moses for Israel. So David had told his own son this. May God grant you understanding.

And here the Lord actually comes to Solomon and says, ask what I will give you. Maybe Solomon had that in his mind about what his father had said to him. And he asked for understanding.

He asked for the very thing David wanted his son to have. And again, we see some of his reasons here. He wanted to do a good job governing.

He recognized his insufficiency. He wanted to discern between good and evil. He felt who is able, who has the ability to govern this, your great people.

He had a good self-assessment, it appears. So Solomon asked for something to serve others best, to honor God the most, that it seems was not self-focused. And he asked for something to help him do the position God had sovereignly put him in to do it faithfully.

That's good. Obviously, it's good what he asked for. Who am I to say it? The Lord says it pleased.

It pleased God. Solomon pleased God by what he asked for. He wanted an understanding mind, an understanding heart.

He wanted to understand. He wanted to have knowledge. What is pleasing to God in order that I might know how to discern what to do? As he says, I want to be able to discern between good and evil.

So what is discernment? Let's think about discernment. He says, I want to understand the difference between good and evil. Then the Lord says to him in v. 11, you've asked for your self-understanding to discern what is right.

V. 12, so the Lord says, I give you a wise and a discerning mind. God gave him a wise and a discerning mind. Discernment is to test, to examine, to prove, to scrutinize, to see whether something is genuine or not.

We're not talking about the ability to discern good food from bad food. We're not talking about the ability to discern fool's gold from real gold. Solomon wanted discernment to discern good from evil.

One lexicon says discernment is the faculty of mind for perceiving, for understanding, for judging, to judge correctly, to recognize. Discernment means you have an ability to interpret the situation and see what's really going on in the situation. To see what's actually happening here.

Discernment, one lexicon says, is the ability to make a moral decision, the ability to understand. It's the power to discriminate. It's the ability or insight to apply wisdom or knowledge to choose what is right and prudent.

Or J. Adams, he says this, discernment is the divinely given ability to distinguish God's thoughts and ways from all others. And that's what Solomon wanted. He wanted the ability to distinguish God's thoughts and ways from all others in order to make a right judgment.

To do justice. And in the very example that happens after this starting in v. 16, at the end in v. 28, after he makes this judgment, v. 28 says this, all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. That's what Solomon wanted.

And the people saw it. Clearly, God answered this request because the nation saw the wisdom of God in Solomon and His ability to do justice in a difficult case where these two prostitutes came, and as you know, one of the children had died in the sleep, and so the one mother who had the dead child went and took the living child and put the dead child with the mother who had the living child. And then the mother woke up and her child was dead.

And so she brought that before Solomon. And Solomon had wisdom. How do we deal with this situation? How do I do justice when there's no evidence and there's no witnesses, and it's a he said and she said? And they're both saying the same thing.

And what did Solomon do? He had a sword that was brought. It took a little time. Maybe the sword gets brought before him.

And then he says let's cut the baby in half and give one half of the baby to this mother and one half to the other mother. Solomon recognized something. The true mother there will want the child to live even if the other mother gets the child because she cares about the life of the child.

And that's what happened. The one mother said let the other woman keep the child. So Solomon had incredible insight and he was able to discern between good and evil and make right judgments.

Now what we need is spiritual discernment. Right? During the pandemic, I started playing a little chess again. I was in the chess club in middle school.

And I thought, well, let's buy a chess board. Let's start playing some chess again. Chess is a game of discernment.

That's not what Solomon was asking for. He wasn't asking for wisdom to have all the chess moves and know how to beat the grandmasters. He wasn't asking for that.

He wanted to know the difference between good and evil. To discern between good and evil in order to govern the people. And you think about chess.

You're anticipating the other person's move. You're not just thinking about... You're thinking about the consequences of what I do. If I move this piece here, what move does that open up for my enemy to possibly capture one of my pieces? There's so many possibilities.

You're thinking. You're using your brain. You're trying to discern what will this lead to if I put this piece here.

Now many have an understanding and discernment in the world, but they cannot see things in the spiritual realm. We don't want to be those people. We want to have a spiritual understanding.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, he says it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. So these guys are saying they've got discernment. And God comes along and He thwarts it.

And the main way God's done that to the Jews specifically is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. And the Jews who think they're discerning lack discernment. They don't really understand the Old Testament Scriptures.

And they're missing the very Messiah. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2.14, for they are folly to Him. He is not able to understand them because these things are spiritually discerned.

We need spiritual discernment. Nicodemus did not have spiritual discernment. In John 3, Jesus answered him, are you a teacher of Israel? And yet, you do not understand these things.

So we need spiritual discernment. We don't need discernment in the worldly sense. We need to understand the things that God has given us in His Word.

That's the supreme thing. I could be dumb in all other areas of life and the world could consider me foolish, but if I understand who God is and what He's done in Christ, that's the big deal. In Hebrews 5.14, it talks about our powers of discernment being trained.

And that word there, discernment, it's the idea of an organ of perception. How well do you perceive certain things? How healthy is your organ this morning when it comes to discernment? How much training do you do for this organ? Do you have constant practice to distinguish good from evil? Or are you continually making bad moves and bad choices? There are certain organs in the body that you have organ failure and you're actually totally unaware. I might have some organ failing right now and I don't have a clue about it.

Sometimes that's the person without discernment. They don't even recognize that their organ of perception is actually failing. They don't see it.

Because they're not in God's Word to see it as they are. Or they're not in a biblical church to see it as they are. Or they're not reading the right stuff on the Internet.

And they think they're discerning, but they can't actually discern that they're not really discerning. We can have a wrong self-assessment of ourselves. But we use discernment all of the time.

In Luke 1, an angel comes to Mary. It says, greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you. And it says this, she was greatly troubled at the saying and she tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

We use discernment all the time. Someone greets me here in a certain way and they seem a little cold. I try to discern.

Why did they greet me in that way? We're using spiritual discernment all the time. I went on my wife's Facebook last night to go and do a scouting report of what's going on in the Facebook world. I'm trying to discern.

Why did this person say this? What does this mean? What's implied here? I'm trying to discern. To distinguish what's biblical, what's not biblical. The Bereans used discernment in Acts 17 and 11 when they eagerly examined what Paul had said to see if these sayings were consistent with the Old Testament Scriptures.

When something is shared in a church gathering, especially on the spot, 1 Corinthians 14, it says we need to weigh what it said. Someone says they have a word from God. Others are sitting and they're weighing what is said.

Is what they said, does that really have the weight that is from Scripture? Or is that not really from God? Is that not consistent with His Word? Husbands need discernment. The husband, 1 Peter 3, it says, live with my wife in an understanding way. Solomon prayed for understanding.

The husband prays for understanding. Lord, help me to understand my wife to really see what's going on in her heart that I can discern what's the right thing to say and what's fitting for the occasion that my words would be like apples of gold on a silver platter. Proverbs 25, 20, v. 5 says, the purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

How often we hear someone say something and we're trying to draw out, we're trying to understand what were they really saying when they said that? What were the implications behind what they said? We need discernment in every conversation we have. Colossians 4, 6, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, in order that you may know how you ought to answer each person. How do I answer this email? How do I answer this WhatsApp message? How do I answer this person here? We're using discernment.

We're trying to distinguish. We're getting that organ going and thinking here, what's going on as I examine this? What's the right thing to say? 1 Chronicles 12, 32 says, those of Issachar were men who had understanding of the times. So they understood.

They had some discernment and knowledge to know what Israel ought to do. You think about today. On the Internet, you've got all sorts of discernment ministries.

Right? A lot of discernment ministries. But often I wonder how discerning the discernment ministries are. Just because you say you have a discernment ministry, it doesn't necessarily mean you have discernment.

Sometimes you actually need to use more discernment when reading a post by a discernment ministry than if it wasn't a discernment ministry. Some discernment ministries should rename themselves the blog of a hypercritical, overly judgmental person who has a log in their eye. Because that's a lot of times what's happening.

We elevate ourselves to think we've got it all figured out. We've got the answer to everything. There's some people, they do have a gift.

It was said of the hymn writer William Williams that his discernment exceeded his co-labor Daniel Rowlands. William Williams, they wrote, his acuteness and discriminating penetration were more than ordinary. He could generally perceive what a person was by a few words which he might have said.

He could see through a man as by sort of intuition. The discerning of spirits, 1 Corinthians 12.10, was what he possessed in a high degree. He was endued with great honesty and showed no respect of persons.

So here church history records, this man, he had discernment. It's not him saying that about himself. You would discern that would be wrong if a man said that about himself.

But this is others saying they look back and they saw William Williams in many different situations. He saw who the person really was. He saw what was really going on.

When a lot of others, some were really naive, some saw part of it, but William Williams, he got to the heart of the matter. He could see in a specific way. We do find in 1 Corinthians 12.10 there is some ability to distinguish between spirits or discerning the spirits.

There's some that God has given us that are specifically going to have that ability. Thank God for that. Because what happens when you don't have discernment, it's not good.

Many churches, they lack discernment. They don't have the ability to see. Is this really consistent with what God has said in His word? Many are like Proverbs 18.2, a fool who takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his own opinion.

Solomon took pleasure in understanding. He said, Lord, give me an understanding mind that I might be able to discern. And God gave it to him.

Now having understanding and living it out and being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only is a whole other thing. If you don't have discernment, you're going to focus on the wrong thing. You're never going to get to the root of the matter.

You're going to miss some major factors that are going to help you see clearly. It could be like driving down the road in the rain and the windshield wipers, they just don't work. You cannot really see what's before you.

Your organ's not working correctly. You're not able to distinguish these things. So that's what Solomon asked for.

An understanding mind, and the Lord says, I'll give you a wise and a discerning mind. So that, which Hebrews 5.14 says, through constant practice and training, our discernment is going to increase. Solomon got it in an instant.

Be jealous of the man. I've got the next 10 more years. How much more are my powers of discernment hopefully going to grow? Because your powers of discernment, they can go backwards.

You can't actually lose discernment. Solomon here got it all at once, but it was for the sake of God's name. God helps His people for His own glory, and He'll very easily give a man such supernatural help for the sake of His name and the sake of His people.

And the Lord's response, again, verse 10 is amazing. It pleased the Lord. That's what I want when I go and pray.

I want what I prayed for, what I asked for, for the Lord to say it pleases Me what you have said, James, that you have asked this. It pleases Me. Ephesians 5.10 mentions we try to discern what's pleasing to the Lord.

Here, Solomon did. He discerned it was pleasing to the Lord and asked for more discernment. So he had enough discernment to discern asking for an understanding mind and more discernment would please God.

It would please the Lord. And the Lord did according to His Word. So what does this teach us about the Lord? There's so much here that this passage teaches us about God.

But I only want to mention a few of those things. Number one, think of this. The God who made Solomon Cain.

Again, verse 7, Solomon says he does order an argument with the Lord in his prayer, in this dream. O Lord my God, You've made Your servant Cain. I'm in the position I'm in because You put me there.

Did God abandon Solomon in the position that God put Solomon in? He did not abandon him. He gave him full access to the resources that would be required to do the task that God had called him to do. He'll do the same for you, believer.

Another thing here that's very encouraging is God is good and gives beyond what we ask. Right? I mean, the Lord says in v. 13, I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you all of your days. I mean, the Lord gives us what we do not ask.

That should be our perspective of God. I might be praying for this one thing. There's other things I could be praying for in this one thing.

It's the right thing. It's pleasing to the Lord. And the Lord might come along and give all the rest.

That's how our God is. He's kind like that. We don't want to have the opposite perspective that well, it's really hard to access God in prayer, and the Lord is very stringent and He rarely answers and He rarely gives anything.

Look, you might say I feel like that at times because I'm not seeing answers to my prayer. Well, just because you feel like that, that doesn't make it a truth about who God is. That's not true.

God is not overly trying to give us His children as little as possible. Ephesians 3 says He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or all that we think according to the power at work within us. Now, one other thing this teaches us about the Lord here is the Lord gives a warning in v. 14.

And if you will walk in My ways, keep My statutes and My commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days. The Lord answers the prayer, but He gives a warning. We find similar warnings in the New Testament.

This is not just something found in the Old Testament. You don't expect if you habitually go on in sin as a Christian, that God's just going to be marvelously helping you. You expect that He'll remove His hand.

Your strength will dry up as by the heat of the summer until you acknowledge your sin. So, Solomon, he uses his discernment. In v. 16-28, the whole nation sees what God has done.

Solomon had discernment to not be deceived by someone's false motives that one of those women had. And so often we need that. People come to us, they've got false motives, they've got lies, we've got no witnesses, and we need God to give us discernment.

So, how does this apply to us? All of this is taking place in a dream or an appearance. The Lord coming. Solomon says, v. 15, He awoke.

So it seems pretty clear He was asleep. All this happened while He was asleep. A very intense dream where there's communicating back and forth.

And Solomon clearly awoke. And it was very evident it was from God. It wasn't someone who was wondering, what did I dream last night? It's pretty clear.

And there's clearly an answer. And it's in the Scriptures. And you might say, well, I don't have dreams like that.

Yeah, dreams are not normative. Do we read in Joel and we read in Acts that young people might have dreams? Absolutely, we read that, but it's not the normative thing that we see. So this doesn't really feel like I can apply this to me, James.

And then the second thing someone might say is Solomon was a king. I'm not a king. How does this apply to me? I'm not a king.

I'm not governing all this people. So I don't have this position of a king. And I'm probably never going to have a dream like this.

Well, you and I are not kings. And we will most likely never have such a dream as Solomon had. But I want to tell you this, we've got something greater.

We've got something better than being a king. And we've got something better than having an intense dream like that. We do.

We've got something better. 2 Peter 1.19 And we have the prophetic Word more fully confirmed than the manifestations that Peter had and others had. Something more fully confirmed, given to us who are not kings.

But what does Romans 8 say? Romans 8.17 says we are fellow heirs with Christ. What would you rather have? A for sure word from God? Or a dream? I'd much rather have a sure word from God. That's what Peter says.

What would you rather be? A king of an earthly nation or a fellow heir with Christ of the heavenly kingdom? A fellow heir with Christ of the heavenly kingdom. And someone might look at this and say, well, wow, ask what I shall give you. If you know your Bibles, you instantly should have verses from the New Testament coming into your mind.

This is not foreign to Solomon that God comes to Solomon and says such a statement. And it's like, well, wow, I wish that would happen to me as a Christian. I wish something like this would happen to me.

We're greater than a king. We're heirs with Christ. We've got something greater than a dream.

We've got the very written Word of God. And we have someone greater than Solomon. The Lord Jesus Christ.

A greater than Solomon has come, taken upon human flesh like ours, and He says almost exactly the same thing. John 14. I'm going to read many of these verses.

I want to ram this into our heads. John 14, verse 13, "...Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. Okay, let's read that and then we'll look at what the Lord told Solomon.

God said, ask what I shall give you. Okay, ask what I shall give you. And then Jesus says here, if you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do. My point is we shouldn't look at Solomon and be jealous of his experience. In a way, Solomon should be jealous of the experience that we have being co-heirs with Christ, having a sure Word.

And Solomon had two of these appearances and dreams in his life. And we've got far more than two verses in our Bibles telling us if you ask, it will be given. Matthew 7, "...ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and the one who seeks, finds, and the one who knocks, it will be opened." Matthew 18-19, "...Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven." Matthew 21, Jesus answered them, "...Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, it will happen.

Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive if you have faith." Mark 11, "...Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours." Luke 11-13, "...How much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" John 15-7, "...If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you." John 16-23, "...Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now, you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full." James 1, 5-6, "...If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." James 4-2, "...You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions." 1 John 3-22, "...Whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him." So you've got that conditional idea again. "...And if we walk in His ways, as Solomon said..." And one more, 1 John 5-14, "...and this is the confidence that we have towards Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him." Are these guys wanting to come in? So, you see. Sorry about that distraction there. You see, that's a lot of verses.

I realize you've got to take every one of those passages in its context and you could exposit each of those and look at it and maybe there's certain things being inferred in each of those. But you find this idea in your Bible again and again and again. I mean, I clicked on some sermon on Sermon Audio on this passage and someone was saying what happened in 1 Kings 3. It's like it's never happened again.

It's like it was so unusual. I hope my discernment's not off, but I don't discern that as unusual. I find that we have something far greater.

God wants us to ask. And we have an example of Solomon. The Lord takes initiative and goes to Solomon and Solomon asks.

It pleases God and God answers. We should have the same faith. We can ask God.

So don't read 1 Kings 3 and be jealous of Solomon. Solomon should be jealous of us. Many of us always say, that's great, but I feel like Paul in Romans 8. I don't know how to pray as I ought.

Well, I'll tell you one thing you know you can pray for as you ought. You know one thing you can pray for and it will please God. What's that? Ask for discernment.

Ask for an understanding mind. Asking God to give me an understanding mind, it's kind of like the prayer, Lord do whatever it takes to make me like Christ. When has one of those prayers ever been denied? You know, sometimes you don't see it exactly the answer as you might think.

Kind of like John Newton, I asked the Lord that I might grow. That song, but he answered in a way I least expected. Same thing might happen.

Lord give me discernment. Give me understanding. And in order to get understanding, we have to then experience something that about crushes us to get our blind spots stripped away that we might see correctly.

Okay, you say, what do I pray for then? I mean, you're encouraging me to ask. What's something to pray for? Well, think about Solomon. Again, he ordered an argument in prayer.

Verse 7, And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king. And You did this although I am a little child. And I don't know how.

You put me in this situation even though I'm insufficient. He uses that as a reason to ask for what He asked for. Therefore, in view of this, You making me a king, give me an understanding mind.

We should argue in the same way. Here are some examples. Mothers, you could pray this.

Your children. You have two children come to you. No witnesses.

No one saw what happened. There were two peaches. Each kid had their own peach.

One kid squandered his peach. The bird yanked it away. The other kid's peach, he set it down.

The one kid went, he took the peach. And then they both come before you and they're fighting over whose peach it is. No witnesses.

And one is saying, that's my peach. The other is saying, no, that's my peach. Who do I give the peach to? Chop it in half and split it.

And that would work there because it's a peach. You wouldn't do that with a living child because the child's dead. But, you know why you wouldn't chop it in half? Because then the child who's in the wrong would be justified in his wrong.

So you would want discernment in order to do what is right in the child who wasted it. So the illustration fails. This is my point though, mothers.

You should go to the Lord. Lord, You have made me a mother. Not a king.

But Solomon says, You have made me a king. So you say, Lord, You have made me a mother. I don't know how.

Give me an understanding mind to govern these children. You should expect God's going to help you there. You should absolutely expect that.

So much of asking in the Christian life is simply asking for help. We should ask for help. You have made Your servant a pastor.

I don't know how. There's too many people. The church has grown too much.

Give me an understanding mind to govern Your people. You have made Your servant the garros, a missionary. I don't know how.

There's too many people in Ecuador. Give me an understanding mind and discernment. Look, we know God is pleased when you ask for this.

He put you in the situation that you're in. He's made you in that situation. So you can have utmost confidence He will not abandon you in that situation.

He will absolutely give you sufficient help. But do you recognize your own insufficiency? That's one thing very commendable about Solomon. He had a low view of himself apparently at this point where he was able to recognize, Lord, I don't know how.

My eyes are on You. And this is something we find the apostles praying. We find Paul.

Philippians 1.9. He says, it's my prayer for you that your love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, that you might approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. And he goes on. But he prayed for all discernment.

Again, he prayed for love and knowledge and discernment, all these things together. We should pray for discernment. You guys should be praying for us in the leadership to have discernment.

That God would give us an understanding mind to know how to govern the people. Especially in this season of transition that's upon us and coming up. Pray that for us.

So why is God not hearing me? Look, you should ask yourself. The Lord said to Solomon, if you walk in My ways, and there's New Testament verses that say if you ask according to His will. There's verses that say if you treasure sin in your heart, God will not hear you.

There are absolutely times God does not hear because we're asking wrongly. We're in sin and we need to deal with it. We have something unresolved.

Psalms 19, verse 12. Who can discern His errors? Declare Me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.

Let them not have dominion over Me. Who can discern His errors? Isn't that a terrifying thing? You feel it at times. How well can I discern my own errors? Errors.

How well can I discern those? How well can I discern if I've got a speck in my eye? Isn't that interesting? Matthew 7 says you should actually take notice and help your brother. You should help resolve different situations. But this ought to drive us to pray for wisdom and discernment.

This should drive us to study God's Word. Romans 12, 2. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God. What is good, acceptable, and perfect.

We should read the Bible. Hebrews 4.12 says the Word of God is like a double-edged sword. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

You want to have your heart exposed? Be in the Word of God. Proverbs 17, 24. The discerning sets his face towards wisdom.

This is where you're going to find it. But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. If your eyes aren't in the Bible, if your ears aren't around godly counselors through whom abundance is going to give you discernment, you're not going to have discernment.

If you're more and more reading stuff that people put online, and not reading what God says in His Word, you're going to slowly lose your discernment. Unless what the people are putting online is truly discerning according to what God says. What God says in His Word.

At a Puritan conference in 1965, Martin Lloyd-Jones warned, and this is a warning to people who want to say we're going to be around these other people to try to influence them to get them to grow. Right? I mean, they lack discernment. Let's really help them.

These churches that are compromising, let's help them. Lloyd-Jones says this, we have evidence before our very eyes that our staying among such people who compromise does not seem to be converting them to our view, but rather to a lowering the spiritual temperature of those who are staying amongst them and an increasing tendency to doctrinal accommodation and compromise. We don't want to be like that.

We don't want to be around people and we actually start to compromise and again, shipwrecking the faith. You don't just hit the rock. It's a drift.

You drift in that direction. So what if right now those you are around are saying things that are wrong and you're taking those sayings to be true? And your discernment is actually in a season of decreasing and you don't even recognize it. You lack the discernment to discern that your discernment is decreasing.

You know, there's times we think we discern someone else's lack of discernment when we might be the very one who's lacking discernment. Thank God He's given us a standard. Thank God He's given us the Spirit.

Thank God He's given us a church where iron sharpens iron as one man sharpens another man. You know what you want to do to keep discernment? You want to maintain discernment by acting upon what you discern is right and doing it rather than grieving the Holy Spirit and doing contrary. I mean, you know what? You grieve the Holy Spirit, it's very easy for your discernment to be at its peak of sharpness at that point.

That's like putting some poison in the organ. In your organ of perception at that moment, you're not able to perceive correctly because you've taken something in that's not true. So, this passage, it shows us the vital need for discernment.

It encourages us to ask for it. And us as New Testament believers should have all the more confidence to draw near to God and ask Him for four things. And I want to close and read something I read at a prayer meeting years ago.

So forgive me if you heard it, but it will be for your reminder. This is from D.L. Moody's book Prevailing Prayer. Let's just read.

The next element in prayer that I notice is petition. How often do we go to prayer meetings without really asking for anything? Our prayers go all around the world without anything definite being asked for. We do not expect anything.

Many people would be greatly surprised if God did answer their prayers. I remember hearing a very eloquent man who was leading a meeting in prayer. There was not a single definite petition in the whole.

A poor, earnest woman shouted out, asking something, man. How often do you hear what is called prayer without any asking? Ask and ye shall receive. I believe if we put all the stumbling blocks out of the way, God will answer our petitions.

If we put away sin and come into His presence with pure hands as He has commanded us to come, our prayers will have power with Him. In Luke's Gospel, we have as a grand supplement to the disciples' prayer, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you shall find.

Knock and it will be opened unto you. Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The only way to trouble God is to not come at all.

He encourages us to come to Him repeatedly and to press our claims. I believe you will find three kinds of Christians in the church today. The first are those who ask.

The second, those who seek. And the third, those who knock. Teacher, said a bright, earnest-faced boy, why is it that so many prayers are unanswered? I do not understand.

The Bible says ask and you shall receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened unto you.

But it seems to me a great many knock and are not admitted. And then he gives this example. Did you never sit by your cheerful parlor fire, said the teacher, on some dark evening and you heard a loud knocking at the door? Going to answer the summons, have you not sometimes looked out into the darkness seeing nothing but hearing the pattering feet of some mischievous boy who knocked but did not wish to enter and therefore he ran away? Thus, it is often with us.

We ask for blessings, but we do not really expect them. We knock, but we do not mean to enter. We fear that Jesus will not hear us.

He will not fulfill His promise, will not admit us, and so we go away. Ah, I see, said the earnest-faced boy, his eyes shining with new light dawning in his soul. Jesus cannot be expected to answer runaway knocks.

He has never promised it. I mean to keep knocking, knocking until He cannot help opening the door. Too often we knock at mercy's door and run away instead of waiting for an entrance and an answer.

And I realize all that could be balanced out. Someone could say, well, aren't there times people are knocking for something and they're not discerning this is actually the wrong thing to be knocking for? And they need to stop praying for that like Moses and they need to move on? Sure, there's a lot you could say. Well, let's pray.

Father, we think of Psalm 19, who can discern his errors? Lord, we're all sitting here today with blind spots that we're blind to see. We're all sitting here with organs of perception that need to be healthier than they are. We're all sitting here with things we've asked for and we sometimes can't discern if it's the right thing, if we're asking wrongly.

But Lord, we do know this, we can ask for wisdom. We can be sure You're going to give it, but You're not going to show partiality. And so Lord, we ask, would You give us more wisdom? I pray, Father, give each and every believer here greater insight into Your Word, a greater understanding of who You are, greater light that they would be able to be faithful in the position You've put them as a mother, as a boss, as a pastor.

Whatever position, Lord, You've put them there. Lord, I pray, give us help. Lord, help us.

We ask for help. We ask for discernment. Lord, we want to distinguish between good and evil.

Lord, we don't want to sin. We want to do what is right. And Lord, we don't want to end up like Solomon with all this knowledge and understanding, but then in our latter years, we compromise.

Lord, even at that point in that chapter, Solomon had some compromises. Lord, we don't want any only's in our life that there's this exception of, well, the high places are there. Lord, we want to honor You.

And so Lord, I pray that You would give us more discernment, that You would make us more like Christ. And Lord, I do pray specifically You would give Clayton and Don discernment as they go to Ecuador, that You would give them insight into all of these individual people there that they're going to interact with. Lord, sometimes it's so difficult to know who a person really is.

Lord, I pray You'd give them discernment like William Williams had, where they'd be able to see, even in one conversation, in Spanish, a language that is not their own, that they'd be able to see, Lord, the spiritual needs and the state of people there, that they'd be a great help. Lord, as Clayton seeks to govern and help those people down there. So Lord, we cast ourselves on You.

In Jesus' name, Amen. If you're visiting, we'll start back up around 1130.

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