

**WHEN YOU ARE IN OVER YOUR HEAD**

1 Kings 3

**INTRODUCTION**

I was an intern at Mission Hills Baptist Church in the Denver area for two years while I was in seminary. Mission Hills Baptist Church was a church of 700 people, a fairly large church before the era of mega churches. As I was approaching graduation, I asked my pastor for his advice about what kind of church he felt I would be best equipped to serve. He thought that I would be capable of pastoring a church of 200 or so people. My first church I went to was 30 people. I look back and think if I had gone to a church of 200 people, I would have been way over my head. Even with just 30 people, there was so much to learn and issues to deal with that, at times, I felt I was in over my head.

Have you ever felt you were in over your head?

Your job

Your first child

Life itself, with all its decisions

Many of us have felt that same way. Maybe you feel that way now. Well, you are in good company.

Solomon felt the same way.

This morning, as we continue our series on Prayers of the O.T., I want us to learn how pray when you feel like you are in over your head. I want us to look at Solomon.

For the first couple of years after Solomon had become king, he had to put out fires, so to speak. He solidified his rule, he put to death some enemies, and he decided to make an alliance with the king of Egypt. Then we see a summary picture of the kingdom of Israel at this point:

*The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. <sup>21</sup> And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life. 1 Kings 4:20-21 <sup>NIV</sup>*

You can see how David extended the rule over the area around him on this map. The area within the circle is Israel. David conquered a number of nations and doubled the size of his rule.

I think the realization of being the king over this vast kingdom began to sink in. And the direction and future of the kingdom relied upon him. A heavy responsibility. Solomon grew up in the palace. He was in his 20's when he became king. He observed how his father, David, ruled. He was around to see what goes on in the palace, with other nations. But there is a big difference between just observing what a king does and being the king.

Let me ask you again: do you feel you are in over your head in some aspect of your life? Or do you feel inadequate in a role or responsibility?

We pick up the story in 1 Kings 3. Solomon had gone to offer sacrifices to God. And that night the Lord appeared to him in a dream. In this appearance of God, I find four lessons about praying that can help us when we are in over our heads or feel like it.

The first lesson is that:

### **I. God invites us to ask him for what we want and need**

*1 Kings 3:5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." NIV*

God put Solomon on the throne. God knew that Solomon needed help to fulfill the role God put him in. So he invites Solomon to ask him for what he wants.

God wants to give to us what we want. I think a better way to say it is that God wants to give us what we need. Hopefully, what we need is also what we want.

Jesus said the same thing:

*John 14:14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

While both God and Jesus have invited us to pray for anything, yet, there are some boundaries for praying. One is that our prayer should please and honor God. After Solomon finishes his request, notice the response of God:

*The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 1 Kings 3:10*

Our motive in not just our prayers, but in all of life is to please God.

I'd like you to do something. If God came to you in a dream and asked, what do you need to be a good spouse, or a good parent, or a good student, or a good manager, what would you ask for? You may not be in a situation that is over your head, but I bet that you could use God's help in some aspect of your life. What would you ask for?

God wants to help you be successful in your role so you can bring honor to him. And he is willing to help you and give you what you need, if you will ask him.

Do you know what you need?

A second lesson we learn is that:

### **II. We can appeal to the faithfulness and love of God**

Notice how Solomon begins his prayer: (NLT)

*Solomon replied, "You showed great and faithful love to your servant my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued to show this great and faithful love to him today by giving him a son to sit on his throne. 1 Kings 3:6 NLT*

Solomon points out two characteristics of God: first is his great and faithful love. This phrase refers to the unconditional love that God gives to us. It is best translated, covenant love. It is the love that God gives to us because he has made an unconditional commitment, or covenant to us.

The other characteristic of God is God's faithfulness. God continued to show his great and faithful love. God made a commitment to King David that God would ensure that a descendant of David would always sit on the throne. And God was faithful to fulfill that promise as he brought Solomon to the throne.

When you read the Bible, there are so many promises that God has made to us that can help us in our roles in life. Just take, for example, the fruit of the Spirit. Every follower of Jesus has the Holy Spirit living in us. And Paul describes what the Spirit wants to produce in us:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23<sup>NIV</sup>*

God has made a commitment to us to make these qualities a part of our life. And he is faithful to see them produced in us through his Spirit. Do you think they would make a difference in your marriage or your parenting? Could your marriage need some kindness or joy? Could your parenting use some love or gentleness or self-control?

God wants you to be a great spouse, a great parent. In every role God has put us, he wants us to succeed by experiencing his grace to be godly, wise and loving people. He loves us so much that he is willing to give us all we need to be what he wants us to be, and do what he wants us to do. God is faithful; that means he keeps his word to us.

A third lesson to receive God's help is that:

### **III. We need to be humble and teachable**

Solomon initially responds to God's invitation by saying:

*"Now, 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.<sup>8</sup> Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number." 1 Kings 3:7-8<sup>NIV</sup>*

Solomon calls himself a little child. He was actually in his 20's when he became king, but he recognized that he was like a young child, limited in knowledge and experience to know what to do. He didn't know how to effectively lead the people as king. He knew he needed help. This was an expression of humility. And it pleased God.

God loves humility. That's because when we are humble, we know we need help. And God gives us what we need, as James tells us:

*And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say,*

*"God opposes the proud*

*but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6<sup>NLT</sup>*

Let me apply this in a couple of ways:

First, as married couples and parents. I find it interesting that if you want to drive a car, you need to study and pass an exam before they give you a license. We require kids to go to school until they are 16 or 18 years old so they can learn some things. If you want to practice medicine, be a dentist, give financial advice, you need to learn and pass a test.

But our society doesn't require any courses or tests when you get married or when you have kids. I think something is wrong with this!

When a couple gets married, it is such a special relationship, designed by God to be a blessing and source of fulfillment. But only if the husband and wife learn wisdom in how to be a blessing to each other.

When a couple has a baby, that baby doesn't come with instructions. You are instantly parents, and there is so much to learn as parents. At least there is a book now that you can read. And not just at the beginning, but also as the baby grows into a child, into the teen years and beyond there are so many things to learn. From the very beginning of the birth of a child, every parent should be pleading with God for wisdom to be a wise and discerning parent for the benefit and blessing of their child. And with all the resources that are available, they will do you no good unless you are humble and teachable and read them.

E.g. reading the book on personalities of children.

If you think you know everything, you are not going to learn much new. You are not going to be open to advice and counsel. That's why you need to be humble and teachable.

A final lesson is that:

#### **IV. Our request should be for the benefit of others**

*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?" 1 Kings 3:9<sup>NIV</sup>*

Solomon asks God for a discerning heart so that he could govern the people justly and make good decisions.

Notice that Solomon didn't ask to become rich, famous, or to live a long time. He didn't ask for anything that would benefit him, but rather he asked for wisdom to be a benefit and blessing for others. It wasn't about him, but about others.

This is important because when you want to be a blessing to others, you are going to want to know how to be a good parent for the sake of your children; you are going to want to know how to be a loving spouse for his or her sake; you are going to want to know how to effectively help your co-workers be successful in their jobs. For myself, besides being a good spouse and parent, it emphasizes that I need wisdom to be a good pastor so that I can be a blessing to everyone here.

This is unselfish praying, isn't it? Our prayer is not for our benefit, but to be a blessing to others.

This was the attitude that Jesus had. He summed up his life this way:

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45<sup>NLT</sup>*

Jesus came to serve others and be a blessing to us.

When we pray like this, we can expect God to respond as he did to Solomon: *The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.* <sup>11</sup> *So God 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,* <sup>12</sup> *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.”* 1 Kings 3:10-12 <sup>NIV</sup>

God was pleased to give Solomon what he asked for because he knew that Solomon needed wisdom and a discerning heart to fulfill the calling that God gave him and so he would be a blessing to others.

God wants to help us. At the very least, God wants to give us wisdom and he promises to give us wisdom. That’s what James reminds us in: *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 <sup>NIV</sup>

God went way beyond what Solomon had asked for. This doesn’t mean that God is going to make us the wisest people on earth, or give us great wealth. But he will give us what we need to serve him well and serve others in our role.

**Next Steps:**