

NEW YEAR'S WISH
1 Kings 3:3-9

Dr. Howard Batson
First Baptist Church
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What would you ask for? God gives you one wish for the new year – just one, but anything that you want.

If you look at various surveys, when the question is posed: “You’ve got one wish, what will it be?” – the responses are varied. Of course, there is the ever self-serving, “I’d wish for a thousand more wishes.” But I’m going to call that one out of bounds.

One wish for the new year – what would it be?

Angel Van Atta says: “My only wish ever is that my children grow to be very old after living full and happy lives.” That’s a good wish.

Another responder, Theseus, says: “To be loved back by the one person I have loved since forever.”

Angie Ashbourne says, “If I could make one wish....two week trip to Las Vegas with some spending money.” She’s thinking small, isn’t she?

Mandy F says, “I would simply ask for a day of peace and quiet to rest and catch up on much needed sleep.”

One wish and you blow it on sleep? That’s not where I’d spend mine. (<http://hubpages.com/religion-philosophy/answer/125478/if-you-could-makeone-wish--what-would-it-be>)

Anna Marie Rice, a fourth-grade teacher, encouraged her students to enter the *Tulsa World*’s Essay Contest, which was asking the question, “If I only had one wish...” The winner, Kinsey McMillan, a nine-year-old fourth grader from Brassfield Elementary in Bixby, responded with this little essay. Let me read a little bit of it.

“If I had one wish, I wish I could help people be happy. I would help people be happy by making music. Bands would play. People would dance. Music would play in everyone’s house. People would sing happy songs that make hearts warm up. I would help people by laughing. There would be ha-ha-ha’s and he-he-he’s, and it wouldn’t even be Christmas.

“People would joke around a lot in happy ways. I would help people be happy by smiling. Bright red lips would grin from ear to ear. When one person smiles, another smiles back. I would help

people be happy by sharing. Clothing, food, toys, and houses would be shared. We would cooperate. And there would be no hungry people.

“I would help people be happy by giving hugs. Arms wrapping around friends; Grandmas and Grandpas, moms and dads and sisters, and even brothers, too! Hugs make people feel warm and happy and special inside.

“My wish could come true if everyone would make more music, laugh a little more, give away smiles, share with others, and hug one another.”

Kinsey won a trip to Branson, Missouri, for herself and all of her classmates. (<http://tulsaworld.com/archives/if-i-had-one-wish-students-respond-to-tulsa-world>)

This was a hypothetical question – on the internet or a newspaper contest. But for Solomon, the question was real, because the guy asking could really deliver. God asked Solomon, “You’ve got one wish. Anything you want. What are you going to ask for?”

There was no clear heir to the throne of David. Some people were certain that Israel would never be the same again. David – her king, her shepherd boy – giant-slaying, Saul-evading king – was old and feeble. He was in the bed, cold and shivering. Why, the text implies they couldn’t get enough blankets to make the king warm. Even a new, young wife couldn’t revive him.

David had been such an effective ruler. He had made Jerusalem the capital. He’d assembled the plans and the materials to build the temple. He had routed the Philistines on the left and on the right. Never before had ancient Israel seen her boundaries – the expansion of her territories – as she had under King David.

How do you follow David? David had not only captured the land, he’d captured the heart of Israel as well. The shepherd boy, the musician, the song writer, the warrior – so many images of David, a man seeking the very heart of God. The question begins all the way back in 2 Samuel, chapters 9-20. Who will succeed David?

During his reign, David had subdued the old enemies of Moab and Edom and Ammon, Syria and Philistia. Not only had he expanded Israel’s borders, he had fattened its treasuries. And God had promised David that his kingdom would continue forever. Clearly, what could be said of David is what every leader wants said of his or her reign. David would leave the nation better than he found it.

As 1 Kings opens, all of David’s physical health is gone. The great fighter, politician and lover – now his circulation is not even sufficient to keep him warm, even under all the blankets. As his death is imminent, the question rings in the ears of the reader. Who will replace David? Who will this person be? How will he be chosen? What kind of character will he possess?

Israel has no clear ascension system. Adonijah is David’s oldest surviving son. Absalom, the third born, died in his revolt, trying to prematurely capture the throne from his father, but not before he had killed the first born son, Amnon. The second born, Kileab, disappears from the whole story

after the mention of his birth in 2 Samuel 3:3. I assume he's dead. So it seems reasonable that Adonijah, the oldest remaining son, will be king. At least Adonijah thinks it's reasonable. He assumes the throne is his.

What kind of man is Adonijah? Much like his brother, Absalom, he can't even wait for his father to die before he is seeking the power.

Notice 1 Kings 1:5-6

Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, "I will be king." So he got the chariots and the horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him. His father had never interfered with him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.

The picture of Adonijah is clear. He's an aggressive, self-possessed person. He's a spoiled brat, never having been corrected by his father. David was a lot of great things, but he wasn't a great disciplinarian as a dad.

But Saul had not sought the throne. He was out chasing lost donkeys. And David, himself, had not sought the throne. He was out keeping the sheep. The prophet had sought them. God told Samuel to select both Saul and David for the task. They were not seeking the seat. Now, Adonijah is showing his arrogance by running for office. His arrogance is further revealed by his choice of 50 men to run ahead of him. Why, he's made himself act like a king without a coronation.

His list of conspirators in the attempted coup are named in verse 7. First, there is Joab, a very powerful person. He was the longtime military leader in David's regime. David had displaced him from the top military post, and he was going back to the top with the would-be ruler, Adonijah. Abiathar the priest, the sole survivor of Saul's massacre of the House of Eli, was also among Adonijah's political party. With his crackerjack cadets in hand, Adonijah's supporters went ahead to celebrate, with the kingdom surely in hand.

Even while Adonijah is filling his face at the pseudo-coronation feast, Nathan – the prophet of God – reminds Bathsheba that a throne had been promised – not to Adonijah but rather to her son Solomon. They set the scene. Bathsheba goes to David and says, "Did you not, Oh my Lord, my King, swear to your maidservant saying, 'Assuredly your son Solomon shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? Then, why has Adonijah become king?" Even while she is talking, Nathan plans to barge into the room and take her side on the matter, asserting to the old king that Solomon's place has been inappropriately usurped by his brother Adonijah.

David remembers his promise – a promise not recorded in scripture, but, nonetheless, apparently true. And he declares Solomon as his successor. Zadok the priest takes the horn of oil from the tabernacle and anoints Solomon, even as Samuel had anointed David so many years before. All the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon." There were people playing flutes, and there was shouting and rejoicing with great joy. There was such a turmoil, such excitement, that 1 Kings 1:40 says that the earth seemed to split with the sound of the people. Such a roar was made on that day that even an Aggie football game would have seemed as silent as a Sunday School picnic.

Adonijah, who is away with his guests, hears the shaking of the ground even as they are finishing the feast. Then Joab the general hears the sound of the blowing of the horns and asks, “What’s going on? Why is the city in such an uproar?” Even while they are speaking, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest, comes. “Tell me, tell me. Bring me the good news.”

“No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king.”

All of his guests flee the party. Adonijah himself runs, as a coward, and clings to the horns of the altar, begging for mercy for having inappropriately asserted himself.

Look at chapter 2, verse 46. By the end of chapter 2, Solomon has fulfilled deathbed promises to his father David. He has rightly punished, putting to death those who usurped the throne, including Adonijah. The narrator concludes, “Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.”

Look at chapter 3, verse 5.

In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said [here it is], “Ask what you wish me to give you.”

What would you ask for? A young man, just a mere shadow of his father David. A large nation with people overflowing with expectations of a new ruler – everyone trying to have their way and find their place in the new king’s regime. Pressure is mounting from the left, from the right, from above and from below. What do you ask for, if you’re Solomon? Do you dare ask for more riches for the treasury? Do you ask for more years to live and to reign, to make your tenure the longest and the greatest? What’s a young king to desire?

What do you ask for today at the beginning of 2022? What do you seek from the throne of God? With what shall he gift you, that you can do life better? What do you desire and what do you long for from God?

If you have only one wish, what do you ask for?

Look at verse 7.

“And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king in the place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.”

Figuratively speaking – he wasn’t in reality a child king, but figuratively speaking – I am just a young lad. I don’t know how to do daily business. And I’m trying to serve in the midst of your chosen people. So Lord, I want you to give me – notice verse 9 – “an understanding heart to judge Thy people, to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?”

Solomon asks for a listening heart.

I hope that would be my desire today. I hope that would be your desire today, that as you represent God and His kingdom as His son or His daughter, that God gift you with an understanding, a listening heart. It can be translated a “receptive” heart, a “hearing” heart – the one I like best is “Lord, give me a listening heart.”

By “heart,” the Hebrews mean what we call the mind. Lord, make me attentive, make me receptive, make me understanding, and give me discernment to discriminate when I am making decisions about people. Lord, give me a listening heart.

Who among us doesn't desire a double dose of God's wisdom? As James Naisbitt has stated, **“We're drowning in information today, but we are starved for real knowledge or real wisdom.”** (*Bits and Pieces*) We have the data at our fingertips like never before, and, yet, we still don't know what choices we need to make for life.

To have wisdom. To have a listening heart. To be able to discern how to live life, how to understand and how to overcome.

A wise old gentleman retired and purchased a modest home near a junior high school. He spent the first few weeks of his retirement in peace and contentment...then a new school year began. The very next afternoon, three young boys, full of youthful, after-school enthusiasm, came down his street, beating merrily on every trash can they encountered. The crashing percussion continued day after day, until finally the wise old man decided it was time to take some action.

The next afternoon, he walked out to meet the young percussionists as they banged their way down the street. Stopping them, he said, “You kids are a lot of fun. I like to see you express your exuberance like that. Used to do the same thing when I was your age. Will you do me a favor? I'll give you each a dollar if you'll promise to come around every day and do your thing.”

The kids were elated and continued to do a bang-up job on the trash cans. After a few days, the old man greeting the kids again, but this time he had a sad smile on his face. “This recession's really putting a big dent in my income,” he told them. “From now on, I'll only be able to pay you 50 cents to beat on the cans.” The noisemakers were obviously displeased, but they did accept his offer and continued their afternoon ruckus.

A few days later, the wily retiree approached them again as they drummed their way down the street. “Look,” he said, “I haven't received my Social Security check yet, so I'm not going to be able to give you more than 25 cents. Will that be okay?”

“A lousy quarter?” the drum leader exclaimed. “If you think we're going to waste our time, beating these cans around for a quarter, you're nuts! No way, mister. We quit!” The old man enjoyed peace and serenity for the rest of his days. (Gentle Spaces News, quoted in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*)

Wisdom – an understanding, a listening, a discerning, a discriminating heart.

The old man had the gift of wisdom, the ability to solve the problem with grace. May God give you the ability to see things from other people's perspective, to really have a listening heart. I've noticed one thing for certain – that is, the world comes to God's people with their problems. You don't have to be a counselor. You don't have to be a therapist. If you are a kind, listening friend,

a believer, the world discerns that you have your life in order, that you have a source of strength, that you are able to overcome the trials and tribulations of life. And so, when their basket is full of hardship, they come to us. Let God give you a wise and listening heart.

God is so pleased with Solomon, with his request. Look at verse 10

“And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon has asked this thing. And God said to him, ‘Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself a long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.’ Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream.”

Immediately the narrator thrusts our new young king into a situation to test to see if God has given him the gift of a listening heart.

“He’s mine!”

“No he’s not!”

“He’s mine.” “He is not.”

“He’s mine. Give him here.”

“Give him here.”

Can’t you hear the two harlots hollering, coming before the king.

“My Lord, my Lord,” said the first woman. “This woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. And it happened on the third day after I gave birth that this woman also gave birth to a child, and we were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, only the two of us in the house with our children. And her son died in the night because she rolled over on him, suffocating him. She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while I slept and laid her dead son at my bosom. When I woke up in the morning to nurse my son, behold he was dead; but when I looked at him carefully, he didn’t look like my boy. My boy has a birthmark.”

“That’s not at all true, King,” hollered the second harlot. “The dead boy is your boy.”

“No, no. The living one is my son,” repeated the first woman.

And on and on they bicker before the king.

“Fair is fair,” said the king. “I don’t know whose child it is. You’ll each take a half.” He lays the child before him, and – can’t you see – he calls for his sword and pretends as if he’s drawing a dotted line across the midriff of the babe. “We’ll just divide him in two, and you each can have a half. Fair is fair; square is square.”

“Oh no,” said one of the women. “Let her...let her take the son. Give her the living child. By no means kill him.”

But the other said, “No, no. I’ll take my half, you take your half.”

“Give the first woman the son,” declares the king. “Don’t kill him. She is the real mother.”

God, indeed, had given Solomon the listening heart, the discernment of judgment.

Notice chapter 4, verse 29:

“Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men....”

Notice verse 32:

“He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.”

Verse 34:

“And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.”

You’re going to meet people, God’s going to bring them into your very path – and I pray that you have the wisdom that you have sought from God to deal with them with a listening heart.

An old man got on a bus one February 14, carrying a dozen red roses. He sat beside a young man. The young man looked at the roses and said, “Somebody’s going to get a beautiful Valentine’s Day gift.”

“Yes,” said the old man.

A few minutes went by and the old man noticed that his young companion was still staring at the roses. “Do you have a girlfriend?” the old man asked.

“I do,” said the young man. “I’m going to see her now. I’m bringing her this.” He held up a Valentine’s Day card.

They rode along in silence for another 10 minutes, and the old man rose to get off the bus. As he stepped out into the aisle, he suddenly placed the roses on the young man’s lap and said, “I think my wife would want you to have these. I’ll tell her that I gave them to you.”

He left the bus quickly, and as the bus pulled away, the young man turned to see the old man enter the gates of a cemetery. (*Bits and Pieces*)

If you have only one thing to ask for, ask for a listening heart.