

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

May 3-4, 2014

1 Kings 3

“What Do You Want From God”

Slug disasters—it's important to know where you are going

The first eleven chapters of I Kings tell the story of a king who knew where he was going—he was David's son, Solomon

- who was ushered in as king through political intrigue and violence
- the opening chapters picture an up and comer who was shrewd, ambitious, and at times ruthless
- strengthening his hold, removing any threats to his young reign
- by the end of this section, his authority as king was now established—stable, secure (2:46)
- and *behind all of this was God*—who made Solomon exceedingly great (2 Chronicles 1:1)
- anointed him—and gave him a nation at its zenith (see map)

-but then there came a defining moment—recorded in chapter three

-one that hopefully comes in all of our lives

-when God breaks in and speaks

-it came at a time Solomon was already living at full press—read verses 1-2

-Solomon was overseeing some formidable building projects

a. beginning with a temple

-it took seven years and nearly 200,000 men to construct

b. he was also building a palace—a 13 year project

c. as well as a wall—that would fortify the capital

-verse 1 also tells us Solomon was engaged in international politics—forming alliances with leading families through marriages that secured protection , opened up trade, formed military liaisons

-Egypt is mentioned because for most of his life, Solomon was preoccupied with Egyptian power

-but for this moment—Solomon is preoccupied with God—read verses 3-5

-like his father, Solomon had a heart for God—and so, like his father, he assembled all of Israel to come to Gibeon to dedicate his kingdom

-Gibeon was the highest of the high places—it was also the location of the tabernacle

-and though already anointed (1:39), Solomon came to begin his reign as an act of worship

-a thousand sacrifices made the statement that Solomon was serious about his faith

-*that a religious foundation is essential to any great endeavor*

-he came to express this—but more—he came to seek God

(2 Chronicles 1:5)

- seeking God requires arranging one's life to hear God
- leaving one's world for another—which is what Solomon did—what we must do
- he escaped the busyness of commerce and kingdom and politics to seek a word from God, talk to God
- and in this defining moment—God spoke to Solomon
- the language of verse 5 sounds like a blank check signed by God—"Tell Me what you want"

-we see God doing this in other places

- in Mark 10—Jesus approached blind Bartimaeus and asked—what do you want Me to do for you?
- various verses indicate He continues to do this with us—
 - "keep asking and it will be given to you"—*Matthew 7:7*
 - "Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive"—*Matthew 22:21*
 - "You do not have because you do not ask"—*James 4:2*

-God seems to delight in our asking—underscoring that prayer matters

THAT OUR ASKING DETERMINES OUR RECEIVING

- and that no request is beyond the capacity of God
- something affirmed elsewhere-
- "The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful"—*James 5:16*

-in Bill Hybel's book, Leadership Axioms, written to those who aspire to be leaders, his second adage is this—MAKE THE BIG ASK

- leadership is a lot about asking
- the greater the vision—the greater the ask

Illustration—Portland City Club—Do we have the best Doctor of Ministry program in the nation? I told him—not yet

- what I wanted to say—almost said—was—"If you give me a million dollars, we will"
- God seems to be saying to Solomon—make the big ask
- and maybe He is doing the same with us
- what if this is a defining moment in which God is saying "Ask what I should give you!"

-how would you answer? A new job, more energy, better health, a healing of a relationship, a Trailblazer victory?

- how we answer says a lot about our lives—what matters
- Solomon's answer said a lot about his—read verses 6-9

-so what do we notice?

1. ASK IN LIGHT OF OUR CALLING

- Solomon was young—but he had a sense of his place in God's story

- he saw himself as a man summoned to be a king—God’s king—verse 7
- this is how God wanted Solomon to personally penetrate the world and live for God and bring glory to God
- the monarchy was his divine vocation
- and so it set the CONTEXT for his prayer—his call was inseparably interwoven with his request
- as it must be with ours

- what we ask God for must relate to what we are called to be
- and all of us are called—first to be a follower of Christ
- and second—to a specific task—something God has said—“This is yours to do”
- be it an engineer, a police officer, a professor, a writer, a salesman, a stay at home parent
- our tendency is to miss this
- compartmentalize—our spiritual life over here—our vocation over there
- secularize our work rather than see our work as a divine calling—a missional enterprise
- too often we reduce our work to a paycheck
- but a follower of Christ must recognize that our work is something sacred—our offering to God
- no matter if I work at Home Depot or mow lawns
- it is how God wants me to personally penetrate this world for Him
- once we get this—than it will become much clearer what it is we must ask

Illustration—USTA—when I see even my activities in light of my calling—my mission—I ask differently—Zen Monastery

2. ASK IN LIGHT OF OUR NEED

- coming to grips with what God summoned him to unnerved Solomon
- it should us—anyone who realizes their life amounts to a divine summons to fulfill God’s call realizes this is way beyond us
- we see this from time to time in Scripture
- Moses is called to lead a people—who am I that I should go?—Exodus 3:11
- Jeremiah is called to be God’s mouthpiece—God, I don’t know how to speak—Jeremiah 1:5
- Solomon expressed his sense of inadequacy in the most humbling way—saw himself as a little child who has no idea “how to go out and come in”—verse 7
- he knew he needed God’s help to grow up*
- he understood his inadequacies, his weaknesses, his shortcomings, *his temptations*
- he may have already seen his tendency to fall into the dark side of power—become ruthless, exploitative, and self-serving
- it may have appeared to those around him that he had it together—but Solomon knew he didn’t

- knew that if we do what we do with a sense of divine purpose and meaning
- if our intended aim is to do it for the glory of God—do it as an act of faithfulness
- do it in a way that demonstrates the power of God
- we will find it beyond our range*
- and then we will know what to ask for

3. ASK IN LIGHT OF WHAT IS ESSENTIAL

-Solomon was what Greg McKeown in his book, Essentialism describes as an Essentialist

-an Essentialist comes to grips with what really matters

-one is asking—

-“What is my highest intent—the central purpose of my life?”

-“What do I want to “go big on?”

-“If I could be truly excellent at one thing, what would it be?”

-“What is it I must edit, eliminate to get there?”

-Solomon could have asked for the nonessentials—riches, honor, life

-good relations with Egypt, peace with his wives, good deals with his contractors

-the superficial trappings of kingship

-but Solomon edited these out

-*what does it matter to have too much to live with and too little to live for?*

-what mattered is that he become what God has made him to be

-attain the skill to rule well

-so Solomon asked God for—

-a listening heart, a discerning heart—verse 9

-an ability to be judicious, govern lead

-Solomon prayed for what was most essential—that he be a WISE LEADER

-for he recognized that wisdom is the royal virtue par excellence—the main essential

-it’s what enables kings to discern reality—notice what is going on—get in step with laws and rhythms of life

-wise leaders get it that what you sow you reap—what you don’t sow—you don’t reap

-they live within the boundaries—they tear along the perforated line

-no wonder Solomon would later write-

-“*Wisdom is supreme—so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding*”—Proverbs 4:7

-“*Wisdom is better than precious stones, and nothing desirable can compare with it*”—Proverbs 8:11

-it’s an essential prayer request for all of us—

-“*If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to everyone generously—and it will be given to him*”—James 1:5

-at the end—God had a most amazing response—read verses 10-14

- a. God gave what Solomon asked
 - He made Solomon a wise leader—one of the wisest ever
 - Solomon composed over 300 proverbs and 105 songs
 - people came from around the world to hear his wisdom—for he surpassed all the kings of the world in wisdom—2 Chronicles 9:22

- b. God also gave beyond what Solomon asked
 1. from every corner of the world, people brought objects of gold to Solomon—25 tons annually—I Kings 10:23
 - he had so much that silver was considered as “nothing”
 - as precious as plastic

 2. God also gave him honor and long life
 - as well as a warning all of this could be forfeited if God’s way is disregarded

CONCLUSION

All of us need this kind of defining moment

- a Mt Gibeon moment—were we seek God afresh
- and in a new way—He summons us to ask what we would have Him do
- especially at the beginning of new ventures—starting school, becoming a parent, beginning this new career, this new position, entering into retirement
- or entering a new phase of retirement
- and God says—what would you have Me do?

- maybe you have been asking God—taking up His command to ask whatever you will
- and nothing has happened
- and you wonder if God really responds—let alone goes beyond your requests

- ask yourself—is what I am asking related to God’s unique call on my life?
- does it correspond to how God wants me to personally penetrate the world for Him?
- does it admit to desperation—does it get to what is most essential—to what matters most?
- does it seek for wisdom?

- if not—if it is self-absorbed and trivial—stop wasting your time—and God’s
- if so—then stay at it—and don’t give up staying at it

LG QUESTIONS

1. Have you had a defining moment, where God has put it on your heart to ask Him what He should give you?
2. Have you come to grips with God’s call on your life?
3. Are your big asks in line with your calling?
4. Has God given you things you have not asked for?