

Unit 2

GOD ALL WISE

1 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes

Memory Verse

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

—1 CORINTHIANS 1:30

Writers

Greg Breazeale (sessions 7-12) is the North Campus pastor at The Austin Stone Community Church.

Keith and Kristyn Getty (session 13) are writers of modern hymns that teach Christian doctrine sung in globally-accessible melodies.

Solomon Asks for God's Wisdom

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God's promise to make His people a light to the nations began to come true during the reign of Solomon, a king whose wisdom came from God.

What makes a great leader? We could list many things here: a prestigious education, high intelligence, a proven track record of achievement, a charismatic personality, or the ability to cast vision. These qualities *could* make a great leader, but they do not guarantee great leadership.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman argues that what makes a great leader is not a high IQ or off-the-charts talent. What makes a great leader, he argues, is someone with a high level of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the sum of five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.¹

Though he sometimes misses the mark in his analysis, Goleman was essentially describing what the Bible calls wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. It's knowing what to do when, quite frankly, we don't know what to do. A good leader is a wise leader. Good leaders must know how to manage themselves, relate well to others, and discern between good and evil. They know how to navigate in choppy waters.



Take a few minutes and discuss some of the great leaders of history. What made them great leaders?

As Christians, we believe that wisdom must go beyond the world's perspective because we believe wisdom comes from an all-wise God. God desires to give us wisdom as part of our relationship with Him. As we pursue Him by faith, He generously gives us the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

In this session, we examine Solomon's prayer for wisdom and the incredible blessings God granted him in response. We will see how he requested God's wisdom, how he reigned in wisdom, and the blessings that resulted from his wisdom. We will also see how desperately God's people today need the wisdom and insight that only comes from walking with God.

Voices from the Church

"Wisdom should not be equated with intellectual giftedness or philosophical brilliance. Wisdom expresses itself in the way one lives. Human beings do not have the capacity to acquire wisdom on their own, for that would require ascending to heaven, and thus those who are wise put their trust in the words revealed by God."²

—Tom Schreiner

1. The Request for Wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-15)

We begin with one of the most remarkable stories in the Old Testament. God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said, "Ask what I shall give you" (v. 5). Many of us would love for God to come to us and ask this question.



Imagine if God told you to ask for anything from Him. What immediately comes to mind? What would you be most likely to request?

Solomon could have asked for all sorts of things, but he chose to request wisdom. Below, we will look closely at two things about this prayer: Solomon's posture in the prayer and his purpose for the prayer.

⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” ⁶ And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in 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. ⁷ 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 come in. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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?”

¹⁰ It pleased the LORD that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² 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 arise after you. ¹³ I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. ¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ 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.

Solomon’s Posture in This Prayer

Notice how Solomon saw himself as he prayed. He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people. In addition, he recognized that he was there only by divine appointment (v. 7). God placed him there. It was an act of God’s grace. Seeing himself and his weaknesses, Solomon felt compelled to ask for the one thing he knew he could not live without—God’s wisdom (see Prov. 3:5-7).



Voices from Church History

“We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that He is wiser than we are. To be sure, we may say that He is; but when it comes to a showdown, we do not want to act on what we say.”³

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom. Recognizing God's grace in our lives and admitting that the task before us is impossible in our own strength humbles us and causes us to reach out for divine wisdom. When we think too highly of ourselves, we are in danger of walking in our own wisdom and strength.



In what areas of your life do you feel self-sufficient?



In what areas would you most likely lean on your own understanding and not ask for God's wisdom?

Solomon's Purpose in This Prayer

Solomon asked for God's wisdom in order to lead God's people well. He made a request for himself, but his intention was to use this wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. In other words, his motivation for wanting wisdom was others-centered. That's one reason why his prayer pleased the Lord.

God gives us wisdom so we can relate rightly to those around us. We need wisdom to be godly friends, husbands, wives, parents, and bosses.



For what relationships in your life do you most need God's wisdom right now? Why?

2. The Reign of Wisdom (1 Kings 3:16-28)



¹⁶ Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷ The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. ¹⁸ Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. ¹⁹ And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰ And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant

slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹ When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." ²² But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king.

²³ Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'"

²⁴ And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was brought before the king.

²⁵ And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." ²⁶ Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." ²⁷ Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." ²⁸ And 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.

This story shows that God truly answered the prayer of Solomon. The people of Israel saw their king reigning in wisdom and discernment in a way that could only be attributed to God. Here we have proof that when God promised to give Solomon wisdom, He was committed to fulfilling His promise. This is the kind of God we serve, One who does what He says He will do.



When have you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made a decision? Explain the circumstances.

I highly doubt you will be confronted with the same situation as Solomon (let's hope not!). But I can promise that you will face problems in which the solution is not clear. For instance, a business deal comes your way that could change your life dramatically, yet it requires moving your family across the country. What do you do? Or one day your child asks you why his classmate has two mommies. What do you say? How do you respond?

There are countless situations in which we need wisdom. Thankfully, our God is the all-wise God. He alone has all wisdom and understanding. Let us go to Him and expect that He will respond to us.



What keeps us from expecting God to joyfully grant us wisdom when we ask for it?

3. The Results of Wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34)

²⁹ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, ³⁰ so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. ³⁴ And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

We need wisdom more than anything—even a pay raise! We must fight to believe this. Too often we think that money or power or approval is what we need the most. But Solomon’s life is evidence that when all is said and done, it is wisdom from God that aids us best in our time of need.

One area we especially need wisdom in is the area of mission. God gives us wisdom so we can better announce the gospel to the world. In other words, *wisdom is for mission!*

If we are going to be salt and light in the world, we need wisdom. We need it to rightly relate to the non-Christians around us. We need it to show how money and power and pleasure are not what matter most in this life. We need it as we interact with those who are skeptical or even hostile to Christianity. This is why Paul said, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time” (Col. 4:5). It was because of Solomon’s wisdom—granted by God—that people came from everywhere to hear from him (1 Kings 4:34).

Wisdom makes us appealing and attractive to those around us. The world needs to see God-given wisdom. They need to see Christians walking wisely when it comes to money, parenting, and suffering. They need to see that the gospel has fully equipped us and empowered us to live righteous and upright lives in this world (Titus 2:11-13). And we need wisdom in order to serve, bless, and love those around us.



Voices from Church History

“O then do not leave, but be continually waiting at wisdom’s gate, and you shall find all her ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; then, you shall find that it is worth waiting on the Lord Jesus; and when you have got his Spirit within you, all the power of men or devils cannot make you forsake the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴

—George Whitefield
(1714-1770)



What are some ways you can celebrate God’s wisdom in your life?



How would you explain to someone that wisdom is more valuable than wealth, power, or approval?

Conclusion

As we unpack the story of Solomon, we see a king who got it right in so many ways. God used him in a tremendous way. His story shows us much to emulate.

But more than anything, Solomon's life stirs within us a longing for a true king. We long for one to rule over us in perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Solomon points us to a perfect king, one who would reign in wisdom and never falter in his trust in God. He points us to Jesus Christ, the true King who rules and reigns in infinite wisdom. In fact, Paul said that "in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

There is a King like Solomon, but even better than Solomon. We can know this King. We can come under the reign and lordship of this King, and the wise person is the one who looks to Jesus and fully submits to Him in everything. You want to see wisdom? Then take a glance at Solomon, but set your gaze on Jesus. May we live for our true King and announce His kingship to the world around us.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Solomon reigned with great wisdom and insight, and he foreshadows the coming of a greater king—Jesus, in whom is hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

18. *God Is Truthful*

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our Creator. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God, whose Son is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to depend on Him for wisdom from above and to live wisely before others as a testimony to our all-wise God.

1. Write a prayer asking God for wisdom in an area of your life in a way that reflects an others-centered mind-set, which pleases God.

2. How can our group/church hold one another accountable for displaying “wisdom from above” and rejecting “earthly wisdom” (Jas. 3:13-18)?

3. How would you explain to someone that Jesus is your wisdom for living, and with whom will you share this testimony?

The Gospel Project[®]

Adult Personal Study Guide ESV
Volume 4, Number 4 Summer 2016

Eric Geiger

Vice President, LifeWay Resources

Ed Stetzer

General Editor

Trevin Wax

Managing Editor

Daniel Davis

Content Editor

Josh Hayes

Content and Production Editor

Ken Braddy

Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Michael Kelley

Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to:

Managing Editor,
The Gospel Project: Adult Personal Study Guide,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;
or make comments on the Web at
www.lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America

The Gospel Project[®]: *Adult Personal Study Guide* ESV
(ISSN 2330-9393; Item 005573553) is published
quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234,
Thom S. Rainer, President. © 2016 LifeWay
Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit www.lifeway.com,
or write LifeWay Resources Customer Service,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113.
For subscriptions or subscription address
changes, e-mail subscribe@lifeway.com,
fax (615) 251-5818, or write to the above address.
For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address,
e-mail orderentry@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5933,
or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author;
salvation for its end; and truth, without any
mixture of error, for its matter and that all
Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To
review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit
www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are
taken from the English Standard Version[®] (The Holy
Bible, English Standard Version[®]), copyright 2001
by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News
Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

About the Writers

Unit 1:



J. D. Greear is the lead pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He's the author of *Gospel*, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, and *Jesus, Continued...: Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. J. D. holds a PhD from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Veronica, have four children.



Spence Shelton lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife, Courtney, and their four children. Spence and his family were sent by The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham to plant Mercy Church in the fall of 2015. He holds a BSBA from UNC-Chapel Hill and an MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Unit 2:



Greg Breazeale (sessions 7-12) resides with his wife, Heather, and three sons in Austin, Texas, where he is the North Campus pastor at The Austin Stone Community Church. He holds an MDiv from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a DMin in Expository Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Keith and Kristyn Getty (session 13) are writers of modern hymns that teach Christian doctrine sung in globally-accessible melodies. Some of their best known hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Speak, O Lord," and "The Power of the Cross," all three co-written by Keith with Stuart Townend. Their hymns are sung in churches around the world, in fine concert halls of Europe and North America, and on US network and public television and the UK's BBC. Keith and Kristyn live between Northern Ireland and Nashville with their three young daughters.

SESSION 1

1. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, eds., "The Lord Reigns," in *The Mission of God Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 596.
2. Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 55.
3. E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), 293.

SESSION 2

1. Oswald Chambers, in *The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Oswald Chambers Publications Association, 2008), 176.
2. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, 2.6, quoted in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel*, ed. John R. Franke, vol. IV in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 256.

SESSION 3

1. D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 25.
2. Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-by-Day* (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 290.
3. Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, 26150, quoted in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel*, ed. John R. Franke, vol. IV in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament*, 273.

SESSION 4

1. Helen Keller, quoted in *Expository Eureka*, by Diana Tham (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) [eBook].
2. Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 95.
3. Augustine, Sermon 385.4, quoted in *Late Have I Loved Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 400.
4. R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 66.
5. Joseph Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 154.
6. Corrie ten Boom, quoted in "Preface," by Elizabeth Sherrill, in *The Hiding Place*, by Corrie ten Boom (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), x.

SESSION 5

1. Nancy Guthrie, *The Son of David* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 161.
2. Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 46.
3. Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985), 41.

SESSION 6

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation, in Creation and Fall & Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 132.
2. Adrian Rogers, in *Adrianism: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers*, vol. 1 (Memphis: Love Worth Finding, 2006), 114.
3. Trevin Wax, "The Gospel and Repentance," *LifeWay Pastors* [online], 12 May 2015 [cited 8 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.lifeway.com.

SESSION 7

1. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 2006).
2. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 288.
3. Martin Luther, in *What Luther Says*, comp. Ewald M. Plass (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1453.
4. George Whitefield, "An Exhortation to the People of God Not to Be Discouraged in Their Way, by the Scoffs and Contempt of Wicked Men," in *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London: Henry Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828), 606.

SESSION 8

1. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1997), 2.
2. Ambrose, *Six Days of Creation*, 1.4.12, quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, ed. J. Robert Wright, vol. IX in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 7.
3. David K. Stabnow, in *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 1035, n. 3:11-12.
4. Jonathan Leeman, "Wisdom," *The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide* (Winter 2012-13): 113.

SESSION 9

1. "Vision," Burj Khalifa [online], 2015 [cited 19 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.burjkhalifa.ae.
2. Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 717.
3. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (San Diego: Harvest, 1964), 4-5, quoted in "The perfect church service," Tolle Lege [online], 14 November 2009 [cited 19 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: tollelege.wordpress.com.
4. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 401.

SESSION 10

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine, 1983), 274.
2. D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 83.
3. John Wesley, "Sermon LXXXIII: On Spiritual Idolatry," vol. 2 in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1835), 188.
4. Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoirs and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, (London: W. Middleton, 1846), 254.

SESSION 11

1. Daniel Schorn, "Transcript: Tom Brady, Part 3," CBS News [online], 5 November 2005 [cited 20 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.cbsnews.com.
2. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 76-77.
3. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2008), 107.
4. Sam Storms, *The Hope of Glory: 100 Daily Meditations on Colossians* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 154.

SESSION 12

1. Oswald Chambers, in *The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2008), 282.
2. Robert Yarbrough, "Christ and Crocodiles: Suffering and the Goodness of God in Contemporary Perspective," in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 31.
3. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2008), 78.

SESSION 13

1. N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 23.
2. Jonathan Leeman, "Psalms: Songs for New Creation Hearts," *The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide* (Winter 2012-13): 96.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1970), 14-15.
4. Ambrose, *On the Christian Faith*, 2.12.102, quoted in *Psalms 51–150*, ed. Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, vol. VIII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 263.