

## **Why Does God Bless Us?**

**Series: Understanding God Helps You To Understand You.**

**Do you remember your earliest beliefs about Santa Clause?**

**Many of us learned about God at the same time as Santa Clause.**

**However, our views of Santa Clause have matured, but have our opinions of God changed?**

## **What Does The Bible Say?**

5 That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!”(1 Kings 3:5 NLT)

## **What would you ask from God?**

9 Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong.

For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?”

10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom.

11 So God replied, “Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long

life or wealth or the death of your enemies—12 I will give you

what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding

heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! 13 And I

will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! (1

Kings 3:9–13 NLT)

**God gave Solomon wisdom to properly govern, leading and serving others.**

9 So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before

me, and my wisdom never failed me. 10 Anything I wanted, I

would take. I denied myself no pleasure. (Ecclesiastes 2:9–10

NLT)

**Solomon became Santa Claus to himself.**

11 But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. (Ecclesiastes 2:11 NLT)

**Giving to yourself will not provide you with purpose.**

Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. (Ecclesiastes 12:13 NLT)

**Solomon concludes that no matter how wealthy or wise you are, your number one priority is obeying God.**

17 Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. 18 He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. (James 1:17–18 NLT)

**God gives to you what is best because He values you.**

**How Can You Obey?**

Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. 3 And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. (James 4:2–3 NLT)

**Why do you ask God for things? Is it for your pleasure or others?**

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1–3 NLT)

**God gives to you so you can give to others.**

**You are blessed so you can bless others.**

### **Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

### **Notes:**

This series is originated from the book, Thurman, C. (2017).  
The Lies We Believe About God: Knowing God For Who He Really Is. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

### **Notes:**

Today's Talking Theology segment comes from Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999

### **Explore:**

Let's say you have a child who wants a bicycle for her birthday. Let's also say that upon receiving the bicycle, she leaves it out in the rain, crashes it into things, and never does anything to take care of it. As mean as it might sound, the wise parent would take the bicycle back for a period of time to help that child learn she has to take good care of the things she has been given. Yes, the bicycle was a gift, but some gifts need to be taken back if the recipient doesn't properly steward them.

Similarly, God will take certain gifts back for a period of time—or permanently—if we don't take good care of them. Here is an

example that you may not agree with and may even feel angry about.

I believe having a spouse is one of the greatest gifts God can give us, and I further believe that God doesn't take too kindly to our mistreating our mates. Now, here is the especially risky part of what I have to say: I believe that God will take the gift of marriage away from us if we grievously hurt our spouses and are not willing to stop. Even though He hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), I believe God is clear in Scripture that if we are hard-hearted enough to severely and unrepentantly mistreat our spouses (through adultery, abandonment, neglect, or abuse), we have then done so much that God will give our spouses permission to divorce us. That is how seriously God takes the gift of holy matrimony.

Our marriages, children, jobs, abilities, and talents are all blessings from God and need to be taken good care of if we want

to enjoy them over the long haul. All this reminds me of these words from Christ: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48). Sadly, after receiving much and being entrusted with much, far too many of us don’t fully appreciate and steward the gifts He gives us. When we show God how little we appreciate the wonderful people and things He has bestowed on us, His righteous anger reaches its full expression and He takes the gift back.

Chris Thurman, *The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

## **Explore:**

Revelation (v. 5). The assembly lasted all day and the people remained at Gibeon for the night, including King Solomon who was given a remarkable dream from the Lord. David had both Nathan and Gad as his counselors, but there seems to have been no prophet in Solomon's circle of advisers. Twice the Lord spoke to the king through dreams (see 9:1–9). The Lord sometimes communicated His messages through dreams not only to His own servants but also to those of other nations, such as Abimelech (Gen. 20), the Egyptian servants of Pharaoh (Gen. 40), and Pharaoh himself (Gen. 41).

Solomon heard the Lord say, "Ask! What shall I give you?" (v. 5, nkjv). The Lord's command and question were a revelation of God's grace as well as a test of Solomon's heart. (The word "ask" is found eight times in this passage.) What people ask for

usually reveals what they really desire, and what they desire depends on how they envision their life's calling. Had Solomon been a warrior, he might have asked for victory over his enemies; but he saw himself as a youthful leader who desperately needed wisdom so he could adequately serve God's chosen people. He had succeeded David, Israel's greatest king, and Solomon knew that the people couldn't help but compare and contrast father and son. But even more, he had been called to build the temple of the Lord, an awesome task for such an inexperienced leader. Solomon knew he couldn't accomplish that great venture without wisdom from heaven.

Petition (vv. 6–9). Solomon's prayer was brief and to the point, and it was spoken with true humility, for three times he called himself "your servant." First, Solomon reviewed the past and thanked God for the faithfulness and steadfast love shown to his father (v. 6). Solomon acknowledged God's goodness in keeping his father through many trials and then giving him a son to

inherit his throne. Solomon is referring here to the covenant God gave to David when he expressed his heart's desire to build a temple for God (2 Sam. 7). In that covenant, God promised David a son who would build the temple, and Solomon was that son. Solomon admitted that he wasn't the king because God recognized his abilities but because He kept His promises to his father David.

Then, Solomon moved into the present and acknowledged God's grace in making him king (v. 7). But he also confessed his youthfulness and inexperience and therefore his desperate need for God's help if he was to succeed as Israel's king. Solomon was probably twenty years old at this time and certainly much younger than his advisers and officers, some of whom had served his father. He called himself a "little child" (1 Chron. 22:5; 29:1ff), a mark of both honesty and humility. The phrase "to go out or come in" refers to giving leadership to the nation (Num. 27:15–17; Deut. 31:2–3; 1 Sam. 18:13, 16; 2 Kings 11:8).

In his prayer, the king not only confessed his own smallness but also the nation's greatness (v. 8). The people of Israel were the people of God! This meant that God had a great purpose for them to fulfill on earth and that their king carried a great responsibility in ruling them. God had multiplied the nation and fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5), Isaac (Gen. 26:1–5), and Jacob (Gen. 28:10–14), and Solomon wanted the blessing to continue.

The king concluded his prayer by anticipating the future and asking the Lord for the wisdom needed to rule the nation (v. 9).

Wisdom was an important element in Near Eastern life and every king had his circle of “wise men” who advised him. But Solomon didn't ask for a committee of wise counselors; he asked for wisdom for himself. In that day, the wise person was one who was skillful in the management of life. It meant much more than the ability to make a living; it meant the ability to make a life and make the most out of what life might bring. True

wisdom involves skill in human relationships as well as the ability to understand and cooperate with the basic laws God has built into creation. Wise people not only have knowledge of human nature and of the created world, but they know how to use that knowledge in the right way at the right time. Wisdom isn't a theoretical idea or an abstract commodity; it's very practical and personal. There are many people who are smart enough to make a good living but they aren't wise enough to make a good life, a life of fulfillment that honors the Lord.

Solomon asked God to give him "an understanding heart," because no matter how smart the mind may be, if the heart is wrong, all of life will be wrong. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23, nkjv). The word translated "understanding" means "hearing"; Solomon wanted a "hearing heart." True understanding comes from hearing what God has to say, and to the Old Testament Jew, "hearing" meant "obeying." When the Lord speaks to us,

it's not that we might study and pass judgment on what He said, but that we might obey it. An understanding heart has insight and exercises discernment. It is able to distinguish the things that differ (Phil. 1:9–11). It knows what is real and what is artificial, what is temporal and what is eternal. This kind of understanding is described in Isaiah 11:1–5, a prophecy concerning the Messiah. Believers today can claim the promise of James 1:5.

Approbation (vv. 10–13). God was pleased with Solomon's request for wisdom, for it showed that the king was concerned with serving God and His people by knowing and doing God's will. Solomon never read Matthew 6:33, but he practiced it—and the Lord gave to him the additional blessings that he didn't ask for! God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him. When you read the Book of Proverbs, you find that the love of wisdom and the practice of discernment can lead to these extra blessings (see Prov. 3:1–2, 10, 13–18). In the

subsequent chapters, we will learn about Solomon's wealth and honor and how he attracted visitors from other nations who wanted to hear his wisdom.

Obligation (v. 14). The Lord was careful to remind Solomon that his obedience to God's covenant and his devotion to the Lord were the keys to his future blessings. Solomon was required to write out his own personal copy of Deuteronomy (Deut. 17:18–20), and this would include the covenant spelled out in Deuteronomy 28–30. Solomon also knew the terms of the covenant God made with his father David (2 Sam. 7:1–17) and that it required obedience on the part of David's son and successor (vv. 12–16). God promised to lengthen Solomon's life if he obeyed the Word (Prov. 3:2, 16), for he would be honoring God and his father David and could claim the promise of Exodus 20:12 (see Eph. 6:1–3). It's unfortunate that Solomon with all his wisdom forgot this part of the agreement and gradually drifted into sin and disobedience, and God had to chasten him.

When Solomon returned to Jerusalem, he went to the tent that housed the Ark and there offered more sacrifices (v. 15). The Ark represented the presence of God among His people and the rule of God over His people (Pss. 80:1; 99:1). Solomon acknowledged the sovereign rule of God over his own life and the life of the nation. In other words, Solomon knew that he was second in command. It was when he started to forget that basic truth that he got himself into trouble.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2002), 28–31.

### **Explore:**

“What causes fights and quarrels among you?” (niv) Among Christians! “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). Surely brethren should live together in love and harmony, yet often they do not.

Lot caused a quarrel with his Uncle Abraham (Gen. 13).

Absalom created a war for his father David (2 Sam. 13–18).

Even the disciples created problems for the Lord when they argued over who was the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 9:46–48).

When you examine some of the early churches, you discover that they had their share of disagreements. The members of the Corinthian church were competing with each other in the public meetings, and even suing each other in court (1 Cor. 6:1–8; 14:23–40). The Galatian believers were “biting and devouring” one another (Gal. 5:15). Paul had to admonish the Ephesians to cultivate spiritual unity (Eph. 4:1–16); and even his beloved church at Philippi had problems: two women could not get along with each other (Phil. 4:1–3).

James mentioned several different kinds of disagreements among the saints.

Class wars (2:1–9). Here is that age-long rivalry between the rich and the poor. The rich man gets the attention, the poor man is ignored. The rich man is honored, the poor man is disgraced. How tragic it is when local churches get their values confused and cater to the rich while they ignore, or even reject, the poor. If fellowship in a church depends on such external things as clothing and economic status, then the church is out of the will of God.

Employment wars (5:1–6). Again, it is the rich man who has the power to control and hurt the poor man. Laborers do not get their wages, or they do not get their fair wages. In spite of our modern labor movement and federal legislation, there are still many people who cannot get a good job, or whose income is less than adequate for the work they are doing.

Church fights (1:19–20; 3:13–18). Apparently, the believers James wrote to were at war with each other over positions in the

church, many of them wanting to be teachers and leaders. When they studied the Word, the result was not edification, but strife and arguments. Each person thought that his ideas were the only right ideas and his ways the only right ways. Selfish ambition ruled their meetings, not spiritual submission.

Personal wars (4:11–12). The saints were speaking evil of one another and judging one another. Here, again, we see the wrong use of the tongue. Christians are to speak “the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15); they are not to speak evil in a spirit of rivalry and criticism. If the truth about a brother is harmful, then we should cover it in love and not repeat it (1 Peter 4:8). If he has sinned, we should go to him personally and try to win him back (Matt. 18:15–19; Gal. 6:1–2).

James was not forbidding us to use discrimination or even to evaluate people. Christians need to have discernment (Phil. 1:9–10), but they must not act like God in passing judgment. We

must first examine our own lives, and then try to help others (Matt. 7:1–5). We never know all the facts in a case, and we certainly never know the motives that are at work in men's hearts. To speak evil of a brother and to judge a brother on the basis of partial evidence and (probably) unkind motives is to sin against him and against God. We are not called to be judges; God is the only Judge. He is patient and understanding; His judgments are just and holy; we can leave the matter with Him.

It is unfortunate that the saints are at war with each other, leader against leader, church against church, fellowship against fellowship. The world watches these religious wars and says, "Behold, how they hate one another!" No wonder Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21).

But, why are we at war with one another? We belong to the same family; we trust the same Saviour; we are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit—and yet we fight one another. Why? James answered this question by explaining the second war that is going on.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 366–367.

### **Explore:**

(1 Kings 1:1–4:34)

There is some doubt as to who will succeed David as king.

Adonijah puts himself forward, but both Bathsheba and Nathan make sure that Solomon is chosen. Solomon is David's son by Bathsheba. He is anointed by Zadok the priest and Nathan the

prophet. David advises him to walk in God's ways, and commissions him to repay favours and settle old scores.

The reigns of David and Solomon are the high point of Israel's history. Solomon asks God for wisdom, and becomes a man of great insight and judgment. He establishes a lavish royal household, supplied by twelve districts. He builds up a large army and, with the help of the seagoing Phoenicians, develops foreign trade. All this is expensive in money and human resources. Samuel had warned that a king would be a burden to his people (1 Samuel 8:10–18).

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 150.

**Question 1 of 5**

Do you believe the Apocrypha should be in consideration as sacred scripture? Why or why not.

### **Question 2 of 5**

In what ways do you think of God and Santa Claus as being similar?

### **Question 3 of 5**

What kinds of problems have you run into when you played Santa Claus and gave yourself the things you wanted in life?

### **Question 4 of 5**

What people, places, power, positions, and possessions have you wanted God to give you that would have been bad for you if He had?

### **Question 5 of 5**

What gifts or abilities has God given you that you have used for others?

