

A Listening Heart
 1 Kings 3:3-15
 Tampa Covenant Church
 03 August 2025

Proposition: Because wisdom is the very essence of God's character, Christians are called to live with a listening heart; one that consistently seeks his wisdom in prayer.

FCF: The Christian's tendency to allow stubbornness to linger in their hearts in their relationship with God.

RHF: Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God, who possessed the ultimate listening heart, through his person and work, we are enabled to know and do the will of God.

(#1) Introduction:

I don't know if we still use the term "hard-headed" these days. When I was growing up, that was basically my middle name; *Mark Hard-Headed Farrell*. We know what it means to be hard-headed. We describe hard-headed children as "strong willed." Teens as "rebellious" and adults as "set in their ways." But at the end of the day, it all amounts to good old-fashioned stubbornness. Let's be honest, it's exhausting to live with stubbornness, whether it's in our families, our friendships, or our workplaces. But what does it look like when a Christian is stubborn; not just in their relationships with others but in their relationship with God? That's a spiritual problem because spiritual stubbornness points to a heart that's dull of hearing and a will that's disobedient to the voice of God.

But the good news is that we serve a merciful and gracious God who offers an antidote. And he applies it to our lives when we approach him humbly in prayer, asking him to grant us a heart that listens to and obeys his voice. Which allows us to live according to his plan and purposes for our lives. Today, we'll see how this plays out in a crucial season of Solomon's life and how it still applies to our daily lives.

Solomon's Pragmaticism and Expediency: (*vv.1-4*)

(#2 Blank) We open to 1 Kings; David is near death but is still lucid enough to give final instructions to his son, the newly crowned, king Solomon. David tells him to walk in the Lord's ways by keeping his statutes, written in the Law of Moses so that he may prosper as King. And if his sons do the same, he'll never lack a man on the throne of Israel. But David's exhortations weren't just moral; they were also pragmatic and expedient given the unresolved tensions surrounding young Solomon's reign. Thus, he instructed Solomon to deal wisely with the commander Joab, who unlawfully killed former commanders; Abner and Amasa. David recalled the incident when Shemei publicly cursed him as he fled from Absalom. And commended Solomon as a wise man in knowing how he ought to deal with him. In due time, Solomon not only does away with these men, he also kills his older brother Adonijah, who rivaled his kingship and expelled Abiathar from the priesthood for his involvement in the coup attempt.

Now with the tensions resolved, **(#3) the author** tells us, *the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon*. And as we look at our text, we see he continues to make these pragmatic and expedient decisions that seem wise given the circumstances but fall **(#4) short in reflecting** the heart of God. In v.1, he forms a political alliance with Egypt in marrying Pharaoh's daughter; a clear violation of God's covenant. Next, he allows the people to continue sacrificing at the high places ¹ because the temple

wasn't (#5) yet built. And v.3, kinda sums it all up, *"Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places."* (#6) The author continues, that Solomon even went to the great high place in Gibeon² where he would sacrifice a thousand burnt offerings of devotion to the LORD. It's clear Solomon's love for God was sincere but there was a stubbornness that lingered in his heart.

(#7 Blank) We often experience this kind of tension in the Christian life. While we trust God and genuinely seek to walk with him daily, there are times when our decisions expose the stubbornness lingering in our hearts. Instead of trusting in God's discernment, we lean on our own. Sure, we're quick to agree with him on the "no brainer" issues of life. But when the issues seem a little more complex and the path isn't so clear, we often default to what feels pragmatic or expedient, without truly seeking the heart of God in the matter. In other words, we busy ourselves trying to figure things out. We rely more on the "golden gut" versus crying out to God for the wisdom needed to navigate through the complexity of it all. Louis reminded us last week that Job recognized he only had two options in his suffering: *"Live in surrender to God's purposes or live in rebellion."*

Solomon's Prayer: (vv.5-9)

This seeming dilemma comes (#8) into sharp focus in v.5, as the Lord appears to Solomon in a dream at the great high place of Gibeon...of all places! But he doesn't come to judge rather he comes with grace and what follows is a gracious offer, *"Ask what I shall give you."* (#9) The NLT makes it clear, *"What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"* It's a moment that feels like something out of folklore;³ the offer of a divine "blank check" that sounds too good to be true. And it brings to mind the old cautionary tale: *"Be careful what you ask for; you just might get it."* Imagine if one of these popular youtubers met us on the street and asked this kind of question. How would we respond? I want good health, financial security, and all the stuff that makes for a better life in this world. That's what these types of questions are designed to do; reveal the deepest desires of our hearts. (#10) British Commentator Donald Wiseman writes, *this offer was meant to stimulate Solomon's faith. He was given an invitation to trust in God's goodness by submitting to his purposes. But because the heart is naturally bent toward self-exaltation, comfort and control, the invitation could also stimulate greed.*⁴

But in this moment, Solomon gets it right and he responds to God's gracious offer with a prayer of faith to God. He begins by acknowledging (#11) God's faithfulness in the past, *"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."* (#12) Recall Lou's sermon on Prayers of Lament. He said that the word *hesed* is one of those "ten-thousand-dollar Hebrew words that cause translators to scratch their heads." It speaks of God's mercy, kindness, favor, and covenant loyalty. It's connected to his goodness, devotion, beauty, compassion, and unfailing love. No wonder they scratch their heads because the word points to the all-encompassing, immeasurable love of a holy God to his children. And like David, the fitting response to this kind of love is living a life characterized by faithfulness, righteousness & uprightness of heart toward him.

Next, Solomon demonstrates (#13) unbridled humility before God, *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.* Beginning with Moses and with the prophets, we see this same posture when God sets his people apart for a special work. The response is never pride or swagger; it's always a deep sense of inadequacy given the enormity of the task. Solomon feels the weight of the calling, *"I'm just a kid... this is way too much for me."* And in his time of prayer, he abandons the stubbornness we witnessed earlier in the text and admits his total incompetence before God.

(#14) Church family, this is where true freedom is found in the Christian life. When we stop pretending "we got this" and admit to God "he's got this." Solomon is doing exactly what we were all created to do; fully depend on God in the midsts of a daunting circumstance. This may feel a little counterintuitive because there's a natural instinct to hide our weaknesses by giving the appearance we have everything under control. For some of us, the hardest thing we could ever do is look another person in the face and admit, *"I can't handle this on my own."* But we don't have to worry about preserving our reputations when we come before God in prayer. Because prayer grants us the privilege to boldly confess our weaknesses directly to him, knowing he'll never hold it against us. Instead, he'll meet us with his love and grace in supplying exactly what we need in the moment. This is true worship. Letting go of our stubborn wills and yielding to God's. He's the one who always stands ready to receive us in our frailty and cover our weaknesses with his unfailing love.

And with that, (#15) Solomon makes his request, *"Give your servant therefore an understanding⁵ mind⁶ to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"* Solomon understood that carrying out the responsibilities of kingship required more than common sense or political savvy; he needed discernment to distinguish good from evil. He also needed to understand the hearts of God's people; their burdens, needs, and concerns and how to lead them in a way that reflected the heart of God.⁷ This kind of discernment had to come from above; not below. So, Solomon asked for an "understanding mind," which literally translates to a "hearing heart." We're talking about the totality of our being; our minds, wills and affections all seeking to listen to and obey God.⁸

The Listening Heart and the Christian Life: (vv.10-14)

(#16) In vv. 10–13, we see that Solomon's request pleased the Lord because he didn't ask for long life, riches, or vengeance on his enemies. (#17) And so, the Lord honored his prayer by granting him a wise (skillful) and discerning heart. In sum, Solomon asked for a listening heart and in response, God granted him the gift of wisdom. (#18) Martin Lloyd-Jones put it this way, *"You get your knowledge by studying, but you do not get wisdom that way."*⁹ (#19) According to NT Wright, *"wisdom happens when God enables us to hear his voice, discern his purpose and put it into operation."*¹⁰ See how that works? Knowledge comes through books, the classroom and study. But wisdom comes from God and is received through a listening heart. It's the God given skill that puts knowledge into practice in pleasing God. That's what Solomon asked for. (#20) That's what God honored and that's what we need as God's chosen and dearly loved. And the Lord wasn't finished. He further graced Solomon in giving him what he didn't have on his radar; riches and honor. It tells us when we seek the will of God above our own; he responds with grace on top of grace for our good and his glory.

So, we take inventory this morning and reflect on the circumstances and situations in our lives calling for a listening heart but that stubbornness may still be lingering. The call for us is to forsake that stubbornness through repentance and meditate on the faithfulness of God. How his mercy, grace and steadfast love forever abides with us. And we come humbly before him and admit the frailty of our humanity in all spheres of life: Lord, this parenting thing is too much to bear. Lord, I don't know how to navigate through this drama at work. Lord, I don't know how to deal with this relationship. Lord, I'm way in over my head in this area of my life. Whatever it is; our Heavenly Father knows and he cares. And so we pray, Lord give us a listening heart, enabling us to hear your voice, that we may discern what your will is in this situation and put it into practice for your glory.

(#21) In the NT James tells us, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."* It's important to note that God only gives "generously to all" who love him as his children. And the good news is, he does it without reproach (finding fault). In other words, he's not gonna sigh and roll his eyes. No, he gives freely without keeping score, without reminders of past failure and without critique because he's our heavenly father who delights in giving good gifts to his children; in this case it's wisdom. **(#22) James also tells** us we must ask in faith without doubting. Because if we waffle between faith and doubt, we'll be driven and tossed in this life instead of walking out the path the Lord has set before us according to his plan and purpose for our lives.

(#23) In v.14 of our text, the Lord concludes with a condition to Solomon, *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.*" As the king, Solomon served as the one through whom the Lord would carry out his will in the lives of his people. And that could only happen through Solomon's listening heart. But later in his reign, his heart became dull to the voice of God. And as that stubbornness lingered in his heart, he continued to make faulty alliances with other nations and continued to sanction faulty worship of the one true God. Which ultimately led to the nation's division, destruction and exile.¹¹

Jesus Christ: The Wisdom of God

(#24 Blank) In the end, Solomon's kingship points to the need for a greater king; someone who through whom God would fully accomplish his sovereign plan and purposes in the lives of his people. We turn to Matt 12, the religious leaders come and ask Jesus for a sign of his messiahship. Jesus responds by recalling the account of Queen Sheba's visit to Solomon in 1 Ki 10. During that visit, Solomon's wisdom and royal court took her breath away. What she saw with her own eyes exceeded everything she heard. And she praised the Lord for delighting in Solomon and setting him on the throne to execute justice and righteousness. Now, with this story fresh in their minds, Jesus drops a bombshell by telling these religious **(#25) leaders,** this same queen will rise up at the judgment of their generation and condemn it. Because she came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom and behold something greater than Solomon is here. Jesus is saying, to reject me is to reject something far more than Solomon ever offered. You are rejecting the one who perfectly embodies divine wisdom; the very one who possesses the ultimate unwavering listening heart.

(#26 Blank) It's only through Christ we discover what it means to listen to and obey the voice of the Father. During his earthly ministry, he was clear; *"I have come from heaven, not to do my own will but the*

will of him who sent me.” And that mission, took him straight to the cross where he suffered, bled and died; in order that we might be reconciled to a holy God. He redeemed us, not by seeking his own will but by perfectly submitting to the will of the Father. (#27) Paul writes in 1 Cor 1:30, “And because of him (the Father), we are in Christ Jesus (united to him), who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

All the blessings of salvation are ours not because we manage to keep our noses clean from time to time but because we are united to Christ by faith. We have been made one with him in his suffering, death and resurrection. In Christ, we experience newness of life now as we live for the life to come. This is the (#28 Blank) very reason we can rest assured that God will always grant wisdom generously to us without finding fault. Because all of the hidden treasures of wisdom are ours in Christ. So, if we want to boast about something; let us boast in the Lord and all that he’s done for us in the person and work of Christ.

Conclusion:

So, may he remain the supreme object of our faith and sphere in which our faith operates. Without him the only options remaining are putting faith in our ability, in someone or something else. And none of those options will stand the test of time nor are they biblical. And so, we place our trust in Christ; the one who has secured the irrevocable promises of God on our behalf. And through the power of his Spirit may we continue cultivating listening hearts that remain inclined to the voice of God in seeking to do his good and perfect will in this world.

¹ High Place (הַמָּוֶה, *bamah*). The high places were common sites of worship in the ancient Near East, named after their common location at the summits of hills or ridges. They were often treated as unsanctioned for worshipping Yahweh, and typically located at the summits of hills. John T. Swann, "High Place," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

² This is probably the modern village of el-Jib, some 6 miles (10 km) northwest of Jerusalem; some have suggested that Gibeon had been King Saul's capital (Cogan 2001:185). William H. Barnes, *1-2 Kings*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, vol. 4b, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 52.

³ Barnes writes in his commentary, "By identifying folkloristic elements, we are not questioning the historicity of the narrative but recognizing that the narrator employs literary motifs, exaggerative touches, and entertaining tropes as he draws his audience into his account of their history." Barnes, 53.

⁴ Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 92.

⁵ שָׁמַע (*šā·māʿ*): hear, i.e., use the perception of hearing with the ears to process information. The Hebrew word (*šā·māʿ*) is used here as a participle that is functioning as a verb (understanding) and modifying the noun (mind).

⁶ לֵב (*lēb*); לֵבָב (*lēbāb*). n. masc. heart, mind, self, inner person. *Refers to the central organ of the body and to inner person, generally as the seat of emotions, desires, or the will.*

⁷ Gary Inrig, *I & II Kings*, ed. Max Anders, vol. 7, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2003), 27–28.

⁸ Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 92.

⁹ Tony Sargent, *Gems from Martin Lloyd Jones, An Anthology of Quotations from the Doctor*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), Logos Software.

¹⁰ See NT Wright a devotional entitled, "How to Become Wise." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFo0BhMI6OY> (Accessed 2 July 2025).

¹¹ Mark W. Chavalas, "Kings, First and Second, Theology Of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 455–456.