

Sermon Note: We Don't Need More Money

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

This is week one of *Dreaming the Future*, a four-week stewardship series built on two books by United Methodist pastors: *Earn. Save. Give.: Wesley's Simple Rules for Money* by James A. Harnish, and *Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity* by Adam Hamilton. As United Methodists, we promise to support the church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, and that is the whole of stewardship. Questions about money often start with amounts: how much we earn, how much we owe, how much would be enough. In 1 Kings, Solomon has just become king when God appears to him in a dream and invites him to ask for anything. In Proverbs 3, the writer says wisdom is worth more than silver or gold.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWgBZ7erqDo>

In this clip from *Aladdin* (2019), the Genie offers Aladdin a way around the law that keeps him from Jasmine, and asks for his last wish...

Why This Video?

Aladdin could settle his own situation in a sentence: one wish, and the law between him and Jasmine disappears. He gives his wish away, which leaves him with nothing from it for himself. The Genie has served other people's wishes for a thousand years or more. Now, for the first time, he can dream about a future of his own.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Aladdin asks, "You can just make the law disappear?" What do you think is happening for him in that moment?
2. Aladdin chooses to free the Genie instead. What do you think made that possible for him?
3. The Genie needs a moment, then says, "Tell me to do something." Why might freedom be hard to believe at first?
4. Have you ever been offered something you wanted and found yourself wanting something else more? What happened?
5. Aladdin says, "I owe you everything." What do you think that means to him? To the Genie?
6. When Aladdin asks what he'll do, the Genie talks about traveling the world with the handmaiden. What do you notice about what he wants once he's free to choose?
7. Have you ever used something you were given, like time, money, or a favor, for another person's good? How did you feel in the moment? What was that like afterward?

Proverbs 3:13-18 (CEB)

¹³Happy are those who find wisdom
and those who gain understanding.

¹⁴Her profit is better than silver,
and her gain better than gold.
¹⁵Her value exceeds pearls;
all you desire can't compare with her.
¹⁶In her right hand is a long life;
in her left are wealth and honor.
¹⁷Her ways are pleasant;
all her paths are peaceful.
¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
those who hold her tight are happy.

1 Kings 3:5-12 (CEB)

⁵The Lord appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you."

⁶Solomon responded, "You showed so much kindness to your servant my father David when he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and with a heart true to you. You've kept this great loyalty and kindness for him and have now given him a son to sit on his throne. ⁷And now, Lord my God, you have made me, your servant, king in my father David's place. But I'm young and inexperienced. I know next to nothing. ⁸But I'm here, your servant, in the middle of the people you have chosen, a large population that can't be numbered or counted due to its vast size. ⁹Please give your servant a discerning mind in order to govern your people and to distinguish good from evil, because no one is able to govern this important people of yours without your help."

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had made this request. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked for this instead of requesting long life, wealth, or victory over your enemies—asking for discernment so as to acquire good judgment— ¹²I will now do just what you said. Look, I hereby give you a wise and understanding mind. There has been no one like you before now, nor will there be anyone like you afterward.

Scripture Study Questions

1. In 1 Kings 3:5, the Lord tells Solomon, "Ask whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you." Solomon answers in verses 6-9. What do you notice about how he begins his answer?
2. In verse 7, Solomon calls himself "young and inexperienced" and says, "I know next to nothing." What do you think that says about his character and priorities?
3. In verse 9, Solomon asks for "a discerning mind." Some translations say "understanding heart." What difference do you hear between a mind and a heart?
4. Why do you think Solomon asked for a discerning mind instead of long life, wealth, or victory over his enemies (v11)? What do you think pleased God about his request?
5. In Proverbs 3:14, the sage writes that wisdom's "profit is better than silver." What could it mean to compare wisdom to profit?
6. In verse 16, the sage places "wealth and honor" in wisdom's left hand. How do you understand that?
7. In 1 Kings 3:12, God gives Solomon a wise and understanding mind. In Proverbs 3:18, wisdom is a tree of life to "those who embrace her." Where have you seen wisdom given to someone?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. In *Enough*, Adam Hamilton recalls Jesus' parable of the sower, where "the cares of the world and the lure of wealth" choke out the seed. What do you think chokes out good things in your own life?
2. In *Earn. Save. Give.*, James A. Harnish describes wisdom as "the divine insight to know when enough is enough." When have you sensed that in your own life?
3. Harnish suggests a person can have plenty of information about money and still need wisdom. What helps you tell the two apart?
4. Who has taught you something about wisdom, by words or by example? What did you learn from them?
5. Solomon prays for discernment to "distinguish good from evil." What is a decision you're facing right now where you'd welcome that gift?

Weekly Action

Consider taking two quiet minutes each morning this week to ask God for a discerning mind, using Solomon's words from 1 Kings 3:9 or your own. Then sit still for another minute and notice what comes to mind about how you spend your time, your attention, and your money. Write down one decision you're facing where you'd welcome wisdom, and listen for what God might be saying about it. At the end of the week, talk to a trusted spiritual partner about what you asked for and what you noticed. Invite them to keep praying with you as you listen for God's guidance.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, you appeared to Solomon in the night and invited him to ask for what he wanted. We are grateful for his humble request for wisdom. Guide us as we also seek your wisdom: in the bills we pay and the offerings we place in the plate. Give us listening hearts, and help us make decisions that honor you. Through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

This content was developed by Rev. Bob Rhodes using source materials from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, his own original writing, and AI tools in alignment with La Jolla UMC AI Usage Guidelines. AI assisted with drafting and iterative refinement. All final text was reviewed and approved by Rev. Rhodes.