

What Do You Want?

Hebrews 11:24-27

Richard Tow 08.02.15

What do you want?

That was the question God brought to **Solomon** when he became king of Israel. What do you want, Solomon? Tell me what you want; and I will give it to you. Some of you already know the answer Solomon gave to that question. It was an answer that pleased God because Solomon's answer was more focused on God's purposes than on Solomon's personal desires. Solomon asked for wisdom so that he could fulfill his calling. 1 Kings 3:9 records Solomon's answer, *"Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"*¹ I like the way Solomon recognized that the people belonged to God, not him. That was unusual for a king in those days: "...*this great people of Yours.*" The Hebrew word translated understanding is *shama`*. It's root meaning is to hear intelligently or obediently.² Real wisdom for any job God gives you is wisdom that proceeds from hearing Him and doing what He says to do. So Solomon's request for wisdom could be translated, *"Therefore give to Your servant a hearing heart to judge Your people...."* God was so pleased with Solomon's request that He also gave Him other things that he didn't even ask for. Solomon later veered off from His commitment to that; and he experienced some consequences as a result.³ Solomon's life illustrates how important it is to stick with our choices; reflect on them; and affirm them from time to time.

I want to talk with you this morning about choosing what we want in life. The good news is that we may very well get what we choose. The bad news is that we may very well get what we choose. In a general sense, life is an opportunity from God to choose what we want. That's true simply because God has given us free will. Every human being has the right, is authorized by God, to make his or her own choices. Different choices have different consequences; but we get to choose. Life is a choice made up of many, many decisions. Life basically asks the question of us: What do you want?

There is **Cain** in Genesis 4. He and his brother, Abel, have brought their offerings to the Lord. God is pleased with the offering Abel brought; but He did not have respect for Cain's offering. Theologians argue over why that was. Some say because Abel's was a blood sacrifice and Cain's was not. Others say it was because of the heart attitude of Cain versus Abel. Perhaps there is truth in both arguments. But when Cain realized that God was not pleased with his offering he got angry. God met with him and presented him with a choice. You can let this offense brew and fester in your heart or you can overcome it and walk with Me.⁴ Cain decided what he wanted. He

¹ All Scripture quotes are in New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

² OT:8085: (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

³ Solomon asked God for wisdom and God gave him wisdom. There is a stewardship that comes with every gift from God. By asking and receiving wisdom Solomon was committing himself to walk in that wisdom. However, Solomon later violated that commitment and turned from his devotion to the Lord. 1Kings 11:1-14 explains how that happened.

⁴ Genesis 4:6-7 (Living Bible) *"Why are you angry?" the Lord asked him. "Why is your face so dark with rage? 7 It can be bright with joy if you will do what you should! But if you refuse to obey, watch out. Sin is waiting to attack you, longing to destroy you. But you can conquer it!"*

wanted the offense more than he wanted the favor of God. That seems like a strange choice; but there are multitudes today who make the same choice Cain made. Cain felt like God had not done him right. He felt anger against Abel who had done nothing to him. The offense grew into bitterness, the bitterness grew into hatred; and eventually Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain's behavior was a result of the choice he made. What do you want, Cain? Do you want your bitterness or do you want a relationship with God?

There came a day in **Abraham**'s life when God asked him the question: What do you want? The question didn't come in those exact words. But God brought Abraham up to a decision when He said to him in "*Get out of your country, From your family, And from your father's house, To a land I will show you*" (Genesis 12:1). So the essential question to Abraham was this: Abraham, do you want the comfort of the familiar, the security of your father's house, or do you want the adventure of living by faith in Me? Do you want to hunker down where you are or do you want to step out with Me to "*a land I will show you.*" "Well show me the land and I'll let you know." No, you'll have to walk into this land step by step, day by day, and trust My leadership if you go that path. I will tell you this: if you choose to trust and obey, Genesis 12:2. "*I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*" You will be glad you made that choice; but making the choice is something you have to do. What do you want, Abraham? Do you want comfort and security or do you want to follow me into the unknown?

The great evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke, had to make a choice one day. He was a missionary in Africa with very little evident fruit. One day he was in his office praying for provision. He did not have the money to make his \$ 50 rent payment. The rent was due and in desperation he was crying out to God for the money to pay the rent. Suddenly, God asked him a question, "Reinhard, do you want Me to give you \$ 1,000,000?" The question startled Reinhard. He had been asking for \$ 50 and now God is offering \$ 1,000,000. How would you respond? How would I respond? Reinhard pondered the question before he gave his answer. "No, I want You to give me 1,000,000 souls!" Since that day his ministry has recorded well over a million decisions for Christ.⁵ Reinhard gave the right answer. What would have happened if his answer had been, "Yes, I want \$ 1,000,000?" Perhaps that is what he would have gotten. What we must understand is how important our answer to the question is!

The fact that this sermon is being preached raises the question for each one of us here. What do you want? The answer reflects something about the condition of our hearts? What do you want? To answer that question narrows the options. It sets a course for my future.

Moses faced that question when he was about 40 years old.⁶ Up until that time he had enjoyed the full privileges of being in Pharaoh's family.⁷ He was a prince in the most powerful kingdom in the world at that time. He had it made as far as worldly wealth and fame are concerned. But life brought Moses face to face with the question. When it really comes down to it, what do you want? Turn with me to Hebrews 11:24 as we read his answer. "*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction*

⁵ Reinhard Bonnke: Winning Millions to Christ One Soul at a Time, <http://reinhardbonnke.com/author.html> accessed 8/1/15.

⁶ Acts 7:23

⁷ Exodus 2:10; Acts 7:20-22.

with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

Notice first that an either/or choice had to be made. He could not keep his place in Pharaoh’s court and embrace the “*people of God*” at the same time. It was one or the other. He could not have this rich relationship with Christ and also have the treasures of Egypt at the same time. The choice of one automatically excluded the other. Choices are hard for that reason. Sometimes we get stuck in indecision because we want to perpetually keep all our options open. I’d like the pleasures of sin AND the rich relationship with God. Sorry, that is not one of the options. Jesus said “*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:27, 33).

Notice also what motivated Moses’ choice: Hebrews 11:26 “*esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*” He evaluated two things: (1) “*the reproach of Christ*” and all that goes with that verses (2) “*the treasures in Egypt*” and all that goes with that. When he added it all up, he realized that following Christ and bearing the reproach of Christ was far better than following Pharaoh and receiving the treasures of Egypt. He set his focus on Christ, the reward.⁸ Egypt in Scripture is a type of the world. 1 John 2:15-17 tells us “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (KJV). The alternative to following Christ will always boil down to these three temptations: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Let’s look a little deeper behind Moses’ choice. Heb 11:27 “*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*” His evaluation of the two options was dramatically affected by what he could see. Of course, he could see the affluence, privilege, esteem, power, and pleasures of Egypt and Pharaoh’s court. He had grown up around all that. But if that were all he could see, he would have made the wrong choice in life. **Seeing is the key!** He saw something that changed everything. Heb. 11:27 says he was “*seeing Him who is invisible.*” Paul counted everything as garbage compared to knowing Christ. He endured every kind of hardship imaginable pursuing the will of God. But when did that all begin in Paul’s life? It all began the day He saw “*Him who is invisible.*” It all began that day on the road to Damascus when the Resurrected Christ appeared unto him (Acts 9). From that day forward Paul had only one pursuit: Christ and His glory (Phil. 3).

I don’t know any other way to get people to really serve God except to introduce them to Jesus, to do everything I can to open their eyes to who He is and His love for them. It is only when the scales fall off our eyes and we see Him, that the really good decisions are made. That’s why we preach. That’s why we pray. You’ll never get people to live holy lives by giving them a set of rules and demanding they follow those rules.⁹ They will either rebel outright or they will superficially follow the rules and continually look for loopholes. Legalism does not produce holy

⁸ In Phil. 3:7-12 Paul describes his own pursuit of Christ. Moses was in a similar pursuit based on his revelation: “*for he looked to the reward.*”

⁹ Gal. 2:21.

people. Legalism produces hypocrites. If you don't believe that, look at the Pharisees of Jesus day, or look at some of the holiness movements in the previous century. Better yet look at church going people today. If its biblical holiness, they look and act the same way Monday through Saturday as they do on Sunday. If its religion, they can look really pious in the pew, but you don't want to do business with them through the week!

Oh, that a true understanding of holiness would come to the Church of America. It would shut the mouths of the gainsayers. It would silence the critics of Christianity. Holiness begins with seeing Jesus for who He really is. Holiness begins with a vision of the possibility of being changed into His image. The motivation for pure living is rooted and grounded in that revelation.

Listen carefully to the wording in 1 John 3:2-3 *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."* Begin with this truth: *"now we are children of God."* Our good performance does not make us children of God. The planting of the divine seed (or "sperma" as it is in the Greek) is what makes us children of God. You must be born again.¹⁰ That is not optional. That is the vital beginning. Being born of the Spirit makes us children of God and places us in the family of God. Now, now, now we are (already are) the children of God. *"and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, (there is a whole lot about that we do not know) but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* The thing that we do know is that *"we shall be like Him."* That is God's plan for us. That is where God is taking us. He is conforming us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). If you want an explanation of what is going on in your life, that's it. You are God's workmanship.¹¹ He is bringing you through experience after experience with this one end in mind: that you will be like Jesus!!!

Now what is the one thing that motivates people toward living pure lives? 1 John 3:3 *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."* We cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit producing purity in our lives because we have seen what the objective is and the value of what God has in mind. Have you seen Jesus in a way that changes your value system? Have you caught a glimpse of what He has in mind for you—for all eternity? If you have, nobody will have to pound you with a Bible to get you to pursue holiness. You have seen Him whose soul you love; you will pursue Him with all that is in you. Because of your love for Him you want to be a pure and clear and beautiful as you possibly can for Him. Rev 19:7 declares, *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."* I want to be a bride holy and pure and ready for my Bridegroom. Rev 22:17 *"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"*

The key to choosing wisely is to see into the eternal and choose accordingly. That's why Paul prayed this for the Church at Ephesus: *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power"* (Eph 1:17-20).

¹⁰ John 3:3-7.

¹¹ Eph. 2:10

Our gathering here today or any other day, is not about appeasing an angry God. It's not about doing enough nice things to get God to like us. *Now* you are the children of God. He already likes His children. It is about you and me SEEING: seeing into the invisible realm; seeing the beauty of our Bridegroom, Jesus; seeing what God wants to make of us for His glory. And then, deciding to follow that with everything that is in us.

Now I raise the question again: What do you want? This I believe is the question God is asking each and every person in this room. You want the world? It will be a vain, empty, worthless pursuit in the long run. Your life is more valuable than that. You are better than that. You want God, intimacy with God, power to do the works of God, wisdom from above? That choice means laying down some other things. It means valuing things less than you value the favor of God. It means turning loose of grudges and offenses. It means laying down vain ambitions and silly pride. It means less TV and more of God. It means helping somebody else when you feel like you actually need help more than they do. It means going to prayer meeting when you've worked hard all day and your body is saying, no. It means turning the other cheek when somebody says something hurtful or stupid to you. It means choosing the reproach of Christ over the treasures of Egypt. But let me tell you that choice means some other things as well. It means your conscience is silenced and the guilt is resolved. It means you don't have to depend upon drugs or alcohol because you have learned to depend upon the Lord. It means you see and you keep seeing the coming of your Bridegroom and you live for His appearing. It means you call on God and He is there!

The season ahead is different than the season we have been in. It will be a season of either being hot or cold. It will be a season of empowerment for those who walk with God. It will be a time of great harvest. There will be persecutions; but there will be spiritual authority like you have not seen before. Some of you will be amazing at God's glory and anointing on you. Prepare, prepare, prepare. For the days of Elijah are here. Where is the God of Elijah? He is here to do business on the earth.

In days past many of you have encountered God and you have made choices like Solomon, like Moses, and like Paul. My mission today is to remind you of those choices and stir up your hearts to say to God—I'm still good for my vow. Whatever the cost, I will follow You, Lord. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back; no turning back. Will you decide now to follow Jesus? Will you affirm your choice esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt?

Pray

Life Church OUTLINE
What Do You Want?

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I. Solomon: 1Kings 3:5-15

- A. Solomon's Answer
"shama" root meaning: to hear intelligently or obediently
- B. God's Approval – overflowing answer
- C. Solomon's failure to live in this later in life

II. Cain: Genesis 4:3-8

- A. God's favor toward Abel's offering but disfavor toward Cain's
- B. Cain's response/offense
- C. Cain's choice for his future

III. Abraham: Genesis 12:1-4

- A. The question/choice as God's gives direction (vs 1)
Comfort/security vs Obedience/adventure of faith
- B. Reinhard Bonnke story

IV. Moses: Hebrews 11:24-28

- A. An either/or choice had to be made (vs 24-25)
- B. Notice what motivated his choice (vs 26-27)
Seeing is the key!
Pure lives flow from seeing (1John 3:2-3)

Conclusion:

- A. God is asking you & me: What do you want?
- B. Season ahead of either being hot or cold
- C. Affirm choice to follow Jesus

QUESTIONS

1. If God were asking you to choose what you want most in the future, what would you answer?

2. Have you had experiences in the past when God posed this question to you? Did it simply come through the circumstances you faced or were there other factors as well? What was your answer?

3. How important is it to affirm your answer/commitment from time to time?
How have you done this?
How did Solomon fail to do this?
How did Moses do this?

4. How did seeing into the spiritual realm (seeing Him who is eternal) affect Moses' values and choices? How has seeing spiritual realities affected your values and choices?

5. What questions did this sermon raise that have not been discussed or answered?