

07/27/14 17 A

-- He was chosen to lead his people after a disputed selection process. He faced a very dangerous world around him. The neighbors were not friendly. His country had some military power, but confronted nations with much greater forces.

-- This description sounds like it could fit many nations and leaders of nations today. But that was precisely the situation that young King Solomon faced. He was not his father's oldest surviving son. He became king because his father had designated him, and it took a while for all the people to accept that.

-- His country was not currently fighting a war, but that could change at any moment. He lived in a volatile part of the world—and it is still volatile 3,000 year later. Witness what is taking place in Gaza now.

-- Any sane person would feel like he was in over his head in such a situation. In his dreams God came to him. Dreams were thought to be powerful at that time. God asked him what he needed.

-- Given his predicament, he could have asked for a stronger military. He could have asked for more economic resources to negotiate deals with his neighbors.

-- But he asked for an understanding heart. He begged for the wisdom to discern right from wrong. He sought God's help in making decisions. He received that, and much more.

-- Whether it's in Israel and Gaza, the Ukraine and Russia, our own country or any other area of the world, today's leaders would do well to learn from young King Solomon's example.

-- All the military might, policy know-how and economic power does a leader little good without wisdom and an understanding heart. The crisis in the Holy Land, for example, cannot be dealt with on a long-term basis without people who understand the legitimate needs of those on the other side.

-- But the gifts of wisdom and understanding are not just necessary for political leaders. Virtually all of us need the same gifts King Solomon asked for.

-- Parents certainly need understanding hearts to make good decisions for the future of their children. People running a business need these gifts to treat their employees fairly and motivate them to be good workers.

-- Teachers need those gifts of Solomon to guide students in a healthy direction in life. And, of course, pastors need wisdom and understanding to oversee and encourage the gifts of parishioners for the building up of the parish and to reach out to the wider community.

-- Whatever responsibilities we have in life, there is nothing better to ask God to give us than an understanding heart. We all need God's wisdom to distinguish right from wrong in the practical circumstances of life.

-- We know how King Solomon did this. When two women came to him, one whose infant had died and one whose child was alive, he was able to make a wise decision.

-- That need for wisdom is an ongoing need. Solomon was better at it as a younger man than as an older man, when the trappings of riches and power tended to blind him.

-- Today we pray that we may continually seek God's wisdom and understanding for the decisions we need to make in life. For that is a gift that no riches on earth can obtain.

-- We only receive it through prayer... with God's help, of course.