

***If You Had One Wish*** – 1 Kings 3:1-14, et al – FMC – 2/7/2010

Why do you do what you do? What drives you?

If you're like King Solomon, you are probably NOT aware of what REALLY shapes and controls your actions.

It's pretty clear he had very little self-knowledge.

Like Solomon, we are usually most conscious of our admirable motivations.

Like Solomon, we think that pleasing God is the reason for what we do.

But also like Solomon, we are often driven by parts of ourselves that lie deeply buried, unacknowledged, covered over.

And when that deeply buried stuff is never brought to the light, it tends to fester, to poison us, to become destructive.

The darker motivations of our hearts—the stuff we don't want to admit is there—tend to push us, pull us, twist us, confuse us, and lead us to bad choices, bad decisions.

And so when things fall apart and life gets confused or hurtful, we wonder, "How could this have happened?  
How did I get myself in this mess?"

The path to wholeness and healing goes through the land of that inner darkness where various dragons dwell.

When we take Jesus with us to that part of ourselves that we are most afraid to see and acknowledge, Jesus brings light, healing, and hope.

The story of Solomon is a tragic one.

It's the story of a man who had it all, who made it to the top.

But it's also the story of a man who was driven by an inner dragon, by inner compulsions, and because he never dealt with it, because he never sought God's help in bringing it to the light, it led this otherwise wise man to destroy himself—and his country.

Why do you do what YOU do?  
Solomon did what HE did because of **FEAR**.

Fear ran in his family.  
When Solomon's daddy, King David, was old and ready to die,  
one of David's other sons, Adonijah, claimed the throne.

Now Adonijah's mother was Haggith, while Solomon's mother was  
Bathsheba.

Bathsheba was full of fear.  
She was afraid that her position of power and wealth would be ruined  
if her son Solomon did not ascend to the throne.  
So she pulled some strings with David, causing Adonijah to be sent  
home and for Solomon to become king.

At first, Solomon promised that his half-brother Adonijah would be  
protected, but soon Solomon became afraid of Adonijah,  
so he had him killed.

But then he became afraid of his #1 military leader, Joab, because Joab  
had conspired with Adonijah.  
Joab knew his life was in danger, so he ran to the temple and grabbed  
the horns of the altar, where safety was supposedly guaranteed.  
But there he was killed.

A bit later, Solomon became afraid of a man named Shimei, who had been  
one of his father David's enemies. So he had HIM killed.

Every time he feared someone, he executed them.  
Why did he do what he did?  
I'm sure in his conscious mind he was thinking nice phrases like  
"national security."  
I'm sure in his conscious mind he was simply preserving the throne of  
his father David from evil enemies.

But the inner dragon was fear.  
When fear is the driver, the road leads to destruction.

It didn't stop there: 1 Kings 3:1 says this:

“Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter.”

God had very specifically forbidden Israel from making foreign alliances. All of the prophets preached that reliance on foreign military alliances for protection and security was the same as rejecting God.

And think for a moment about the irony of Israel making an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt!

But again, Solomon was afraid:  
his kingdom was small and his military was not very powerful.  
He needed more protection, so he looked to Egypt.

Marrying the Pharaoh’s daughter was just part of the package. This was not a love story; it was a high-level political transaction that cemented the relationship between two countries.

Verse 2 of 1 Kings 3 says that the people were still sacrificing at “the high places”, something Solomon also did.

“High places” were the traditional worship places of the Canaanites, whose land Israel was occupying.

“High places” were where you worshipped all the local gods.

Yes, Solomon and his people also worshipped Yahweh, but because of fear that other gods may also have power, they tried to cover all the religious bases.

Why did Solomon divide his worship? Again, it was fear:  
fear that Yahweh wasn’t all he was cracked up to be;  
fear that he might offend a local god,  
fear that his poll numbers would go down if he didn’t worship the local gods,  
fear that one God wasn’t enough,  
fear for his throne, his wealth, his neck.

Which is what makes God’s reaction to Solomon so amazing—  
a truly amazing grace.

It was at one of the Canaanite high places that Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him the question that all of us dream being asked:

“Solomon, ask for one thing, and you can have whatever you want.”

In the very midst of Solomon’s fearful act of worshipping at a site dedicated to gods other than Yahweh, Yahweh gives him a gift.

What would YOU ask for if the Lord appeared to you, like a genie out of a bottle, and granted you one wish—any wish?

And it’s no fair saying: “My one wish is for all my future wishes to be fulfilled.”

Would you wish for a red Ferrari?

To be a better basketball player than Kobe or LeBron or Michael?

To make as much money as Bill Gates?

To be president?

To have peace on earth?

A bunch of national championships for the Huskers?

\$25 milk and \$10 corn?

There was nothing wrong with Solomon’s conscious mind.

In response to God’s invitation, Solomon’s highest and best aspirations came to the forefront, and he asked not for wealth or fame, but for wisdom.

God was very pleased, and gave him not only wisdom, but wealth and fame as well.

The very next story is that famous one about the two women who both claimed that a baby belonged to them.

Solomon figured out which was the real mother by threatening to cut the baby in half, and his reputation as a wise man grew.

With wisdom came fame and wealth.

1 Kings 4 lists Solomon’s chief officials and it outlines his riches:

DAILY, he received 185 bushels of flour, 375 bushels of meal,

10 head of stall-fed cattle, 20 head of pasture-fed cattle,

100 sheep and goats, plus deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl.

Now why does a person accumulate far more than they can possibly need?  
Why does a person flood themselves with food and possessions?

It's fear: fear of running out, fear of going hungry.

It's fear of not having enough.

Fear that someone else might have more.

Fear of not having your needs met.

It gets worse: 4:26 says, "Solomon had 40 thousand stalls for chariot horses and 12,000 charioteers (or horsemen.)"

This was in direct disobedience to God.

To keep chariot horses was a slap in the face of God,

for God had said very clearly, more than once,

that all horses captured in battle were to be hamstrung.

Their hamstrings were ALL to be cut so that they could never be used to make war.

God's model for holy war called for GOD to do all the fighting,  
for Israel to depend on GOD for success, not on their own military strength.

And God's #1 rule of warfare was that Israel was to have NO economic gain from the victory that God would give;  
none—including war horses.

But you see, the dragon in Solomon's basement was fear.

He was afraid, so he kept the horses and did not hamstring them.

Fearful leaders always stockpile weapons,

just as fearful people stockpile old hurts and other people's sins

so that they're ready to fire off at a moment's notice.

Solomon was a bundle of fears, and they undermined his character.

His fears were like a dirty undercurrent,

corrupting the bright purity of his God-given wisdom.

Out of his wisdom he spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs.

Solomon became the world's supreme authority on botany and zoology.

Foreign leaders like the Queen of Sheba traveled far and gave him lavish gifts, just for the privilege of hearing him speak.

But underneath it all, fear festered and grew like a malignancy:

Only a fearful man picks 30,000 men from his own country and forces them into slave labor to build a temple.

Only a fearful man tries to exterminate all the foreigners around him and makes slaves of those he can't exterminate.

Only a fearful man takes 700 foreign wives and keeps a harem of 300 concubines as part of his foreign security system.

Says Chapter 11, verse 3: "And his wives led him astray." Well, duh!

Solomon is a prime example of how the more you have, the more you accumulate, the more you become afraid that somebody is going to take it away from you.

Out of his fear, Solomon built a high place for the detestable god of the Ammonites, Molech, who demanded child sacrifice.

Whenever one of his wives demanded place of worship for her god, Solomon built one.

Fearful people can't say "no."

In the end, God ripped the kingdom from Solomon's hands and divided it, so that never again would there be one throne and one kingdom in Israel.

Solomon's fears corrupted his wisdom.

So I ask again the question with which I began:  
Why do you do what you do?

Do you come to church out of fear of hell?

Do you bake pies for the relief sale out of fear of criticism of others?

Do you stay in your job out of fear?

Do you get involved or stay involved in unhealthy relationships out of fear?

Do you shop out of fear?

Do you accumulate out of fear?

There's a reason why the first words out of the mouths of God's angels are always, "Fear not!"

1 Tim. 1:7 says, "For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."

1 John 4:18 says, "Perfect love casts out fear."

Isaiah 43:1 says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine."

One God is enough.

God invites you to lay aside your desperate attempts to make yourself safe and secure.

God wants to touch your fear and transform it into power and trust.

God wants to enter the dark places that lie beneath the surface and to shine on them the divine light of healing.

And perhaps, if God grants you one wish,  
you may be wise enough to ask that God would remove your  
chains of fear,  
so that the other gifts God has already given you can be used with  
strength, with purity, and with total joy.

Because God is truly God, you need not fear;  
THAT is the Good News.