

An Understanding Heart

Introduction.

- I. In a poll taken years ago the question was asked: "If you could choose, what is the one thing in the world that you need most?" The one thing chosen by most people was money. How would you answer this question? What is the one thing in the world you need most?
- II. About 3,000 years ago Solomon was asked a similar question. (1 Kgs. 3:5-12).

1KI 3:5 In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what {you wish} me to give you."

1KI 3:6 Then Solomon said, "Thou hast shown great lovingkindness to Thy servant David my father, according as he walked before Thee in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward Thee; and Thou hast reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as {it is} this day.

1KI 3:7 "And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.

1KI 3:8 "And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude.

1KI 3:9 "So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?"

1KI 3:10 And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.

1KI 3:11 And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,

1KI 3:12 behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.

A. God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what {you wish} me to give you". (1 Kgs. 3:5).

B. Solomon answered. (1 Kgs. 3:9a).

1. Solomon asked for an understanding heart even above riches and power.
2. This pleased God and He gave Solomon great wisdom and great wealth and great power.

III. This is one of the greatest needs of the world today.

A. We need an understanding heart for others.

B. If we would cultivate this trait it would revolutionize the world in which we live. It would change the nation, the church, the home, and our personal lives.

I. **Toward The Faults Of Others** - We need an understanding heart toward the faults of other people.

- A. Most of us are very tolerant in relation to our own faults, but we are often extremely intolerant and harsh in relation to the faults of others.
- B. We need to be more understanding and tolerant of others.
 - 1. One thing that will make us more tolerant and understanding is to sit where others sit long enough to understand their problems and feelings.
 - a. Lady with 9 children in Wichita who was late to class. She had 9 children and had a hard time getting the children to class on time, but she was trying. She did not deserve the criticism some gave her.
 - b. Preacher in Okla City whose preaching was criticized, but had such a full schedule. He had a hectic schedule with every 30 minute block of time scheduled. Some criticized his lack of preparation for some of his sermons, but the demands the elders and congregation put on him were unbelievable.

Someone has written these familiar lines that we need to frequently read. They are entitled, "Do Not Judge Too Hard."

Pray don't find fault with the man who limps
Or stumbles along the road,
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears
Or struggled beneath his load.

You may be strong, but still the blows
That were his if dealt to you
In the self-same way, at the self-same time,
Might cause you to stagger, too.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt,
Though hidden away from view,
Or the burden he bears, placed on your back,
Might cause you to stumble, too.

Don't be too harsh with the man who sins,
Or pelt him with words or stones,
Unless you are sure, yea, double sure,
That you have no sins of your own

Don't sneer at the man who's down today,
Unless you have felt the blow
That caused his fall, or felt the shame
That only the fallen know.

For you know, perhaps, if the temper's voice
Should whisper as soft to you
As it did to him when he went astray
'Twould cause you to falter, too.

- 2. Another thing that will make us more understanding of the faults of others is the realization that we have faults of our own. (Rom. 3:10; 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8; Jn. 8:1-11).

II. **For The Lost Throughout The World** - We need an understanding heart for the lost throughout the world.

- A. Jesus had an understanding heart for the lost.
 - 1. He came to seek and save the lost. (Lk. 19:10).
 - 2. After He had spent 33 perfect years in the flesh, He did that the lost might be saved.
- B. He taught us to also have an understanding heart for the lost. (Mk. 16:15, 16).
 - 1. One time some **African porters were resting on the bank of a stream**. They saw an African mother with her dearly loved baby on her back trying to cross the stream. The swift waters were too much for her and she and her baby perished. The porters saw them drowning but did not lift a finger to save them. They had no compassion for the perishing.
 - 2. There are many professed Christians, I am ashamed to say, like these porters. They have no compassion for

the perishing. They do not even lift a finger to rescue the precious souls that are perishing throughout the world.

3. **The man with an understanding heart is not like this.** Following the example of Christ, he will go the ends of the earth, if need be, to save the lost. And when he approaches a sinner he does not do it in a “holier-than-thou” spirit but he approaches him with love and understanding realizing that he was once the same position.

III. **For The Aged** - We need an understanding heart for the aged.

- A. Many of our elder citizens spend numerous hours alone. Many are confined to bed or home most or all of the time and most of their lifelong associates have passed into eternity; consequently, their last years are often very lonely ones for them.
- B. We need to spend more time visiting these people. A visit, a card, a call takes so little of our time and yet means so much to them.
- C. A few days ago I saw a **man who had just retired because of health.** He and his wife are spending their time visiting shut-ins. What a fine service. What a fine way to spend one’s retirement years.

IV. **For The Suffering** - We need an understanding heart for the suffering.

- A. One time I read about a **leprous woman** who had lost all her fingers and toes by that dread disease. A missionary lady who saw her put her hand on the woman’s shoulder and asked her to sit down on the grass by her. The woman fell sobbing, overcome by emotion, and cried out. “A human hand has touched me. For seven years no one has touched me.” The missionary said at that moment it flashed across her mind why it is recorded in the gospels that Jesus touched the leper. Jesus did that which no one else would do. Jesus had compassion for the suffering.
- B. This world is filled with people who are suffering and who are longing for our help. As Christians we should do all that is in our power to help these people.
 1. Some years ago I read about a work some of the members of the church were doing in another city. They were devoting time each day to help children with brain damage learn to crawl and eventually walk. Most of these children have hope if someone will extend an understanding heart to them.
 2. This is just one of 10,000 ways we can minister to the suffering.

V. **For The Poor** - We need an understand heart for the poor.

- A. There was a time when the church was made up largely of poor people and it worshiped in the poor section of town. The church has moved into more fashionable neighborhoods and has become more prosperous; consequently, it is easy to forget the poor.
- B. **One time a Christian man called a preacher.** He said, “I have some furniture to give to someone who needs it. Do you know anyone who needs some furniture?” The preacher said, “No.” He said, “I’ll call the Salvation Army.” Here was a Christian man who did not know any poor and he called a gospel preacher who did not know any. Yet he knew somebody who did know the poor - The Salvation Army. The Salvation distributes mountains of clothing, food and furniture while we occasionally give something to the poor.
- C. We usually wait for someone to come by the church building and ask for his needs.
 1. I am afraid we do not have enough friends among the poor. I am afraid we have forgotten the poor in our city and the people in the slums elsewhere.

2. Our beloved Master was not like this. He did most of His work among the poor, the maimed, and the lame. He was not deafened to the cry of human needs, but was sensitive to the needs of man.
3. He has taught us to be the same. (Gal. 2:10; 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17, 18).

VI. For Those In Sorrow - We need an understanding heart for those in sorrow. (Rom. 12:15).

A. Paul said here we are to sympathize with those in grief and sorrow. The words “Weep with those who weep” mean two things.

1. First, they mean we should shed tears with those in sorrow as Jesus did on several occasions.
2. Second, they mean we should do all we can to relieve this sorrow.

B. One night a minister was awakened by a stranger who was calling. His only child, a little girl of 7, had been killed. She had been killed by a truck on the highway. The driver never even knew he had struck the child and had roared on into the distance. The minister went to the man’s house and found him in terrible grief. Without a word, the minister put his arm about the man’s shoulders and said: “Let’s go out.” It was storming, but out into the storm they went. They walked mile after mile along the pitch dark road. No word was spoken. What was there to say? After a long time a deep feeling of comfort and peace came to the man and he said, “Thy will be done.” The presence of the Christian man turned his tears to comfort.

Conclusion.

- I. Yes, it is vital that we be understanding for those in sorrow and others. It is not only important that we have an understanding heart for others, but we need to understand our lost condition before God. It is only through Christ that we can be saved. It is only by His shed blood that we are saved.
- II. Will you accept Christ? Will you be buried with Him in baptism and arise to be a person with an understanding heart for others? Come as we stand and sing.

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