



Asking Wisdom, Leading the People: Solomon's Example for Transformational Leadership Based on 1Kings 3:1–15

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Abstract:

Leadership crises marked by pragmatism and lack of integrity raise the need for a more profound leadership foundation. This study addresses the question: How does Solomon's narrative in 1 Kings 3:1–15 model the four components of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) and what underlying theological dimension does it offer? Using a qualitative method with a hermeneutic and exegetical approach, this research presents an exposition of 1 Kings 3:1–15, followed by an integrative synthesis with transformational leadership theory. The findings reveal that the four pillars of transformational leadership are evident in Solomon's example: idealized influence through humility and dependence on God; inspirational motivation through a vision of justice and shared welfare; intellectual stimulation by making wisdom the paradigm of thinking; and individual consideration through a commitment to justice for the people. Beyond confirming the existing theory, this research identifies a "Transcendental Foundation" as the core that underlies and deepens the four pillars. This foundation is defined as a radical dependence on God manifested through the application of divine wisdom. The result is a transformational theological leadership model in which the leader serves as a conduit for divine wisdom. The "Asking Wisdom, Leading the People" paradigm offers a robust spiritual and ethical foundation for leadership, particularly within religious communities.

Keywords: 1 Kings 3:1-15; Transcendental Foundation; Transformational Leadership; Wisdom

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1. Introduction

Leadership is a constant challenge, both in secular organizations and religious communities.¹ In the midst of the complexity of global problems and the demands of the times, it is often possible to witness a leadership crisis characterized by a lack of integrity, rampant pragmatism, and an absence of wisdom that brings prosperity to many people. Some leaders get caught up in the pursuit of power, wealth, and short-term popularity,

¹ Richard A Hardy, *Leading In A Secular World: Meeting Today ' s Challenges Through Christ Centered Leadership* (Christian Faith Publishing, Inc., 2022).



thus forgetting the essence of leadership itself, which is to serve and advance the people they lead.² In response to this challenge, the world of modern management and leadership science has introduced various models, including transformational leadership. James MacGregor Burns initially proposed this concept, and Bernard M. Bass later developed it.³ Transformational leadership emphasizes the ability of a leader to inspire, motivate, and encourage followers to reach their best potential and work for a greater cause than self-interest. Transformational leaders not only manage the system, but are also able to change the hearts and minds of the people they lead.⁴

However, the application of this transformational leadership concept, born in the secular realm, in the context of religious communities, especially Christians, often faces challenges.⁵ Without a solid foundation of values and spirituality, this concept risks being reduced to just a collection of motivational techniques or psychological manipulation strategies to achieve organizational goals. Such leadership can lose its true soul, which is an authentic and ethical transformation. Therefore, it is very important to find a foundation that can enrich and underlie the concept of transformational leadership with transcendent and enduring values.⁶ This search for a foundation leads to a time-tested source of wisdom, the scriptures.

In the Old Testament, the narrative of King Solomon in 1 Kings 3:1–15 presents a very important and profound moment about the essence of asking and leading.⁷ This story introduces a leadership paradigm that differs from general worldly leadership models. Solomon, who had just ascended the throne in place of his father David, faced the enormous burden of responsibility of leading a people, not just a kingdom.⁸ When the Lord appeared in a dream at Gibeon and made an infinite offer, "Ask what I will give you,"

² Leadership Anika Stuppy and Nicole L Mead, "Heroic Leaders and Despotism Tyrants: How Power and Status Shape Leadership," in *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* (Routledge, 2016), 498–516.

³ Bernard M Bass and M Bass Bernard, *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*, vol. 25 (Free press New York, 1985).

⁴ Tony Bush, "Transformational Leadership: Exploring Common Conceptions," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* (Sage Publications Sage UK: London, England, 2018).

⁵ James Phillip Chaisson, *A Correlational Study of Transformational Leadership Behavior and the Spiritual Growth of Congregants' from Multicultural Churches of Christ in the United States* (Liberty University, 2021).

⁶ Anne Sliwka et al., "Transformational Leadership for Deeper Learning: Shaping Innovative School Practices for Enhanced Learning," *Journal of Educational Administration* 62, no. 1 (2024): 103–21.

⁷ Mogomme Alpheus Masoga, "S Reading the Text of 1 Kings 3: 7-9 as Inspirational Teaching on Leadership to the Modern Church: A Hermeneutical Perspective," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 2 (2023).

⁸ Margaret P Roy, *King Solomon's Empire: The Rise, Fall, and Modern-Day Influence of an Iron-Age Ruler* (Ambassador International, 2022).

Solomon was at a critical point that would determine the direction of his leadership. Worldly choices such as wealth, military success, or longevity lay before him. However, Solomon's response was surprising and wise. Instead of asking for material and personal things, he chose to ask for a "discerning heart" or "wisdom" to distinguish between good and evil and to lead God's people justly and righteously.⁹ This text was chosen because it presents a unique moment in which a leader prioritizes wisdom over personal gain, making it an ideal model for examining the intersection of spiritual values and transformational leadership. Several previous studies have discussed the moral and spiritual values of Solomon's story. Angel explores how Solomon's wisdom can be applied to contemporary spiritual life.¹⁰ Williams and Denney extract practical leadership strategies from Solomon's life.¹¹ Dean examines Solomon's leadership from a phenomenological perspective.¹² However, these studies tend to discuss the moral and spiritual value of Solomon's story without connecting it to the framework of modern leadership science. On the other hand, the leadership science literature on transformational models rarely draws on biblical narratives as a rich and relevant conceptual resource. As a result, Solomon's example is often only an abstract spiritual inspiration, without having a clear operational impact on contemporary leadership practice. This gap between theological reflection and leadership theory forms the basis for the present study.

This study aims to analyze the narrative of Solomon's plea for wisdom in 1 Kings 3:1–15 as a paradigm for transformational leadership. The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify the transformational leadership principles within the text of 1 Kings 3:1–15, and (2) to formulate a theological leadership model based on the narrative. The research problem is formulated as follows: How does Solomon's narrative in 1 Kings 3:1–15 model the four components of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) and what underlying theological dimension does it offer? This question explores how Solomon's humility, his request for wisdom, and his servant-oriented mindset exemplify these leadership traits while also revealing unique elements beyond the standard model.

This research argues that Solomon's example does not merely "confirm" transformational theory but also provides a deeper foundation by adding a crucial

⁹ Jiani Sun, "From Divided Loves to Sacred Desire: Lady Wisdom's Reconciliation in the Wisdom of Solomon," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 2025, 09518207251371629.

¹⁰ Rabbi Marc D Angel, *The Wisdom of Solomon and Us: The Quest for Meaning, Morality and a Deeper Relationship with God* (Jewish Lights Publishing, 2016).

¹¹ Pat Williams and Jim Denney, *Leading with Integrity: The 28 Essential Leadership Strategies of Solomon* (Barbour Publishing, 2015).

¹² Debra J Dean, "Lessons from Solomon for Christian's Today," in *Leadership and Calling Through the Prism of Scripture: A Phenomenological Study of Biblical Leaders* (Springer, 2023), 95–113.

component: a "Transcendental Foundation." In this proposed model, the four leadership pillars are sourced not from personal charisma but from divine wisdom, leading to just and prosperous governance. This study is expected to contribute a deep and spiritually grounded paradigm for leaders, especially in contexts that value spirituality.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a hermeneutic and exegetical approach.¹³ The hermeneutic approach is employed to interpret the meaning of the text of 1 Kings 3:1–15 within its historical and literary context, while the exegetical approach is used to analyze the linguistic and theological elements of the pericope.¹⁴ This methodological framework is chosen because the primary data source of this research is the biblical text itself, specifically 1 Kings 3:1–15, which must be interpreted carefully to extract principles relevant to transformational leadership.

The primary data source is the text of 1 Kings 3:1–15, using the English Standard Version (ESV) as the standard translation for all biblical quotations. Secondary data sources include theological literature, biblical commentaries, and academic works on transformational leadership. All sources cited in this study are classical and contemporary works that have been tested for their scholarly quality. The data collection technique is carried out through documentary studies, which critically examine related texts and literature. Data analysis is carried out in two main stages. First, the exposition of the text is done to understand the literal meaning, historical context, and narrative structure of 1 Kings 3:1–15, focusing on key words such as "a discerning heart" (ESV) and the dynamics of Solomon's plea.¹⁵ Second, integrative synthesis connects the findings of the textual exposition with the components of transformational leadership theory (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) to formulate a transformational theological leadership model grounded in the biblical narrative.¹⁶ Through this approach, this research builds a constructive dialogue between the interpretation of scriptural texts and contemporary leadership theory. This manuscript was originally written in Indonesian, the native language of the author. The author used Deepseek, an artificial intelligence tool, to assist in translating

¹³ Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2022).

¹⁴ Ragil Kristiawan, *Dari Teks Kuno Ke Hidup: Mengenal, Mempraktekkan, Dan Menerapkan Eksegesis Narasi Perjanjian Lama Di Jaman Now* (Solok: Penerbit Mafy, 2026).

¹⁵ John Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2024).

¹⁶ Irfan Ullah Khan, Rooh Ul Amin, and Naveed Saif, "Individualized Consideration and Idealized Influence of Transformational Leadership: Mediating Role of Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation," *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 2022, 1–11.

the manuscript from Indonesian to English. After translation, the author thoroughly reviewed, edited, and verified the entire content to ensure accuracy, coherence, and scholarly integrity. The author takes full responsibility for the final version of this manuscript.

3. Result and Discussion

Three main sections are discussed in this section: the exposition of the text of 1 Kings 3:1–15, Transformational Leadership according to 1 Kings 3:1–15, and Solomon's life as a transformational-theological leadership model.

Exposition of the Text of 1 Kings 3:1–15

Solomon Marries Pharaoh's Daughter (V. 1)

Before discussing how Solomon asked for wisdom, the author of the book provides an introduction that contains Solomon's personal life and the state of the Israelites. This introduction is found in verses 1 to 5. This introductory role is felt important because it provides an overview that can be used as a guide to understand the life of Solomon and the nation of Israel for its readers. Also with this introduction, it will give a thorough view of the text to be discussed, especially to the wise judgment of King Solomon.

At the beginning of his reign, King Solomon became the son-in-law of Pharaoh, king of Egypt (1Ki 3:1, ESV). King Solomon's actions seem to have a negative impression. Marriage to someone outside the nation of Israel was contrary to God's command.¹⁷ God forbade the Israelites to marry other nations because of the tendency of the Israelites to worship other gods (Ex 34:16, ESV; Deut 7:3–4, ESV). This marriage possibly occurred for political reasons. Pfeiffer argues that Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter was to signify that Israel had been in the international arena.¹⁸ This marriage likely showed the Egyptians' submission to Solomon's rule, and such agreements usually took place through marriage. Saxe argues that Solomon's marriage had a positive connotation, namely, that Pharaoh's daughter had agreed to become a new follower of Judaism.¹⁹ Saxe draws this conclusion because Pharaoh's daughter was willing to be brought to the City of David, namely Jerusalem. However, this is not correct. The text provides no information about Pharaoh's daughter, who later became a follower of Judaism. Clarke argues that Solomon's marriage was a political measure to strengthen his kingdom, but God strictly forbade His people to have fellowship with foreign women, lest the foreign woman lead His people

¹⁷ Don C Benjamin, "The Land Rights of Women in Deuteronomy: In Memory of John J. Pilch (1937–2016)," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 47, no. 2 (2017): 67–79.

¹⁸ Charles F. Pfeiffer, *An Outline of Old Testament History* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981).

¹⁹ Grace Saxe, *Studies in First and Second Kings and First and Second Chronicles* (Chicago: Moddy Press, 1939).

away from Him in idolatry²⁰ This opinion agrees that Solomon's marriage was simply to establish relations with other nations and to strengthen his kingdom. However, this is contrasted with God's prohibition against marrying foreigners.

So this marriage suggests that the author of the book wanted to show that the kingdom of Israel had gained an even wider influence through King Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, and that this marriage was politically motivated. On the other hand, the author of the book wants to show that this marriage is a violation of God's own commandment. This marriage also indicates that Solomon disobeyed God. His disobedience continued and culminated in chapter 11, where he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines who took him away from God (1 Ki 11:3, ESV). It is not told in the text that this daughter of Pharaoh brought him into idolatry. This marriage event was the beginning of a continual transgression and one that would lead Solomon into failure.

From this, there is also an indication that the kingdom of Israel was so vast that King Solomon had to ask for wisdom to govern his rapidly developing nation. This development was evident in King Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, which showed the expanding influence of the Israelites. To lead this great nation, wisdom from God is needed so that leadership aligns with God's will.

The Israelites Worship God on the High Place (V. 2)

The Israelites worshipped on the high places. At that time, there was no specific place designated exclusively for worshiping God because the Temple had not yet been built. A special place that is sacred and crucial for the worship of the Israelites is the Temple of God, the dwelling place of God in this world, but it had not yet been constructed. This custom was probably a legacy from the time of the Judges. Gates gives a satisfactory description of this high place, stating that the phrase derives from an ancient Canaanite term meaning "an elevated arena on which are placed instruments of worship."²¹ These high places were regarded as sacred sites for worshiping the Canaanite gods. In the early days of Solomon's reign, these high places were used only to worship the God of Israel and existed only in the region of Gibeon.

The use of the word "only" at the opening of verse 2 in the King James Version ("Only the people sacrificed in high places") indicates the importance of the existence of the unbuilt House of God at that time. The author of the book implicitly wants to show that there is a great contrast in which the nation of Israel in the reign of Solomon is

²⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982).

²¹ John T. Gates, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer & Everett F. Harrison (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2005).

progressing in all fields, but in terms of worship of God, it has not shown satisfactory progress with the unerected house of God as the center of worship of the Israelites. This nation should have a special place to worship God. This opinion is reinforced by the phrase "no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD" (1Ki 3:2, ESV). The importance of the Temple is evident from this narrative, but the construction of the Temple only begins in chapter 5. It is likely that the author of the book wanted to show that the Israelites should prioritize the existence of the Temple as a means of communicating with God and that the existence of the Temple should take precedence over personal interests.

The Life of King Solomon Who Loved God (Vv. 3-5)

In verse 3, the text states that King Solomon loved God deeply by walking in the statutes of David his father (1Ki 3:3, ESV). There are indications that King Solomon fulfilled his own father's final mandate to continue building a relationship with God. God gave Solomon the name Jedidiah, which means beloved of the Lord (2Sam 12:25, ESV). This name turns out not to be meaningless. King Solomon truly loved God, according to the meaning of the name God Himself gave. The dimension of love itself is not limited to the activity of worshiping God Almighty alone. Henry defines that the love that King Solomon had means loving the worship of Him, the love of hearing all that He says, communicating with Him, and having personal fellowship with Him.²² King Solomon has shown all of this by living in all the decrees of his father David.

King Solomon also carried out all of David's decrees. If viewed in the previous context, what Solomon did is clear evidence of all David's messages before he died. Up to the third chapter of the book of 1 Kings, King Solomon was completely obedient to his father's final message (1Ki 2:3-4, ESV). In the preceding context, the meaning of the phrase "the statutes of David" most likely refers to David's last message to Solomon before he died.²³ And when it is connected with David's last commandment to Solomon, then the closest meaning of the expression "the statutes of David" is all of God's statutes, commandments, and regulations written in the law of Moses (1Ki 2:3, ESV). The writer of the book likely wanted to show that on this occasion, King Solomon obeyed the Law of Moses. The obvious proof of Solomon's love for God was his obedience to all His commandments contained in the Law of Moses.

Verse 4 provides evidence of King Solomon's love for God by showing that he offered sacrifices to God. This event took place in Gibeon, which was the place of the high place (1Ki 3:4, ESV). Gates gives an account of this place: before the Temple was built,

²² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on The Whole Bible* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.).

²³ Peter J Leithart, "Counterfeit Davids: Davidic Restoration and the Architecture of 1-2 Kings," *Tyndale Bulletin* 56, no. 2 (2005): 19-33.

Gibeon was a city located in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin (which had belonged to them since the time of Joshua and was the last place of the Tabernacle) that was the center of worship of the Israelites.²⁴ According to Gates, Gibeon was a special place to worship because the house of God had not yet been built. Similarly, Burroughs explained that the first thing Solomon did in public was to erect a building at Gibeon, which was the tabernacle of prayer and the most important place of sacrifice and offerings to God at that time.²⁵

It was not a violation for King Solomon to make an offering at Gibeon because the Temple had not yet been built. It is possible that the author of the book wanted to show one of the weaknesses of Solomon's reign in terms of worship of God, where there was no Temple yet. From this, it can also be concluded that the existence of the Temple was important and urgent for the life of the Israelites at that time.

Wenham gives at least three reasons why there should have been an offering at Gibeon by King Solomon.²⁶ First, the King and the people worshipped there because the Temple had not yet been built. Second, to clear all suspicion of failure from Solomon's life. Third, the author of the book also affirms that Solomon loved Yahweh and walked in David's way of life. This opinion does not seem to contradict the facts contained in the narrative. Again, the Temple's existence was one of the reasons for the offering at Gibeon. Possible suspicion of the failure of Solomon's reign was also evident where there was no Temple. In fact, the existence of the Temple had been prophesied long before by God Himself to David. Solomon had ruled Israel, but the Temple was not built immediately. This incident at Gibeon also proves that Solomon loved God. He did not love only a thousand burnt offerings to be offered to God Almighty. His love was proven through the sacrifice of a thousand burnt victims at Gibeon.

Verse 5 records that God responded to King Solomon's offering by coming to Gibeon. The way the LORD appeared to King Solomon was not through theophany in the form of the appearance of the Angel of God, but He appeared to King Solomon through a dream (1Ki 3:5, ESV). The revelation of God through dreams was a natural occurrence in Old Testament times because God often used dreams to communicate with His people. God was still pleased to come to Solomon even though he was making an offering on the high place. This act of God coming to Solomon at the high place is not contrary to the nature of God Almighty, who always responds to His people regardless of place, because God is not limited by place. In this regard, Davidson argues that God always responds to

²⁴ Gates, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

²⁵ P. E. Burroughs, *Biblical History* (Jakarta: Lembaga Literatur Baptis, 1979).

²⁶ G. J. Wenham, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1970).

His people in the circumstances in which they are.²⁷ God Almighty was pleased to meet the king on the high place, even though, for some previous generations, high places were seen as very bad. This opinion is very apt to describe God Almighty. God never looks at places. God Almighty is pleased to be present without ever being limited by time and space.

King Solomon's Request for God's Wisdom (Vv. 6–8)

In verse 6, God's presence brought great joy to King Solomon. Through His word, God offered King Solomon what he wanted. This word of God contains great hope for King Solomon. All of God's words will surely be fulfilled by Him because God never breaks promises. King Solomon had a golden opportunity to ask for the most desirable thing in his life. Moreover, King Solomon did not waste this opportunity; he made his request.

King Solomon's response did not immediately raise his plea to God. The first thing he did was to praise God (1Ki 3:6, ESV). The essence of King Solomon's praise is gratitude for God's great and unending love. King Solomon recalled His loyal love for his father, David. King David was able to enjoy God's loyal love because he lived faithfully, righteously, and honestly toward God. It seems that King Solomon wanted to remind God of His deeds to David, and this happened because of David's attitude, which gave a good response by living faithfully, righteously, and honestly. God Almighty never forgets all His deeds. Perhaps Solomon's intention in reminding God of His faithfulness was to provide a strong foundation for him to continue asking God for wisdom. God's love was also evident in Solomon's accession to the kingship of Israel, in accordance with His promise to David.

Verse 7 reveals that the second thing Solomon reminded himself of was his position as king. Solomon realized that his position was a gift from God alone. The phrase "I am but a little child" (1Ki 3:7, ESV) likely shows how King Solomon was not yet ready to lead his great people. Solomon's unreadiness to be king for Israel is reinforced by the phrase "I do not know how to go out or come in" (ESV). According to Cook, these two phrases are a form of hyperbole.²⁸ Hyperbole is an exaggerated expression or allusion to obtain a certain effect. Jamieson argues that it was not a matter of age, for he had reached maturity and was about twenty years of age, but he was inexperienced and raw in matters of government.²⁹ This opinion is correct because Solomon had never been involved in politics before. Solomon said this to the Lord to give the effect that he really needed wisdom to rule God's elect.

Verse 8 shows that in his plea, King Solomon again expressed his inability to lead

²⁷ & E. F. Kevan F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, *Modern Biblical Interpretation Vol., 1 Genesis-Esther* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1982).

²⁸ F. C. Cook, *The Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981).

²⁹ Robert Jamieson, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.).

the people. He led a great people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude (1Ki 3:8, ESV). Here, King Solomon uses a hyperbole. King Solomon wanted to contrast his very young, limited-experience existence with that of the nation he led. Humanly, King Solomon felt incapable of carrying out this great responsibility. According to Cook, the use of the phrase "a great people, that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude" refers to the promise made by God to Abraham, especially in Genesis 13.³⁰ From the perspective of systematic theology, that answer is valid. The realization of God's promises is indeed real in this narrative. The nation of Israel had grown and multiplied during the reign of King Solomon. However, the focus of this narrative is not on the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. The context does not allude to God's promise to Abraham. The text was likely more focused on showing King Solomon's inability to lead the nation of Israel than on showing the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

What King Solomon Asked For: Wisdom (V. 9)

In verse 9, King Solomon expresses his true desire to God. He asked for "an understanding heart" from God Almighty (1Ki 3:9, ESV). In the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the word "heart" comes from the word לֵב (*lēb*). The use of this word does not refer to the literal meaning of the internal organs of humans. Johnson interprets לֵב (*lēb*) as an "intellectual activity," that is "understanding".³¹ Berkouwer interprets לֵב (*lēb*) as "intellectual activity, perception, and knowledge," that is "mind".³² So in this case, the use of the term לֵב (*lēb*) refers to the understanding and thought that comes from God Himself, so that he can judge the great nation of Israel. From this it is also said that לֵב (*lēb*) can be interpreted as wisdom itself.

This request was motivated by his inability to lead the great nation of Israel as described in verses 7 and 8 (1Ki 3:7–8, ESV). Regarding this, Costable argues that Solomon asks for an understanding heart directed to the voice of God so that he could lead Israel as God wanted the nation to be led by him.³³ He acknowledged his dependence on God by referring to himself as a servant of God (1Ki 3:7–8, ESV). A recent study confirms that wisdom in Solomon's context is not merely intelligence but a comprehensive divine gift

³⁰ Cook, *The Bible Commentary*.

³¹ A. R. Johnson, *New Bible Dictionary: Third Edition*, ed. D. R. W. Wood (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1996).

³² G. C. Berkouwer, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol II: E-J*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997).

³³ Cleon Louis Rogers III, *An Exegetical and Theological Study of Proverbs 8* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991).

that serves as the foundational blessing for his leadership.³⁴ This opinion sees King Solomon as a servant of God because God Himself has chosen Solomon to lead His people. As a limited servant, Solomon had made the right choice by asking for an understanding heart. This choice proves that Solomon was a limited man, still very dependent on God. Wisdom was indispensable to King Solomon. The wisdom literature of Solomon's time and the post-exile period shows the need for wisdom (Prov 8:11–36; Eccl 12:9–11).³⁵

God's Answer to Solomon's Request for Wisdom (Vv. 10–15)

In verse 10, the request for wisdom in the form of an understanding heart led God to answer King Solomon's request. God never breaks a promise, and He keeps His word to King Solomon's request. God's response to this request was positive. The phrase "It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this" (1Ki 3:10, ESV) indicates that God agreed with King Solomon's request.

Verse 11 shows that God was pleased with what King Solomon asked. God's words spoken to King Solomon in verse 11 are evidence of God's approval of his decisions. As a king, usually what is sought is a long life to be able to enjoy the power in his hands. In addition, another thing asked for may be greater respect for the wealth of other nations, or for the lives of enemies, so that the kingdom he leads does not experience a coup. However, King Solomon did not ask for all these things, even though many sought them. He emphasized wisdom in the form of understanding to decide the law in order to serve the people he leads well. (1Ki 3:11, ESV). King Solomon was more concerned with the interests of the nation he led than just pursuing his own interests. It was this attitude that God praised and admired so that King Solomon's request was "good in His eyes" (NET Bible).

Verse 12 states that not only did God see that King Solomon's request was good, but God Himself also granted it. In the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the word used in this verse is הִנֵּה (*hinneh*), an interjection that means "behold" or "see".³⁶ This expression proves that God granted King Solomon's request in accordance with His will. The use of the word הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) is repeated in this verse and it indicates that the proof of God's word to King Solomon is important. God never reneges on His own promises that He has spoken. King Solomon did receive "a heart full of wisdom and understanding" from God in accordance with His promise (1Ki 3:12, ESV). Even God Himself affirms that there will be no one else who equals Solomon's wisdom. This is a privilege given by God Himself to King Solomon that no one can surpass the wisdom possessed by him.

³⁴ Ragil Kristiawan, "Hikmat Sebagai Berkah Dan Fondasi Pemerintahan Salomo: Sebuah Kajian Teologis-Historis," *SERVITA DEI: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2026): 122–40.

³⁵ Gates, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

³⁶ John Joseph Owens, *Analitical Key to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992).

Verse 13 explains that in addition to giving wisdom to King Solomon, God also gave him gifts in the form of wealth and glory (1Ki 3:13, ESV). This gift from God is purely a gift and does not require any conditions that King Solomon had to meet. Perhaps God's purpose in bestowing wealth and glory was to bring honor to Solomon's reign. Wood argues that Solomon's later life illustrates the fulfillment of God's word of grace.³⁷ Wood's argument is in accordance with the biblical record that King Solomon lived in wealth and glory. It is evidenced by the establishment of the magnificent Temple, the magnificent king's palace, and the visit of the queen of the land of Sheba which shows how rich and magnificent Solomon's reign was (1Ki10:1–13, ESV).

Verse 14 records that God also promised King Solomon longevity. This gift of God Almighty is a conditional gift. King Solomon would have a long life if he walked in God's ways, keeping His statutes and commandments (1Ki 3:14, ESV). The reference used as a measure is David's life. The reference is not too heavy to implement. The reference is the life of his own father, who is also an ordinary human being. The standards given are not a perfect standard of God, which is difficult for humans to achieve. Regarding this, McGee argues that the standard, as previously indicated, is David.³⁸ David's life is the standard of a human, and it is not very high. However, actually, few of the kings could meet that standard. King Solomon should have been able to do this because the measure given was not too heavy to obtain God's promise of longevity.

Verse 15 states that King Solomon woke up and realized that what he had experienced was a dream (1Ki 3:15, ESV). Devries argues that dreams are a form of revelation; they will definitely have an effect and become real.³⁹ This opinion is true. The dream that King Solomon had was not an ordinary dream. Such a dream is God's way of communicating with Solomon. And everything that happens in it will definitely be real. Solomon had wisdom that could be used to judge God's people and bring glory to his rule.

Furthermore, verse 15 also describes that King Solomon soon returned to Jerusalem and the first thing he did there was to stand before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. In front of the ark, King Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. King Solomon also held a banquet for all his servants (1Ki 3:15, ESV). The sacrificial offerings given were a form of his gratitude to God Almighty. King Solomon also shared his blessings with all his servants as a form of joy. Moreover, all the servants also felt the same joy that King Solomon experienced. Gratitude is not only given to God Almighty, but

³⁷ Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976).

³⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (Pasadena, California: Nelson Inc. Publisher, 1982).

³⁹ Simon J. Devries, *12 Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. John D. W. Watts (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1985).

also to Solomon's subordinates, so that they feel the joy that Solomon also felt. This discussion concludes that the wisdom possessed by King Solomon was purely from God. As a sign of Solomon's gratitude for the wisdom he had gained, he offered sacrifices to God and gave a banquet for his servants.

Transformational Leadership According to 1 Kings 3:1–15

Based on an in-depth exposition of 1 Kings 3:1–15, the narrative of Solomon's plea for wisdom is not just a historical record, but offers a deep and relevant paradigm of leadership. This paradigm is aligned with the essence of transformational leadership, which aims to inspire and empower followers to achieve higher collective goals.⁴⁰ Through textual analysis, a transformational leadership model can be formulated based on theology, in which the application and acceptance of divine wisdom serve as the foundation that transforms all dimensions of a leader's leadership. This model is evident in the way the narrative fleshes out and deepens the four key components of transformational leadership.

The Ideal Influence Founded on Humility and Dependence on God

Transformational leaders serve as role models who are admired, respected, and trusted by their followers.⁴¹ They exercise their ideal influence not through coercive power, but through the strength of character and ethical values they live. In this narrative, Solomon demonstrates this in a way that is very unique and counterintuitive for a king of his day. His ideal influence actually starts from the recognition of his own limitations. Solomon's words in verse 7, "I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in" (1Ki 3:7, ESV), are not a sign of weakness, but the foundation of his moral strength. By openly acknowledging immaturity and lack of experience before God and before his people, Solomon built an authentic and humble model of leadership.⁴²

This ideal influence is strengthened by his pure motivation. His request for "an understanding mind to govern your people" and "to discern between good and evil" in verse 9 is driven not by personal ambition, but by a commitment to serve God's chosen people, whom he describes as "a great people, too many to be numbered" in verse 8. He chose not to ask for the longevity, wealth, or life of his enemies, which are symbols of a king's personal power and security. This choice, which the author of the book judged as "pleased the Lord" (in the BHS considered "good in His eyes") suggests that his character is ideally centered on service and collective well-being. Thus, Solomon's ideal influence stemmed from his integrity which was reflected in the harmony between his humble

⁴⁰ Kimberly Mudd-Fegett and Helen K Mudd, "Transformational Leadership," in *Transformational Learning in Social Work and Human Services Education* (IGI Global, 2024), 63–83.

⁴¹ Angela Lumpkin, "Leaders of Character Model Values-Based Leadership," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership* 16, no. 2 (2023): 16.

⁴² Williams and Denney, *Leading with Integrity: The 28 Essential Leadership Strategies of Solomon*.

confession before God and his altruistic motivation for the people.⁴³ This transforms the concept of ideal influence from a mere personal charisma to a charisma built on honesty, humility, and selfless dedication.

Inspirational Motivation through the Vision of Justice and Shared Welfare

Transformational leaders are able to articulate a compelling and inspiring vision, which motivates followers to transcend their personal interests.⁴⁴ Solomon's vision is clearly revealed in his request in verse 9: that he may "discern between good and evil" (1Ki 3:9, ESV). This vision is not about military conquest or the material grandeur of the kingdom, but about just and wise governance. This vision of a government based on divine wisdom and justice is a source of great inspiration for a nation.⁴⁵ The vision promises a social order in which everyone is treated fairly, and important decisions are made on discretion, not arbitrariness.

Furthermore, this vision is inclusive and service-oriented. The phrase "your people" repeated by Solomon in verses 8 and 9 (1Ki 3:8–9, ESV) shows that he viewed his people not as his own, but as God's people. His position as a leader is that of a representative or servant entrusted to lead God's people. This theocentric perspective elevates his leadership motivation to a higher level. He is not only leading for political stability, but to fulfill the divine call to nurture the community that God loves. Thus, Solomon inspires by presenting a noble purpose that transcends himself and his era, a vision of leadership as a sacred service for the common good.

Intellectual Stimulation by Making Wisdom a Paradigm of Thinking

Transformational leaders challenge outdated assumptions, encourage creativity, and stimulate their followers to think critically and solve problems in new ways.⁴⁶ Although this narrative does not directly describe Solomon interacting with his advisers, his plea for a "discerning heart" or wisdom is essentially a request for the highest intellectual capacity and moral discretion. Wisdom in the Old Testament context is not just intelligence, but the ability to apply knowledge and understanding in complex life

⁴³ Angel, *The Wisdom of Solomon and Us: The Quest for Meaning, Morality and a Deeper Relationship with God*.

⁴⁴ Pushpa Gupta, "Transformational Leadership: Inspiring Change and Innovation," *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 14, no. 2 (2025): 504–9.

⁴⁵ Emerson B Powery, "Wisdom of Solomon," *The Apocrypha: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, 2016, 979.

⁴⁶ Stig Ytterstad and Johan Olaisen, "Learning Transformational Leadership," *Palgrave Macmillan* 10 (2023): 973–78.

situations to make correct and fair decisions.⁴⁷

By asking for wisdom, Solomon essentially established a new paradigm for government. He replaced a leadership model that relied on military power or economic wealth with a model that prioritized moral considerations, justice, and practical wisdom. This action itself is a powerful intellectual stimulus for the entire system of government. His legendary decision to settle the dispute between two women (1Ki 3:16–28, ESV) is a clear testimony to how this wisdom stimulates creative and just problem-solving, which brings respect to all his people (1Ki 3:28, ESV).⁴⁸ By making wisdom a core value, Solomon created an environment that encourages critical thinking and innovative solutions, because the basis of every policy and decision is the search for what is right and wise, not just what is profitable or easy.

Individual Consideration Reflected in Commitment to Justice for the People

Transformational leaders act as coaches or mentors who provide individualized attention to their followers, understand their unique needs, and help them to thrive.⁴⁹ In the context of Solomon presiding over a large kingdom, "individual consideration" may not be applicable in a narrow, personal sense. However, its essence lies in Solomon's deep commitment to ensuring justice for every individual within his jurisdiction. His request to "discern between good and evil" in verse 9 (1Ki 3:9, ESV) on a practical level means the ability to listen, understand, and decide each person's case carefully and fairly.

When a leader is committed to leading with wisdom and justice, it is essentially the highest consideration for every member of his society. Every citizen, from the most respected to the most humble, is guaranteed to be listened to and treated fairly. Solomon's commitment to be a king who could "judge" such a great people as stated in verses 8 and 9 (1Ki 3:8–9, ESV) shows that he was aware of his responsibility to the welfare of each individual who made up the nation. By invoking wisdom for this task, he showed that he would not lead with a crude and general policy, but with attention to the details and complexity of every situation that required justice.⁵⁰ Thus, Solomon's leadership fulfilled the spirit of individual consideration by guaranteeing that each person, as an individual, would receive a wise and fair decision.

Solomon: A Transformational-Theological Leadership Model

⁴⁷ Katharine Dell, "Wisdom in the Old Testament", *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2024.

⁴⁸ Moshe Garsiel, "Revealing and Concealing as a Narrative Strategy in Solomon's Judgment (1 Kings 3: 16-28)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2002): 229-47.

⁴⁹ Primadi Candra Susanto and Ni Nyoman Sawitri, "Coaching, Mentoring, Leadership Transformation and Employee Engagement: A Review of the Literature," *Dinasti International Journal of Education Management & Social Science* 7, no. 2 (2022).

⁵⁰ Dean, "Lessons from Solomon for Christian's Today."

Based on the text's exposition and in-depth synthesis with transformational leadership theory, it can be concluded that the narrative of 1 Kings 3:1–15 not only records historical events, but offers a distinctive and theological model of transformational leadership. This model places the Transcendental Foundation, which is a radical dependence on God manifested through the application of divine wisdom, as the central core that affects, shapes, and deepens all dimensions of leadership. In this paradigm, transformational leadership does not start from overconfidence or personal vision, but rather from an honest recognition of human limitations and a search for a source of wisdom that transcends the self.

The ideal influence in Solomon's model is built not on a dazzling personal charisma, but on a charisma of humility and moral integrity. His confession in verse 7, "I am but a little child" (1Ki 3:7, ESV), is actually the source of his credibility and trust, because he leads with honesty and sincerity. The inspirational motivation he showed stemmed from a divine vision of justice and well-being for all of God's people. His request for a "discerning heart" to distinguish between good and evil in verse 9 (1Ki 3:9, ESV) is an inspiring noble vision, because it centers on the enforcement of justice for the community, not on personal glory. Furthermore, the intellectual stimulation in his leadership is driven by divine wisdom itself. This wisdom enables problem-solving that is not only creative and intelligent, but also ethical and in accordance with the principles of truth, as evidenced by his wise decisions (1Ki 3:16-28, ESV). Finally, his commitment to lead a great people justly is a tangible manifestation of individual consideration. By asking for the ability to judge righteously, Solomon was essentially committed to caring for and providing justice for each individual within his area of responsibility.

Therefore, according to Solomon's example, transformational leadership is essentially leadership that begins and is driven by deep spirituality. He transforms not solely through the power of character, vision, or personal intellect, but also by serving as a conduit of wisdom and divine values for the people he leads. The transformational leader in this model serves as a link between the source of transcendent wisdom and the immanent needs of his community. This model is an invaluable paradigm for contemporary leadership, especially in religious contexts, as it offers spiritual depth and a solid ethical foundation for the entire transformation process. This model reminds us that true leadership, which can transform and uplift a community, is rooted in the humility to depend on the Source of Wisdom himself.

4. Conclusion

This research has analyzed the narrative of Solomon's plea for wisdom in 1 Kings 3:1–15 as a paradigm for transformational leadership. The four components of transformational leadership are manifested in Solomon's example: idealized influence

through humility and recognition of limitations (1Ki 3:7, ESV), inspirational motivation through a divine vision of justice and welfare (1Ki 3:9, ESV), intellectual stimulation through divine wisdom enabling creative and ethical problem-solving (1Ki 3:16–28, ESV), and individual consideration through commitment to justice for each individual within his leadership (1Ki 3:8, ESV). Beyond confirming the existing theory, this research identifies a "Transcendental Foundation" that underlies and deepens the four pillars, namely a radical dependence on God through the invocation of divine wisdom. In Solomon's model, transformational leadership does not come from one's own ability, but rather from being a conduit for wisdom and divine values. The leadership paradigm of "Asking Wisdom, Leading the People" offers a solid ethical and spiritual foundation for the transformation process, reminding that true leadership begins with humility to depend on the Source of Wisdom.

For future research, it is recommended that scholars explore other Old Testament narratives depicting leadership transitions, such as the leadership of Moses, Joshua, or David, through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Comparative studies between different biblical leaders could further enrich the understanding of how theological foundations shape effective and ethical leadership. Additionally, empirical research within religious organizations could test the applicability of the Transcendental Foundation model proposed in this study.

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