

“Joash: We Need Godly Influencers”

2 Chronicles 24

It's been interesting to see over this summer in our study of the good kings in 2 Chronicles that with each king there seems to be a different focus, something the Chronicler wants the readers to make note of. The original audience of the Chronicles was the generation of Israelites who returned to the land of Israel after the Babylonian exile. Chronicles is a retelling of the history of Israel from David to the end of the Babylonian exile to the generation of Israelites who returned to Israel (most of whom were born in Babylon) who now needed to learn how to worship God as God prescribed in His Word in their own land with the temple.

So the Chronicler will focus on the highlights of the kings of Judah so that the people would learn what pleased God then so they can please God now as they have returned to the land of Israel. So if we learn to read Chronicles through the eyes of a returned exile we too will learn what sins not to make that got them into trouble and how to walk with God through His Word so that we can experience His blessing of peace.

Last week we looked at Jehoshaphat in ch's 17-20. He was a good king who most of his life walked with God but made the unwise decision of arranging a marriage with his oldest Jehoram and the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, the wicked king and Queen of the northern kingdom, Israel. Jehoram was an evil man and at his death we read in 21:20 that he passed away to no one's regret and they refused to bury him with other kings of David's descent.

His son Ahaziah takes over and lasts all of 1 year. We read that his mother Athaliah “*encouraged him in doing wrong*” (22:4). God sends the prophet Elisha to anoint Jehu to become the north's new king and to go and put Joram (Israel's present king) to death. Ahaziah is visiting Joram at the time and God sees to it that both kings are put to death because both are evil. Jehu becomes king of the north but Athaliah, Ahaziah's wicked mother, goes on a rampage and has all the other sons of Jehoram killed so she can take over the throne herself. And she succeeds – so she thinks.

Jehoram's daughter Jehosheba takes Ahaziah's son Joash (her younger brother and Athaliah's grandson) and hides him in the temple for 6 years with the help of her husband the high priest Jehoiada. In ch. 23 when Joash turns 7, Jehoiada the high priest makes his move. He secures the support of the Levites and priests and presents Joash as the rightful king, crowning him and giving him a copy of the law –in obedience to Deut. 17. And they blow trumpets and make a huge thing of this because there is still a surviving descendent of David through Jehoshaphat to take the throne.

Well Grandma Athaliah she flips a curler or two and tears her robes and shouts ‘treason, treason’ – which is ridiculous because she's the one whose guilty of treason. Jehoiada the high priest who's in charge calls for her arrest and has her killed while escaping the city. Jehoiada then orders the temple cleaned of all stuff relating to Baal worship, and has the priest of Baal put to death. He and the people have a covenant renewal ceremony and puts the temple and the priests and the Levites and doorkeepers all back where they are supposed to be according to the Word of God.

So ch. 24 begins with,
Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. ²Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest.

That sounds rather ominous – and it should because the life of Joash has two distinct parts: the years when he walked with God and years he didn't walk with God. And the key to the years he walked with God was Jehoiada who influenced Joash to stay close to God.

And that's the focal point of this chapter; the difference between godly influencers and ungodly influencers in our lives. We need godly influencers in our lives so we will do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. We need to be godly influencers to our spouses, children, siblings and friends so they will do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. What does a godly influencer look like? This is what we can learn from Jehoiada.

GODLY INFLUENCERS

Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba raised Joash. When you put the parallel account from 2 Kings 12 and here you understand Jehoiada was over 100 years old when they took Joash in. He lived to be 130. This very young centenarian had a significant influence on Joash. How was he a godly influence to Joash?

He pointed him to God's Word (vv.1-2)

How do we know? Because Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days Jehoiada lived. Jehoiada followed God's Word and since Joash pleased God he obviously obeyed God's word. Jehoiada and Jehosheba taught and shared and modelled the Word of God to Joash. That's the kind of godly influencers we need in our lives. Our closest relationships should be with those who keep us pointed to God's Word.

Notice however, the change that happens when Jehoiada dies. V. 17 says,

¹⁷After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. ¹⁸They abandoned the temple of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God's anger came on Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁹Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.

V. 17 records Joash abandoning the temple all because he listened to these other officials. They were not godly influencers. Godly influencers point you to God's Word while

UNGODLY INFLUENCERS

Point us away from God's Word (vv.17-19)

We see this quite clearly in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Paul was there. He taught them from God's Word. They were doing well when he left. Then other Jewish teachers slipped in and started teaching things contrary to what the word says. To the point where Paul says in Gal. 1:6,

^{1:6}I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

^{5:7}You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? ⁸That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹"A little yeast works through the

*whole batch of dough.*¹⁰ *I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty.*

A little yeast works through a whole batch of dough. It's those little suggestions that slowly loosen us from the anchor of God's Word. Sometimes it's a Christian spouse or relative or friend who suggests skipping worship, Sunday school, bible study, a fellowship gathering. What are they doing? They are pulling us away from growing in the Word! You've invited some non-Christian friends or family over for dinner. Your spouse whispers to you 'Don't pray for the meal, we don't want to offend our guests.' You're at school and there's an advertised Christian event and your Christian friend says to you 'You're not going to that are you?' We're all guilty of it at different times because none of us are perfect, but do your closest relationships help point you to God's Word or away from God's Word? And, what is our tendency ourselves? Are we more inclined to point our spouse, child, relative to God's Word when they are struggling to make a decision or are we often silent – which is no different than being an ungodly influencer because we didn't point them to God's Word.

Sadly Joash didn't grow enough in the Lord to be the influencer; he allowed himself to be influenced by ungodly people. We need Jehoiada's in our life, but even more important, we need to be the Jehoiadas.

What else do godly influencers like Jehoiada do?

They give wise counsel on relationships (v.3)

While its only one verse, v.3 is quite significant for Joash.

³ *Jehoiada chose two wives for him, and he had sons and daughters.*

Before we quickly criticize Jehoiada for finding 2 wives for Joash we have to remember the culture. David and Solomon and other kings of Israel had numerous wives while Jehoiada encouraged Joash to have only two. Okay, why two then? Because Joash was the only male descendent of the line of David. It is important that he produce sons – and he does. Telling us that God is blessing. This is wise counsel for the time. We can only assume Jehoiada chose godly women for Joash. Since the text suggests the blessing of God we are probably right to assume these were good women.

Once Jehoiada is gone however, Joash's new advisors give ungodly counsel that . . .

Destroys relationships (vv.20-22)

²⁰ *Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the LORD's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'"* ²¹ *But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's temple. ²² King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah's father Jehoiada had shown him but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, "May the LORD see this and call you to account."*

This was Jehoiada's and Jehosheba's son! The people who spared his life, who were directly responsible for him having the kingship! But because of ungodly influencers Joash killed Zechariah.

Do you have someone in your life who gives you wise counsel about who are good friends and not so good friends? About unhealthy relationships with friends or family? Do we listen when godly people point you to God's Word about unhealthy relationships in our life? Or are some of the closest

people to you encouraging you to abandon or even hurt those who have influenced you for God? Think seriously about the effects those you are closest to have on you. Are they healthy relationships or poisonous relationships? Do they point you away from God's Word or to God's Word? Do they build people up or tear people down? And again, what about ourselves? Are we strengthening good relationships or destroying relationships by our attitudes and words? Do people come to us for wise counsel or do they avoid asking us?

The other thing Godly Influencers do that we can take away from Jehoiada is that Godly influencers . . .

Keep us God-Centered (vv.4-16)

Under Jehoiada's influence Joash wants to repair the temple. The temple was the house of God that God allowed Solomon to build in splendour as a testimony to the greatness of God to the nations around them. But during Athaliah's reign Baal worship and other idol worship was allowed in God's house. So the first thing Joash needed to have done to make it God-centered again was to . . .

Correct errors (v.7)

Athaliah had broken into the temple and used its sacred objects (table of incense and bronze altar most likely) to worship Baal. He wanted to restore it so that it is God-centered not idol centered. This will cost money so he orders the Levites and priests to go to the towns and collect the annual half-shekel temple tax (instructed by Moses and presumably not been taken for a while) so that they can rebuild the temple. So in fixing the temple what is Joash doing for those who work at the temple?

Encouraging God's servants (vv.4-6)

Certainly the Levites and priests were not happy with what Athaliah had done to the temple. Their job was to make God the focus. This is good. They are going to get things back the way they should be. Except the Levites and priests are reluctant to go door to door collecting the required shekel. Why? When you read Ex. 30:11-16, and especially v.16, this money was used for the service for the tabernacle/temple. In other words it was how the Levites and priests were essentially paid. While they were encouraged that the repairs to the temple were going to happen, they were reluctant to collect the required offering that was supposed to be their pay but instead it was going toward the repair fund. And if you read the parallel account in kings, the priests were expected to do the repairs themselves.

And according to 2 Kings 12 it is Jehoiada who makes the chest and suggests that people be encouraged to give a freewill offering. So why does the Chronicler say it was Joash's idea? Because the Chronicler is trying to show the kings in a positive light so that the returned exiles would look for a wise godly leader to rule over them. And the order would have come ultimately through Joash anyway.

So, the people are glad to give freely and directly to the temple restoration fund – to the point where they had money left over. Does that ring a bell? Sure. When Moses collected for the first tabernacle and David for the temple that Solomon would build the people gave freely and wholeheartedly. The hesitation on the priest's part led to Jehoiada guiding Joash to not just encourage those in ministry but to . . .

Empower his servants (vv.8-14)

All God's servants. Now the people had ownership because they gave freely and saw that God's house was going to be restored. And they hired masons and carpenters to do the work and not expecting the Levites and priests to do it all. When God is made the focus the people get on board.

But once Jehoiada passes away, Joash listens to ungodly influencers who lead him to

Abandon God as their Center (vv.23-26)

Joash became an ungodly influencer himself. In v.24 we read "*Because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, judgment was executed on Joash.*" When Joash stopped correcting the theological errors around him and forsook God he . . .

Received the consequences of his own errors (vv.23-24)

Judah forsook God because their leader forsook God. He directly influenced them to forsake God. Were the people responsible themselves for their own relationship with God? Of course they were just as you and I are. But, we do not realize the significance of our own influence on others. Many Christians will choose their own levels of obedience based on the influence of others. In Romans 14 the apostle Paul gives specific teaching on what 'strong' brothers and sisters should do when 'weaker' brothers and sisters are around them.

God allows the Arameans to attack Judah. As a result Joash is wounded – a direct consequence because of his disobedience. His officials then conspire against him for murdering Jehoiada's son Zechariah and murdered Joash. Why?

Lost the respect of his servants (vv.25-27)

That's an obvious understatement but we're trying to apply it. Joash's forsaking God caused him to lose respect with those who served him. And as a result no one wanted to be influenced by him anymore. He had nothing to offer anyone. They didn't even bury him with the other kings from the line of David.

The returned exiles were back in their land. When you read Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah, it wasn't easy. There were lots of people outside Israel but also a few inside Israel who influenced some to forget this command from God to rebuild the temple and rebuild Jerusalem. Look after your own house first (Haggai). You'll never restore the temple like it used to be so why bother? (Ezra). Jerusalem restored to its glory? Don't bother (Nehemiah). Return to me and I will return to you (Zechariah).

You and I are influencers, whether we realize it or not. Do we point people to God and His Word or away from God and His Word by our actions and speech? Do people want to be around us because we build them up, or have we not noticed how few friends we have because people find us too negative or gloomy? We need to keep God at the center of our lives so we can influence others to do the same.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please contact us
at olivet@rideau.net