

Lessons from the Life of a King

2 Chronicles 34

Elder Smith Quentin, June 23, 2019

I want to say sincerely today that it is a privilege to stand before you and open the Word of God together formally for the first time as one of your elders. This is a privilege that is something that I hope we never forget. I hope we never get tired of doing this.

I have four different news apps on my phone, and I have no idea why, because reading the news is seldom edifying, isn't it? We can be tempted to look at our world and become discouraged with its brokenness. We can lament about how bad things are and how things are changing. And frankly, we feel somewhat powerless to stem that tide, and that can be discouraging.

But the times in which we live are really no different to times in the past. No matter what the circumstances or times we live in, God is not necessarily calling us to change our culture, but to cultivate faithfulness in our own lives, and to make a decision to live for Him sincerely and righteously and let Him determine the extent of our influence. That's our calling. And to illustrate this, I want to look at the life of Josiah in Second Chronicles 34, the passage that was read to us by Stan.

There are many boys who want to grow up and be just like dad. To them, their dads are their heroes and they want to grow up and be just like them. It wasn't that way for Josiah.

After Solomon's reign ended in 931 BC, Israel was divided. God tore the kingdom away from Solomon because of his sin, that his heart had been drawn away by his multiple wives and concubines. And the northern kingdom was formed with ten tribes and the southern kingdom was formed with two tribes; Judah and Benjamin. The northern kingdom was ruled by Jeroboam who was Solomon's servant. The southern kingdom was ruled by Rehoboam who was Solomon's Son. And so began the period that we understand as the kings.

And altogether there were 19 bad kings in the northern kingdom. And there were 12 bad kings and eight good kings in the southern kingdom. And so Josiah became King of Judah in 640 BC. It's just 35 years before Israel is carried off into Babylon in 605. He's eight years old.

His great grandfather was Hezekiah, one of the good kings. But his grandfather Manasseh ruled over Judah for 55 years, and the Bible describes him as very evil. The faithfulness that Hezekiah had reestablished, Manasseh systematically dismantled. And if you look back in your Bible, Second Chronicles 33:9, "Thus Manasseh misled Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel. The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention." The Bible says that he was worse than the pagan nations that they had displaced when they came into Canaan, the King of Judah.

So what made him so evil? Well, he rebuilt the high places, and the high places are best understood as literal high places for sacrifices. In Deuteronomy 12, Israel had been told to utterly destroy and tear down these altars, smashing sacred pillars, burning their carved images, obliterating them from the land.

But when Jeroboam became king of the northern kingdom, he re-erected those. He made two golden calves for the Israelites to worship. And he made priests from amongst the people who were not sons of Levi. In other words, they were not designated to be priests. And he literally made up feasts and worship days that the Bible says he devised in his own heart. His object had been to draw people away from the need to go to Jerusalem. And so, he made local shrines of convenience. He was afraid that if they ended up going to Jerusalem to worship, they would end up being blown away by the magnificence of the temple and they might in their heart be drawn back to worship God. And he wanted to prevent that from happening, so he appealed to the convenience of not having to go. "Come and worship locally."

Well, these high places became part of the landscape in the northern and the southern kingdom. And Hezekiah tore them down, Manasseh rebuilt them, the bad kings rebuilt them, the good kings tore them down.

In addition to the high places, he erected altars to worship Baal. He made Asherim. Asherim were wooden carvings of the female goddess of fertility, the mother of Baal. He worshiped all the hosts of heavens and he served them; that is the sun, the moon, the stars, all the created things. He used divination, and that is attempting to contact supernatural powers to answer questions. This was a practice practiced most often by the Babylonians and the Assyrians. What they would do is they would employ priests who would sacrifice an animal and then they would look at the liver and stare at it and try and determine what the future activities of the gods would be.

I'll tell you, I've seen some livers when we operate, and the liver can sometimes tell you a little bit about the person's past. But it's a quantum leap to suggest that you could tell the future by staring at the liver. I must confess, I've done a bit of that. When I was a kid, our parents used to feed us liver, and I stared at that thing on my plate for a long time. But it seems strange to us. But we have people who read tea leaves and Tarot cards and palms. Is that any different from reading a liver? Times are not that different. He practiced witchcraft and sorcery and he dealt with mediums and spiritists. Second Kings tells us he shed innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other. He made a systematic and persistent attempt to banish the worship of Jehovah from the land.

And faithful prophets like Isaiah and Micah lived during this time. And there's a Jewish tradition that Isaiah was martyred under Manasseh's reign. Their message, their faithful warnings only caused bitter hatred and cruel persecution to break out against the people of God.

But perhaps most disturbing of all, he reverted to the practice of his grandfather (King Ahaz - so Hezekiah's dad) in that he had sacrificed his own sons by fire. That sounds absolutely awful. But that's what happens today. Children are sacrificed at the altar of convenience. Babies are aborted because they weren't planned and there'll be too much hassle.

Well, Manasseh was going his own way with determination. And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, as we read, but they paid no attention. Second Kings 21 says that Manasseh literally seduced Judah to do more evil. But ultimately, God brought judgement on Manasseh in the form of the Assyrian king who invaded and led him away with hooks in his nose and bronze chains. And it was only after this in his distress that he finally repented and he acknowledged that the LORD truly was God.

Well, so much for his grandfather. What was his father like? Well, he wasn't much better. His name was Amon and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the LORD as his father Manasseh had done. He never did humble himself as his father had done though. And finally, his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house. I wonder if at this point you're thinking that your childhood wasn't actually as bad as you thought.

Out of this context of extreme evil comes the story of Josiah. He was eight years old when he became king. At 16, he begins to seek the God of his father, David. At 20, he begins the purge of Judah and Jerusalem from idol worship. And I wonder if you noticed in verse 4 that it was in his presence that they chopped down these things. In verse 7, when he returned to Jerusalem (that means that he personally supervised the destruction of these temples) he tore down the high places, he tore down the Asherim, the altars. He broke them into pieces and he grounded them to powder, and he scattered them on the graves of all those who had been worshiping. Such was the passion and his hatred for this idolatry that he actually burned the bones of the priests on their own altars.

And you know what's absolutely fascinating? Is that that exact event had been prophesied 300 years before. First Kings 13, we're told about a nameless prophet who prophesied in 931 BC when Jeroboam was first setting these altars up. And this nameless prophet says this,

2 He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'"

I find that remarkable. What a testimony to the Word of God.

At age 26, he commissions repairs to the temple. The temple had been damaged over the years by multiple attacks from the Assyrians, and they'd done no maintenance. Verse 11 of our text says, "which the kings of Judah had let go to ruin." He chose a man, Shaphan, to oversee the repairs and restoration. And during the reign of Hezekiah when there had been a national repentance, there had been a free will offering and those offerings had been brought and stored in the temple - Josiah gives instructions to the high priest Hilkiah, to go into the temple and bring out the treasures and give those to the workmen and the overseers, so that they can restore the temple.

And while Hilkiah the priest is bringing the treasures out of the temple, he finds a book, and it's the Book of the Law. And he takes it with him when he goes to give his report to Josiah. And he has three things in his report – verse 16.

16...“Everything that was entrusted to your servants they are doing. 17 They have also emptied out the money which was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hands of the supervisors and the workmen.” 18 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, “Hilkiah the priest gave me a book.”

And then he starts to read from the book in the presence of the king. When Josiah hears the words of the Law, he tears his clothes, he tells his servants to go and inquire of the LORD according to the words of the book which had been found. He's devastated by the realization

that they have not been faithful and he's very afraid of the wrath of God that is spoken about in this book.

What a realization! 55 years of Manasseh's reign, two years of Ammon's reign, 16 years or Josiah's reign - that's 73 years that the Word of God has been lost, ignored. He chooses Hilkiah and some others to go to Huldah, the prophetess, and Josiah wants to know what Israel's future is going to be. And she has verse 24 and 25 to say,

24 Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah. 25 Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place and it shall not be quenched."

But all is not completely lost for Josiah. God recognized the tenderness of his heart and the sincerity of his faith, and the wrath stored up against Israel's idolatry, He decided he would meet out after Josiah was gone. In other words, he chose to spare Josiah from His wrath.

Well, Josiah is faithful to make sure that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem are gathered for him to read the words that he has been read. And in verse 31, he stands and he makes a covenant before the LORD with all his heart and his soul to be faithful. And his influence is very far reaching. And in fact, in verse 33, we understand that people remained faithful throughout his lifetime. What an influence.

So, with that introduction, if you're taking notes this morning, I have three points that I want to share; three lessons from a king. Number one is God hears those who humbly seek Him. God hears those who humbly seek Him.

What's fascinating to me is that despite the obstacles in his life, God produced a desire within Josiah to know God. The fabric of his society, the wickedness that he was surrounded by for the first 16 years of his life, the waywardness of his grandfather and his father, the vacuum of teaching and indeed the hostility towards the Word of God - all of that you would think would conspire to say he's done. He's not coming back. Nobody can come back from that. Surely, he didn't have a chance. Many of us have come from situations like that. Many of us have come from non-believing families. Many of us come from situations where the Word of God was never opened.

We all live in a world which is hostile to God, where God's Word has been forgotten in our schools and universities and governments and in our homes. Some of us have come from situations where there was zero parenting. And some of us have come from situations where there was abuse, even incest. But God, you see, is a rescuer. Our God is a God who intervenes.

And He intervened in King Josiah's life and he caused him to, verse 3, "seek the God of his father David". And the Hebrew word there is *darash*, which means "to seek with care." God had through Samuel described David, King David, as a man after His own heart. And David as a result, was known throughout Israel for his devotion to God. And so, Josiah began to seek the God of his father, David. He wanted to know the true God. Verse 27 tells us that his

heart was tender and he humbled himself and he wept and he tore his clothes because of Israel's sin.

And because of that, God says, Verse 27, "I truly have heard you." Let that sink in for a bit. The God of the universe says, "I truly have heard you." When Lorenzo was small and Tanya was distracted in the kitchen, and he really wanted to talk with her, he would walk up to her and pull on her dress or clothes. And she would bend down and she would pick him up and she would carry on. And he wanted to say something to her and so he would grab her face, he would say, "Mom." And he would look in her eyes and he made sure that she heard him. "Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before Me and tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD. That is incredibly significant.

Tenderness of heart is one of the attributes of God. Luke 1:76, when Zacharias is prophesying about his son, John the Baptist, he says this,

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on "Before the LORD to prepare His ways"; 77 to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of God.

Tenderness of heart is precious to God and He acknowledges and responds to that; not your works, not external religion – that. God acknowledged repentance in the life of David after his sin with Bathsheba. In Psalm 51, David concludes, "You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it. You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Turn forward with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 66, briefly. I want to read you verses 1 and 2. Isaiah 66:1-2,

1 Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2 For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD.

I want you to understand His majesty and His size and His authority and His ownership over all creation. What could we do or build for God? That God wrote verse 2 as well, and He says, "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." And when He talks there about looking, He talks about paying attention to or hearing. This is how we get an audience with the King of the universe.

So, I wonder if you feel like God is far away right now. You ever been there? You feel like you're a bit in the wilderness. Maybe you feel that He doesn't hear you of late. Maybe we need to do a heart-tenderness check: Am I humbling myself before Him? Am I seeking Him? Do I tremble at His Word? God hears those who humbly seek Him.

Point number two, and we'll spend most of our time here today. God guides those who humbly seek Him. God hears those who humbly seek Him, God guides those who humbly seek Him. As God gives Josiah this tenderness, a desire to seek Him, Josiah instinctively begins to destroy that which was built up in opposition to the Lord. He sees right through the blasphemy of idol worship and he begins that purge. He had the authority and he had the

position that he could do that. And at age 20, he is a formidable foe. He's unstoppable. And he sends a clear message to those who would worship anything or anyone other than God.

But I want you to see as Scripture is read to him, he is cut to the heart. He realizes the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Word of God, and he realizes that the wrath of God will be great because of his fathers not obeying and following and observing the Scriptures. But it's interesting that he doesn't find comfort in his sincerity. He doesn't find comfort in his works. But he has that heart stopping realization that he and Israel had been forewarned through the Word of God but had been ignorant. He realizes that sincerity was not enough, and as much as ignorance is a tragedy, it doesn't change the fact of God's existence. It doesn't change the fact of His rule or His authority. It's not going to be an excuse at judgment.

Turn back with me to Deuteronomy 17:14-20. This would have been a text that he would have had read to him, I'm assuming. It's part of the Book of the Law. 17:14,

14 When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. 16 Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' 17 He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. 18 Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

These were very specific instructions for the king. The person on the throne couldn't be a foreigner. He was not to multiply horses for himself, lest he trust in the horses and not in God. He was not to find an ally in the neighboring country, Egypt in this case, lest he not trust in God's sufficiency. He wasn't to multiply wives for himself because his heart would be turned away. He wasn't to greatly increase silver or gold, lest he trust in his riches and not in God. And most importantly, when he began his rule, he had to write out the law.

Some of us learn how? By writing, we take notes. It keeps us concentrating. And it was expected of the king that he write his own copy of the law. I wonder if you've ever seen that in the Old Testament. The law was to be with him and he was to read it all his days in order that he would not become proud; that he wouldn't turn aside. This was a big deal.

How many copies do you think there were floating around of the law in those days? Not very many, right? But God wanted to make sure that the law was in the hand of the king who was to lead his people, because God wanted to make sure that the heart of the king was right when he led. Despite the challenge of the copying process, he was still accountable.

Let me ask you though, are we in the same boat today? In comparison, how many copies of the Word of God are there in the world? Remember now, this is the entire revelation, 66 books, not just five. How many are in your house? Put your hand up if you have one Bible in your house. This is disturbing me. Put your hand up if you have one Bible in the house. Okay, that's better. Keep your hand up if you have two? Three? I want to see the hands, come on. Four? Five? Six? More than six? Okay, the majority of the congregation.

From 1816 to 1975, 5 billion Bibles have been printed. Over a hundred million Bibles are printed every year, 20 million are sold in the US, every year. The New Testament has been published in 1,521 languages, the full New Testament. And that's not even taking into account the digital versions that are downloaded onto computers or mobile devices. 60% of people use a digital Bible at church instead of bringing a printed Bible. Put your hand up if you have a digital Bible here today instead of your other Bible. Okay, I'm going to pray for you. More than 66,000 people are using a Bible app at any given second. We have so much more light than Josiah had.

But you know what comes along with that light and that revelation? Is accountability because there's no excuse. The Word of God is not unavailable. You see, whether the Word of God is lost in Josiah's time or whether it's forgotten and ignored on our shelves, it's the same. The Word of God has no effect on our lives. It has no impact on how we live. We need to be sincere, we must be sincere. But without the Word of God to guide us, we are at best, going to be seriously ignorant or at most, sincerely lost. You can be sincere, and you can be lost. So, God guides us in a positive sense through His Word.

But there's another aspect in that He guides us against misinformation - that is false prophets, right? And during the majority of the reign of Manasseh, there was never a prophet around. 47 years into his reign, Nahum comes on the scene. And then Josiah's reign, first comes Zephaniah, then Jeremiah and then Habakkuk, during the reign of Josiah. Jeremiah 23 tells us that they were prophets in Samaria and in Jerusalem who prophesied by Baal, who walked in adultery and falsehood and polluted and poisoned the faith of the Israelites. Jeremiah 23:13,

13 Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: they prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. 14 Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: the committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from this wickedness.

Drop down to verse 16, he says,

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have peace"'; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.'"

So, not only was the Word of God ignored, there was competition from false prophets who spread messages springing from their own imagination. Well, it's not very different in our own day, is it?

One of these false prophets of our time is Richard Dawkins, a man who says that there is no God. In the documentary "Expelled", Ben Stein asked him what he would say to God one day if he was wrong. And his answer was this; he said, "I would say what Bertrand Russell said, 'Sir, why did you go to such lengths to hide yourself?'" - 5 billion Bibles since 1816, the creation around us.

Another one is Darwinianist, Michael Ruse. Ben Stein asked him how we got from the inorganic world to the organic world of the cell. Well, he says one popular theory is that it might have started off on the backs of crystals. You can YouTube that or Google that. It's remarkable. Jeremiah 23:16, "They speak a vision of their own imagination." That's what that is.

So, if we don't want to be like Josiah, sincere but uninformed, and if we don't want to be influenced by false prophets (religious or secular), how are we to know what God's message is for us and our generation? That's a good question. It's an easy answer. We are God's people. We must know what this says.

I want to talk to our young people especially today, and to anybody who's not saved. I want you please, just to listen carefully. If you are not sure of the message of this book, please listen to me. By faith, we understand that the Bible is God's Word. It is His authority. He's the one who created us and He speaks to us through His Word as truth. And the Bible says we were created by God and that is completely consistent with everything that we see around us. Completely consistent with the evidence. Evolution, and by that I mean molecules accidentally becoming man, is a lie. It's a lie. It's an impossibility. It's not rational. But like most cover-ups, it's designed to make you think that there being no God is an alternative view that you could adopt that it somehow has credibility.

And I need you to know that just because you suppress the knowledge of God that doesn't make Him go away. It doesn't alter anything about Him. Just like ignorance in Josiah's time didn't do that either. It just means you go on your way remaining ignorant. But at the end of that six days of creation, God said everything was very good. And the implication is that even the relationship that He had with man was very good. And God instructed that man could eat from all the trees of the garden except the one - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "All of this you can eat from, not that one."

Satan tempted Eve, and Eve being deceived by Satan's distortion of God's command succumbed and disobeyed God. And in that moment, in her mind, she had a justified rebellion. Well, it looked good and it was good to make you wise. It'll be okay. And in her mind, in that justified moment of rebellion and disobedience, she took and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as did Adam who was right there with her. It wasn't that they didn't know. They knew and they chose to do it anyway. They followed their own thoughts on the matter, not God's, just like we would have done and have done. And in that moment, man's relationship with God was altered and spiritual death became a reality for all men and women. Sin breaks relationships here and sin breaks relationships with God. And it was the start of what were to follow - that man began to go his own way. Isaiah 53, "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each one has turned to his own way."

Isaiah 65, if you want to just turn there quickly with me. Isaiah 65 starting in verse 2,

“I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, 3 a people who continually provoke Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks; 4 who sit amongst graves and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine’s flesh and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots. 5 Who say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!” These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. 6 Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay into their bosom, 7 both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,” says the LORD. “Because they have burned incense on the mountains and scorned Me on the hills, therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom. 12 I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight.”

That's you and that's me. We've all disobeyed God's command, we've all thrown off His authority, and gone our way in disobedience. And God is a just God, and He will punish that disobedience. His justice demands that. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death.

God is holy and He is just, but He is also loving. And He made a way for us to be forgiven by punishing another in our stead. Jesus Christ, His Son, came to earth, lived a sinless life, submitted Himself to His Father's plan, was rejected by men, and ultimately nailed to a cross because He claimed to be the Son of God. But by going to the cross, He took your sin, my sin, and He bore it for us. And He absorbed the wrath of God on that cross. And that's where the entire universe focused. And He gave us His righteousness and He Himself took our sin, the just for the unjust, the righteous for the unrighteous. “The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

Sometimes, we don't believe this because we don't think that it applies. But let me say this, that's just arrogance, that's just ignorance and that's just pride. You know when you sin, you know when you choose to go your own way. And I want you to understand that that is exactly the attitude that God is angry at, and He will punish that hardheartedness and pride as true as I stand before you today. He is angry and He will repay.

But for those who are tenderhearted, convicted, humble, contrite at heart and tremble at His Word, for those who confess and repent of their sin, as many as receive Him, to them, He gives the right to become the children of God. You're saved, you're born again, you get adopted and placed within the family of God, the eternal family of God. You will never be lost, and your inheritance in heaven as sons and daughters is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit that He sends to live within you. He grants you a new heart with new desires, and He causes you to walk in humble obedience, desiring to honour Him with your life.

And if you're not saved here today, I need to remind you that Christ rose, He's reigning and He's returning. But this time, He's not coming back as a baby. All that power that brought creation into being, all the power that was focused on the miracles of Christ, all the power that could not keep Jesus in the grave is manifested and focused in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who is coming back, and He is going to pour out wrath on this world that we cannot imagine on those who remain proud.

King Josiah was no longer ignorant. He had knowledge of how he and his people had offended God. He had knowledge of a terrible judgment coming and he repented, and God says, "I have truly heard you because of that humility," and he was spared from the judgment to come. And you know what? We stand in exactly the same position today. Exactly.

If you're a young person here today, I get it, I get it. This is a very difficult world to grow up in. There is a lot of confusion. But I want to tell you, God is not confused. You won't have all the answers now, but I want to urge you, take that step, answer the call of the tenderness in your heart. Put away pretending that you're okay. Put away pretending amongst your friends that you have it all together. You don't. None of us does. Be real for just a moment and trust the Word of God you know to be true and be saved by putting your faith and your trust in Christ. Be reconciled to God by confessing your sin and be saved before it is too late to restore that relationship.

God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. God hears those who humbly seek Him. God guides those who humbly seek Him, and thirdly and finally, God steadies those who humbly seek Him.

Back in Second Chronicles 34:31, "Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book." Look at that verse. There is firstly a covenant, there's a promise, a determination to follow God. Verse 2 in our reading says that, "...he walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left." That's a determined promise. Secondly, there is a heart attitude, there's a degree of commitment with all his heart and with all his soul the text tells us. And the promise is specific. He's going to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes to perform the words of the covenant written; obey and do.

But it's not legalism because the attitude is that it's from the heart. Folks, these things are signs of a deliberate life, and that's what God gives us. He gives us deliberate lives. He steadies those who humbly seek Him. He gives us the direction and he plants our feet firmly, and He makes your life deliberate.

So, let me ask you, how deliberate are our lives? Are we there yet? As a Christian man and as a Christian woman, is your life deliberate or are you floating along? What are the idols that God is calling you to give up so that your life can be more deliberate in this urgency of time in which we live? Are our Bibles resting on the shelves? Do we have apps on our phones that we never actually open up but we carry our Bibles with us? Are we not getting to them - the Bibles or the apps, but we're able to play video games for hours? Are we exercising more than we read our Bibles? Bring it a bit closer to home for me. How much TV are we watching in comparison to reading the Word of God? Are we any different really than from Josiah's time? Do we look like the people of God? How is our prayer life?

Listen, if we want to grow in Christ, the spiritual disciplines of reading our Bibles and praying is the only way to get there. It is the only antidote to this world. Let's commit to take advantage of all the light we have, all the additional revelation that we have that the Old Testament saints never had. Let's grow into a Spirit-empowered church.

Finally, God caused him to have incredible influence. In verse 30, he read the Word of God in the hearing of all the people. Verse 32 and verse 33, he led his people in following God. And it says, "Throughout his lifetime, they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers." This is the influence of a deliberate life, but God gets to choose how influential we are.

So, let me say this in closing. The times in which we live are difficult, but they're not as difficult as they were and nor are they as difficult as they will be. Our job is not to change the culture, but to be faithful to God in whatever culture we live. Remember, He left us here, but He gave us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us and to guide us. God hears those who humbly seek Him. He guides those who humbly seek Him through the miracle of the revelation of His Word. And He steadies those who humbly seek Him. He blesses them with deliberate lives and ultimately, He will determine our influence as we remain faithful to Him.

Church is not coming to worship and having coffee and going home. It's not about being entertained by a sermon week after week. It's not about enjoying worship songs, feeling good. Let's not be a fake church. The church is people that may come together to worship with their heart and their soul, and they refuel here with one another in the beautiful fellowship that God has blessed us with. But when we leave here, we are the church out there in our families and our jobs and our community, and we need to live tenderhearted and Word-guided and deliberate lives. My prayer is that the Lord will bless our church to grow into that. And that our influence within Chilliwack would be profound because of that. Pray with me.

Father, we come before You. We are so humbled to recognize, Lord, that we live in times that are really no different than the times of old. And Father, You remain the same faithful God who created, who has seen us fall, who brought the flood waters of the flood in judgment, and who has been crying out to Your people all day long. And Father, we humble our hearts today to recognize, Lord, that even amidst all of our light that we have, we know that the Word of God goes ignored in our lives. Lord, we want to be Your people. We are Your people. Would you stir within us a desire to look like Your people? Not through works that we would do that are legalistic, but through hearts that You would inflame, with Your honour and Your glory and the desire to live lives that are really authentic wherever we are.

And Lord, would You give us influence, would You give us people with whom we can speak about these things. Would You give us boldness and courage, would You help us to live those authentic lives at home with our families, to be who we say we are - in our jobs, in the community, that Father, our lives would just put You on display and that You might use us in some small way to influence the Kingdom.

We are so looking forward, Father, to Your return in the form of Jesus Christ who is coming back as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Lord, would we have within us an anticipation that is urgent. Would You help us to decide to live for You and to remove whatever barriers of laziness and distraction there are. Lord, thank you for grace. Thank you, Lord, that You take these imperfect vessels and You pour Your grace abundantly upon us. And I just pray finally, Lord, that You would help us to grow into that which we have been declared to be, and that is righteous. And it's in the name of Him who called us, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.