

Read 2 Chronicles 1

In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." 2 Chron 1:7 Have you ever wondered what you would ask for if you had three wishes? From the first time I heard about genies in lamps, I've wondered this question. I usually thought I'd wish to be taller, richer, or maybe famous. Honestly, most people would probably ask for some different variations of my requests. But what would you really ask for? Have you ever thought about it?

Solomon had many options to choose from, and he choose wisdom. Ultimately, most of the things that we might choose would be temporary and fleeting. Riches can be squandered. We shrink with age. Fame is fleeting. If I could ask something, I would ask that the Holy Spirit would never allow me to miss an opportunity to share the gospel. There are few feelings worse than knowing you missed the chance to emphasize eternity with a person. Solomon was blessed because he didn't waste such a special gift from the Lord. He asked for something that would last him his entire life and allow him to serve God in a greater way. **How would you have answered God? When you pray, do you find yourself praying more for issues that will improve your walk with Him, or simply the various issues of the day? There is nothing wrong with praying for the little things, but don't miss out on the big things in your life like patience, faith, and gospel obedience.**

Read 2 Chronicles 2

The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods. 2 Chron 2:5 Think of some of the great kingdoms and civilizations of the world. The Assyrians were mighty and dangerous people, some of the first to use iron weapons against their enemies. Alexander the Great lead Greece to conquer lands as if he were simply playing Risk. And the Romans stretched their empire as far as they could, until they found that they had conquered too much. The footnote is that none of these kingdoms exist anymore and have each gone back to their previous small stature. Assyria's descendants are contained within the small nation of Syria. Greece is within the boundaries it had before Alexander. And Vatican City is all that is left of the once great Roman Empire. A great kingdom comes not by its victories, but by it's ability to remain.

God's Kingdom is such a kingdom. Solomon wasn't just building a house for his God, like all other nations did. Solomon knew this house couldn't be less than the one the Philistines built for Dagon for example. This house was the one and only temple of the living God. **Do you sometime forget that your faith is different than the faith of those who do not know Jesus? Sometimes we are too willing to just let our faith sit alongside every other faith and religion on this earth. Remember that our God is above all gods. He has no equal. We cannot concede that our faith and our God is just one of many. He is the one and only. Have you thanked God for His unique character and love for you?**

Read 2 Chronicles 3

He erected the pillars in front of the temple, one on the right and the other on the left, and named the one on the right Jachin and the one on the left Boaz. 2 Chron 3:17 My son came to me the other night and said “We need a name for our car.” I asked him why he thought it needed a name. He said, “We called our old car Taurus, but we just call our new car the van.” I told him the old car WAS a Taurus, so we really didn’t pick a name, but maybe the van could use a name. He said he wanted to name it Betsy. That name has a lot of significance, which he obviously has remembered from previous conversations. My first vehicle was a ’75 Ford truck that our every member of our family called Betsy. Then when I was away for basic training, I named my rifle Betsy. So it’s a name that my son thought would be a good fit and a reminder I suppose.

Names are important, and here we see that Solomon actually names the two great pillars on the front of the temple. One is named Jachin (“He will establish”) and Boaz (“quickness”). From the time of Adam the lineage of Jesus had begun. But David’s family is where the promise of a forever kingdom really began. The ultimate fulfillment of that would be Jesus. So it’s fitting as David’s son builds the temple that the prominent pillars to the front are a foreshadowing of that promise. Literally you can say that every time people came past those pillars into the temple, they knew that “He will establish quickly”. **Today we could do the same thing to the entrances of our church. Just as Christ established quickly the means of salvation through the cross, he will establish his final kingdom quickly. No one knows the hour, but the time is soon approaching. Are you ready for Him to establish quickly? Or do you fear you may be unprepared when Jesus shows up? Do you pray, “Lord Jesus come quickly?” Or are you satisfied for Jesus to stay away?**

Read 2 Chronicles 4

Thus Solomon made all these utensils in great quantities, for the weight of the bronze could not be found out. 2 Chron 4:18 Often when we are preparing to spend money as a church, we seem to have a wrong attitude. The dominating factor always seems to be the money. The majority of churches I have seen never look for what is going to work out the best, but how cheaply they can they solve the problem. As a result of this I’ve seen churches deal with construction needs because they built trying to hit a number and not to fill a need. I’ve seen churches regret the smaller bus they purchased just a year or two later, because they were trying to hit a number and not a need.

When Solomon had the utensils built for the temple, he must have thought about how utensils at his own home were often lost. Solomon didn’t just want what they needed, but he also had the replacements made while a skilled craftsman was available. He went above and beyond the need in order that any future needs would already be filled. **Think about how you spend your money. Do you always purchase the cheapest thing, or do you look for value in your purchase? Whether it’s paying a minister and supplying a ministry we need to stop asking “How much can we get away with?” Instead let us ask “How can we bless this minister or ministry?” When our churches gain that**

attitude, we will truly be stewards of what God has given us. Not by being cheapskates, but by doing what is truly needed.

Read 2 Chronicles 5

And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. 2 Chron 5:6 Every church service has some moment where one person is offering up a prayer on the behalf of the entire congregation. Sometimes these are genuine prayers offered up in sincerity, and sometimes it's just people talking with their eyes closed. I used to love it when Russ prayed in church. It was like he was personal friends with God and could talk to Him for all of us. There was something genuine in His voice as he asked God to bless the message and the church. One thing that Russ didn't skimp on was praying for sin. He didn't just tag his prayer with, "and forgive us our sins. Amen." Russ prayed that we would see our sin and that God would show it to us. Sin was never a side note, but always a very serious matter when Russ approached God.

Here as we see the temple having been completed there is a great sacrificing by all the people. You have millions of people all coming together at once and offering the sacrifices for their sin as they entered into this holy place. You can come to church willing. You can come to serve. You can come and give your tithe. But, if you come to church unwilling to deal with your sin, then you have not honored God in your worship. Forgiveness is His business. He forgives us by the blood of Christ. That forgiveness allows us to know that we have entered into a relationship with God, without any fear of losing that relationship. Even though Christ covers all of our sins, that doesn't mean we never again acknowledge that we have sin. The process of becoming like Christ (sanctification) comes through acknowledging that we are sinners and choosing to cut sin from our lives. **Are you working to cut sin from your life? Or do you come to church and ignore the 800lb gorilla, pink elephant, etc that is the sin in your life that you need to deal with? It's time to come before the Lord with clean hands to serve and a pure heart to worship Him. He loves when people recognize their sin to turn from it. He will love you for it too.**

Read 2 Chronicles 6

Now Solomon had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and he stood on it, knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. 2 Chron 6:13 I've known essentially two kinds of pastors in my life: those who act like pastors and those who act like themselves. Sometimes the man feels that he has to act a certain way in order to be a pastor. He takes himself too seriously, and always appears thoughtful and introspective. But then you have the man who is a regular guy and happens to be a pastor. He is still thoughtful and introspective, but he hasn't lost his sense of humor. He jokes and interacts with people from his congregation and puts

them at ease. A pastor must recognize that his role is not to be a CEO, but to be a servant leader.

Solomon has seen all the people come to the temple offering their sacrifices for their sin. Solomon has a large platform built so that he can be seen and heard by the people. But, this act was one of humility. He climbs upon the platform, only to fall to his knees before the people and to speak to God in his humility. Many kings and leaders wouldn't do this, for fear that people wouldn't properly respect him. Solomon has no such care as he gives ultimate honor to the Lord. **Do you have trouble humbling yourself in positions of authority? Do you enjoy being in charge and do whatever you can to retain your position? Then you need to ask God to humble you. Often what we try hardest to hold onto is the thing that we lose our grasp on. A true servant leader is humble. Jesus humbly went to the cross. What further example do you need? Don't lord your position over people at church, work or in the community.**

Read 2 Chronicles 7

and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14 One of my favorite toys as a child were Legos. Not the huge ones that kids have now that prevent choking, but the tiny ones that you could eat a handful of and never know it. My parents bought me some tubs of these, but then they started coming out with the Lego building sets. These were boxes that had a picture of a castle, jet, etc on the box, and the box contained all the pieces to make the object pictured on the box. I bought a helicopter one, and started to build it, but I couldn't figure it out. I didn't follow the instructions, but just tried to do it from the picture. Eventually I gave up and those specialized Legos simply became another part of my tub 'o stuff.

As God is talking to His people at the temple, He gives instructions for how to have healing in their land. But, there are four steps given: humble yourself, pray, seek God's face, turn from your sin. If someone were to do three of these, but miss one, then the healing will not happen. What if you didn't pray? Or what if you didn't turn from the sin that hurt you in the first place? We have to be willing to do all that God instructs us. Partial obedience is disobedience, and it hurts us. **Who are God's people? They are people that have been adopted into His family through Jesus Christ. I heard someone once say that this text above has nothing to do with believers today because God was talking to Abraham. However, as believers in Jesus Christ we are partaking in the promise to Abraham to give him innumerable descendants. Are you part of God's people? Someone that belongs to God should seek to be completely obedient. Don't expect God to do other than He has said He will do.**

Read 2 Chronicles 8

Now it came about at the end of the twenty years in which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house that he built the cities which Hiram had

given to him , and settled the sons of Israel there. 2 Chron 8:1-2 Northwestern University is located in Chicago and has a football team noted for futility. They set the record for the longest losing streak in Division 1 football when they lost 32 straight games. Upon losing the students ran onto the field with the chant “we’re the worst”. Then they tore down the goalposts and threw them into Lake Michigan. In later years, Gary Barnett became the coach at Northwestern. He quickly turned the program around, taking them to the Rose Bowl in 1995 and earning Coach of the Year honors for himself. Suddenly the loveable losers were looking forward to brighter days. When the team got together for the 1996 season, Coach Barnett got all the trophies and awards out from the previous year. Every player received an award for his play the previous year. Then Barnett took a trashcan and put his Coach of the Year trophy in it. He told them that if they rested on the laurels of 1995, they would never move forward. Every player came by and put his award in the trash and then they got to work on another first place season in their conference.

If there was anyone who could have rested on previous accomplishments, it would have been Solomon. He built the temple that his father could not. He made sure that it was everything it was supposed to be. And when he finished that incredible work...he kept on going. He began building up new cities and moving Israel into them. He knew that his work was not done, because he still had strength left in him. **Are you continuing to look for ways to serve the Lord? Or have you decided you need a break from some successful ministry you were a part of? If you want to take a break from an area, that’s great, but find a new one to fit into. You lose and the church loses when you allow yourself to take time off and do nothing. Have you been ignoring work you know that God wants you to do? Maybe you’re the person who’s supposed to fill the role the pastor has been begging to fill for weeks.**

Read 2 Chronicles 9

How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. 2 Chron 9:7 I’ve had many different kinds of bosses in my life. I’ve had the “friend” boss that tries to be cool with everyone. I’ve had the “climb the ladder” boss who clearly didn’t want to be around the peons. There are a few others in the mix, but every once in a while you get a boss you like. While I was working landscape construction, I had a boss named Bill. He asked me on the first day if I knew how to work a skid loader. I told him no, so he gave me a five minute crash course and then left me to it. One day we had to get rid of a residential sidewalk. He pointed to the jackhammer, gave me a quick tip on using it, and then left me to it. Bill would watch you from time to time, but he gave us the skills that we needed to do the work, instead of doing things himself all the time.

The people who served Solomon felt like I did serving Bill. They heard amazing wisdom coming from this man everyday. I’m sure there were times that they went to the King themselves and asked for personal advice of guidance. These men gladly served someone they trusted to be a wise and thoughtful man. They knew that He loved the Lord, and served Him with devotion. **Do you have a leader like this in your life? Maybe it’s a**

boss at work, or a minister that you assist at church? Have you thanked them for their approach to leading? Evaluate yourself with the people that you have authority over. Do people feel blessed for serving with you, or do they dread watching you walk in the door? This could be at home, work, or church. Seek to bless as much as you seek to lead. People willingly follow someone who loves the ones he leads.

Read 2 Chronicles 10

So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us'?" 2 Chron 10:9 I've always had great respect and admiration for Ronald Reagan. There is no denying that he was one of the most important and influential presidents that our country has ever seen, and he often gave the answers that Christians wanted to hear. He talked about prayer. He talked about God. But when Reagan had to make a decision, he turned to psychics. He didn't schedule a trip or decision without consulting Jean Dixon or some other noted psychic of the time. I remembered seeing this as a teen in tabloids, and not really believing it. But, recent reading of some of his advisers has verified that he often turned to these people for guidance.

We have to be cautious about who we approach for advice. Rehoboam had two groups of people to get counsel from. He had his father's advisers, who had played this role and gave him sound counsel on how to correct some of his father's mistakes. But, then he also turns to his childhood buddies and asks what they think. It's interesting to note that when he asks the older men he says, "how do you counsel me" to answer the people. He says to his friends, "what counsel do you give that we" regarding his answer to the people. I think his buddies liked being friends with a powerful man in the kingdom and they didn't want to see him relinquish any power. Their motives were selfish, but they convinced Rehoboam that it was in his interest. **Who do you turn for advice? Are you sure that they have your interests at heart, or are they seeking what is best for themselves? You need to be going to the throne in prayer and when you can ask spiritually mature advisers for counsel, don't ignore what they say.**

Read 2 Chronicles 11

'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not go up or fight against your relatives ; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me."'" So they listened to the words of the LORD and returned from going against Jeroboam. 2 Chron 11:4 Do you know what happens when a family fights itself? Only one family has a funeral. The Civil War was a difficult and dark chapter in our nation's history. I remember reading about an early skirmish along the western front around the Missouri and Kentucky region. During a lull in the battle, a cry came out from the Confederate lines to the Union lines. The rebel soldier stood up without his rifle and asked if a certain soldier was a member of their regiment. Within moments a Union soldier charged from their lines directly to this soldier and hugged him, certainly to the surprise of both sides. They were brothers who had chosen different sides in the battle. The rebel soldier had noticed a familiar face along the

enemie lines and decided to take the chance to see his brother again. After a few moments of speaking, and no firing from either line, the brothers returned to their lines and the firing remained silenced. Eventually both sides began firing again, and the conflict with the greatest number of American casualties in history continued.

Rehoboam didn't much like the idea that Jeroboam was in control of the people that Rehoboam felt he was entitled to lead. So he gathered Judah's fighting men and prepared to go against Israel. Then God tells Judah that the division is a result of God's will and plans, and that they should just return to their homes and not fight their relatives. There was certainly intermarriage amongst tribes of Israel, which was not an issue with the law. So they certainly would have been fighting not only distant relatives through Abraham, but also brothers and sisters as well. **Are you allowing fights within your family? Are you keeping the fight fueled, or are you attempting to bring peace to your family? What about your church family? The word "relatives" in this verse can also be translated "brothers". There is nothing more disappointing than to watch brothers and sisters in Christ treat each other like enemies in church business meetings and beyond. Let us step up and say, "No more fighting in the family." Let those who want to fight, do so by themselves. A one person fight dies quickly.**

Read 2 Chronicles 12

He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD. 2 Chron 12:14 I think that everyone has something that they can excel at. I have a great love of sports and competition, but the major sports like baseball, football, and basketball are all fun for me, though I don't have any unusual talent for them. I often wondered if there was some sport out there that I could have been good at if given the chance. Then when I was a sophomore in high school, I went skiing for the first time. I took a half-day lesson, mostly so I could learn how to stop myself. The instructor said I had natural talent and wanted to give me continued lessons, but since I was living in Missouri, that wasn't an option. I skied several more times in high school and got dramatically better each time. But, since I didn't have the opportunity to put any real effort there, nothing ever came from it.

Rehoboam had a real need to divert his attention. When Judah was invaded by Egypt, God tells Rehoboam, "You have forsaken me, so I also have forsaken you". Essentially God says if you want to ignore Him, he'll make the disconnect feel complete. Not because God seeks to leave us alone, but He would rather leave us to ourselves for a time so that we might consider what we have lost in our marginal relationship with Him. Rehoboam did evil, because he didn't seek to do good. I didn't concentrate on skiing, so I had no real connection with the sport. Rehoboam didn't concentrate on God, and therefore he had no real connection with the Lord. **Are you trying to fit God into your life? Don't. You either make Him your life, or you will find yourself living a marginal life that is filled with more spiritual defeats and heartaches than with spiritual victories and memories.**

Read 2 Chronicles 13

"Now behold, God is with us at our head and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed." 2 Chron 13:12

I pulled up next to a friend in town one day at a red light. We noticed each other and waved, and then I knew it was on. Neither one of us wanted to be left behind by the other. I had a Pontiac Sunbird, which looked sporty but wasn't. He had a Ford Probe that looked sporty and was. When the light hit, he just left me in the dust. Even though we both had four cylinder cars, I later learned that there is a liter size to your engine that is more of a determination of speed than your cylinders, and his car had a larger liter engine. We both had cars, but that's where the similarities ended.

As Israel comes against Judah, King Abijah tells Israel that they have a false hope. The priests of the living God had escaped Israel and come to Judah where God was worshipped. Israel had traded the truth of God for a lie and were worshipping idols instead of the God that led them into the promised land. Abijah tells the enemy not to fight against Judah because to do so is to fight against the Lord, and they would not win. Israel decided their gods were just as good as what Judah had, and 500,000 dead soldiers later, Israel saw their mistake. **Are you serving with the Lord? Is there anything He has instructed you to do that you are fighting against? Any sin that He has told you must be removed from your life? Any location He has led you to go that you have said no? You need to let God lead and then be a willing follower of Him.**

Read 2 Chronicles 14

Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one besides You to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in You, and in Your name have come against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; let not man prevail against You." 2 Chron 14:11

There was a show a couple years ago called "30 Days". It was hosted by the guy who ate McDonald's for 30 days straight to show the effects of fast food. They turned that concept into a show where opposites were paired for 30 days. One time they brought an atheist into the home of a Christian family. She knew of the Lord from her childhood, but had never trusted Jesus to be her personal Savior. Towards the end she took the Christians to meet her atheist friends. An atheist asked the husband, "Do you think that 'In God We Trust' should be on our money?" The Christian never gave a straight answer and finally the atheist said, "I think it should stay there, because it is a part of our history." He wasn't acknowledging God, but acknowledging our country's history of worshipping God.

The Christian life is really proved by trust. Asa saw the Ethiopian army coming against his army at two to one odds. But, Asa's trust was not in his military might, but in the Lord who had established Israel as a nation. As a result of that trust, the Lord went before them and won the battle. They clearly said "O Lord, You are our God", and because of that willingness to trust Him alone, God won the victory. **How trusting are you of the**

Lord? When financial difficulties come, do you cut or withhold your tithe? When a crisis comes do you work harder or pray harder? Do you trust God with your good days as much as you do the bad ones? Does God hear from you when things are going well, or just during disasters?

Read 2 Chronicles 15

All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly , and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side. 2 Chron 15:15 People often argue about the process of salvation. Some say that it is completely a work of God and that we have no active role in the process. I disagree, and this verse includes an interesting statement “He let them find Him.” This idea is repeated throughout the chapter. When people sought God, He was easily found. When people sought to ignore God, He allowed them to ignore Him. God is clearly in the process as people seek Him, but we have a responsibility to reach out to God. A professor in this debate summed up salvation this way, “If you’re in Heaven, it’s all of God. If you’re in Hell, it’s your fault.” His point is that we have a choice, and if we choose Heaven, it’s by the merits of God’s own son, and nothing we did beyond the choice to seek Him.

So in this verse we see that Judah swore to seek God, and so He made Himself easy to find. God does not enjoy playing hide-n-seek with His people. But when people choose to ignore them, God allows it so that they might see the predicaments that come from trusting in themselves. **Would you say that you clearly feel God’s presence in your life, or does it feel more like absence? God makes it clear: if you seek Him, you will find Him. If you don’t, you won’t. Seek after God and His will. Not in a quick or fleeting way, but make your life about seeking to honor and please the one who was pleased to create your life.**

Read 2 Chronicles 16

"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars." 2 Chron 16:9 As someone who has done public speaking and preaching for many years, I know how a speaker looks for someone to talk to. We’re always told to include the entire audience, but eventually you find those really enthusiastic people and often find yourself looking at them. I’ve seen people who were listening, responding, and writing down the things I was saying. Then I’ve seen people sitting in the back with their arms crossed and acting as if I just told them their momma was a tramp. I look at them occasionally, but I’d rather just stay in with the group of people that are responding as I had hoped.

God is much the same way. His message is available through His word, through His ministers and through His church. He is looking through all the earth to find those who are listening on the edge of their seat, and not those who are sitting back with arms crossed as they show their dissatisfaction with God’s message. **As God searches**

throughout the earth, does He see in you a heart that is “completely His”? Do you belong to Him at every moment? If you will live for Him, He will strengthen you for the task. Whether it is doing something difficult that you know you must, or simply standing against those who live for the exact opposite of the Lord’s will in their lives.

Read 2 Chronicles 17

He took great pride in the ways of the LORD and again removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah. 2 Chron 17:6 Our family went to one church my entire time in high school. Towards the end of that time I began to realize we had some loving people in our church, but they just didn’t believe the Bible was completely true. The pastor preached as if it wasn’t, and the people lived as if it wasn’t. After we had been gone a while, I ran into a church member from this previous church. I asked her how the church was doing and she said, “Oh we have a beautiful glass entrance that people can walk into the church through. We are going to build our new sanctuary and it will be beautiful.” While these are exciting things to have going on at your church, they are not an indication of how your church is really doing. She was taking pride in some meaningless accomplishments of church building, instead of having pride in kingdom building.

Jehoshaphat was a man who loved God. This king of Judah quickly worked to make sure that the people of Judah were living the covenant lifestyle with their God. The Hebrew means that he exalted the ways of God in his heart. When he took pride in the ways of the Lord, it means that they were very important to Him. The words of Scripture were to be closely listened to and applied to life. As a king, he knew the success of his reign would be determined by how he lived for the Lord. **What do you take pride in? Are you proud of how your church is building its own kingdom, or how your church is building God’s kingdom? Do you seek to follow God’s plans over your own? If so, that is showing pride in God’s ways. Pride can be a dangerous thing in the life of a believer, unless that pride is based on what Jesus has done in and through you. Remember that He gets the credit for all that is good that has come from your life.**

Read 2 Chronicles 18

Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 2 Chron 18:17 Every winter in my youth groups I always hosted a Christmas party. It was a big deal with the kids dressing up, fancy table settings, and anything else we could do to make things look nice. At that party I would give each student a gag gift that had something to do with an incident during the year, or just something to fit their personality. It takes a lot of planning, and one year a kid showed up even though he didn’t sign up. I realized this halfway through giving the gifts and was furiously thinking of something to do. I gave the last gift and then called up this young man. I told everyone that he hadn’t signed up, but that I wanted to say something about him. All I could think of was that he liked video games. He had two different video game systems and a computer for playing games. He sat down happy to

be recognized and I thought how sad it was that all I could think of in 20 minutes is that the kid liked video games. But, that's who he was and everyone knew it.

In this passage we see God's prophet, Micaiah, being maligned by King Ahab of Israel. There is a battle brewing and Ahab has four hundred prophets who all say that Ahab will win. They were clearly "yes men", and Jehoshaphat looks at Ahab and says, "That was fun. Now do you have a real man of God who can give us an answer." So Ahab gets Micaiah and says that the prophet never has anything good to say about him. And sure enough, that holds true and then we see the above reaction of Ahab. But who was at fault in this conflict? Micaiah is simply communicating God's message to Ahab, and Ahab is shooting the messenger. The reason Ahab always got bad news from God is because Ahab was a bad dude. He was known to be someone who didn't live for the Lord, but he wanted a different message on the day of battle. **What if I went to your friends and co-workers and mentioned your name? What would they say? What are their impressions? Would they mention the Lord? If you haven't, they probably won't. We need to be aware of the testimony we have among those around us. It's our most convincing witness of Jesus.**

Read 2 Chronicles 19

"But there is some good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God." 2 Chron 19:3 I am tired of hearing how John is a good person. Or Sally. Or Billy Bob. The Bible says there is none that does good (Romans 3:12). Yet all these people would just give you the shirt of their back or help you in a crisis, thereby labeling them as a good person. Have you ever been talking and heard someone be labeled a bad person? Occasionally, but not often. And the judgment of what makes a person good can change from person to person.

Jehoshaphat made some good decisions as king of Judah. One of his bad decisions was in aligning himself with godless Ahab. Even after Micaiah gives the word that God would not bless the battle, Jehoshaphat goes forward with it anyway. And in this chapter he is reprimanded by God through the prophet Jehu. However, despite this lapse in judgment we see that God says there is some good in Jehoshaphat. Does that mean that God is calling him a good person? No, because the good that is being attributed to Jehoshaphat is only as a result of his willingness to follow the Lord. He removed the Asheroth from receiving false worship amongst Judah and he set his heart to seek God. **Where is your heart set? Is God pleased with the motives and directives of your heart? Your motives are not set by what you do on Sunday, but what you do between the Sundays. We are seeing a lot of passages about God being our priority. Has it been set in your life yet? Think of what you did over this past week, and you'll have your answer. Was it different from a past week of three months ago, or pretty much the same?**

Read 2 Chronicles 20

When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." 2 Chron 20:21 If I walked into a Sunday School class today and asked the question, "Do you trust God?" I'm sure that everyone in the room would say yes. But, how do we really show that we trust God? Trust is displayed when our actions follow our words. I remember moving for seminary with no job prospects at all. We got there with a full bank account and no job, and we trusted God. Sometimes as the money dwindled, so did our trust. That's when we learned what trust really is. It's putting your faith in God alone to accomplish the things that you really need.

Jehoshaphat was a man who trusted God. He's going out to a battle that God said He would fight for them. Jehoshaphat is so confident of this promise, that he doesn't put soldiers with spears at the front; he puts singers with tambourines at the most vital location for his fighting force. It would be one thing to say they trusted the Lord, but their actions of the people show that they believed what they were saying. **Do you believe what you're saying? Does anyone believe what comes out of your mouth? Do you claim to trust God, but act like the hopeless? Unbelievers need a convincing witness. You don't have to fake your trust. Be honest about your personal difficulties in your faith. But, there should be a difference in how you and a lost person approach similar situations.**

Read 2 Chronicles 21

He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years; and he departed with no one's regret, and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. 2 Chron 21:20 I know I'm on a WWII kick, but there is so much application, and people don't know much history anymore. In Stephen Ambrose's book, "Band of Brothers", there is an account of the 506th while they are sitting in the woods of Bastogne, France. Their job was to hold the line, basically just by sitting in foxholes while the Germans pummeled them with artillery. The regiment asked the unit to come up with one person to go back to the States for a short time to drum up support for war bonds. Instead of many wearied soldiers all vying for the opportunity to go home, they instead came up with the person that was of least value to the unit. So they picked a Lieutenant and sent him home with much joy. The Lieutenant thought that the guys were sending him home because they liked him. In truth, they were glad to see the guy leave so they could fight more effectively.

Jehoram didn't act much like the son of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram did evil in the sight of the Lord by his alliances with ungodly people and ungodly religious practices. He was king for eight years and made sure to kill his brothers so that no others would be prepared to take the throne from him. When Jehoram finally died, the people were relieved. It says

that he “departed with no one’s regret.” Translation: they were glad to see him go. The people had such disdain for him that they didn’t even bury him in the tomb of the kings. Matthew Henry put it this way, “Nobody valued him while he lived, none lamented him when he died.” **There are two issues for you to think about. First, do you have a Jehoram in your life? Are you willing to value someone that everyone else despises, so that he might be won to the gospel? Loving those who love us is easy. We show Christ’s love when we love those that are hard to love. Secondly, if you left, would people in your church be sad or glad? What kind of attitude do you show those who worship with you? One of humility or of haughtiness? The church has enough “supervisors”. We need more “employees.”**

Read 2 Chronicles 22

For they said, "He is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart." 2 Chron 22:9 My first day working for a landscaping company was a big learning experience. I had never done any kind of work like it and so I wasn’t sure what to do. We were at a very nice house being built, and my new boss told me to level out flower beds in front of the house so that sod would lay evenly on them. He also mentioned that I should take out any large chunks of dirt that could not be broken up. I started with a rake, but soon was bent over the beds picking out dirt chunks and tossing them. My boss came over and said, “I appreciate you getting your hands dirty, but you really don’t have to work that hard. If you’re getting the beds level, that’s the main thing. Don’t get distracted by the dirt clods.” So I finished the beds and after putting sod on them, they looked great.

How perfect is God looking for us to be? It should be a great comfort as we have seen Jehoshaphat with some failures, and yet God wrote in His word that Jehoshaphat sought God with all his heart. Sometimes he got things right the first time. If he didn’t, he repented of his sinful mistakes and then did it right the second time. **Do you understand what it means to follow the Lord with all your heart? It means that you seek to do things right the first time, and when you miss that mark you repent of your failures and seek to do it right the second time. Too often people mess up and then they give up. That puts you exactly where Satan wants you and places you in a position of getting away from the Lord because of your guilt. Allow God to have priority by allowing Him access to all areas of your life.**

Read 2 Chronicles 23

Moreover, Jehoiada placed the offices of the house of the LORD under the authority of the Levitical priests, whom David had assigned over the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses—with rejoicing and singing according to the order of David. 2 Chron 23:18 I had friends who went to a large church in their hometown. They grew up in this church and really loved the pastor that had been there for years. He finally retired and upon his retirement, he told people a secret that he had been hiding: he never went to seminary. Now this wouldn’t be a big deal under normal circumstances; many effective ministers have never

been to seminary and they are wonderful men of God. The problem for this man was that he lied and told the church that he had gone and earned a degree. Clearly we run across people in ministry that we soon realize probably shouldn't be in their positions.

As the ungodly queen Athaliah was ruling over Israel, unqualified people were being placed in leadership of God's house. But Jehoiada was a true man of God, and he placed the rightful king into his position of leadership. Then he put the right people into the offices of the temple, that being the Levitical priests whom God had set apart for that position. He saw unqualified and ungodly men attempting to do the work of God's house. Ministers are not perfect people, but there are qualifications listed in the Word of God so that ministers will be selfless and not selfish people. You don't have to be a minister or a deacon to serve the church. Some of the people who have served with me in churches never held an official position in that church. However, I'm sure that God is going to recognize their service one day before the throne. **Are you in an office of the church? Are you qualified to be there? Does your church have people in office who clearly are unqualified? You need to pray that God would open their eyes so that they would remove themselves without a fight. Pray for your ministers that God would keep them from temptation and from incidents that can ruin their ministries.**

Read 2 Chronicles 24

Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 2 Chron 24:2 I've heard character described many different ways. In the army we were taught that our character is who we are "when no one is looking." Obviously in the army a soldier is expected to follow orders, but just as important are the choices a soldier makes on his time with no one else around to keep him accountable. Most military installations have a town right next to them where a soldier can make any purchase and fill any vice. We were always encouraged to go out with a couple of buddies. It didn't guarantee good behavior, but young soldiers at least had the protection of hanging out with other friends than just going out on their own.

Joash seems like a good king at the beginning, but we learn that he only lived for the Lord while Jehoiada the priest was watching over him. Probably Jehoiada gave godly counsel to Joash and was there to help Joash to avoid costly mistakes. But once this godly man passed away, Joash no longer lived for the Lord. While godly people help to keep us accountable, so does the Holy Spirit. We are never alone, because we have been given "another helper" (John 14:16) in the mold of Jesus. He teaches and guides us and never leaves us to ourselves. **Do you find yourself sometimes making foolish decisions when you're alone in certain places? Then don't allow yourself to be alone there. And remember, the Holy Spirit indwells the life of the Christian. That means where you go, He goes. Have you been taking the Holy Spirit places that He doesn't want to be, and where He doesn't want you to go? He is God and could completely control you at any moment, but His choice is to speak to you and lead you to make the right decision. Are you listening or going deaf to the Spirit of God?**

Read 2 Chronicles 25

Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The LORD has much more to give you than this." 2 Chron 25:9 Early on in our marriage, when Nikki would go home to visit family, I turned the house into a bachelor pad. Mostly I rented movies, stayed up late, and ate lots of pizza. I remember one time I had a coupon to buy two pizzas, and so for some reason I bought two pizzas for myself to be my supper for 3 days. After two days, I was sick of pizza. But, I had spent money on that pizza and I couldn't get myself to throw it away, so I forced pizza down my throat for a third day until I got rid of all of it.

Have you ever spent money on something and then later realized you made a terrible purchase? Amaziah hired these mercenaries from Israel to fight for Judah. The problem with that was that God was not with Israel, so He was not with their soldiers either. When a prophet comes to deliver this message to Amaziah, the king says the money has been spent. The prophet responds that God has more, and just write it off as a lesson learned. Have you held onto foolish purchases simply because they cost you money? **You need to remember two words when preparing to spend the money that God has entrusted to you: contentment and priorities. You need to learn to be content with what you have. Do you need a new widget, or does the old one work just fine? And what are your priorities? Are you unable to tithe, but always able to fund your favorite hobby (golf, motorcycle, etc)? Be wise, because everything you have comes from Him. If He can't trust you with little things, He will never trust you with the big ones.**

Read 2 Chronicles 26

But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. 2 Chron 26:19 When I was a teenager I worked at a steakhouse buffet. On Thursday nights it was always busy because we served prime rib, and each customer who paid extra for the prime rib was given a blue plate to use. I was taking orders in the line, and I was just giving a blue plate to a customer when my manager came to me and said "That's the last prime rib plate to sell tonight." I saw a lot of people still in line and thought, "Oh great." So I gave the plate, and the next customer came up and asked for prime rib. I told him we had no more, and he said that I had just given out another plate. I explained that we had to make sure that there was enough for everyone who had already ordered. This man instead of just getting something different, started walking up to tables and telling people who had paid to stop eating his prime rib. Eventually the police had to be called to get the guy out of the building.

Rarely does rage get us anywhere. In the case of Uzziah you had a king who usually made pretty good decisions. But, he apparently thought he was so good that he didn't have to follow the rules for offering incense to the Lord, which was done with prayers lifted to God. The priests were the only ones who were permitted by God to do so, and

the priests come and tell Uzziah to stop. Instead of realizing his mistake, he goes into a rage that they would confront him over his sin. And as a result, he is a leprous outcast until the day he dies. What do you need to learn from Uzziah's tragedy? First of all, don't respond in anger when someone points out your sin. Once you calm down, you're likely to agree with them that you were in sin. Secondly, remember that rules have a purpose. Kids usually don't think so when their parents make rules for them, but as a parent I know every rule has a purpose. **Have you been obeying God's rules? Are you choosing disobedience and you know it? Is anger hurting any of your relationships? Ask God to calm you to lead you to a more obedient life. He won't make you more obedient, because that's your choice, but the Holy Spirit can ensure that you are aware of your sin as soon as you enter into it if you really want to know.**

Read 2 Chronicles 27

So Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. 2 Chron 27:6 Some decisions just can't be put off. How many times have you heard the advice on putting away money every month to build a substantial savings for retirement? I've heard it many times, and yet more and more seniors have to keep working because they have nothing to retire on. Working with teenagers I often hear them ask where to draw the line on physical contact with the opposite sex. First of all, I think the line should be on contact, but if they wait until the moment arrives to draw the line they've waited too long. In the same way, Christians often have failures in life simply because we reacted to something instead of preparing for it.

Jotham was a mighty king because he didn't react to things, but he prepared for them. It says that he "ordered his ways". Literally it means that his ways were firm. He was not a wishy washy flip-flopper. Jotham had made a number of decisions on how to live for his God and to rule his kingdom. He made sure that he was living and ruling by firm guidelines so that he would not have any excuse for failure. **What about you? Are you allowing excuses for failure in your life? There's nothing wrong with repentance, but your life will be blessed more when you set your convictions and obey God the first time. Where are you reacting instead of planning in your life? Ask God to forgive you and to prepare you for a wise decision the next time.**

Read 2 Chronicles 28

Now you are proposing to subjugate for yourselves the people of Judah and Jerusalem for male and female slaves. Surely, do you not have transgressions of your own against the LORD your God? 2 Chron 28:10 Isn't everybody else terrible? Wouldn't it be better if others lived for God like we do? I was sitting in church this past Sunday and a lady behind us and at the other end of a pew was sawing logs. She slept through the sermon. She slept through the invitation music. Even when we got up to hold hands and pray across the aisle to leave, people reached around her! I couldn't believe she came to church and then basically slept the whole time. However, I began to think about the times my eyes were open and I was awake, but my mind was elsewhere. I was thinking about lunch, or a ballgame, or anything else. Was God really more pleased with

me just because I stayed awake? I don't think so, but it sure was easier to judge a lady that was asleep instead of judging myself.

King Ahaz was another unpleasant chapter in the history of Judah's kings. The guy sacrificed his children in the name of religion. He sacrificed to the gods of countries that defeated him thinking that would change his luck. As a result of his idiotic behavior, God allows Judah to get pretty beat up. Israel even comes up and kicks them while they're down. Then they lead 200,000 people back from Judah to be their slaves. This is where God drew the line. As is always His purpose, He desires repentance over destruction. God says that Israel is attempting to "punish" Judah for their sins against the Lord. Then he reminds Israel that they have plenty of their own sins to deal with. It sounds a bit like God is asking who wants to throw the first stone. **Are you judging yourself as swiftly as you judge others? Helping others to see their faults is not an unbiblical thing to do. Sometimes we need an outside pair of eyes to wake us up to our sin. Jesus says our sin is like a log in our eye, and that another person's sin is like a speck in their eye. Don't avoid the obvious sin in your life while you try to help another person stop the sin in theirs.**

Read 2 Chronicles 29

For the Levites were more conscientious to consecrate themselves than the priests. 2 Chron 29:34 I have been reading C.S. Lewis' fictional work "The Screwtape Letters". They depict correspondence between an experienced and inexperienced demon regarding the temptation towards a particular individual. One letter tells that the human being targeted has been going to the same church for a while. The elder demon says this could be good or bad. It is good for them if he is attending the same church out of indifference and isn't being affected. But, it is bad if the man is attending regularly because he feels that the church is teaching him and growing him to be more like God wants him to be. Essentially, was church something the man looks forward to or is it just old hat to him.

The verse above gives a similar picture. King Hezekiah is moving the priests to restore the worship that should have been going on in the temple. The number of priests had dwindled, because there weren't as many needed. So when the time came to consecrate ("set apart for God" by a deliberate offering) the things of the temple and the people of the nation, there weren't enough priests to do the work. A priest was not just a Levite, but of the family of Aaron. Since there was so much work that needed to be done for the sacrifices, an exception was made that allowed any Levite to help with the priestly duties. And the passage says these volunteer Levites were "more conscientious" than the priests in the process. Literally it means the regular Levites were much upright in heart. They were excited at this prospect of being involved in the worship of the temple, whereas the regular priests apparently saw this as nothing special, but simply church work that had to be done. We need more volunteer Levites in our churches; people that are excited to be there and willing to do anything, even if it is menial. These volunteers were skinning sacrifices, some of the most menial work you could perform in the temple. But, they were doing it for the Lord and for no one else. **What is your attitude as you come into church? Do you come in ready for the same old thing, or are you listening and**

watching for what God wants to say to you personally? Is there any work in the church that you view as beneath you? If so, you have lost the joy of serving Christ, and you need to ask Him to give you the humility that He had when He washed the feet of his disciples.

Read 2 Chronicles 30

For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed . For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary." 2 Chron 30:18-19 As a parent I often reward effort over results. My son likes to help me fix things and always brings his own toolbox. His tools are plastic and useless, but he likes to get under a sink or around the lawnmower and see if he can help. I asked him once to get me a wrench because he knew what it looked like. I used it and then he offered to use his to finish unscrewing a sink piece. I had already done the work and it just needed to be easily twisted a few times. So I gave him a shot at it and it took forever! In the end he had it almost out and I unscrewed it the last few turns with my fingers. Did he accomplish what he set out to do? No, but he sure did it with all the effort he could muster and I'm as concerned with his intentions as I am with his results.

Here we see God being pleased with the attitude of his people and forgiving their incomplete results. Had God established the law for no reason? There was a purpose behind the purification that was to take place before the people ate the Passover. Hezekiah knew that the people hadn't done everything they should, but he asked God to forgive them because they were seeking God and God does forgive the people. This is a great indicator that the God of the OT is the God of the NT. We see here His grace for people that didn't do everything properly, but were diligently seeking after Him. **Are you more concerned with results than attitudes? Do your children come to church, but hate going? Do you? God watches our motivations and not just what we accomplish at the end of the day.**

Read 2 Chronicles 31

Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the eastern gate, was over the freewill offerings of God, to apportion the contributions for the LORD and the most holy things. 2 Chron 31:14 We nearly always give our children something to put in the offering plate for themselves. Sometimes they each get a dollar, or one gets to put in the check for our family tithe. Well Tyler lost a tooth some time back and he received a visit from the tooth fairy (a.k.a. Dad). He woke up and showed it off to us and was so excited. That night as we prayed during bedtime, he told me he wanted to give his dollar as an offering at church the next day. I told him that I was very proud that he wanted to do that, and that it was his choice. The next morning he woke up and told us that was still his plan, and when the plate was passed in church he didn't hesitate to give it. Tyler had been

happy to give what we gave to him. This was his chance to give out of his own money, and we felt very blessed to see our son make such an unselfish choice.

There were many contributions given to the temple. Many were for different purposes, but Kore got the best job. He was in charge of the freewill offerings. That means that he dealt with the happy people who were giving with a thankful heart as they attempted to show their love and joy for the Lord in their giving. Did you see where this offering went? It went to the most holy things. The items of the temple that were most set apart for service to God, were cared for by the freewill offerings, and not those that might have been given out of compulsion. **How do you give? God wants us to live a freewill offering faith. Not just in our money, but our willingness to serve and to share the gospel. That whether it be our money, time, or talents that we would give freely without even being asked, in order to see Kingdom work accomplished on earth. Is there anything God could ask for that you would hesitate to give? Then ask Him to work on your heart in that exact area.**

Read 2 Chronicles 32

'Who was there among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? 2 Chron 32:14 In Memphis we often got a Sunday newspaper when I was looking for a job. I soon noticed there was a large section entitled "Attend Your House of Worship." In this section of several pages were churches listed from all over Memphis. As I read, I noticed that there was never any indication of what these different churches believed. Some were Christian denominations and some were definitely not Christian. But since they met on Sunday morning, it was assumed that they were all equal choices for someone to choose from in picking a church for Sunday morning.

Sennacherib made a similar mistake. He assumed all religions were created equal when he went up against Judah. Assyrians were bad dudes, and they demolished every nation they set out to conquer. When they arrive at Jerusalem, Sennacherib knows that the people are praying that their God would deliver them. The Assyrian king assures them that no other nation's god has spared his people, and so they shouldn't assume anything different. However, Sennacherib wasn't fighting people this time, but the one true God who annihilated his army with just one angel. Imagine if He had sent two! **All faiths are not created equal. All the man-made religions of the world have the same look: they are religions of work where people attempt to impress a deity so they can gain reward. That's why they appeal to people, because we are so self-serving anyway. Christianity is the faith of relationship, with a God who extends grace to all who ask, regardless of his/her works. Next time you meet someone of a different religion, remember that you are not on equal footing. A person who has picked another religion is just as lost as someone who has chosen none. Work to share the gospel.**

Read 2 Chronicles 33

Moreover, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had done , but Amon multiplied guilt. 2 Chron 33:23 I don't watch a lot of court tv, but every once in a while I got sucked in during channel surfing. I remember a case in particular where a husband had murdered his wife. He went through the trial and was found guilty. During the entire trial, he never spoke or showed any emotion, even during the recounting of the details of the murder. When he stood before the judge to receive his sentence the judge stated that the man showed no remorse for committing such a crime. There were a couple of options for how the man could be sentenced, but due to the man's indifference to the crime he received the maximum punishment the judge could give.

Manasseh was a guy that certainly no one would have faulted God for writing off. The guy did the exact opposite of God's will for every area of his life. Then in his distress he called to God and knew that the Lord was truly God (v.13). We saw earlier in 2 Chronicles 15:4 that God accepts those who turn to Him in distress, however He wants people who will continue to be in relationship with Him beyond the moment of disaster. Manasseh repented and was remorseful, and God forgave him. However, Manasseh's son Amon did not admit his wrongdoing. It says that he "multiplied guilt". Literally the meaning is that he didn't just commit sin, but continually committed greater sin without any change or remorse. **Have you had a rough past? Have you humbled yourself and asked God to forgive you? If you have, then you are forgiven! If God could forgive Manasseh who not only sinned against God, but led the entire nation to sin against God, then the Father will forgive you. Remember, God never brings up sin that we have repented of; only Satan does that for the purpose of holding you down. Satan brings you down to keep you down, but God brings you down to lift you back up. If you haven't asked for forgiveness, stop living in guilt and just repent before the God who forgives everyone who asks (1 John 1:9).**

Read 2 Chronicles 34

Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD. 2 Chron 34:27 I received some pretty good marital advice early on in my marriage. For some reason, my wife thinks the best time to talk about something really important is when I'm really engrossed in a football game or a show that she knows I like on tv. We talk at other times too, but she really gets her gears turning when I'm preoccupied. A man told me if you're wife comes to talk to you, don't watch the tv and listen to her. Don't mute the tv either. Just turn it off and turn towards her. It's great advice. My wife is not an idiot, and she can tell when I'm listening and when I'm just nodding my head at her. She doesn't want me to hear, but to truly listen to her.

What causes God to listen to us? God can hear us with no problem. God can hear the prayer of a lost person, but if it's not a prayer of repentance, then it's not a prayer He's going to listen to. Here with King Josiah, he came to the Lord repentant for his sins and the sins of the nation. He didn't just come saying they messed up, but he was truly torn up by what they had done. Since his repentance was real and not just for show, the Bible says that God truly heard him. Why? Because he was sincere. **Are you sincere when you pray? Do you pray really expecting and hoping for the things you are asking God about? Are you praying really believing that God is listening to you? When we pray, we must pray without any doubting, and pray in humility and expectation so that the Lord will hear our prayers.**

Read 2 Chronicles 35

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his deeds of devotion as written in the law of the LORD, 2 Chron 35:26 Wearing a wedding ring does not signify devotion. In my time in the military, I was always surprised at how quickly men could forget their wives because they were separated by a few hundred miles. I'm not talking about guys who were stationed overseas, but guys who were training even in the same state. Suddenly their wives were a vague remembrance, and it was off to find other women in other locations.

Look at Josiah. How can you quickly tell he was devoted to the Lord? Because he took actions that are evidence of devotion. He did the right thing, not the easy thing, when he turned the nation upside down to follow after God. He sought God's forgiveness and humbled himself, not attempting to trumpet any position he held as king. He had "deeds of devotion." It wasn't because he said he loved God that he is highly esteemed, instead it was his actions that proved his devotion. **What deeds of devotion are written about you in Heaven? The Bible indicates that we will be judged/rewarded on the basis of what we did during our life here on earth. Will those actions indicate a life of selfless devotion or selfishness?**

Read 2 Chronicles 36

Parenting children is like watching a trainer circle in a cage with a lion. Both are checking out the other, testing weaknesses and limits in an effort to establish dominance. In parenting, children often test us to see how strong that "no" really was. And as a result, there have been times I've allowed my children to push those limits in order to suffer the consequences I once attempted to protect them from. Sometimes, children fail to believe their parents and choose to learn lessons the hard way.

There is no one verse for this passage, because it repeats over and over. Chapter 36 shows the last few moments of life for the nation of Judah. They went through kings like college students go through Mountain Dew. Each time a new man took the throne, he continued to disappoint in light of the standards God had for the nation. Finally, God ends Judah's time as a nation and allows Babylon to finally bring them to a complete destruction. **How many times have you repeated a destructive behavior, hoping to**

once again fall back on the mercy and grace of God? God's forgiveness is an amazing attribute, but it does not guarantee that we will never face consequences for these repeated choices. Whatever sin you are continuing to choose, allow this chapter to be your wake up call. God is patient, but He is also just and willing to allow you to suffer in order to get your attention.