

Leadership Lessons from Kings

What You Won't Learn About Leadership at Harvard

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study, I'm Pat Morley. We're going to be doing a six-week series now called *Leadership Lessons from Kings*. First off, we're going to look at King Asa. And the title of today's message is, *What You Won't Learn About Leadership at Harvard*. I would've put, at, Harvard Business School, but I ran out of space. So you can get a world-class business education at the Harvard Business School. I would extol the virtues of Harvard Business School, but I would also say that one thing you will not learn at Harvard is how to be a humble leader who lives by faith and finishes well. We're going to be looking at Second Chronicles chapters 14, 15, and 16 in this lesson, if you want to turn there.

THE NOT SO UNIQUE STORY OF ASA

We're going to begin though, by looking at the not so unique story of Asa, the not so unique story of Asa's faith, actually. Chapter 14 begins by telling us that in verse two Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord, his God. Asa was a reformer. He did things like removing the four altars. He commanded the people to seek the Lord and he removed the high places. And there was peace in the land. At about the 10-year mark of his reign, of his leadership, an army of a million troops, a million Cushite troops came marching against him, led by another man named Zira. And just imagine the feeling that he would have had, the queasy feeling in his gut, that he would have had facing such a large enemy or just maybe picture for yourself that queasy feeling that you get at various times when you're facing an obstacle or some kind of an event. It may be it's at the start of a race, maybe you're involved in some kind of sporting event and you know that queasy feeling you have just before the race begins, or maybe that queasy feeling that you have just before you go into an appointment for a new job.

Or maybe it's to make a sale that you really need to have the sale go through. Maybe you have a customer who has made a big purchase from you, and now they won't pay. It's not that they can't pay or they shouldn't pay, but they won't pay. Or maybe you have some kind of a foundational difference in values when it comes to how you and your wife view money. I have that queasy feeling, I think I've said it before, I know I have, that every time I walk up the steps to come to my office here to prepare a message, I have that queasy feeling in my stomach because I don't know what's going to happen. Now, at the Harvard Business School, they're going to give you the skill, they're going to teach you the skill to face adversities with confidence and resolution. And so they'll do that because they'll teach you that you maybe are the smartest person in the room, or they will teach you to have a sense of security in the skills that you've acquired, that you basically are able to manage whatever situation it is by human determination, by your own strength, by your own power, by your own will.

Asa took a very different approach though. We read in verse 11 of chapter 14, when these thousand thousands or a million, a thousand thousands of troops came out against him. It says in verse 11, that

Asa, who would have had that queasy feeling in his gut. Then Asa called to the Lord, his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord, our God, for we rely on you. And in your name, we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God do not let mere mortals prevail against you."

This word rely, for we rely on you, is the word for faith. It's the word for trust. We have faith in you. We trust in you. It literally means to lean. So we lean on you. Asa, when he faced adversity, he embraced the queasy feeling he had in his gut and he decided to lean into that trust he had in God. And this is how the Bible describes Asa in chapters 14 and 15. We already looked at the verse that said, verse two, Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of his God.

And then the verse eleven, which we just read and chapter 15 verse 17 sort of rounding out the 15th chapter. It says, "Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord, all his life." Let me say that again. "Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life." This was a man who knew what it meant to live by faith. So the Big Idea for the day, which I'm going to ask you to go ahead and make a note of, because I think this could be one that can really help you a lot. **Embrace that queasy feeling because that's what it feels like to live by faith.** How did I learn this? I learned this through a book called, The Prayer of Jabez, by David Wilkinson.

Maybe you've heard of it. I was reading the book and he tells the story on pages 46 and 47, when he was starting a ministry called Walk Through the Bible, he really says that God had something planned that was big and many opportunities were coming. But he started to get what he didn't say did, did not describe it as a queasy feeling, but he did say that he began to feel inside like he was not the right man for the job. And it became so overwhelming to him that he decided to reach out to one of his mentors, a man from Yorkshire called John Mitchell, a man in his eighties, who had been the spiritual father to thousands of men. And Bruce Wilkinson described to John Mitchell, what he was going through. And so this is what John Mitchell said.

He said, "Son, that feeling you are running from is called dependence. It means you're walking with the Lord, Jesus." And then he paused to let that sink in. And then he continued. "Actually, the second you're not feeling dependent is the second you've backed away from truly living by faith." Well, Wilkinson didn't like what he heard and so he said, "You're saying, Dr. Mitchell, that feeling that I just can't do it is what I'm supposed to be feeling?" And Mitchell said, "Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying." The Big Idea here, embrace that queasy feeling because that's what it means. That's what it feels like to live by faith.

Then we go on and there's a paradox because the not so unique story of Asa is also the not so unique story of you and me. So he's living by faith. He's accepting this queasy feeling, his heart is fully committed to the Lord, his God. He's doing what seems good and right in the eyes of the Lord, just like you're trying to do, just like I'm trying to do. And then in chapter 16, something happens. After 35 years of living this way, another enemy comes against him, Baasha, the King of Israel. And instead of embracing the queasy feeling and trusting God as he has been doing for 35 years, he decides to make a treaty with the King of Aram, the King of Syria. And as a result, he essentially makes an incredibly poor decision that costs him a great deal.

Let's read in chapter 16, beginning at verse seven, when God sent the prophet, Hanani, to confront Asa. It says, "At that time, Hanani, the seer came to Asa, King of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the King of Aram and not on the Lord, your God, the army of the King of Aramis has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and the Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen. Yet, when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand."" So we're right back to what we were talking about in chapter 14, verse 11. It's this word rely, this word, trust, the word, lean. He said in chapter 14, verse 11, "Lord, we rely on you.", and God delivered the Cushites into the hands of Asa. But now here, when this other enemy comes, he says, the prophet says, because you relied or

trusted on the King of Aram, they're not going to escape from your hand. And then he says, when you relied on the Lord, your God, he delivered them into your hand. And he was referring back to the time with the Cushites. Then in verse nine, "For the eyes of the Lord ranged throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."

And then something very disheartening for all of us. He says, "You have done a foolish thing. And from now on, you will be at war." And I want you to see how Asa responded to this because he did not respond well to this. He had made a mistake, but he did not respond well. Verse 10, "Asa was angry with the seer because of this. He was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time, Asa brutally oppressed some of the people." And then in verse 12, "In the 39th year of his reign, Asa was afflicted with the disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness, he did not seek help from the Lord as he had done before, but only from the physicians."

WHY WOULD A MAN DO SUCH A FOOLISH THING?

So why would a man do such a foolish thing? That's the next thing we want to talk about. There could be a couple of reasons for this at least. Maybe he had gone to Harvard Business School, and now he felt like he didn't need the Lord anymore. Maybe it was a pride of life issue for him. Maybe he had developed the skills that he felt like he could handle his problems on his own. That's a real risk for you and me too, as we go along, I'm sure. Or maybe he had accumulated enough cash in his bank account so he felt like he had enough money over here, he didn't have any problems anymore. Maybe that could be something that some of you might experience yourselves. Or maybe it's that you do your job so well, you feel like you can waltz in to any situation and handle it with great business acumen or other acumen because you have the skill to do it.

I remember Tom Skinner by best friend, now deceased, who was one of the greatest public speakers in all of Christianity. And I remember him telling me one time, he said, "I can snow you." And I could do that too. I could walk up here and give a talk in my own strength that would be a perfectly satisfactory, but I don't want to do that. In fact, the first thing I do when I prepare a message is, because I know that I have developed some skills, I repent of any self-sufficiency to prepare and deliver this message. And you know what the last thing I do every time before I actually give the message, I repent of any self-sufficiency to either prepare or deliver this message, but express desire to rely only upon the Holy Spirit. And that's what Asa had given up.

He might've done it for pride of life, but I think a more probable reason, especially based on the texts is that he just felt the need to take things into his own hands. He just felt the need to take things into his own hands. I just can't wait on the Lord any longer. This queasy feeling, I just can't live with this queasy feeling anymore. I just need to take matters into my own hands. I know you feel that from time to time. I certainly feel like that from time to time. The Big Idea today, again, **embrace that queasy feeling because that's what it feels like to live by faith.**

The reason I think this is probably why Asa made this foolish decision is because number one, it's referred to in the text, we read as a foolish decision, because you've done this foolish thing. And then also, because it says in the text that Asa was fully committed to the Lord, his God, all of his life. So you remember the movie, *Seabiscuit*, perhaps from the early 2000s. So Chris Cooper is the trainer. Jeff Bridges is the owner. When *Seabiscuit* is a little damaged, the trainer says to the owner, "You don't throw a horse away just because he's a little beat up." Later, when the jockey has a problem that may prevent him from riding the horse, then Chris Cooper says to Jeff Bridges, the owner, he says, "You don't throw a human away just because he's banged up a little bit."

And we don't want to throw Asa away just because he's a little banged up and we don't want to throw you away. And we don't want to throw me away just because we are banged up a little bit. Erik Erikson, a talk show host, said in an NPR interview, he said, "If we are not allowed to move beyond the worst

thing we have ever done, there's no incentive to get better." Let me say that again. "If we're not allowed to move beyond the worst thing we've ever done, then there's no incentive to get better." So we don't want to throw Asa under the bus here. We want to use him as an instructor to us and learn from him because we are the shadow case. Every time we read one of these stories, we're comparing our lives to the life of the person that we're studying. And we can learn so much from the life of Asa here. And that is, is that we should embrace that queasy feeling. That's the Big Idea, **embrace that queasy feeling because that's what it feels like to live by faith.**

ARE YOU BECOMING TIRED OF DEPENDING ON GOD?

And so the last thing to talk about today, the third circle. Are you becoming tired of depending on God? We live in a cancel culture. God does not have a cancel culture. No matter what you've done, no matter how far you've gone astray, he doesn't cancel you. In fact, he restores you. But when you become tired of depending on God, then there's a tendency to take matters into your own hands like Asa has done. The message for us today is not to do that, it's to repent of any self-sufficiency, to do whatever it is that lies before us, whether it's a job interview, an important sale we're trying to make, a payroll that we're trying to figure out how to make, a conflict with our wife or spouse that looks serious. A child that we can't seem to coax back onto the right path. Whatever those million troops are for you and that queasy feeling that you have inside, remember that that queasy feeling is what faith feels like. The Big Idea today, **embrace that queasy feeling because that's what it feels like to live by faith.**

Let's pray. Our dearest Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the life of Asa. Lord, he was a good man. He was seeking good all of his life and his heart was fully committed to you all of his life. And he did make this bad mistake. We all make these bad mistakes where we just get tired, Lord, of waiting and we get tired of this queasy feeling in our gut of living by faith. And we just want to take matters into our own hands. So father, I just pray that if there are any men hearing this message, receiving this message that are becoming tired of depending on God, Lord, that you would renew their faith and renew them in the idea that that queasy feeling that they have, that is what it feels like to live by faith. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you, men.