

Leadership Lessons from Kings

A Foolproof Guide to a Righteous Life

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Hey, guys. Welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. We're in our series on **Leadership Lessons from the Kings**, and today, we're going to look at lessons from King Josiah. Our title today is *A Foolproof Guide to a Righteous Life*, and I think King Josiah has some great things to teach us about how to live a righteous life. So real quick, before we jump into it, just a little history on King Josiah. His father was Amon who was killed because he was so evil, and then the people that killed him were killed.

His grandfather was a guy named Manasseh, who was also evil in the sight of the Lord. The people in the court that killed Amon's assassins, then take eight year old Josiah, and they install him as the King. The Bible says that in verse two of chapter 22, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David, his father, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. This is 2 Kings 22, which is where the story of King Josiah starts. Josiah lived an amazing life as a King. He did great things.

He led the nation of Judah, which after Solomon, the nation of Israel split into two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel to the North and the Kingdom of Judah to the South. Kings and Chronicles both sort of give the history of these Kings of both Kingdoms. They were good ones. They were evil ones. And that's what Kings and Chronicles, those four books that we have, that's what they tell us about. They tell us the stories of these Kings. As we jump into this, I want to ask you a question and that is, what do you think of the Bible?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE BIBLE?

Now, if you were to ask sort of people out in the world what they think of the Bible, a lot of people would say probably it's a great book of moral teaching. It's a storybook. Maybe even like sort of fairytale quality. Some people might even sort of see something more nefarious like, it's a book that religious people created in order to keep their power over other people. It's not really real. They sort of molded and picked and chose what they wanted to build this book.

Honestly, I think that's kind of lame because it's assuming a conspiracy over centuries of people that knew that what they were doing wasn't true. The problem with conspiracies is every person you add to the conspiracy increases the likelihood of it being exposed, and you really can't expose the Bible as false. Every time we found a new piece of history, it's confirmed what we read in the Bible. It's really a fantastic document written by dozens of authors over centuries all telling the same central story, right?

The story of God creating his people, and then those people rejecting him, and then God choosing to pursue those people and redeem them anyway, which leads us to the story eventually of the cross, of God becoming man and walking the earth as Jesus, dying on the cross, paying the penalty for our sins, redeeming us as his people, as his children, his sons, his heirs, so that we can then be called children of God and live with him forever. That's the story of the Bible. It's not a fairy tale. The Bible I think is powerful, and the Bible itself cause is so powerful.

You look at Hebrews 4:12. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the

thoughts and intentions of the heart." The Bible is a powerful document, and it pierces to the bone and the marrow. Really it cuts through all the garbage that the world throws at us, and it gives us the pure truth, which is what makes Josiah's story even more incredible. What do you think about the Bible? That's an important place for us to start.

A GOOD KING DISCOVERS A GREATER TRUTH

The story that I want to tell you is a story of a good King who discovers a greater truth. In verse two, it says, like I said before, that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David, his father, and did not turn aside from the right or to the left. He's 18 years into his reign, we see in verse three, and he realizes that he needs to rebuild the temple. He decides he needs to rebuild the temple. In the process of rebuilding the temple, they find Torah. They find the first...

Well, we know as the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. And Hilkiah the priest finds it. He tells Shaphan, who was Josiah's secretary, but sort of like a primary minister or secretary of state kind of guy. Hilkiah reads the book to Shaphan. Shaphan takes the book, goes back to Josiah, says to Josiah, "The reconstruction's going well, but we found the law. We found the books of Moses." And he reads it to Josiah. And then you see verse 11, 2 Kings 22:11, "When the King heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes."

So here's the thing, if they found the Book of the Law, that means it was lost. So if Josiah was following the ways of David and trying to live a righteous life, up until this point, he'd been doing it without the Bible. And even as much as he had tried to do the right thing, so when you read the Book of the Law, he realized even more how much he had fallen short and how much his people had fallen short. It provoked a passionate response with Josiah and he ripped his clothes.

The next thing he does is that, in verse 14, he sends Hilkiah the priest and some of the other priests, and they go. They meet with a prophetess named Huldah, and they say, "Huldah, tell us what to do. What does this mean?" And Huldah actually tells them, "Because of the sins of Manasseh and your forefathers, God's wrath is not removed from your people. But Josiah, you are a good and righteous man.

And because you are good and righteous and doing right in the eyes of the Lord, when God's wrath is visited on your people for the sins of Manasseh and their own sins, you're not going to be around to see it. God's going to wait until after you die, Josiah, to pour out his wrath on a disobedient people." Josiah could have, at that point, said, "Well, I guess I'm just going to be the best guy I can and devote my stuff to studying this book and just live a good life." But he doesn't do that, because leaders don't do that.

And Josiah is a great leader. He's a righteous leader. We see his response in chapter 23. The first thing he does is he gathers all the elders, all the men, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, it says in verse two. All the people, both small and great. He goes up to this rebuilt temple and he reads the Book of the Law to them. And then he makes a covenant that he will follow the Book of the Law and all of the people join him in the covenant. Josiah doesn't just say, "Well, we found this book and I'm going to do my best."

He says, "No, no, no. I'm going to tell all the people that they need to follow this too." And very publicly, he proclaims his devotion to following God and to obeying the words of the Book of the Law and the people join him in that. Now, he doesn't just stop with this public... He has a passionate response. He has a public response, and then he has a persistent response. What he does from there is he goes out into the land. Now, many pagan religions had been allowed to flourish under the Kings.

There was certainly the worship of God, and we know that because there was a temple, as rundown as it was, to Yahweh. But there are also been other pagan religions that had been allowed to flourish in the nation of Judah. Pagan religions that worshiped nature that had an Asherah pole that worshiped the sun, Baal or Baal was the sun god. Religions that had prostitution. Religions that had child sacrifice. All these false religions had been allowed in the land. And so Josiah goes and he puts an end to all that.

Verse 4 to verse 20 talks about all these different things that Josiah did because he had discovered this greatest truth. He removed all the idols. He deposed the priest. He eliminated their roles as priests, as pagan priests. He ended all these practices, prostitution, child sacrifice, worshiping nature, Asherah poles, or the sun. He ends all of that. Then he goes and he gets the bones of the dead priests of all these false religions. He burns those bones to really make it emphatic to the people like, "This is not just over now."

It was always false. We don't need to follow this in any way or have any sort of fond memories of this. It was wrong." And so he burns the priests' bones, and then he actually kills some priests as well. Sacrificed priests on these altars. Maybe they were priests who refused to be deposed or who were the most egregious actors on all of this. Very persistently, he goes through the land and he eliminates anything that violates the Book of the Law, anything that basically pulls people to worship anything other than the one true God.

And then in verse 21, he does this fascinating thing. He re-instituted the Passover, the celebration of the Passover. Why? So that he's not just eliminating the memory of these false religions, but he's replacing it with the memory of what God has done for their people. He's reminding the people of God's faithfulness to them and saving them from slavery in Egypt. He re-institutes the celebrate Passover. It's interesting. The beginning of this, he establishes a covenant and the people join them.

And at the end of it, bookends, he reestablishes the celebration of Passover, which is from the Book of the Law, and reminds you the people of God's goodness to them as a nation. You can see that Josiah doesn't just rebuild his own life around the Book of the Law. He rebuilds his nation around the Book of the Law. He's a righteous man, a righteous leader, and the Book of the Law, the Bible, is his it's foolproof way to a righteous life.

This brings us to our Big Idea that **a righteous leader builds his life around loving God and obeying his word passionately, publicly, and persistently**. What about you? What about me? What are our life principles and where did they come from? Is the Bible a good place for our life principles to come from?

WHAT ARE YOUR LIFE PRINCIPLES?

Well, Jesus thought so. He quoted scripture all the time. Deuteronomy, in fact, was his favorite book to quote from. In that Matthew 5:17, he actually confirms the importance of the law.

He says, "I didn't come to eliminate the law. I came to fulfill the law." So what is the law? Well, the law is God's people being righteous in God's eyes. The law is the way to do that. We know that we can't measure up in the Old Testament. That's why they had to do sacrifices to show God that they knew that they weren't measuring up, to repent from those, and to offer a sacrifice, something that costs them something. This all led to then Jesus being the ultimate sacrifice, right?

Just like God led the Israelites out of slavery to Egypt, Jesus leads us out of slavery to sin. You can see Paul talks about this a lot. Go listen to our Romans series and you'll hear us talk about this a lot, about how the gospel and grace frees us from the of slavery. That's why Passover is so important. It's a symbol of God's delivering his people from slavery to freedom. Jesus himself gave us two primary life principles that I think we could... If we're sort of building a list of our life principles from scripture, the first two would be this.

He's asked in all the gospels, but he's... I like the version in Luke. Luke 10:27, a scribe asks him, "Jesus, what's the most important law? What's the most important command?" And Jesus, again, quotes Deuteronomy, and he says, "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." And then he says in the second one is this, "Love your neighbor as yourself." And basically he says, "All the law and the prophets hang on these two commands, loving God and loving your neighbor."

Those are good places for us to start with our life principles. I think the other thing we can do is we can look at... If we're trying to live a righteous life and build our life principles around the Bible, we can look at Josiah's example of what we could do too, right? We need to seek counsel from godly people. We need to covenant with God that we're going to follow his ways. We need to tear down the idols in our lives, those things that we think are more important than God.

Whether that idol is our job or our wealth or our kids' success, whatever those idols are, we need to put those things in the right place underneath our love for God. We need to depose the wicked and false teachers that we're following. I can get caught up sometimes in the latest business book and thinking, "Oh, if I can just implement these principles, it's going to make everything better," or you can watch TED Talk after TED Talk after TED Talk telling you the best way to live your life.

You can decide that this latest great speaker is going to be the guy who gives you the principles or the woman that gives you the principles that you're going to live your life by. And there's a lot of great stuff there, but it's all less than the Bible. We need to always test those things against the truth of scripture before we decide that we're going to follow somebody else's teaching. We need to follow the teaching of Jesus, to follow the teaching of the Bible. Are there those things in your life that you need to depose?

That you need to remove from their place of importance in your life? Maybe even walk away from altogether. And then finally, remembering what God has done for you. Just like Josiah re-instituted the feast of the Passover, we need to remember the good things that God has done for us. I think two ways you can do that, I talk about this all the time, but journaling is a great way just to write down what has God done for me today, this week, this month, this year, and then go back and review those things.

And then I think also as we gather as a people in our churches, in our small groups, in our friendship groups, we need to constantly be reminding each other of what God has done for us. And these are the kinds of life principles, getting godly counsel, covenanting with God to follow his word, tearing down idols, getting rid of false teaching, and remembering all that God has done, these are great life principles for us to live our life by and for us to use in our life.

It brings us again to our Big Idea, and our Big Idea is that **a righteous leader builds his life around loving God and obeying his word passionately, publicly, and persistently**. Passionately, like Josiah who ripped his clothes when he heard the Book of the Law for the first time. Publicly, like Josiah brought the people up into the temple and covenanted with God publicly, and they joined him in that covenant to follow the Book of the Law and to follow God's teaching.

And then persistently, as he went out into his life, into his culture, into his nation and rooted out those things that were false prophets, false teachings, and reminding people all that God had done for them. These are the ways that we can build our life principles. This is a foolproof guide to a righteous life. To be a righteous leader, build your life around loving God and obeying his word passionately, publicly, and persistently. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for King Josiah, for the example that he gives us.

Lord, would you help us to be righteous leaders like King Josiah? That we would not turn to the right or the left. That we would love you with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. That we would root out false idols and false teachers in our own lives. And instead, Lord, remember all that you've done for us and follow your word so that we can live righteous lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.