

FROM INSIGHT FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

INSIGHTS

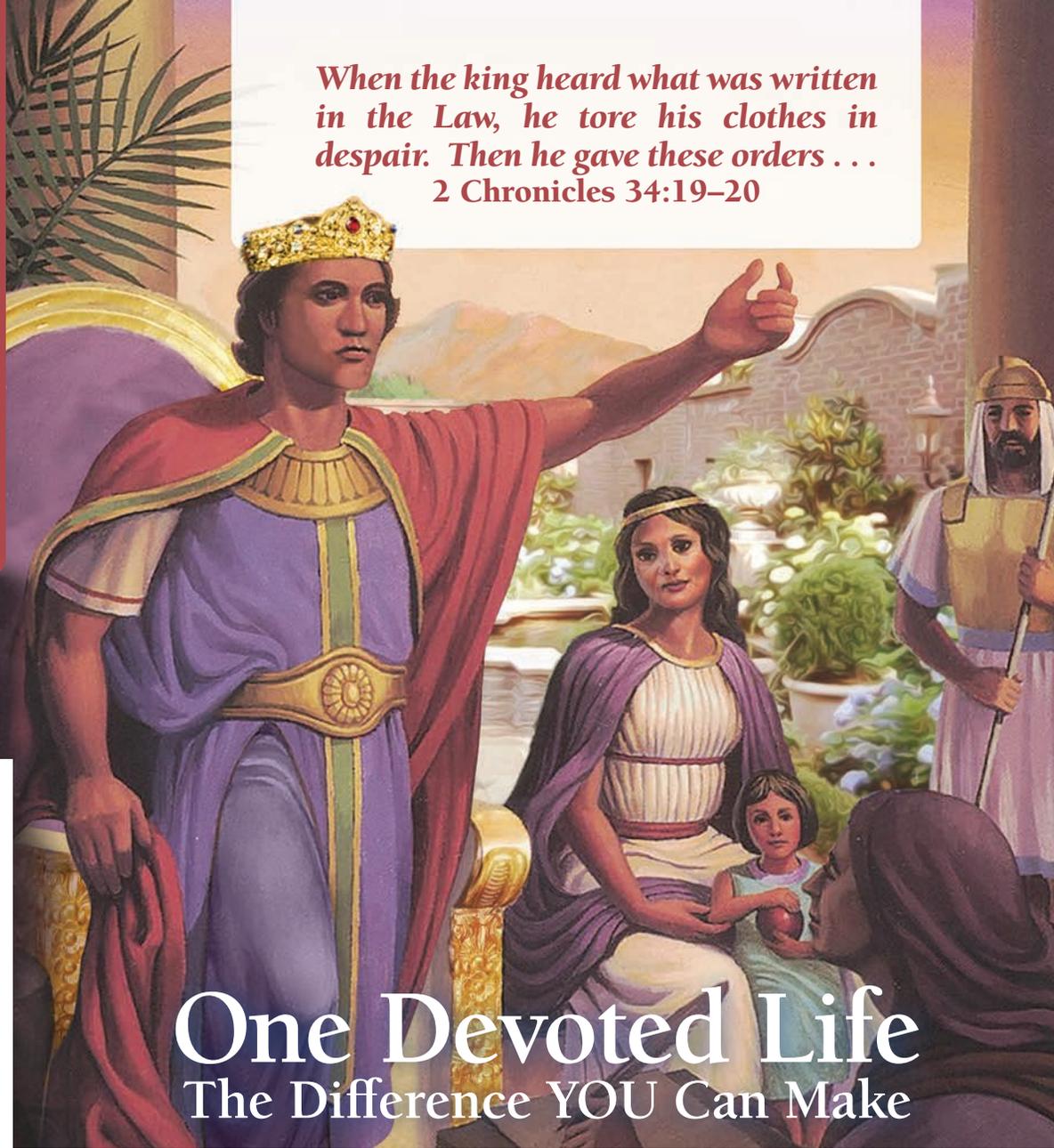
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

ON THE AIR

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When the king heard what was written in the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. Then he gave these orders . . .
2 Chronicles 34:19-20



One Devoted Life The Difference YOU Can Make



One devoted life can completely change a young person's life . . . or even the course of history.

— Charles R. Swindoll



Charles R. Swindoll

I want to tell you something I hope you never forget: **You don't know how significant your influence is.**

When you watch the news and feel overwhelmed with sadness, grief, and anxiety at another lost life, another part of your country destroyed, or another city with skyrocketing COVID-19 cases, remember: **You don't know how significant your influence is.**

When you're stuck at home through this pandemic, feeling like a phone call or what you have to offer your kids isn't enough, remember: **You don't know how significant your influence is.**

When you feel trapped having to go to work and sending your kids to in-person school, worried about their health and feeling exhausted about all that must get done, remember: **You don't know how significant your influence is.**

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One Devoted Life: The Difference YOU Can Make.

When you think about the state of our world and feel hopeless to change it, remember: **You don't know how significant your influence is.**

If you've believed in Jesus as your Savior, the Spirit of God lives in you. He has equipped you to be a world changer. He has given you HIS love to pour out on your neighbors. He hears you when you pray. He chooses you for the roles He gives you. He directs you into the lives of others for a specific reason. The question is: Are you making the most of your opportunities?

Chances are good, you have a young person in your life. It may be your son or daughter . . . perhaps a grandson or granddaughter . . . a niece or nephew . . . a neighbor, a student, an athlete. Whoever that young person may be, I want you to remember:

You don't know how significant your influence is.

Any time you spend encouraging and instructing the young people in your life is worth every minute. **Any** investment you make in their walk with Christ is a lifelong investment.

You have no idea how often they will quote you and remember those special times you spent with them. I can still remember lines my grandfather said to me—actual words he spoke. I was just a little kid running around his big, wrap-around porch in El Campo, Texas, when he said them. I'm sure he must've wondered, *Is he even listening?* I remember so clearly moments that likely seemed insignificant to him. I remember one day sitting in his little bedroom study, looking at his high bed with its ladder. (Have you noticed how the older people get, the higher their beds seem to be?) I *really* wanted to climb up that ladder and take a nap on his bed. Finally, I worked up the courage to ask: "Granddaddy, can I lie on your bed?" He thought for a bit and said, "Well, little Charles, you may—but behave yourself."

With my grandfather nearby, I climbed that ladder and lay perfectly straight and still. I remember like it was yesterday! It wasn't the bed or the ladder that stuck with me. It was the presence of my grandfather who took time for me.

My grandfather was one of several mentors throughout my childhood, adolescence, and young adult years. These men changed the course of my life, my career, and my ministry. What they taught me continues to influence me today, even though most of them have been face-to-face with Jesus for years. But what if it had only been my grandfather investing in

me, teaching me God's Word and His ways?

I believe it could've been enough. The influence of **one** devoted life can completely change a young person's life . . . or even the course of history.

We see this throughout Scripture. Moses' mother, Jochebed, put her baby in a basket and placed him in the Nile amongst the bulrushes. The current pushed his little boat down the river until Pharaoh's daughter found him. Moses' sister, Miriam, watched her brother as he floated to a new life. When Pharaoh's daughter decided to keep Moses, Miriam volunteered to find a Hebrew wet nurse for the baby. Whom did Miriam find? Jochebed, of course! Moses' mother had him until he was weaned, and in that time, you know she gave him more than her milk! She poured herself into young Moses' life.

Samuel had Hannah. She knew when he was born that she would one day have to hand her boy over to Eli. The priest had two sons of his own, men so wicked that they notoriously lay with women at the gate of the tabernacle. Hannah knew exactly what environment she would be surrendering Samuel to! Before that day came, you better believe she poured herself into him.

These are Bible stories most Christians remember. But there's another example from a part of the Bible most of us so rarely read, the pages still crinkle and the gold edging shines like new. I'm talking about the Kings and the Chronicles. These books aren't easy to read, but it's in them that we find a young man powerfully impacted by the influence of one devoted life. Let me set the scene . . .

We're in the land of Judah—a nation suffering the consequences of sin and perverse, corrupt rulers. For 55 years, Manasseh sat on the throne. Into this nation of God's people, Manasseh introduced wizards, witches, idolatry, and sorcery. Along the countryside, he raised pagan shrines with prostitutes and promoted community-wide orgies. In the name of witchcraft, he burned his own son. When Manasseh died, his son Amon took over . . . and he was worse than his father! He was so bad, his own staff soon assassinated him.

In that same palace, lives Amon's son, an 8-year-old boy. He hears the stabbing, screaming, cursing, and killing of his father somewhere in that palace, echoing through the stone walls. Then he's in the chaos as the murderous conspirators face the same fate. Out of that bloody, violent scene emerges this young boy—like a beautiful, blooming rose emerging out of a cesspool of wickedness. His name is Josiah, Judah's new king.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right. During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David.

(2 Chronicles 34:1–3)

At age 16, Josiah begins seeking after God. At age 20, he really takes charge and does something very courageous. Josiah's young faith has grown into a serious determination to follow the Lord, not just personally as a man, but corporately as king. At this point, he really takes charge and does something very courageous.

Then in the twelfth year he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images. He ordered that the altars of Baal be demolished and that the incense altars which stood above them be broken down. . . . He did the same thing in the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even as far as Naphtali, and in the regions all around them.

(2 Chronicles 34:3–4, 6)

Josiah moves systematically through his kingdom, destroying, demolishing, smashing, and burning every idol, cast image, pole, and altar dedicated to a false god. From town to town, he rids Judah of pagan worship, cleaning up the filthy lifestyle his father and grandfather had established.

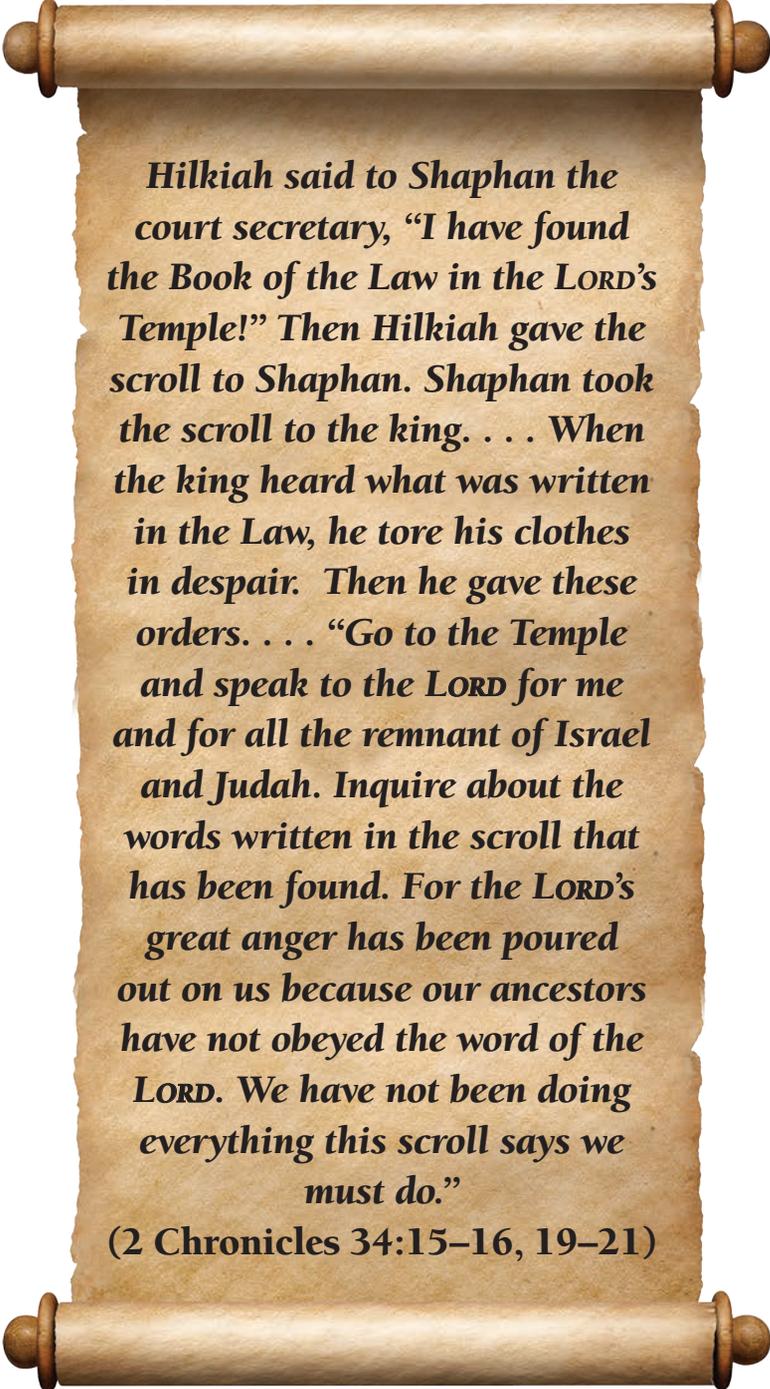
Six years later, Josiah has *completely* purified the land under his authority. But he doesn't stop there. He isn't content for Judah to simply not be wicked; He wants righteousness. He wants to restore Judah to a nation who practically and wholeheartedly worships the one, true God. The 26-year-old king decides the next right step is to rebuild the temple.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, the court secretary, to the Temple of the LORD. He told him, "Go to Hilkiah the high priest and have him count the money the gatekeepers have collected from the people at the LORD's Temple. Entrust this money to the men assigned to supervise the restoration of the LORD's Temple. Then they can use it to pay workers to repair the Temple. They will need to hire carpenters, builders, and masons. Also have them buy the timber and the finished stone needed to repair the Temple. But don't require the construction supervisors to keep account of the money they receive, for they are honest and trustworthy men."

(2 Kings 22:3–7)

Notice the wisdom, humility, and discernment Josiah uses to go about rebuilding the temple. He assembles a “cabinet” of trustworthy men who share his vision of spiritual restoration. Then he reaches out to the high priest, Hilkiah, with a practical plan that provides both manpower and financial resources to get it done. Then he entrusts the work to Hilkiah, the all-star team he’s assembled, and the skilled craftsmen they will select.

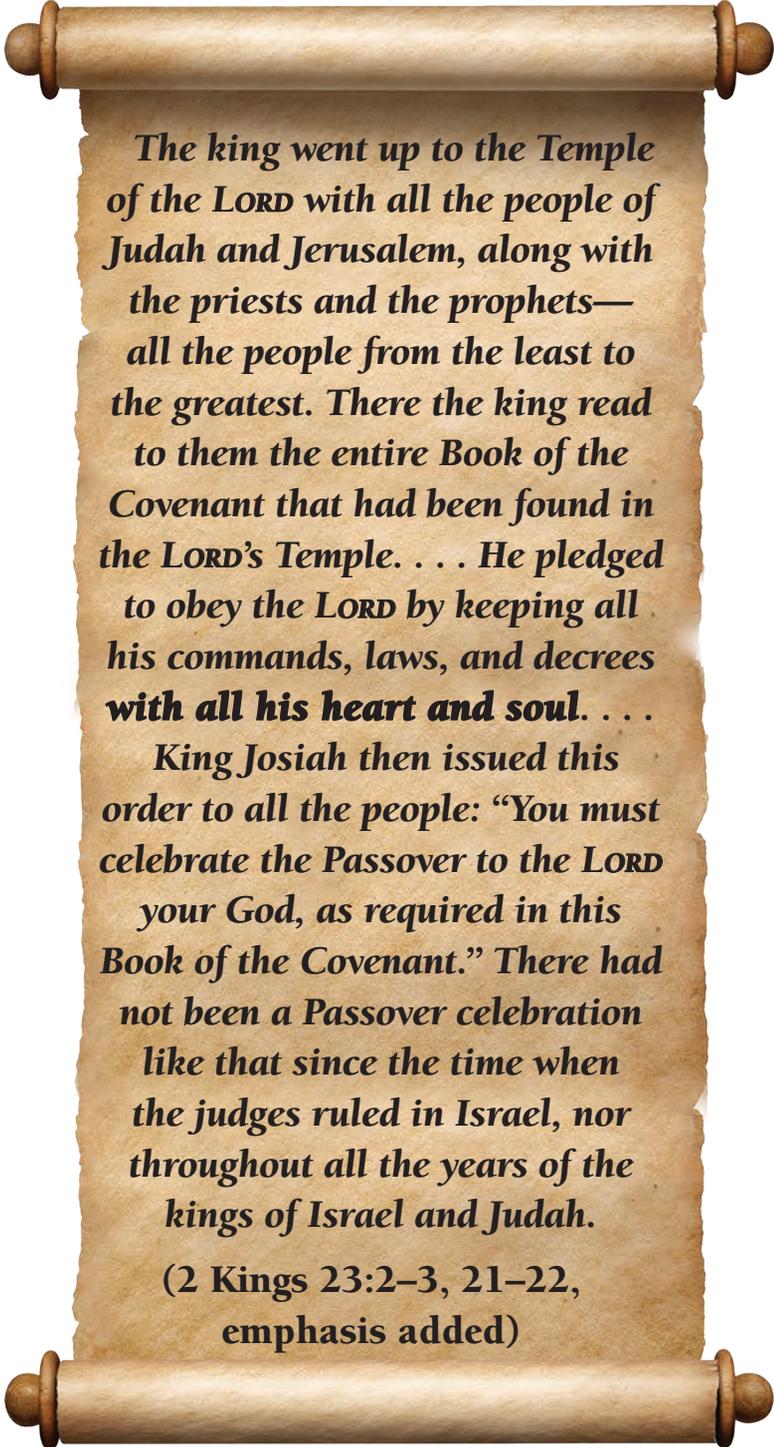
The work begins, and as they dig through the ruins, clearing the way to resurrect the temple, something miraculous happens. Hilkiah finds something that changes everything, something God’s people had long ago lost: the Scriptures.



Hilkiah said to Shaphan the court secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD’s Temple!” Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan. Shaphan took the scroll to the king. . . . When the king heard what was written in the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. Then he gave these orders. . . . “Go to the Temple and speak to the LORD for me and for all the remnant of Israel and Judah. Inquire about the words written in the scroll that has been found. For the LORD’s great anger has been poured out on us because our ancestors have not obeyed the word of the LORD. We have not been doing everything this scroll says we must do.”

(2 Chronicles 34:15–16, 19–21)

Isn’t that great! This is the first time Josiah has ever heard a reading from the Scriptures. They’ve been buried under the destruction caused by his father and grandfather his entire life. Yet, as soon as he hears God’s Word, he responds with true repentance and immediate obedience. He actively and passionately sets the example and calls on God’s people to do the same. Then he orchestrates the biggest Passover celebration in history!



The king went up to the Temple of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, along with the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the LORD’s Temple. . . . He pledged to obey the LORD by keeping all his commands, laws, and decrees with all his heart and soul. . . .

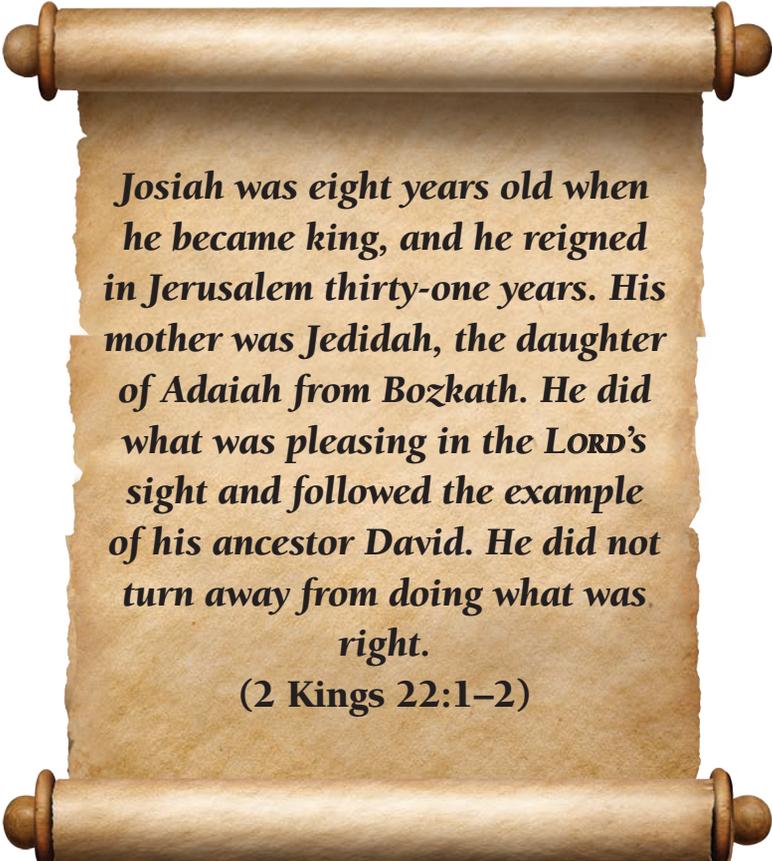
King Josiah then issued this order to all the people: “You must celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as required in this Book of the Covenant.” There had not been a Passover celebration like that since the time when the judges ruled in Israel, nor throughout all the years of the kings of Israel and Judah.

(2 Kings 23:2–3, 21–22, emphasis added)

The blood in this young man's veins comes from two of the most horrifically evil men in history. The two, main males in his life were rotten. Yet, Josiah grew up as though the surrounding atmosphere wasn't evil. As king, instead of following in their footsteps, Josiah goes all the way back to the king *God* chose for Israel many years before, the man after God's own heart: David. With disgust over Judah's rampant wickedness, Josiah determines that he's going to make things right. When he hears God's Word, it's a booming revelation! He now knows exactly what sins have plagued Judah and exactly what they need to do to be in right relationship with the God who chose them and loves them. He has a clear guide on how they should live and worship God—and he makes sure they follow it.

Josiah leads in righteousness until he dies from battle wounds around age 39. He goes down as one of the best kings to ever rule God's people.

But why? I think the answer is tucked away in 2 Kings:



Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath. He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right.

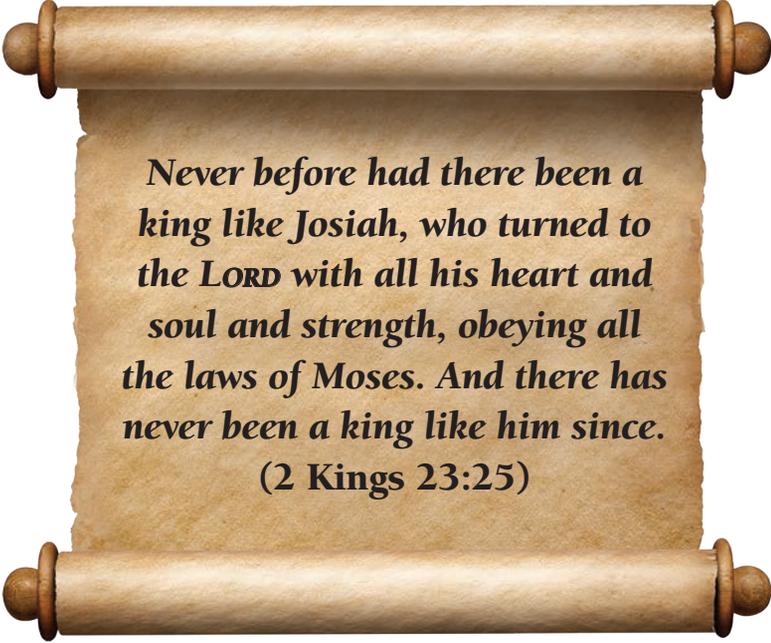
(2 Kings 22:1–2)

Did you catch it? Between the announcement of Josiah's reign and his following the example of David, there's an insertion found nowhere else: "His mother was Jedidah."

When I first read that, I searched the Scriptures for more about Jedidah's life. It isn't there. Except for her being the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath, we literally know nothing more about this woman. But I think we can build a solid case about Jedidah's influence on Josiah—a case for the significant influence of one devoted life.

Jedidah is mentioned at this place in the Bible on purpose. I'm convinced the reason is because she was different. I don't believe Jedidah was caught up in the godless lifestyle of her husband, Amon. I believe she detested the life of her father-in-law, Manasseh. She walked with God. She realized Judah's only hope was her son—the boy who would one day become the king who could turn things around.

Remember, Josiah was only 8 when he became king, 16 when he began seeking God, 20 when he began purifying the land. All through that time, from Josiah's birth into his twenties, I feel certain Jedidah poured herself into her son. All other influences in his life were wicked to the core. But his mother stepped into his world and changed the whole direction of what could have been.



Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.

(2 Kings 23:25)

Never underestimate the powerful influence of one devoted life! It could be the mother, could be the father. Yes, two are better than one, but one is better than none! In the midst of all the pressure of a divided home where one parent is passive, uninvolved, or absent, it's easy to become resentful

rather than realizing: *This is my moment! This is my opportunity!* But what if neither Mom nor Dad step up to the plate? The responsibility falls to the grandfather or grandmother, the aunt or uncle, the neighbor, the teacher, coach, Sunday school leader, or a combination.

Think about the circumstances we have all known due to COVID-19. Where have most of us primarily been these last many months? HOME! (Boy, have we ever been home!) Are you a parent who grew weary of “distance learning” last semester, who felt like you just barely made it through an at-home summer and now are facing *more* online school? This is your opportunity!

Are you a grandparent who has become the caregiver for children whose parents can't depend on schools and daycares and after-school activities as they usually do? This is your opportunity! Are you an aunt or uncle, an older cousin, a neighbor, a family friend, a Sunday school leader, a coach who suddenly has free time and a telephone, an e-mail account, or pen and paper? This is your opportunity!

Or perhaps you're a parent and also an essential worker. Perhaps you've made the hard choice, for reasons you know, to send your children back to the school building against negative comments from outsiders and your and your children's fears. Are you feeling overwhelmed getting everyone ready in the mornings and helping with homework, packing lunches, making suppers, and addressing everyone's needs in the evenings? This is your opportunity! Are you the teacher of those students who've arrived in your classroom with face masks, hand-sanitizer, and anxiety . . . or students on the other side of a computer screen, feeling confused and lonely? This is your opportunity!

What an interesting thing that, without planning

it, so many of us are at home, together. So many of us are more connected than ever to the young people we know through technology. Many of us have more free time than we could've imagined. Others of us suddenly have more small moments than we'd prefer to sow seeds of grace and trust as we fix ponytails, scramble eggs, take temperatures, secure face masks, give reassuring hugs, and put the kids on the school bus.

What a marvelous opportunity we all have to be the “Jedidah” in the lives of the young people we know! ***Are you making the most of it?***

When Josiah heard that scroll read for the first time, why did he respond the way he did? I believe it's because of Jedidah. She wouldn't have had access to the scrolls to read them to Josiah, but can't you imagine her teaching him their truths, encouraging him to follow their instructions? Can't you hear her saying to him, “Son, I remember when the scrolls were read and loved when I was a little girl. Your grandfather got rid of them. But someday they will return. Maybe in ***your*** lifetime.”

When Josiah heard the Scriptures, his mother's words echoed in his heart. She prepared him to hear God's Word and recognize it as truth.

Remember: ***you don't know how significant your influence is.*** Right now is your moment! Keep spending the time. Keep investing yourself. Keep living with integrity. Keep reminding the young people in your life how important it is to follow God's Word. Keep encouraging them. Keep affirming them, loving on them, and believing in them. Don't stop!

You have no idea the difference you will make. ■