



Good Morning Church Family! I love these decorations, they have absolutely nothing to do with today's sermon, but they look amazing! If you are watching this sermon years from now on our website and have no idea why the stage is decorated this way...VBS begins tomorrow 😊!

Today we are continuing in our **Choose Wisely** sermon series. Throughout this series we are looking at the choices (*good and bad*) made by the OT kings of Israel and Judah.

The goal of this series is to help us evaluate how we make decisions! Being able to STOP and take a look at the lives of those who have gone before us...learning from their triumphs and mistakes is a HUGE bonus for our lives here and now.

Today we are going to be in the book of 2 Chronicles chapters 17-20, looking at the life of King Jehoshaphat...the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.



**JEHOSHAPHAT
BE COURAGEOUS**

Now there are many things that characterize King Jehoshaphat's life, but one of the main distinctives was his **COURAGE**. Now when we think of the word **courage** many of us think of bravery, fearlessness, moving forward no matter what.

Illus:

When I was a child, it was my perception that **courage** just came with age. I remember thinking I can't wait till I'm older, then I won't be afraid anymore, because when I was a kid I was a fraidy cat. I especially remember being afraid of my basement. Anyone else here afraid of the basement? Now in my childhood home, our basement light switch was at the bottom of the stairs, which meant that you had to turn the light off and then **RUN OUT OF THE BASEMENT** before the boogeyman arrived. I literally remember making it out of the basement, and realizing how silly it was that I didn't have the courage to simply walk up the stairs.



JEHOSHAPHAT
BE COURAGEOUS

Now in 2023 our house has a light switch at the top of the basement stairs so I don't have to run out of the basement anymore 😊.

But the idea that I had as a child that I would simply grow out of fear and into **courage** didn't work quite how I thought.

And now I've realized as I've grown older that ***there are just NEW THINGS to be afraid of.***

I may not be afraid of the basement anymore, but as we enter new phases of life, there are always new fears to be conquered.

The truth is we never age out of fear and into courage.

And from a biblical perspective, ***courage has little to do with the absence of fear (2x).***

Biblical Courage: the ability to act in faith and trust God despite fear or uncertainty

A good definition of courage from a biblical perspective is *the ability to act in faith and trust God despite fear or uncertainty.*

And so we see from this definition that courage isn't the absence of fear, but rather the ability to TRUST GOD in spite of whatever fear or uncertainty we may have.

And one of the things that I want you to understand this morning is that being able to exhibit **courage** is a crucial part of the Christian life. Why do I say that? Because we live in a world where, pursuing God's will is often met with opposition.

There are good things that God is inviting each and everyone of us into...but that path will not be easy...it will be good...but it will not be easy...and if we are to be unshackled from our fears it will be the trust we have in God that will carry us through.



**JEHOSHAPHAT
BE COURAGEOUS**

And so as we look at the life of Jehoshaphat this morning we are going to see 3 distinctives of his life and ministry that we can learn from.

Jehoshaphat had work to do from God, he was afraid to do it, but nevertheless he answered the call of courage.

Pray:

2 Chronicles 17:3-6

³The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals ⁴ but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel.

Please open your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 17.

To give you some context for the time period we are jumping into...Jehoshaphat was the 4th King of Judah.

Remember a few weeks ago we learned that due to Solomon's unfaithfulness to God at the end of his life the nation was split in two. The northern tribe called Israel, and the southern tribe of Judah. Jehoshaphat became King after his father Asa who was also a faithful King to God.

Read: 

2 Chronicles 17:3-6

⁵The Lord established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. ⁶His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

Continue Reading: ↑

So there are several things we see here.

First, God is with Jehoshaphat because he is following the way of David and his faithful father Asa. God honors faithfulness with faithfulness.

Second we see here that Jehoshaphat does not consult the Baals, this simply means that he does not chase after other gods, Jehoshaphat isn't into idols (*which is a very good thing*).

But what I want to focus on in this passage is where it says in verse 6 that, ***he [Jehoshaphat] removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.***

A few weeks ago we learned that these high places were often places of idol worship. Solomon lost his standing before the Lord because he built high places for idols.

2 Chronicles 17:3-6

⁵The Lord established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. ⁶His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

The nation of Israel were beginning to become polytheistic because of this practice. And now we see here Jehoshaphat tearing down these idols and **restoring order to the worship of the one true God.**

[Pause]

Now we all might think this is good leadership, and a good idea, but I imagine that it must have been a bit scary to do this. Because over many decades now the practice of erecting high places to idols had been integrated into Hebrew culture...Jehoshaphat coming in and clearing this all out certainly would have drawn the ire of many in the nation.

But Jehoshaphat didn't care about that. And it's not that he didn't care what anyone thought, its more that he cared far more about what the ONE TRUE GOD THOUGHT.



JEHOSHAPHAT
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And this is where **courage** becomes very important...courage isn't knowing what to do, and then not doing it. Courage isn't knowing what to do and then waiting and waiting and waiting for the perfect opportunity to come by....eventually.

Courage is acting in faith, trusting God, without fear.

Courage is knowing what to do **and doing it** because you believe that God has your back.

Clearly Jehoshaphat believes that the Lord has his back, and this is what is allowing him to choose the wise thing here.

Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.

And this brings us to our first truth for this morning... **Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.**

Illus:

You know we often fear the wrong things don't we.

Anyone here afraid to fly? You have a 0.00001 percent chance of dying in an airplane crash. On the other hand, the car insurance industry estimates that the average driver will be involved in three or four car accidents in their lifetime.

Anyone afraid of heights? It's the second most reported fear. Your chance of being injured by falling, jumping, or being pushed from a high place is 1 in 65,092. The chance of having your identity stolen is 1 in 200.

Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.

Anyone here fear being killed by a bolt of lightning?

The odds of that happening are 1 in 2.3 million. You're much more likely to be struck by a meteorite—those lifetime odds are about 1 in 700,000.

How about dogs? Their bark really is worse than their bite: Your chance of suffering a dog bite is 1 in 137,694. On the other hand, your chance of being injured while mowing the lawn is 1 in 3,623.

How about sharks? You're much more likely to be killed by your spouse (1 in 135,000) than a shark (1 in 300 million).

Now the point of this illustration isn't for you to start become more fearful of identity theft, meteorites or your spouse. But it is to illustrate how easy it is to misjudge what we should *actually* be afraid of.

Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.

I want to live my life in such a way that I am fearful of letting God down.

I believe that Jehoshaphat thinks similarly, and that is motivating his actions in our text.

Because you see when we truly understand who God is and FEAR Him only...all the other fears of this life feel small by comparison. They evaporate like mist in the face of the Almighty God.

You see we often get this backwards tho.'

We fear our boss at work, or the news from our Dr. or the past due bill in the mail, or the _____.

While at same time the God of the Universe is inviting us into relationship with Him, where we are secure, we are satisfied, He takes burdens, He heals wounds, He is enough.

Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.

If you are struggling with fear this morning and you would like to have more courage. Cry out to God, he is listening. Cast whatever it is on Him, He's strong enough, and resolve to trust Him with it.

Jehoshaphat must have been fearful to remove the high places of worship...but he knew that it was right so it didn't matter.

And for us today...let's move forward into the right things, no matter how scary they are because we know there is reward from the Lord on the other side.

Fear evaporates the more we choose to trust in God.



**JEHOSHAPHAT
BE COURAGEOUS**

Back in our text...

What's awesome about what Jehoshaphat does here is that he doesn't just remove the high places...in **Chapter 17 verses 7-9** it goes onto explain that after he removes them, he sends officials to teach in the cities of Judah. Basically Jehoshaphat sends missionaries out into Judah to help re-educate the people back to Yahweh.

But...In **Chapter 18** Jehoshaphat makes an alliance with the Northern King of Israel, Ahab. This turns out to be a HUGE mistake. Because Ahab is a bad dude who is more interested in doing what he wants to do than doing what God wants to do. And what Ahab wants to do is take Ramoth-Gilead, a neighboring city.



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Ahab desires war and conquest, but he knows that he doesn't have enough might on his own, and so he calls on Jehoshaphat and Judah to help. And Ahab convinces Jehoshaphat to join in. The prophet Micaiah tells them both not to try to take Ramoth-Gilead that God wasn't in it, but Ahab and Jehoshaphat don't listen....they go to battle anyway. Ahab is killed in the battle, and Jehoshaphat barely escapes with his life.

And so as we pick the story back up in chapter 19. ***God is not happy with Jehoshaphat.*** He did not listen to the prophets. He allowed himself to be influenced by Ahab. He compromised all the progress he made to reform Judah.

But as we approach Jehoshaphat here...instead of feeling sorry for himself or blaming others, what we are going to see here is Jehoshaphat respond in faith.

2 Chronicles 19:4-9

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. ⁵ He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah.

Read: 

2 Chronicles 19:4-9

⁶ He told them, “Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. ⁷ Now let the fear of the Lord be on you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.”

Continue Reading:

And so Jehoshaphat after failing big time, dives back into his relationship with God with reckless abandon. He doesn't just stop doing bad.....he begins to do even more good.

The text tells us that King Jehoshaphat went out to the people to turn their hearts towards God. The King who in chapter 18 had a major slip up is now making sure his people learn from his own mistakes. ***This takes courage to do!***

We also see here that Jehoshaphat appoints judges...these judges were tasked with enforcing God's law as outlined in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). This included administering justice, protecting the rights of the people, and promoting adherence to God's commandments.

2 Chronicles 19:4-9

⁶ He told them, “Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. ⁷ Now let the fear of the Lord be on you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.”

He says to these judges in verse 6, “***consider carefully what you do, because you are judging for the Lord, not yourselves.***”

I believe that Jehoshaphat is speaking these words from the experience of what he just learned CHOOSING POORLY by following Ahab instead of God.

He goes on, “***Let the fear of the Lord be on you***”

Jehoshaphat made his error because he was ***influenced*** more by Ahab and what he thought, more than he was ***influenced*** by the Almighty God.

And so now Jehoshaphat has learned...and with a deepened conviction and ***courage*** he has set a new course for the nation...and these judges are a huge step to ***influence*** Judah to get back on track with God.

Wisdom is found as we align our lives with the right influences.

And that brings us to our second truth for this morning. **Wisdom is found as we align our lives with the right influences.**

We have all been influenced in our lives, this happens all the time, sometimes we might even be unaware of it.

We know what it is like to be ***influenced for the good***. We are inspired by the good we see in others and the more we are around people like this, the more we want to do good ourselves. We are inspired to sacrifice, to forgive, to be more patient & kind, as we see others live out these virtues.

But you know we also understand what it is like to be ***influenced towards the bad***...don't we? We know what its like to see others who appear to have it all from an earthly perspective...and we are often influenced to follow lifestyles that lead to empty promises.



Illus:

Our culture (*western culture/values*) in particular is sliding evermore so towards being influenced by people who don't necessarily have our best interest at heart.

Over the last decade or so, we have seen the exponential growth of social media. According to the **tech company DemandSage**, 4.9 billion people actively use social media - that is over 60% of the world population. And this social media boom has given rise to the **Social Media Influencer**.

In case you are here this morning and you don't know...a **Social Media Influencer**, is someone who is hired by a company or a name brand to market their product, to influence public opinion.



They build credibility and trust through regular posts and blogs that impact our thoughts, our feelings, and most importantly our responses. Name brands love influencers because they create trends and fads that bolster sales. And guess what. It works.

Now don't get me wrong, influencers are not an entirely new thing...we have had advertising campaigns in magazines and television for a while now...however what is new is the rate at which our attention is being influenced. We are being bombarded constantly with ideas and messages about how we should be measuring up to THEIR STANDARDS (the standards of society).

And here is the truth. The more we try to measure up to their standards...the more difficult it will be for us to hear the Lord and be influenced by Him only.



**JEHOSHAPHAT
BE COURAGEOUS**

Back in our text...Jehoshaphat has learned to seek God only and he is now solidly seeking the Lord's influence not only for his own life, but for the lives of his people as well.

But now Jehoshaphat will be tested once more.

Because in chapter 20 he learns that the people of Ammon and Moab have come to wage war against him and the people of Judah.

They are severely outnumbered.

When Jehoshaphat hears this, it says in verse 3 that he is afraid, but he doesn't respond to his fear, instead **HE GOES TO GOD WITH HIS FEAR.**

He gathers together all the people of Judah together in Jerusalem, and they seek the Lord in prayers.

2 Chronicles 20:12

¹² Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

Picking it up in verse 12 Read: 

Jehoshaphat doesn't call upon another neighboring King for help, he doesn't run away and hide, he doesn't seek after idols.....he asks God for help. This is Biblical Courage In Action.

He admits his inadequacy, “We don't know what to do!”
”But our eyes are on you!”

You see Church God loves for His people to display this type of dependence in Him. And what's more is that He is eager to respond to the cries of the faithful.

Perhaps you are in the midst of a burden right now, and you resonate with Jehoshaphat's plea, “**God, we don't know what to do.**” Friends turn your eyes to the Lord.

2 Chronicles 20:15

¹⁵ He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’

Moving on in verse 15, here is the Lord’s response to Jehoshaphat’s plea...spoken through Jahaziel the Levite.

Read: 

And as the story continues Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah believe that the battle belongs to God, and so the next day when they prepare themselves for battle, they don’t even bring conventional weapons with them.

Instead they arrive with the weapon of praise and worship to God.

As the people of Judah begin to sing and praise, the Lord causes confusion among the enemy forces. The allied armies of Moab and Ammon turn against each other, leading to their destruction. When Jehoshaphat and his army arrive at the battlefield, they find their enemies already defeated, because the battle belonged to the Lord.

It takes courage to live like the battle belongs to the Lord.

And that brings us to our 3rd truth for this morning. **It takes courage to live like the battle belongs to the Lord.**

Imagine the ***courage*** it must have taken to go to the battlefield armed only with worship to God and still expecting a good outcome.

It would have already have taken ***courage*** to face them vastly outnumbered, but the faith it would have taken to not even carry a weapon.

But remember our definition of biblical ***courage*** from earlier... ***the ability to act in faith and trust God despite fear or uncertainty.***

Jehoshaphat believed in faith that the battle was the Lord's to win. The text tells us that he is afraid, but his trust overcame his fear, and God delivered.

It takes courage to live like the battle belongs to the Lord.

Church family what battles are you **choosing** to fighting right now, that really are the Lord's? You see God is far better at fighting the battles in our lives than we ever could be. But I know what some of you are thinking...REALLY HOW CAN GOD FIGHT MY BATTLE?!?! My battle with addiction, with a burned relationship, with my financial hardships, with my depression etc.

You see church, Jehoshaphat gives us the blueprint here for what that looks like. #1 He humbles himself (humility), #2 He gathers his people around him (community) and #3 He gives it to God in prayer.

And friends likewise as you grow in your humility, as you dive into Christian community not isolation, as you give it to the Lord in prayer.....you will find it easier and easier to allow God to fight your battles, in faith, with **courage**. Because the truth is we are all in process, right? God is working on all of us! There is no shame in that.



Illus:
How many of you have ever seen the show **Fixer Upper**? For those of you who do not know, on this show Chip and Joanna Gaines take houses that are old & worn down and they bring them back to life.

My wife and I watched this particular episode recently and here is a still picture of Chip and Joanna walking through a house that was purchased by a young couple *[site unseen without an inspection during the height of the pandemic]*. This couple was unpleasantly surprised to find out their new home was formerly owned by the the world champion of hoarders.

This is the moment where Chip opens up the refrigeration and the moment he does an egg that has been inside apparently since WWII explodes out of the refrigeration and onto the floor. If you notice you can see Joanna in the background with her notebook covering her face as she runs out of there on the verge of losing her lunch.



But this show is wildly popular in part because there is something we love about being able to see something that was once a mess brought back to life.

We love seeing things renovated and restored whether it be homes, cars, businesses, people.

This is just one of many shows on television dedicated to remodeling, restoring, renovating.

And the reason why we are wired this way is because we are created in God's image.

Church, God is in the renovation business.



He takes wounded sinners who are weak and instead of just obliterating the weak spots, he camps out with us in our weakness. He strengthens us in the areas we need, becoming what we lack.

That is what we saw happen over the course of Jehoshaphat's life this morning. And this is exactly what he can do in our lives.

God is in the renovation business because HE LOVES US. If I had a mirror for every one of you right now I'd tell you to look in the mirror *[perhaps you can imagine this]* and to see that person before you reflected. And I'd say not only did God create that person you are looking at, fashioning each and every detail, every DNA strand, counting each single hair, but He genuinely loves the person reflected before you.



I'm going to ask you to close your eyes and bow your heads as we begin to close our time this morning.

I want you to try to keep that mirror image of yourself in your mind, and I want you to tell the reflection that you see how much God loves them.

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." **Do you choose to believe this today friends?**

Romans 5:8 - "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." **Can you choose to rest in the Love of Christ for you today?**

1 John 3:1 - "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" **Can you choose to make His love enough for you today?**



With heads bowed, is there anyone here this morning who would identify with needing some renovation in their life today? Please lift you hand so I can know to be praying for you today.

There are some of you here this morning that need to choose to make the decision to follow Jesus for the first time.

Do not leave here today without knowing Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. He died on the cross, paying your sin debt, that you might be free of the sin that entangles your life. He wants you to live in the victory his blood purchased. Do not miss the opportunity to give your life to Jesus.

Pray:

Jehoshaphat's Courage, Our Humility Before A Holy God, The Battle Belongs to the Lord.