

A PRIEST, PRINCE (& WICKED QUEEN)
The Call for Godly Influence & Convictional Leaders
2 Chronicles 23-24
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INFLUENCERS

A popular term used today is the word "*influencer*." Even though the term itself is not new (*the first known use of this word meaning, "one who exerts influence; a person who inspires or guides the actions of others", was in 1662*)¹, it is used extensively today of anyone seeking to establish their social media presence and generate influence (and income) with their followers. It is a risky business for those who put themselves out on the internet, build up a platform and attempt to wield influential power over those who will listen and follow. As quickly as many influencers rise, they just as quickly crash and burn when their followers (or internet) turn against them.

Influence is power and can wield a tremendous amount of control over others. The right influences can bring about great change for good and accomplish worthwhile endeavors. While the wrong influences can sow seeds of corruption and bring about swift destruction. The Bible recognizes this principle when it states, "*Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'*" (1 Cor.15:33) The Proverbs are a field guide to navigating along the path of the righteous vs. the way of the wicked. It beckons you to pay attention to wisdom's voice and follow her godly influence, while warning you about the sinful influences of fools, adulterers and wicked company. The voices of influence can have great sway over the course of your life.

Who are the influencers in your life? How have they influenced your life for good or bad? How did their influence affect the course of your life? *Who do you have influence over?* How are you using that influential power - abusively, flippantly, or cautiously? How do you know if your influence is for their good, or is it causing more harm? The power of influence is not to be underestimated. The Scripture gives us real-life examples of individuals who influenced for good, as well as others who were influenced to their harm.

GOD'S PROTECTED PROMISE

ESV **2 CHRONICLES 22:10-12** *Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah. ¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. ¹² And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.*

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/influencer>

Athaliah's Usurption

Dropping into the middle of Israel's divided history may seem a bit obscure, particularly when a wicked queen, a newborn prince and an aging priest are involved. But this moment in Israel's history was pivotal for a couple reasons: 1) the Davidic line was almost eliminated, potentially nullifying God's promise to David; 2) God graciously granted an extended period of reform and return to temple worship under the leadership of Jehoiada and reign of Joash. At this stage in Israel's history, the kingdom had been divided between the Northern tribes of Israel and the Southern tribe of Judah. The Northern kingdom had been recently ruled by the infamous Ahab and Jezebel, and their daughter Athaliah had married into the Davidic line, King Jehoram of Judah. Under Jehoram and his son Ahaziah, the Southern kingdom of Judah declined into apostasy and ruin. The Bible describes Athaliah as her son's "*counselor to do wickedly*." (2 Chron.22:2-3)

God's Providential Preservation

As soon as her son was killed, Athaliah swiftly moved to eliminate any remaining royal descendants of Judah and position herself as the ruling monarch. Being the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, it would seem there was Satanic influence in attempting to eradicate the royal line of David and end God's promise for a Davidic ruler.

However, God always keeps His promises and His plans are never usurped. Unknown to Athaliah (and the Kingdom of Judah), God had preserved an infant prince through the saving actions of his aunt and uncle. Joash was hidden by his aunt, Jehoshabeath, in the temple where her husband Jehoiada was the chief priest. Together they kept his existence a secret and raised him in the temple under their care.

If this entire account seems unreal and dramatic, it's because it is! Reading these types of exhilarating accounts in Scripture should do more than just fascinate us. They are meant to INSTRUCT you and cause you to IDENTIFY what purposes God is accomplishing. The apostle Paul reminds us why such history is recorded, "*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*" ¹² *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*" (1 Cor.10:11-12)

Reading the OT is important, not just because it comprises 60% of your Bible, but as the authoritative Word of God "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*" ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*" (2 Tim.3:16-17) In studying the OT you can identify where God is working, what He is accomplishing and how His revealed will impacts your life today.

EXAMINING THE LIVES OF JEHOIADA AND JOASH, YOU ARE CALLED TO LISTEN TO GODLY INFLUENCES AND TO LIVE AND LEAD FAITHFULLY IN BIBLICAL CONVICTION.

I. JEHOIADA'S FAITHFUL LEGACY

2 CHRONICLES 23:1, 3 *"But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds... ³ And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada said to them, 'Behold, the king's son! Let him reign, as the LORD spoke concerning the sons of David.'"*

HIS COURAGE

The life and rule of King Joash is intertwined with the faithful lives of his Uncle Jehoiada and Aunt Jehosheba (2 Kings 11:1-3). After Joash was rescued as an infant by his aunt, he was hidden for six years in the temple and raised under the tutelage of his uncle Jehoiada the chief priest. It was the courage and conviction of Jehoiada that enabled him to pull off a successful coup over Athaliah's reign and place the rightful heir, Joash, on the throne. Attempting and executing a royal takeover were not the normal duties of an aging priest. At this point Jehoiada had been serving since the days of the righteous King Jehoshaphat, then witnessed two evil kings and a wicked queen take his place. He knew the covenant God had made with David and the attempt by Athaliah to kill any royal descendant. Apart from what the Bible records, all we know is that Jehoiada knew God's promise and strengthened himself in God to do the right thing.

This is a defining mark of a godly influencer! It is one thing to identify what is wrong with the situation around you, it is another matter to take courage and act. Godly maturity doesn't happen by passively observing, it increases through proactive obedience. The godly person will stand for God's honor and choose to do what is right because you believe God and trust His word. Even if it's a situation you haven't faced before, godly courage will enable you to act in obedience thereby producing spiritual maturity.

HIS COVENANT

After the success of overthrowing Athaliah and proclaiming Joash as king, Jehoiada called the people to a covenant of worship. The moral and spiritual decay of the previous rulers required a revival and return to true spiritual worship. He immediately led the people to destroy the temple of Baal and eliminate its priest. He restored the proper order of service and worship in the temple, and was jealous for the people's holiness (23:18-19). He directed the military, noble influencers and common people to identify God's chosen one as the rightful heir. The result was joy, peace and rest in the land.

HIS CONVICTION

The actions of Jehoiada were the product of his faithfulness to God and His word. Both **2 Kings 12:2** and **2 Chronicles 24:2** credit Joash's righteous rule to the godly influence of Jehoiada. As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Through the teamwork of Joash and Jehoiada, the temple was repaired, worship was properly restored and the people thrived. Jehoiada's commitment to the word and worship of God held convictional sway with Joash and tremendous influence over the land. They both needed each other at different stages in their life. Early on Joash needed the protection and exploits of Jehoiada to save his life and anoint him king. Later Jehoiada would need Joash's zeal and vigor to complete repairs on the temple and reinstitute regular worship.

The younger was dependent upon the older, and the older needed the younger to finish the task at hand.

This is what our church needs. Our church is a multi-generational body that is inter-dependent upon each other. Everyone has a place in the church. If you are the younger generation, you need the godly influence, the biblical conviction and practical wisdom of the older generation to learn how to live faithfully in this difficult world. If you are the older generation, you need the younger generation to continue God's work, to grow in courageous conviction and to care for each other's needs. As one godly saint in our church has mentioned several times, "Us older folks have the time to pray and the money to provide resources. You younger folks have the energy and excitement to actually do the necessary work."

Jehoiada's faithful legacy was honored at his death. The first honor was the unusually long life (130 years!) God granted him. Jehoiada is described as having lived "**full of days**" after an extended life that led to spiritual benefit for both Joash and the kingdom of Judah. The second honor was his burial among the Judean kings in Jerusalem. He was acknowledged by the people and the king for the good he did in the land, toward God and for temple worship. Jehoiada was a life well lived!

II. JOASH'S FAILED CONVICTIONS

2 CHRONICLES 24:1-2 *"Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ² And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest."*

HIS RIGHT REFORMS

The legacy of Joash is a different story. Joash is an example of someone raised with the right influences, zealously doing right things for God, but failing to persevere in faithfulness at the end of his life. As noted previously as long as Jehoiada was around, Joash did what was right. He is still recorded in Scripture as one of the few righteous kings in Judah (835-796 B.C.). The influential legacy of Jehoiada even impacted the generations following Joash (25:2; 26:4; 27:2).

Because of Jehoiada's godly influence, Joash was zealous and insistent on restoring the temple and reinstituting proper worship. Joash is credited at a young age (early 20's-30's) for doing right before God in leading the people. No doubt Jehoiada held considerable influence over Joash's life, but it was still Joash's ruling decisions to bring about the necessary reforms in leading the people back to worship of the One True God. He properly honored Jehoiada at the time of his death by burying him among the kings.

HIS REFUSAL TO REPENT

2 CHRONICLES 24:17-18 *"Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. ¹⁸ And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs."*

No sooner had Jehoiada been laid to rest then corrupt influencers infiltrated Joash's inner circle. Sin never stops and sinful men never sleep! Through flattery and bribery they influenced the king's morality causing him to abandon worship of the God alone. As a result of Joash's decision to allow these men to reintroduce pagan worship in Judah, God was swift to bring His wrath upon them. But first God extended mercy by sending His prophets to call Joash to repentance. Yet, he did not listen to God's men (24:19) and instead committed a heinous act. Through God's Spirit to Zechariah, Jehoiada's son, Joash refused repentance and was complicit in his murder. He then died shamefully and was buried unceremoniously.

Examining the rise and fall of Joash you simply want to ask, "*How did this happen?*" After such a successful start, his life and rule end so tragically. The Bible offers a few key insights into why.

1) *Lack of maintaining godly convictions*

Twice the Scripture records that he did what was right before God, while Jehoiada was alive. "*And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him.*" (2 Ki.12:2) "*And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*" (2 Chr.24:2) It would appear that while Jehoiada led with godly conviction throughout his life, Joash's convictions were only as secure as long as Jehoiada was influencing him. Sadly the convictions of Jehoiada never fully became the convictions of Joash, which left him vulnerable to ungodly influence.

What are your convictions rooted in? Are they yours or someone else's? At some point every believer needs to hold their own biblical convictions and live by them. They will be tested, challenged, even changed as you go through life. The Lord graciously brings godly influences around you to help build up your convictions and assist you in navigating the difficulties of life. But if those convictions never become your own, or you do not faithfully maintain them in times of complacency or testing, you are likely to fall. Jehoiada was a 40 year old man who didn't allow the biblical convictions of his godly mentor to take root in his heart and stand firm in the day of testing.

2) *Listening to the wrong influencing voices*

The Bible contrasts Joash listening to the influence of the Judean princes (24:17) versus not paying attention to God's spiritual messengers (24:19). The result of his attentiveness led to false worship and personal ruin. Don't underestimate the power of ungodly influences! Allowing sinful counsel, godless company and unrepentance is what led Joash to commit a horrendous act of killing Zechariah. In this he dishonored the previous kindness shown to him by Zechariah's father, Jehoiada, and he sealed his own fate with God's judgment on his life. He was assassinated at the hands of his servants and buried unceremoniously. All because he listened to the wrong influencing voices!

CONCLUSION

The legacy of both Jehoiada and Joash repeat God's call for His people in any age. God blesses the faithfulness of His devoted followers and plants them securely making them spiritually fruitful as godly influencers throughout their lives. By contrast, the person who is not convinced and convicted by the word of God is susceptible to failure when faced with pressure to compromise. Jehoiada and Joash are real life examples of **PSALM 1**:

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

You have been placed at this point and time in history by God. He has orchestrated your life to this moment for you to live in a manner worthy of His honor. He has positioned people in your life to influence you in a godly manner. He has called you to live with conviction and courage in this day and age. Let us be a church that will be a godly influence and lead with conviction all the days the Lord has appointed.