

Series: ID: Follow the Leader

November 22, 2015

## **Title: Seasons of a Leader**

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**Text: 2 Chronicles 34-35**

### **The Best for Last**

#### **The Last Good King:**

Becoming the person God intended you to be – a person who can lead a turn-around in your life and your world – doesn't just happen. God grows us as leaders through what we might call Seasons of Leadership. The last good king of Judah is a king who lived out those seasons and points the way for you and me.

His name is Josiah. He was Hezekiah's great grandson. He would take the throne as an 8 year old prince, and would rule for 31 years. His epitaph reads:

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*2 Chronicles 34:2 NIV*

*He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.*

As his story unfolds, we see God growing and developing a person to be precisely the Leader that his times and his world called for. His story is in many ways the story of the Seasons of a Leader.

#### **A World in Chaos:**

Josiah ruled Judah in a time of immense upheaval. The Assyrian Empire which had terrorized and subdued the entire Middle East for over 200 years was in decline. Rival kingdoms were on the move. Historian John Bright writes:

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*The ancient Oriental civilizations, which had run their course for thousands of years, were coming to an end: the dikes were cracking and a dark flood*

*lapped without. As contemporary texts show, men were haunted by a premonition of doom and a gnawing insecurity, together with a nostalgic longing for the better days of long ago. (Bright, A History of Israel, p. 319)*

The whole world seemed to be coming apart at the seams. It was a time not unlike what we see happening in the very same region today: Nations, which were defined by long-gone colonial empires, are unraveling before our eyes. The old order has been replaced by failed states, disastrous civil wars, and global jihad. The world is not what it once was, and no one can guess what it will become.

### **For Such a Time...**

Times like these cry out for genuine and authentic leaders: men and women who can find the path forward into the unknown. King Josiah was that kind of leader. During his lifetime Assyria was wiped off the map and Babylon took its place as the region's superpower. Josiah's world – politically, socially, and spiritually, was turned upside down.

And through it all, he chose to follow a different path:

*He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.*

Josiah did not become a mature, godly leader overnight. The Bible tells his story in terms of three distinct *seasons of leadership*. His story points the way for you and me as we face the challenge of becoming turn-around leaders in our world.

Like Josiah, *you, too, were born for such a time as this.*

## **Josiah's Spiritual Journey**

### **The First Season: Seeking**

The First Season of leadership for Josiah began when he was but 16 years old.

#### **[slide 4]**

*2 Chronicles 34:3a NIV*

*In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.*

If you look at Josiah's family history, you would not single him out as a candidate for "most godly king since David." His grandfather Manasseh had brought back all of the most evil pagan practices that Hezekiah had abolished. Even though he had later repented of this sin, his son Amon, Josiah's father, followed his father's bad example and reinstated pagan worship. So what would a child king do?

Josiah, unlike his father, had a profound spiritual awakening as a 16 year old! He embarked on a spiritual quest. His goal: to know and honor the One true God. The first season of leadership meant fulfilling Isaiah's command:

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*Isaiah 55:6-7 NIV*

*Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near.*

*Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the unrighteous their thoughts.*

*Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

To "seek the LORD" meant more than having some vague religious interest in finding a spiritual path. It meant to *ask, to inquire* of God, instead of relying on false spiritual sources. It meant that Josiah determined to make *God's will his will*.

**The Second Season: A Time to Clean House**

The Second Season of leadership for Josiah began when he turned 20. After 4 years of seeking the LORD, he was ready to tackle the corruption in his culture and begin to make his mark on the world. For Josiah that meant three things:

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*2 Chronicles 34:3b-4 NIV*

*In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.*

Asherah poles, Baals and other idols were the common currency of pagan culture. You could find these false gods and goddesses in every temple of every town. Josiah determined to carve out a place that would be sacred to the LORD. And that meant ridding his land of these spiritual intruders.

Cleaning house marks the Second Season of leadership.

### **The Third Season: A Time of Transformation**

The Third Season of leadership brought total transformation to Josiah's culture and society. He stepped into this Third Season when he was 26 years old.

- Repairing the Temple for the true worship of God.
- Renewing the Covenant between God and His people.
- Being reborn as God's people.

The first thing he focused on was the repair of the Temple. Like the good kings before him, he collected offerings and hired workers to repair and restore God's House.

But then something totally unexpected happened:

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*2 Chronicles 35:14-15 NIV*

*While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD that had been given through Moses. Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD." He gave it to Shaphan.*

Shaphan brought the book to Josiah, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." This book was the Book of Deuteronomy. When Josiah heard what was written in the book, he realized *just how far his ancestors had strayed from following God*. They had betrayed the solemn covenant

between God and His people. Now God's judgments would surely come upon Judah and Israel. He tore his robes and sent the priest to seek the LORD on his behalf to see what needed to be done.

Hilkiah went to a prophetess named Huldah with the king's request. She, in turn, received a word from the LORD that because Josiah had sought God and humbled himself, he would not experience God's judgment.

Josiah ordered that this book, The Book of the Law, be read to the entire population of Jerusalem. Then, on behalf of the people, Josiah renewed the covenant in God's presence. The great climax of Josiah's reform came when the entire nation celebrated Passover.

### **[Slide 8]**

*2 Chronicles 35:18 NIV*

*The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem.*

Being a turn-around leader meant leaving the corrupt past behind. But it also meant getting back to God's original plan: His covenant with His people. When our world is out of control, it's time to reconnect with God's plan.

## **Seasons of a Leader**

### **Your First Season:**

God has called you to be a turn-around leader in your world. That means being a person who brings His rule to yourself, your relationships and your community. It all starts with a determination to *seek God*. That means making Him first in your life. It means going to Him for direction and guidance when you make decisions. It means *trusting Him* above all else. No one ever changed or transformed anything without first of all, as Gandhi put it so powerfully, becoming the change they wanted to see.

### **Your Second Season:**

When God is first in your life, you will love things He loves and detest the things that are abhorrent to Him. In the Second Season of leading we find the will and the courage to clean house. We don't just add a little religion to

a busy and compromised agenda. We make the decision to stand for what is right. We get rid of things that are incompatible with God's presence in our lives.

### **Your Third Season:**

When we seek God daily and clean house, He can speak to us and bring the change we long for. When Josiah began his spiritual journey, he had no idea that there was a copy of the Book of the Law hidden under piles of stuff in the Temple. Nor would he have known what to do with it had he found it. But when the time was right, God brought the Book of the Law to light. God spoke to His people through that ancient book and called them to renew their covenant with Him.

The same is true today. We can seek God. We can clean house. But the only thing that will transform us is God's Word and God's Presence in us. He is the Transformation Agent.

### **Your Season??**

#### **[Slide 9]**

So what season are you in right now?

- Seeking?
- Cleaning house?
- Pursuing full transformation?

Take a hard look at what's going on in your life. Are you ready for the next season?