



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Jehoshaphat's Leadership

The Seventh King.

You can read King Jehoshaphat's story in 1 Kings 22:1-9, 22:41-50, and 2 Chronicles 17-20.

When I, Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, became King of Judah, I aspired to follow in my father's footsteps. I knew I could not allow Judah to carry on with its idolatrous ways. Because they had forgotten God's Law, they were sinning against the LORD.

I quickly appointed teachers and Levites to travel throughout the Kingdom. Their objective was to teach the people the Law of Moses. Strangely, shortly after I did this, what I can only describe as "the fear of the LORD" fell over the surrounding nations.

I'll be the first to say I wasn't perfect. While I had honourable goals, I should never have aligned myself with the wicked Israelite King Ahab. Although it did help ensure Judah's safety. God forgave this sin, and He continued to guide me. After this, I designated judges to handle disputes. There was no way I could, or should, have done this myself.

We had our share of conflict, but I responded as my father had, by turning to God and asking Him for help. I knew my provider, and I gave Him the praise and respect He deserved. God gave me no reason to doubt Him. I only wish the people had fully committed themselves to the LORD during my lifetime.

Jehoshaphat, son of Asa and Azubah, carries on his father's legacy of righteousness and faith in God. He makes mistakes but keeps following the LORD passionately. He also experiments with groundbreaking styles of leadership and teaching the Word, all the while conveying a spiritual truth that often lies dormant in the West. How did Jehoshaphat do it? Plus, what can we do to follow his legacy?

The Beginning.

"The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal." (2 Chronicles 17:3)

Like his father, Jehoshaphat doesn't bow to idols. He places his faith in the LORD. Then he does something new. While his father worked to eliminate the bad, Jehoshaphat worked to bring in the good. **You can't only get rid of sin; you need to replace it with something else.** Jehoshaphat sends teachers of the Law, Levites, and prophets to every town in Judah. These men and women ensure everyone knows God's Word.

Jehoshaphat didn't keep his faith to himself. **What set this king apart was his openness to sharing God's Law.** Once he does this, God causes him to become more powerful, and the nations around Israel are filled with fear for the LORD. It's almost as though God wants to bless us for obeying Him.

The Middle.

"Jehoshaphat replied, 'Why, of course. You [Ahab] and I are as one, and my troops are your troops... But first let's find out what the LORD says.'" (2 Chronicles 18:3-4)

After this, Jehoshaphat makes a foolish alliance with King Ahab of Israel. Granted, he may have had good intentions (like reuniting Israel and Judah). However, **good intentions are never an excuse for evil actions.** Ahab was a wicked king and God didn't want Jehoshaphat to have any part in that. Nevertheless, Jehoshaphat and Ahab team up to fight Ramoth-gilead. The war itself wasn't the sin, but the way they went about it was contrary to God's will. Ahab consequently dies in battle.

When Jehoshaphat returns from fighting, Jehu son of Hanani speaks out against his sin. Jehu says that God is very angry, yet He still sees some good in this king. Unlike his father, Jehoshaphat doesn't throw the prophet into prison. Scripture neglects to record a direct act of repentance, though, which is likely why he makes the same mistake years later. He teams up with King Ahaziah of Israel to build a fleet of trading ships. Then another prophet condemns his actions. God destroys the fleet.

What's the point in this? **You need the right motives and the right people.** Be careful who you choose as friends.

The End.

"Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in His prophets, and you will succeed."
(2 Chronicles 20:20b)

These mistakes aside, Jehoshaphat continues to pursue the LORD. He also appoints judges to settle the people's disputes. This is an interesting decision. In Solomon's era, we see him judging all the disagreements. Jehoshaphat takes Moses' route, appointing leaders to judge the people. **Jehoshaphat knew leadership is about delegating, not dictating.** He makes the important decision to outsource his leadership so he's free to seek God.

Then the enemy nations attack. Upon discovering Edom's army marching against Judah, Jehoshaphat cries out to God, orders the people to abstain from food so they can pray, and readies his troops. (Note the faith/obedience split we touched on last week). The Spirit of the LORD comes upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, and he tells the people, *"Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's!"*

Jehoshaphat bows to the LORD, giving Him the glory. And whaddaya know, the next morning, he gets the people to march out while singing praises to God. **Sometimes the only response to hardship is praise.** Jehoshaphat didn't know how God would provide, but he trusted His timing.

The moment the people begin to sing, God causes the enemy nations to fall into panic. As a bonus, when Jehoshaphat reaches the enemy camp, he discovers they've killed each other. No fighting required. Jehoshaphat's act of trusting God, without knowing the outcome, gave Judah victory. God's power, not man's power, won the day.

Jehoshaphat would go on to reign for a total of twenty-five years.

What Defined Jehoshaphat?

Even though Jehoshaphat trusted the wrong kings and failed to remove all the pagan shrines, he is undeniably a good king. A caveat: good actions aren't an excuse for sin, but when we follow God, He will forgive our mistakes.

Atop his big wins in battle, Jehoshaphat introduces the practices of sending people into Judah to teach God's Word and appointing judges to settle disputes. This brings me back to my main point, which is...

Religion isn't Private

"In the third year of his reign Jehoshaphat sent his officials to teach in all the towns of Judah..." (2 Chronicles 17:7a)

I'll be brief: share your faith. Jehoshaphat's first action was proclaiming God's news to the nation. After his slip-up with Ahab, he appoints judges to uphold God's Law. **Jehoshaphat knew faith wasn't a one-man endeavour.** Best of all, when faced with impossible odds, he publicly worships and trusts God. He even sings praises to the LORD, and it's these very words that save him.

For me, it's easy to stuff my faith beneath the surface. This isn't what Jehoshaphat would have wanted. It's certainly not what God wants. For this reason and many others, I love being involved in serving God at church and camp. **If you're afraid to share your faith, what better place is there than church?** You can be as bold and as joyful as you want without fear of condemnation. Serving is an awesome way to proclaim and teach God's Word.

Jehoshaphat led from the front, but he wasn't alone at the front. He knew the real leader. Jehoshaphat's leadership was unique in that he wasn't the leader. God was in command, and Jehoshaphat did everything in his power to share that message.

Will you join him?

Good/Bad.

Jehoshaphat's life is a testament to public faith. Religion wasn't designed to be compartmentalized; it was created to unify us in pursuit of God. Yes, teaming up with wicked Israel wasn't the right move. But when crunch time came, Jehoshaphat trusted the LORD. He obeyed God *before* he knew the outcome. And God came through.

Which is why we need to put Jehoshaphat in his place on the [Kings Chart](#) (you can visit [WritingLifeFaith.com](#) to view it). He is our third king on the 'GOOD' side.

Today's challenge is straightforward: don't hide the Good News. Share it, teach it, live it, wherever you go. Tell others about God's Law and find others to help you share it! Trust God amidst the battle, and praise Him, knowing He will provide. Each one, reach one, as my pastor says.

In our next instalment, we'll see things take a turn for the worse when Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, takes the throne. We'll also witness the striking difference between the life of a king who obeyed Yahweh (Jehoshaphat) and a king who refused to obey (Jehoram). But for now, I can't help but echo the people's words from 2 Chronicles 20:21b... *"Give thanks to the LORD; His faithful love endures forever!"*



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