

Living the Story

A Study through Scripture

Introduction:

My extended family has a lake house on Possum Kingdom Lake. It's nothing fancy—we do not even have a boat at the lake most of the time and half the time, the water is so low a boat would be of no use. Over the years, however, it has become where I go to stop, reflect, and slow down in the presence of God. It really is a spiritual retreat for me. Whenever I go, I am reminded that I need to spend more time in silence, or slowing down to hear God, not just yell to God what I am doing as I speed out the door to the next thing. I often wonder: Why do I always have to get away to remember these things? Why can't I remember while I am here, in the midst of the busy-ness?

All of us, I would imagine, have passages, places, songs, and memories that return us to God, that remind us of his presence and power in our lives. We know we shouldn't forget, but sometimes we do and we are blessed to have moments when we are pointed back to Him.

Today's text contains a similar story. The King of Israel, Josiah, orders a remodel of the temple and in the process an old Bible is found (OK, a Book of the Law). The king is reminded of the covenant of God—which the people are not keeping—and repents of their waywardness. What stands out to me in this passage is not that new ground is being broken—no new covenant is given—but the people, through Josiah's faithfulness to what he hears, are reminded to live again as they were called to live.

Summary of the Text:

For brevity, I have condensed the actual text we are looking at this week to just a few verses, but the entire story can be found in chapter 22 and 23. If we begin in chapter 22, we discover that Josiah is a child-king, beginning his reign when he was 8 years old. (I cannot imagine!) The writer of the book of Kings tells us that Josiah was a good king, even from an early age.

When Josiah was 26, he has the temple rebuilt or repaired. I am assuming this was a remodel—there is no indication in the text that it was in disrepair. During this process, the Book of the Law was discovered. We are not entirely sure what texts this book contained, but we are told in Deuteronomy 28 and 31 that Moses wrote his words in the "Book of the Law." Most presume that the Pentateuch or some portion of it was the book that was found in the temple.

If you will recall, the book of Deuteronomy itself is a renewal and reminder of the Covenant God made with the people of Israel. If this is the material that was found in the temple, Josiah's response is a logical conclusion to a re-reading of this text. Again, more than new instructions, it was a reminder of things once lived out by the people of Israel ... and should be again.

In addition to a reminder that the people should live out the covenant described in the Book of the Law, Josiah is also told of an impending destruction to come because the people "have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made" (2 Kings 22.17). We see Josiah's direct response to this in 2 Kings 23.4-20, when he destroys the idols, altars, and high places (of worship to foreign gods) found in Israel.

It is one thing to be reminded of the ways you or I do not follow God like we should, it is another entirely to do something about it. To return to my lake house illustration, it makes no sense for me to go out to PK and return renewed and refresh—and reminded for the need to slow down—but then never attempt to incorporate a slower

LESSON #18

Date: 1/20/2013

Text: 2 Kings 22.8-13; 23.1-3

The Story: Chapter 17

The Big Picture: While we never plan on being distracted from God, we often get to moments in our life where we suddenly are reminded that we have focused on everything *except* God. How do we respond to these moments?

Materials Needed: none

routine in my life here. The same holds true for other things that pull us away from God. If you spend too much time watching mindless TV shows, perhaps you should not turn your TV on, or even better, remove it from your house. I think it would be easy for each of us to make a list of ways to not only be reminded of ways to serve God better, but also list ways to actually go about doing so. I hope that will be the result of this week's lesson: that we not only are reminded of God's presence with us, but also determine ways to continue to be drawn to him.

Preparing for the Group Time:

Where do you need renewal? How do you renew?

This week I would think of the ways that you are reminded of the power of God working in your life. If you are like me, you forget the presence of God and are surprised when you "see" him anew. What things help you see him better? This week, incorporate more of those things in your routine.

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Lesson #18

Text: 2 Kings 22.8-13; 23.1-3

Lesson Outline:

For an ice-breaker question, ask couples what their “song” was while they were dating. (For some of us, we may need to bring in the 8-track and play it for the group!) Why was that song special to you? What other songs were special and why? [NOTE: My guess is that those songs that are special take us to another time and place. That’s the power of songs—the connections with memories. Be sure to point this out as you hear it.]

Read 2 Kings 22.8-13 and 23.1-3.

Spend some time in the discussion questions.

Close with a time in prayer asking God to help strengthen us to remove distractions from our lives.

Discussion Questions:

What is your favorite Bible verse? Any verses you have memorized as a child and they still stick with you today? What is it about these verses that continue to stick with you, year after year?

Are there any Biblical texts that always remind you of the ways you need to follow God better? What are these and why do you think they are so indicting?

How does your reaction to these texts compare to how we see Josiah react in our text today?

Why do you think this Book of the Law was lost? In what ways do we also “lose” some of the things we should continually remember?

How does reading Biblical texts on a regular basis serve to remind us of ways we should follow our covenant relationship with God? What are ways we can ensure we are regularly focusing on Biblical texts?

When Josiah is convicted about the ways the people of Israel has not followed God’s covenant, he begins to remove those altars and places where other gods are being worshipped. What “altars” do you need to remove to help you continue to focus on following God better? What distracts you from following God?

How can we as a group do a better job reminding one another of ways to renew our commitment to God regularly?

For the Children:

I would encourage you to hear what your children say about those verses that are special to them. Be sure to ask them to answer the question: What is your favorite Bible verse. Then ask them why that particular verse is special to them. You will learn a lot, I promise.

Living the Story:

Josiah’s response to the reading of the Book of the Law inspires me. He immediately went about the kingdom of Israel removing those things that prevented the people of Israel from focusing on their relationship with God. I am reminded that I too need to remove those distractions that pull me away from God. This week, decide what things distract you from God and then determine how you can rid your life of that distraction.

Prayer Time:

Depending on how familiar your group is with one another, you might want to go around the circle prior to your prayer and ask everyone in your group to share what they see as that thing which distracts them from God. Commit to one another to be in prayer that they will respond to those distractions like Josiah did, by removing them.

Next Week:

Next week's lesson will be from *The Story* chapter 18.