



Imagine being born to a lineage of the worst kings of Israel: one who was considered the worst of the kings of Judah, and one whose wickedness got him assassinated by members of his own cabinet. Despite this upbringing, Josiah did not set his heart to follow the bad example of his forefathers. Instead, he set his heart to seek the Lord God and found Him. Among all the kings, none could compare to Josiah's undivided devotion to the Lord. He set the example for national reform and utterly destroyed the idols in the land. We can learn much from Josiah's life—short though it was—about the importance of choosing God for ourselves and aggressively dealing with sin in our lives.

1. Context
 - a. Kings of Judah
 - i. Manasseh
 1. Manasseh was the worst of the kings of Judah.
 - ii. Amon
 1. Manasseh's son Amon continued his legacy.
 2. Amon was so evil that some of his cabinet members assassinated him.
 - iii. Josiah
 1. Amon's son Josiah became king when he was eight years old.
 2. Josiah's name in Hebrew is **Yō'shiyâ**, meaning "founded or supported by God."
 3. Despite the evil legacy left to him, Josiah was the most righteous of the kings.
 - a. A bad heritage does not make us bad, and a good heritage does not make us good. We must choose God for ourselves.
 - b. Josiah started out well, continued well, and finished well.
 4. Josiah tragically died in battle at age 39.
2. **2 Kings 22:1–3a** – *"Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah..."*
 - a. Josiah
 - i. Josiah walked rightly before God, like King David.
 - ii. Josiah was 26 years old at the beginning of 2 Kings 22.

1. We deduce Josiah's age from adding how old he was when he became king (eight years old) to how many years into his reign this event occurred (verse 3 says, *"In the eighteenth year"*).

b. The gap

- i. **2 Kings 22** jumps from Josiah at age 8 to age 26, but **2 Chronicles 34** provides more context.
- ii. **2 Chronicles 34:1-7** – *"Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes. When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem."*

1. Josiah began to seek God during *"the eighth year of his reign"*—when he was 16 years old.
2. When Josiah was 20 years old, Josiah purged Judah of *"the high places,"* which were places of idolatry.
3. Josiah's personal revival led to a national spiritual revival.
4. When you seek the Lord, He will begin to purge the idols from your life and move you to seek to bring others to God.

3. **2 Kings 22:3-9** – *"Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: 'Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who are in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house—to carpenters and builders and masons—and to buy*

timber and hewn stone to repair the house. However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully.' Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.' And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, 'Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the LORD.'"

a. The temple

i. Part of Josiah's revival included repairing the temple.

1. Josiah's father Amon and grandfather Manasseh had no regard for God, so they had no regard for the temple's upkeep.
2. Josiah took the people's donations to the temple and gave them to the builders.
3. Josiah did not take account of the money delivered to the builders because, he said, *"they deal faithfully."*
4. The builders had a reputation of integrity so that people did not need to worry about how the funds given to them would be used.
5. **DISCUSS:** Do you have a reputation for integrity? How can you improve so that integrity marks your life?

b. The Bible

i. While the temple was being refurbished, Hilkiah the high priest found the *"Book of the Law,"* likely a scroll.

1. God and His Word had been neglected that people did not even know this book of God's Law was missing.

ii. The missing book was probably Deuteronomy.

1. **Deuteronomy 31:26** – *"Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you."*
2. The book of Deuteronomy is referred to as the *"Book of the Law."*

4. **2 Kings 22:10–20** – *"Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, 'Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.' And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 'Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not*

obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.' So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. Then she said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Tell the man who sent you to Me, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read—because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'"" But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Concerning the words which you have heard—because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,' says the LORD. 'Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.'"" So they brought back word to the king."

- a. The reading of the Law
 - i. Josiah tore his clothes.
 1. Tearing your clothes was a sign of mourning.
 2. Josiah was convicted when he heard the Law read.
 - a. He realized how much the nation of Judah had departed from God.
 - b. He realized that breaking the law meant earning the judgment of God.
 - ii. Josiah told his servants to inquire of the Lord.
- b. Huldah the prophetess
 - i. Huldah is a rare example of a prophetess of God in the Bible, but not the only example.
 1. Miriam (**Exodus 15:20**) and Debra (**Judges 4:4**) were Old Testament prophetesses.
 2. Anna (**Luke 2:36**) and the four daughters of Philip (**Acts 21:9**) were New Testament prophetesses.
 - ii. Israel's Huldah Gate atop the southern steps is named after this prophetess.
- c. The word of the Lord
 - i. God would still judge the nation of Judah, but not in Josiah's day.
 1. Josiah was a good king, but the people had been idolatrous for years and would suffer the consequences.

2. God saw the tender-hearted repentance of Josiah and consoled him that the judgment would not come in his lifetime.
 - ii. In 625 B.C., Huldah prophesied about the Babylonian conquest that would happen in 586 B.C.
5. **2 Kings 23:1-3** – *“Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.”*
 - a. Seeking national revival
 - i. Josiah worked to create a national revival, doing what he could to remove idolatry and sin from Judah.
 - ii. Josiah set himself as an example.
 1. Josiah read the Law before the people of Judah rather than ask a priest or prophet to do it.
 2. Josiah made a covenant with God before the Jewish people, and the people followed his example.
 3. **DISCUSS:** What is your spiritual impact on the people in your circle of influence? How can you be a good representative of Jesus and encourage others to seek the Lord?
 - b. The covenant
 - i. The word “covenant” means “a cut.”
 1. When people made a covenant, they would cut an animal in half, separate the two parts, and create a path in between them.
 2. The people making the covenant would pass in between the cut pieces, symbolically saying, “May the same thing done to this animal be done to me if I break the covenant.”
 3. The seriousness of the covenant is why it was called a blood covenant.
 4. **DISCUSS:** How does this covenant remind you of the new covenant made on the cross?
6. **2 Kings 23:4-10** – *“And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and*

carried their ashes to Bethel. Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate. Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.”

a. Cleaning the temple

- i. Josiah cleaned up the idolatry left over from the previous wicked kings.
 1. Josiah removed the worship of “the hosts of heaven”—the occult worship of the sun, moon, and stars.
 2. Josiah removed idols to the Canaanite gods Baal and Asherah that were in the temple of the Lord.
- ii. Josiah burned down the image of Asherah and ground it to powder.
 1. Asherah was the Canaanite goddess of sex, so this image was pornographic.
- iii. Josiah tore down the altars of the “*perverted persons*.”
 1. Some Bibles include a footnote saying that the people in question were those practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals.
 - a. **DISCUSS**: What are some ways our culture has tried to “dress up” sin to try to hide its true nature? How do you avoid imitating that practice and deceiving yourself?
 2. “*Perverted*” is **qadesh** in Hebrew, meaning “those who are righteous.”
 - a. They were not righteous, but claiming to be, for their sexual immorality was based on their idolatry.
 - b. Some churches have fallen into this same wickedness, bringing the world’s sexual perversions into their places of worship.

b. Cleaning the valley

i. Josiah defiled Topheth.

1. This “defiling” simply means Josiah is ruining the idols.

ii. Topheth is from the Hebrew root word **tōpēṭ**, meaning “drum.”

1. This place, also called the Valley of Ben Hinnom, sits south of the Kidron Valley, just east of the temple mount of Jerusalem.

2. The valley was right next to the temple of God.

3. Israelis call this valley “the Valley of the Children” because that was where many children were sacrificed to Molech.

4. The word **tōpēṭ**, or “drum,” is a reference to the way the people would play drums to drown out to the sound of the children screaming as they were burned alive.

7. **2 Kings 23:11–14** – *“Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.”*

a. Cleansing the temple entrance

i. Josiah removed the items dedicated to the worship of the sun god, including the horse statues and the chariots.

ii. Josiah burned, ground to ashes, and pulverized idols.

1. Putting aside sinful things is not enough; we must completely remove them so that they do not come back.

2. Just as a person fighting an addiction to alcohol cannot have alcohol in the house, we too cannot allow idols into our lives.

3. **DISCUSS:** What sins do you tend to return to? What idols do you need to utterly destroy to break these sin patterns?

4. We cannot negotiate with the flesh because it desires to dominate us.

5. **Matthew 26:41** – *“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

6. **DISCUSS:** How have you negotiated with the flesh before, and what was the result? What is the aggressive approach you should take to deal with that sin issue?

b. Cleansing the mountain

- i. The “Mount of Corruption” is a reference to the Mount of Olives.

1. The word “corruption” is translated from the Hebrew **mašhîṭ**.
2. The Mount of Olives was called Mount of Corruption in 2 Kings because of the idolatry that took place there.

8. **2 Kings 23:15–23** – *“Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image. As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, ‘What gravestone is this that I see?’ So the men of the city told him, ‘It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.’ And he said, ‘Let him alone; let no one move his bones.’ So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. He executed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned men’s bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem. Then the king commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem.”*

a. Prophecy fulfilled

- i. **1 Kings 13:1–2** – *“And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, ‘O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: “Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.””*

1. God sent one of his prophets to warn the wicked king Jeroboam.

2. In His warning, God prophesied about Josiah, the reformer-king, and mentioned him by name 300 years prior.

b. Passover

- i. Josiah reinstated a national holiday that had been neglected for hundreds of years.

9. **2 Kings 23:24–30** – *“Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him. Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. And the LORD said, ‘I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, “My name shall be there.”’ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father’s place.”*

a. Josiah’s virtues

- i. Josiah was singular in his undivided devotion to the Lord.

b. Manasseh’s sins

- i. Manasseh was Josiah’s grandfather.
- ii. Because of the way Manasseh had run the nation of Judah, God would not turn away His wrath.
 1. **DISCUSS**: How does considering the way your actions can affect the generations to come affect how you live today?

c. Josiah’s death

- i. Josiah went to war against Pharaoh Necho.
 1. We do not know why Josiah went to battle against the king of Egypt.
- ii. Pharaoh Necho killed Josiah.
 1. **2 Chronicles 35** tells us Josiah was killed by an arrow at age 39.