

Josiah: How Great A Child Can Be!

Introduction:

Can you imagine an eight year old as our nation's president? Probably not, especially since the constitution states that a president must be at least 35. And, of course, we see the good reason behind this law. Someone under 35 could not possibly have the wisdom to rule a country. They need more experience and knowledge. Certainly, this is generally true. However, it is not absolute. In fact, even children can be exceptionally wise, though perhaps, the world would not see them as such. Children can be exceptionally wise by simply trusting God and serving Him. In ancient Judah, there was an eight year old king. His name was Josiah (**II Kings 22-23; II Chronicles 34-35**). As with all the kings, the Bible does not reveal every detail of his kingship. However, in both accounts of his reign the Bible places God's stamp of approval on his entire reign, from childhood to adulthood. What we see is how great a child can be and how a child can grow up to be a great adult. God summarized Josiah's reign in **II Chronicles 34:2**, saying, "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."

Discussion:

- I. Josiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord.
 - A. One of the interesting things about this statement is the growth seen in Josiah. This statement is used to summarize his entire reign. Yet, his service to the Lord increased throughout the years. In **II Chronicles 34:3**, the scripture claims that he started seeking the Lord in the 8th year of his reign, while he was still young (16 yrs. old). It also says that he started to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places and carved images in the 12th year of his reign (20 yrs. old). According to **II Chronicles 34:8ff**, the 18th year of his reign (26 yrs. old) was when he was having the temple repaired and the book of the Law was found.
 - B. Though he had been seeking the Lord and making improvements for at least 10 years, **II Chronicles 34:19ff** says he tore his clothes when he heard the law. Even with all his improvements, he still was not completely following God's law. When the Law was found, he did not rest saying, "Surely what I have already done is good enough." Rather, the more he learned the more he submitted. God said of him in **II Chronicles 34:26-28**, Josiah would not face the punishment that would come on Judah because when he heard God's law he submitted.
 - C. There are two things that you need to learn from this.
 1. No matter how old you are, you should apply what you learn and hear. Serving God is not for adults. It is for everyone. How easily could Josiah have said that he was only 16, he would start seeking God later. If you are 8, 16, 20, 26 or any other age, serving the Lord is your responsibility. When you read your Bible consider how you should live. When you hear sermons, consider how they should apply to you. When you attend Bible classes, don't just have fun, learn what God's will is and do what He says.
 2. No matter how old you get or how much improving you have done, do not rest on past service and accomplishment. How easily could Josiah have heard the Law read to him at age 26 and said, "Well, I don't think God will judge me harshly, after all, I did start seeking him 10 years ago and I have cleaned up a lot of the idolatry."? Instead, he realized what he had done before was not enough; he had to keep on growing. He had to keep on submitting. If you want to be a great child, like Josiah, and grow into a great adult, like Josiah, then you have to follow his example and keep submitting no matter what you learn.
- II. Josiah walked in the ways of David.
 - A. Josiah's father and grandfather had been wicked kings. No doubt, Manasseh had repented in the later years of his reign (**II Chronicles 33:12-13**), but Amon had simply returned to the wickedness he had seen for most of his life. Josiah, however, did not follow their examples. He looked back to the reputation of the greatest king of Israel's history—David.
 - B. Let's face it, there are numerous examples out there. Some are good and some are not. Even as a child you need to start discerning between whose example to follow and whose to

disregard. Certainly, as you grow, you will grow in this ability. But don't wait until you are older and have already molded your character to start thinking about who you want to be like.

- C. When considering a role model, do not look around at other children your age. They have just as much to learn from others as you do. Rather, consider some of the following:
 - 1. First and foremost, Jesus needs to be your role-model. As **I Peter 2:21** demonstrates, Jesus' life is an example for us. He should be your ultimate role-model.
 - 2. Secondly, consider some of the great Bible characters. Paul even told the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitated Christ (**I Corinthians 11:1**). Also, note **Hebrews 6:12-13**. You should imitate those who had faith and patience, like Abraham. In fact, in our Vacation Bible School you will learn about some of these great characters: Elijah, Elisha, David, etc.
 - 3. Third, take note of those whom you know here in the church who live faithfully. As **Hebrews 13:7** says, you can look at people like the elders who have lived faithfully and follow their example. Though, this is not restricted just to elders. Look around you at the members of this congregation. Do you see any whose character is worthy of imitation, because they are imitating Christ. Look up to them as role-models and follow in their ways.
- D. Through picking out good role-models, you can be a great child and you will grow up to be a great adult and a great servant of God.

III. Josiah did not turn to the right or to the left.

- A. Here we come to perhaps the most important point. Josiah's childhood and adulthood were stamped with God's approval, because he was not a flash in the pan. He did not start his service as a child and then turn away as he got into adulthood. He kept on growing. This is not to say that he did not make any mistakes. Everyone sins (**Romans 3:23**). The key is that he got on God's path and he stayed there.
- B. Here is a sad thing among children today. We baptize too many children who get into high school and then college and fall away. What happens during those years? I do not know. Perhaps it is the peer pressure. Perhaps it is just the desire for independence from parents. Perhaps it is a desire to "do your own thing" for a while. Whatever the case, there are far too many young people who turn to the right and to the left. Solomon addresses this age in **Ecclesiastes 11:9-10**. Do you want to be independent? That is fine. Do you want to do your own thing? That is fine. But remember that you will stand before God in judgment. Josiah was judged by God. However, because he had stayed true to the Lord, submitting to all he had learned and continually grew, he was rewarded, not punished.
- C. Do not allow your worldly peers to turn your head away from God's path. Remember that the way unto life is narrow and most of your friends will not follow it (**Matthew 7:13-14**). However, you do not want to join them on their path to destruction. Solomon gave his son this same good advice in **Proverbs 4:20-27**. Look straight ahead. Focus on the goal. Do not even look to the right or the left, let alone turn in those directions. Follow the path of God always.
- D. At a time in his life when most young people strive to be independent of God, Josiah worked to draw closer to God. If you would be a great child and grow into a great adult, follow Josiah's example and never turn to the right or the left.

Conclusion:

When I read stories like Josiah's, I am amazed. But I am constantly reminded that God does not expect us to wait until we are fully mature to start serving Him. Whatever service you can offer, no matter how old you are, God wants it now. Don't put off serving Him. Don't wait until you understand everything. Start doing what you understand right now. Follow after honorable role-models, making a commitment right now to never let anything turn you to the right or to the left from God's will.