

# LIVING ON THE EDGE OF DESPERATE

## Week Four Notes

### Josiah: Desperate for Truth

2 Kings 22-23

#### I. Truth Matters

We live in a society where truth seems to change or be subjective. Like the book of Judges, *everyone does what was right in his own eyes*. However, when we live our lives this way, we can never be sure we are right because there is no standard, no measure of truth. But God HAS given us a standard. It is the Bible, His Word. Even though His Word was penned by more than 40 authors, every word is God-breathed (2Timothy 3:16) God did not just influence Scripture, He breathed into the writers. It is authoritative, not because someone says it is, rather because God Himself says it is. Paul David Tripp in his book **Do You Believe** writes, “It is to be joyfully received because it is the Word of God”.

God’s Word never changes (Isaiah 40:8). It is always relevant no matter how society changes. He has sovereignly preserved His Word and it is profitable in every area of our lives (2 Timothy 3:16). God’s Word is the measure of truth. And Truth remains truth whether we believe it or not. Yet, Scripture is not a rule book or a dry compilation of dusty history. It is alive and active. The Holy Spirit uses it in our lives to correct, reprove, teach, adjust, and guide (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus prayed for His disciples, including believers today. John 17:17, Jesus prays, “*Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth.*” The life-long work of sanctifying, conforming us to the image of Christ, depends upon the Holy Spirit using the Word of God in our lives. Scripture is God’s primary tool for maturing us in our faith, thus the Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:16, “*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.*”

While it is easy to see how society has drifted from God’s truth, what about us as His followers? Are we like the frog in the kettle, adjusting our lives gradually to reflect society’s views and values, never realizing how far removed we have become from truth? How can we keep our walk with Christ fresh, and how can we implement His truth into our lives on a daily basis?

In understanding how important God’s Word is for the believer in Christ, let’s begin with an astonishing and negative account in Scripture.

**I hope you will read for yourselves 2 Kings 22-23. Knowing the historical context helps greatly.**

By the time we get to 2 Kings, Israel is a divided nation. After the reign of Solomon, ten tribes of Israel pulled away and formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and two tribes formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom implemented a perverted form of Judaism, incorporating idol worship. They completely rebelled against God and He eventually judged their apostasy, dismantling them as a nation (2Kings 17:5-6). The Southern Kingdom of Judah whose capital city was Jerusalem, also strayed. Judah however, had a series of good kings who tried to keep the people devoted to God. Eventually, a king named Manasseh ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah for 55 years. The Bible characterizes him as more wicked than any other king. 2 Kings 21:16 says he filled the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood. Human sacrifices to false gods became a norm. His son Amon ruled after him for only two years. He too is characterized as evil. But 2 Kings 22 brings reform.

Manasseh’s grandson, Josiah, becomes king of Judah at the age of 8, and the Bible characterizes him as a good king. When Josiah is 26 years old, he does what kings are supposed to do—he plans to do repairs and upkeep on the temple. This is the temple to God that Solomon built, a magnificence structure dedicated to the Lord (1 Kings 6 & 8, 2 Chronicles 3-7). But while doing repairs, Hilkiah, the high priest, makes a shocking discovery. If it were not so tragic, 2 Kings 22:8 is almost comical. *He finds the book of the law in the house of the Lord.* Hilkiah finds God’s word, lost for decades, within the temple. When they take the scrolls to Josiah and read God’s Word to him, Josiah tears his clothes and falls on his face. Josiah is King of Judah, ruling over God’s people. **He is 26 years old and he has never, in his entire life, heard the Word of God!**

Josiah immediately inquires of the Lord and learns that God will judge the people of Judah for their sins but spare the tenderhearted king who has vowed to honor God (2 Kings 22:13-20). Chapter 23 is a new day in the king’s reign. He sets out to make reforms. And oh, the things he must get rid of...and it all starts right there in the temple of God. I want you to read this passage for yourselves. I will briefly point out the highlights in these notes. For more in-depth discussion about the atrocities inside the temple, watch the video☺

2 Kings 23:1-3, Josiah makes a covenant with God to restore worship and live according to God's Word. The people agree. The rest of the chapter tells about the things Josiah tears down, kills, or burns.

23:4 He brings out of the temple of God the vessels dedicated to Baal and Asherah, Canaanite fertility gods whose worship always involved grotesques sexual perversion. **INSIDE THE TEMPLE!** He also got rid of anything dedicated to the sun, moon and stars (astrology)

Vs 5, 8. He got rid of the priestly order created to implement pagan worship inside the temple.

Vs 6. He removed (burned it to dust) the Asherah which evidently was a pole representing this pagan goddess, which they had placed beside the Holy of Holy as the female counterpart to Yahweh.

Vs 7. He removed the male cult prostitutes from inside the temple. Yep! Male prostitutes who could be accessed for immoral worship of Asherah within the temple of God. Josiah also removed the women from the temple who were weavers, making the tents for the male prostitutes and their perverse activity.

Verse 10. He removed the alters built to Molech from a ravine outside of Jerusalem called the valley of Hinnom. The worship of Molech required human sacrifice, specifically children, often the first born of a family. God warned Israel about this abominable practice **BEFORE** they ever entered the Promised land—700 years earlier. Now, here in 2 Kings 23, Josiah is trying to rid them of the horrible practice that has become a norm in their society and in their worship.

Vs. 11. He got rid of the horses and chariots that had been dedicated to the sun and were housed at the entrance of the temple.

Vs 12 He broke down the alters that Manasseh has built in the two courts of the temple, the court of women and the court of the Gentiles. These alters made idol worship accessible to everyone.

Vs 13, 14, 15, 19 & 20. Josiah got rid of the high places, which were outdoor alters, often personal property of families used for family worship to any god they chose to worship. Verse 13 says Solomon built high places for his many pagan wives (1 Kings 7). Josiah even went into the northern conquered kingdom and tore down their high places, leftover after captivity.

Then he slaughtered the priest who led in this kind of worship. Whew! Josiah was serious about reform!

Vs 21, He reinstated the Passover which had been neglected for decades. Hezekiah tried to reinstitute the Passover, but it was short lived (2 Kings 18-20)

Vs 24. Josiah removed the mediums and spiritists...the occult.

God's people had not only allowed these horrible practices, they condoned them, participated fully in them, and taught them to the next generation. The people whom God called to be His chosen people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a light to the nations. (Deuteronomy 7:5-9). But they disregarded God's Word, they lost it, and absorbed the culture around them. God's people became a nation infested and infected with sin. And while hopefully this alarms us, it is a warning to us. We, followers of Christ, are capable of doing the same things. Certainly, we have a new nature when we meet Jesu, when we come into the family of God. And certainly, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. But dear one, our sin nature must be crucified daily. It was not irradiated from our lives when we were saved. We are still capable of wandering far, far from God. **Therefore, God's Word is not just beneficial for us. It is Imperative!!**

## II. Know Truth

Before we can apply truth, we must know it. Psalm 119 is a great place to start as we see the result and the benefits of God's Word in our lives. All 176 verses of Psalm 119 are about God's Word. The verses are divided into short sections based on the Hebrew alphabet. I invite you to read a section a day for 22 days, soaking in the benefits of God's Word for your life. Let's look quickly at a few of my favorites.

Psalm 119:9-11. God's word keeps us from sin. Ps 119:18. It is filled with wonderful things, Ps 119:28, a weary soul is strengthened by God's truth. Ps 119:33-34, His word teaches us His ways and gives us understanding. Verse 38, it produces a reverence for God. Verse 45, it brings freedom to our lives. Verse 50, comfort in affliction. Verse 52, memorizing God's word bring comfort in times of distress. Verse 61, it keeps us from being entangled in the sin around us. Verse 66, His Word teaches us discernment and knowledge. Verse 92, it sustains us. Verse 98 and 99, it gives us wisdom and insight. Verse 101, it keeps us on the right path. Psalm 119:105, God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Verse 130, it is for everyone, not just scholars! Verse 133, it guards us from besetting sins, addictions, and strongholds. Verse 165, *Those who love Thy Law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.*

Jesus teaches that God's word is to abide in us (John 15). To abide means to settle down and live there, His word doing the work in us that it is designed to do. But how do we practically accomplish this on a daily basis?

Spend time in God's word. Be intentional but not legalistic. We can be intentional by having a place, a Bible, a journal or notebook, a pen, and a Scripture reading guide. Keep it all together so that you don't have to look for any of it☺.

Remember this is a relationship, and while we may set a goal of a specific time, the day may not always play out as planned. I am most alert in the morning—after two cups of coffee, so my goal is to meet with the Lord in His word in the mornings. Find your time. Ask the Lord to help you, to put a desire in your heart to be there each day, looking forward to hearing from Him. If you miss a day or week, remember His mercies are new every day. While at first this routine might require self-discipline, it is foremost a loving relationship, not a legalistic obligation.

My routine, and you will have to find your own, is to write down all my prayer concerns in my journal, heading the page with the date and the passage of Scripture I am reading that day (we will get to this). Then I settle my mind—no phone, TV, or computer vying for my attention. Sing a praise song, or a few lines of a hymn to focus your mind and heart heavenward, or breathe a prayer, or read a psalm...just get settled and make the Lord the center of your attention. Then pick up your copy of your Bible and read.

At the risk of sounded ridged, **I believe it is important to actually lay your eyes on your personal copy of God's Word, the Bible.** Devotional books can be great, informative, and inspirational, but if the book does not require you to open your own Bible and read verses for yourself, I suggest you find something else. Why? Because *most of us only get one shot* in the day to spend alone time with God. I want (and I want you busy ladies) to hear and see with our own eyes what HE says, where He says it, why He says it. I want us to let the pages of Scripture saturate our hearts. We even memorize verses better if we can visualize where they are on the pages of Scripture. If you choose to use a devotional book that has the Scripture already printed out for you, I encourage you to still look up those verses in your Bible, make notes in the margins, underline important words, or make notes in your journal about things the Lord says to you as you read. Also, a Bible reading guide will push you into passages of Scripture you would not normally go.

In your journal write down what the passage of Scripture is saying specifically, what God is revealing about Himself. Think on it, meditate on it all for a few minutes. Then begin applying the truth to your own life and to the prayer concerns you have already listed. Is there a sin to confess, a habit to tame, a lifestyle to adjust, a blessing to acknowledge, an assignment to obey? All of these things are in response to our awareness and submission to the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to teach us the will of God and the ways of God (Henry Blackaby).

Memorize God's Word. *Choose a verse or short passage each week to work on.* Write it on a sticky note, put it on the bathroom mirror—it will give you something to do while you brush your teeth. Stick one on the dashboard for the car and refer to it as your able☺ Put it in your phone and refer to it when you have a minute or two of idle time. HIDE GOD'S WORD IN YOUR HEART. It is well-spent effort.

### III. Pray Truth

**Praying** Scripture will keep our prayer time fresh and alive. Many times, we are praying for the same people and things over and over. We run out of ways to express our desires and praying gets stale. Apply the passage of Scripture you have just read in your devotional time to your prayer concerns. Pray it back to the Lord in your own words. Go back and look at Colossian 1:9-12. Remember, we covered this in week 2. Now as you read it, make it your prayer for your children, your loved ones, your friends. Put their names in those verse asking God to accomplish it in their lives. Wow! What a way to keep praying alive. It even helps guard our often-wandering minds.

**Psalms** are wonderful for praying. Line by line work your way through a psalm, praying the truth of each line for or over the concerns on your prayer list. Any passage of Scripture can be used in prayer.

### IV. Live Truth

**Romans 12: 2** teaches we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture to renew our thinking. When we think differently, we behave differently. God equips us to live as He has commanded us to live.

Ephesians 4:1 and Colossians 1:10 instruct us to live in a manner worthy of our call and pleasing the Lord. These verses are not a call for pulling up our bootstraps and trying harder. We are instead to walk in perfect balance with this high call to be children of God through a relationship with Jesus. But how?

Ephesians 3 :16, Paul is praying that we will be empowered in the inner man with the Holy Spirit. We have already been permanently indwelt with the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14), but we are to live daily in His power. He is always at work in us, giving us the desire to please God and the ability to please God. (Philippians 2:13) We set

out each day to live out His desires—at Walmart, at home, at work, in traffic.... we live daily in reverence for God and empowered by His Spirit as well. We are equipped to live this way—the Spirit using the Word of God in our lives.

But we must trust and obey Him. We must choose to participate with the Spirit. Ephesians 4:22-24 says we must lay aside the old way of living—that’s a choice we make, but always empowered to do it by God at work in us. Colossians 3:2 says to set our minds on things above and not on things that are on earth. *To set our minds* is a choice. But God gives us the desire to do it and we chose to obey, then He empowers us to do what He has commanded us to do.

While all of this may seem overwhelming, Jesus encourages us in Matthew 11:28-30. At the time, the people to whom Jesus is speaking are weighed down with the burden of keeping religious laws. Jesus assures them (and us) that His ways are not burdensome, His teaching is not an impossible load. Additionally, He is right there with us as a good and gentle teacher.

Josiah and the nation of Judah was desperate for truth. They had lost sight of it for decades. Worship as well as society had eroded until they were unrecognizable as God’s people. Ladies, God’s Word, Scripture, is imperative for us. It is not an option for a Christian. It is a lifeline, the standard of truth. It is the living, active Word of God for you. Every day.

### **Recommended translation of the Bible.**

New American Standard Version (NASV), English Standard Version (ESV), Christian Standard Version (CSV), The Holman Standard Version (HSV), The New King James (NKJ), The New Living Translation (NLT). All of these translations are available in Study Bible formats.

### **Bible guides for daily reading**

**There are many good guides!** I use a quarterly guide from the ministry below. The devotionals are also online, but I use a yearly subscription (\$25) to have the books in my hands.

Scripture Union

[www.scriptureunion.org](http://www.scriptureunion.org)

1-800-621-5267

They offer two different quarterly guides: ENCOUNTER WITH GOD (for those already familiar with Scripture) and DISCOVER (for those just beginning)

YOU VERSION app has dozens of good Bible reading plans that provide a devotional reading but also require you to look and read verses on your own.

Many devotional books will print out the verses for you, if so, take the time to look them up yourself. *New Morning Mercies*, *Jesus Calling*, *My Utmost for His Highest*, are all great (and dozens more)—but in addition to the authors writings, read the verses for yourself that are being discussed.

### **Reading list for this message:**

*Praying the Bible* by Donald Whitney

*Lord, Where are You When Bad Things Happen?* by Kay Arthur

*The Transforming Power of the Gospel* by Jerry Bridges

*Do You Believe?* by Paul Tripp