

## SESSION 6

# LEAVE A LEGACY



▶ **The Point**

Godly living impacts future generations.

▶ **The Passage**

2 Chronicles 17:1-13

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

We experience many of our greatest freedoms today because someone was willing to step out and do something that changed the world. We call those people legacy builders.

Sir Nicholas Winton was a legacy builder. In 1938, Hitler ordered his troops to march into Czechoslovakia. Word was already spreading that the Germans were mistreating Jews, and Winton chose to do something. Even as he continued his job as a stockbroker, Winton began raising money to fund the transport of Jewish children out of Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland. Because of his efforts, 669 children escaped what would have been death in prison camps.<sup>10</sup>

Vera Diamant Gissing, one of the children rescued, pointed to his legacy. She said Winton did far more than save one generation; because he saved the lives of these 669 children, he also ultimately saved the lives of their children and grandchildren. Talk about leaving a legacy! King Asa was another man who also left a legacy. In his life, we see a man who impacted the generations that followed him.

▶ **The Setting**

The death of King Asa brought sadness to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He had been the king of Judah for forty-one years. For many if not most of the people, Asa had been the only king they had ever known. The people loved him, as evidenced by the honors given to Asa at his death (2 Chron. 16:14). Then, as inevitably occurred, the crown was passed to a new generation. Asa's son Jehoshaphat became king.

## What does the Bible say?

**The Baals** (v. 3)—Baal was the storm and fertility god of the Canaanites. The plural form of the word refers to the various forms of the deity worshiped in different locations.

**Tribute** (v. 5)—The word tribute most often refers to a superior power exacting payment from a weaker or conquered nation. The people of Judah freely brought Jehoshaphat tribute to honor him.

### **2 Chronicles 17:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place and strengthened himself against Israel. <sup>2</sup> He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured. <sup>3</sup> The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, <sup>4</sup> but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. <sup>6</sup> His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

<sup>7</sup> In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; <sup>8</sup> and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. <sup>9</sup> And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

<sup>10</sup> And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup> Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats. <sup>12</sup> And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, <sup>13</sup> and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.





## 2 Chronicles 17:1-6 Commentary

**[Verses 1-2]** King Asa was dead. Now his son Jehoshaphat was taking the reigns of power. He led the nation for twenty-five years (873–848 BC) and was, for the most part, a good ruler and faithful to the Lord (1 Kings 22:43). Nonetheless, in later years he made a terrible alliance with King Ahab of Israel which allowed pagan influence to again gain a foothold in Judah and eventually led to apostasy.

The Chronicler introduced Jehoshaphat in a positive light, as both a strong and godly leader. Ezra noted that Jehoshaphat **strengthened himself against Israel**. This description could be taken in two ways. First, it could mean that at the beginning of his reign Jehoshaphat reinforced Judah's military strength against its northern rival. Another possibility is that the verse is referencing Jehoshaphat firmly establishing his rule over Judah. The Hebrew term translated "against" can also be translated as "over." "Israel" can also be a reference to the kingdom of Judah, which broadly speaking was also part of Israel. In some ancient manuscripts, Judah is called "Israel" in 2 Chronicles 21:2.<sup>1</sup>

The new king deployed his troops in the fortified cities along the northern border and throughout Judah (2 Chron. 17:19). His troops consisted of a large standing regular army and those drafted from the various regions of Judah (vv. 12-18). He stationed troops in the cities of Ephraim his father had captured in the war with Baasha. His central command and control was located in Jerusalem.

**[Verse 3-4]** Ezra wrote that the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. Obviously David was not Jehoshaphat's father, so the passage might better be translated as, "he walked in the former ways of his ancestor David." The implication was that David's early (former) years were good but his latter days were not so exemplary (2 Sam. 11–23).

One important way he followed "his father" was that he did not **seek the Baals**. Baal was the storm god as well as a fertility god, one of the major deities in the Canaanite pantheon. The plural form refers to the various forms of the deity worshiped in different areas or locations. The term Baal also is found in many compound forms designating places where Canaanite religion was practiced (Num. 25:5; Judg. 3:3; Josh. 11:17). It was probably those worship sites that Jehoshaphat disdained.

Instead of following the Baals, Jehoshaphat sought Yahweh, the one true **God of his father**. He conscientiously and consistently **walked (followed, obeyed)** in God's ways.

**[Verse 5]** Because of his faithfulness, the Lord **established** ("confirmed" or "founded") the kingdom **in his hand** (under his control). The people of Judah brought **tribute** to Jehoshaphat to affirm their confidence in him. The *tribute* was presents or gifts they brought to give him honor. Wealth, honor, and fame were important benefits bestowed by God on a faithful king. God gave Jehoshaphat these symbols of blessing through the king's people.

**[Verse 6]** Ezra reported that King Jehoshaphat's heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord. Jehoshaphat demonstrated his devotion by ordering the removal, like his father before him, of the **high places** and the **Asherim** out of Judah (2 Chron. 14:2-3).



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### 2 Chronicles 17:7-9

*<sup>7</sup> In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; <sup>8</sup> and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. <sup>9</sup> And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.*

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 on page 124 of the PSG.

**GUIDE:** Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to explain the background for the government officials Ezra listed.

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 124 of the PSG: **“What are some biblical principles you hope to pass on to others?”**

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points on pages 124-126 of the PSG. Jehoshaphat sent two distinct groups to carry out this task.

- ▶ **His officials.** The members of his cabinet likely oversaw the teaching of what we would call a civics class.
- ▶ **The Levites and priests.** The priests came from the tribe of Levites, but not all Levites were priests. They accompanied the king’s officials to focus on teaching the ceremonial law and the sacrificial practices at the temple.

**DO:** Direct group members to complete the activity, “My Spiritual Legacy” on page 125 of the PSG to help them.



*Take a few moments to consider the spiritual legacy you would like to leave. Answer the questions and write a “Last Will and Testament.”*

**TRANSITION:** In the next verses, we see that godly living influences others.

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**

*How would you describe our responsibility to teach God’s Word to others?*

## 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 Commentary

**[Verse 7]** In the third year of his reign, King Jehoshaphat sent five of his top government officials (“princes”) on a teaching mission throughout the realm. The princes were religious laymen of noble birth and high position in the king’s court. The title “prince” does not mean they were male sons of the monarch. They may have been part of Jehoshaphat’s political “cabinet,” his inner circle of royal advisors. How many such counselors the king had is not indicated in the text. Ezra must have felt the ones who were selected were especially important, so he listed the officials by name. They were **Ben-hail** (“son of strength”), **Obadiah** (“Yahweh’s servant”), **Zechariah** (“Yahweh remembered”), **Nethanel** (“given by God”), and **Micaiah** (“Who is like Yahweh?”).

Of course, Judah had no mass-media as in modern times. All writing was done by hand on parchment, papyrus scrolls, or on clay tablets. All reproductions of a document had to be done manually. News and announcements were broadcast publicly almost entirely by mouth by designated officials or royal spokesmen. These officials were acting in that role. Their assignment was **to teach in the cities of Judah**, informing the people of God’s Word.

**[Verse 8]** The officials took with them nine Levites and two priests. These were the religious professionals of that day. Teaching was supposed to be a vital part of their ministry (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10). These Levites were from the tribe of Levi and were part of the lowest level of Israel’s priesthood. God chose the tribe of Levi to be priests because they had stood with Moses against the Israelites when the Israelites worshiped the golden calf (Ex. 32:25-29; Deut. 10:6-9). Because of their special status they were not given a separate tribal territory in the promised land. They resided in forty-eight Levitical cities scattered throughout the land (Num. 18:20; 35:1-8; Josh. 13:14,33). The nine Levites are also listed by name: **Shemaiah** (“Yahweh heard”), **Nethaniah** (“given of Yahweh”), **Zebadiah** (“Yahweh has given”), **Asahel** (“God acted” or “God made”), **Shemiramoth** (meaning uncertain), **Jehonathan** (“Yahweh gave”), **Adonijah** (“Yahweh is Lord”), **Tobijah** (“Yahweh is good”), and **Tobadonijah** (“Yahweh, my Lord, is good”). The two priests were **Elishama** (“God heard”) and **Jehoram** (“Yahweh is exalted”), who were also from the tribe of Levi but were descendants of Moses’ brother Aaron. They ministered in the temple making sacrifices and burnt offerings (the other Levites could only assist in those duties). Jehoshaphat most likely selected these men because he knew the importance for the country’s political and spiritual leaders to be involved in instructing the people.

**[Verse 9]** The Chronicler noted these leaders took with them the Book of the Law of the Lord. The exact contents of this book are not stated, but it was possibly a general title for all the Scriptures they possessed at that time. They would have included the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), and possibly some of the historical books, along with portions of the Psalms, and Proverbs. They dutifully went from town to town in Judah teaching the people. The men taking this particular book with them indicated that King Jehoshaphat was intent on having his rule be one in which he and his subjects were ruled by Yahweh and lived by Yahweh’s law. The nation’s health was directly related to the people obeying the law of the Lord.



15 minutes

# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### 2 Chronicles 17:10-13

*<sup>10</sup> And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup> Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats. <sup>12</sup> And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, <sup>13</sup> and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.*

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 17:10-13 on page 126 of the PSG.

**DISCUSS:** Question #4 on page 127 of the PSG: **“What kind of spiritual legacy do you want to leave to the next generation?”**

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points on page 127 of the PSG. Jehoshaphat’s influence within his own nation telescoped into an influence on the surrounding nations. You may not see yourself as a leader, but you do have influence. Your influence has the ability to help change someone’s future. What does that influence look like?

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**

***What are the rewards you’ve seen from studying God’s Word?***

- ▶ **Influencers have a genuine love for others.** Influencers love with no strings attached.
- ▶ **Influencers constantly look for ways to encourage others.** “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).
- ▶ **Influencers willingly give their time to others.** Influencers go beyond words that speak encouragement.
- ▶ **Influencers are people of integrity.** Jehoshaphat was a person of integrity. His character was focused on the things of God, and as a result, people trusted him.

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 127 of the PSG: **“How can our group help one another leave a lasting legacy for others?”**



## 2 Chronicles 17:10-13 Commentary

**[Verse 10]** Jehoshaphat's efforts to instruct the people of Judah in the ways of the Lord and to purge the land of pagan religion and spiritual decay had another effect. The **fear of the Lord** was on all the kingdoms surrounding Judah. This **fear** ("terror," "dread") is mentioned many times in the Old Testament when individuals and nations realize the awesome power and sovereignty of Yahweh. Perhaps having seen what Yahweh had done for Judah in the past, the surrounding nations were afraid to rouse His anger again. Fear can be a great motivator, so those hostile countries did not make war on Jehoshaphat. Another instance where the fear of the Lord fell upon the nations was during the time of Israel's conquest of the promised land. When the spies were sent to scout out Jericho, while they were in hiding Rahab informed them that the people of Jericho (as well as all the other nations in the land) had heard of how God had parted the Red Sea and given the Israelites victory over the Amorites. As a result, a great fear of the Israelites fell upon the nations. This terror that fell upon Judah's enemies was further evidence of the Lord's blessing of Jehoshaphat and his reign.

**[Verse 11]** Some **Philistines** brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute. The Philistines were long-time enemies of the Israelites dating back to the times of the Judges. Saul and David constantly were at war with them. The Philistines worshiped two gods. Dagon was their chief god. His temples were at Gaza (Judg. 16:21-30) and Ashdod (1 Sam. 5:1-7). Baal-zebul ("Lord of the Flies") was the god of the city of Ekron (2 Kings 1:1-16). The Philistines also worshiped the goddess Ashtoreth. There were temples dedicated to her at Beth-shan (1 Sam. 31:10) and at Ashkelon. The most famous Philistine was probably the giant Goliath who David literally cut down to size with his sling and a stone.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabians also brought gifts of livestock. They brought seven thousand seven hundred rams (male sheep) and seven thousand seven hundred male goats. The Arabians were associated with the Ethiopians, so they most likely still remembered what Judah had done to them with the Lord's help.

**[Verses 12-13]** With all the wealth he was receiving, Jehoshaphat grew even more powerful. But, like his father Asa (2 Chron. 14:6) and Rehoboam (11:5-12) before him, the king knew he could not rest on his laurels. Ezra documented Jehoshaphat's military defensive projects. He built heavily fortified strongholds and new, larger storage cities throughout the country. He stored large caches of supplies and weapons in the cities of Judah. Finally, he posted his best, most experienced troops in the capital city of Jerusalem, the command and control center of his army.

In verses 14-19 the Chronicler provided information about the various senior officers in the field and the numbers of men they commanded. All totaled there were well over a million men. Ezra concluded this section triumphantly saying, "These were in the service of the king" (17:19).

1. J. A. Thompson, 1, 2 Chronicles, vol. 9, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 278.

2. Brian T. Stachowski, "Philistines," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 1264-65.

