

# 6

## LEAVE A LEGACY



*If you could be known for one unusual achievement, what would it be?*

**QUESTION #1**

*Godly living impacts future generations.*



## 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>1</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.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ***2 Chronicles 17:1-6***

<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.

The reality is, we all try to imitate somebody. As kids, we might have imitated our mom and dad, or one of our siblings. Even as adults, some of us will try to imitate celebrities or public figures—even if they may not be the best examples to be imitating!

This was not the case for Jehoshaphat. Growing up, he had watched his father, King Asa, make some tough decisions as he led the kingdom. Asa had strived to follow God in most of his decisions. As a result, when Jehoshaphat took over the reign of the kingdom after his father's death, he also sought to honor God in all of his decisions. Jehoshaphat was so diligent in this that the biblical writer even likened him to Israel's highest ideal: King David.

Jehoshaphat followed the example of his father in two ways.

- ▶ **Physical protection.** Asa had gained a victory over the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Jehoshaphat followed through by strengthening their defenses. One victory is not a guarantee of no more attacks, and Jehoshaphat sought to secure Judah against any potential threats.

*How have you benefited from the spiritual legacy of those who've gone before you?*

**QUESTION #2**

- ▶ **Spiritual protection.** The people had an ongoing tendency to follow their own ways, which led them down the path of worshipping the Baals. Like his father, Jehoshaphat was not going to have it in his kingdom. He once again set out to rid the kingdom of any of the places where worshipping false gods was taking place. No one can force others to change their thinking, but Jehoshaphat sought to protect them spiritually by removing “the high places and the Asherim” (v. 6) that encouraged false worship.

As a result of Jehoshaphat’s actions and his commitment to follow God’s ways, the Lord blessed him. In response, Jehoshaphat didn’t rejoice in the prosperity or blessings themselves; his worship was centered in the One who provided. We should learn to get our minds in a place where we are thinking constantly about doing what God wants us to do.

## 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.**

Now the Jewish people needed a refresher course in the ways of God. After Jehoshaphat had fortified all the cities in his kingdom, he then turned his attention to strengthening the people by teaching them the Lord’s ways. Strengthening the people called for more than just removing the high places; it included building the right forms of worship in their lives—like studying God’s Word.

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.

*What are some biblical principles you hope to pass on to others?*

### QUESTION #3

## MY SPIRITUAL LEGACY

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

What kinds of things would you want family members to say about your relationship with the Lord?

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What kind of spiritual fruit do you want your family to remember about you?

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Write a Bible verse that you would want them to remember you by.

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"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well!"

—2 TIMOTHY 1:5

- ▶ **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.

This assembly of teachers covered everything the people needed to know to ensure proper obedience to the king, their country, and most importantly to God.

King Jehoshaphat initiated this refresher course to unify the nation in everything they did—and a unified nation would be a stronger nation. Learning and following the ways of God was vitally important for them as a nation and as individuals—and it is equally important for us. Studying God's Word leads us to be productive in the kingdom of God. It gives us wisdom far beyond anything we'll ever learn in school.

Jehoshaphat not only led by acting to make sure they heard God's Word, but he lived it out in front of them. We benefit when we see living examples of God's truth. For me, it was Jim, my sixth grade Sunday school teacher. He not only taught God's Word to a bunch of rowdy sixth grade boys week after week, but his life was a living example of God's Word outside the classroom. I want to do the same, and I hope you will too.



## **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.**

It was obvious to others that God was at work in the Southern Kingdom. They expressed it by terror and by tribute. It's hard to imagine nations fearing a nation solely because the people were in tune with God and living by His Word. By focusing on God's Word, Judah's people had unity and strength, and it was clear God was with the nation. These nations also responded by bringing gifts to Jehoshaphat.

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?

- ▶ **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. An investment of time in someone's life is a great 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. To have influence in someone else's life, we must first earn the right to be heard, and that calls for integrity.<sup>2</sup>

*What kind of spiritual legacy do you want to leave to the next generation?*

#### **QUESTION #4**

*How can our group help one another leave a lasting legacy for others?*

#### **QUESTION #5**

# LIVE IT OUT

How will you allow God to use you to impact and influence others? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Pray.** As you begin each day, ask God to give you opportunities to be a godly influence to those you encounter.
- ▶ **Thank.** Who has modeled a godly life before you in such a way that you wanted to follow his or her example? Contact that person and say thank you for influencing your own walk with Christ.
- ▶ **Invest.** Meet with two or three others whom you can encourage and influence. Consider ways to teach them God's Word. One option is to take them through a discussion of this same study from the life of King Asa.



Whether we will ever have the opportunity to save someone's life, much less hundreds of people, is unclear. But all of us have the opportunity to impact others for Christ.

My thoughts

<sup>1</sup> Muriel Emanuel and Vera Gissing, *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation: Save One Life, Save the World* (Valentine Mitchell, 2002), 138.

<sup>2</sup> These four ideas are based on concepts from John Maxwell, *Becoming a Person of Influence: How to Positively Impact the Lives of Others* (Thomas Nelson, 1997).