

A Closer Look at the Godly

30 MEDITATIONS

**FROM THE LIVES OF
THE KINGS OF JUDAH**

FOR YOUR LIFE'S APPLICATION

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AN INTRODUCTION

The following devotions focus on the behavior of the godly kings of Judah as recorded in 1 & 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. There are 30 meditations to coincide with 30 days in a month. Read one meditation per day, and then complete the questions & the prayer on that day. The answers to the "Application Questions" must be done on separate paper since there is not sufficient space in the book to record them. The "Prayer of Commitment" should also be recorded on separate paper.

This devotional book has been designed as one of the course requirements for *Between the Testaments*, and must be successfully completed to earn full college credit for this course. However, this collection of daily meditations can also be used by anyone as edification for their daily walk & growth.

The amazing fact about studying these "godly" kings is that they are not always godly in their behavior. We are given permission by God & His Holy Spirit to focus on the good things these leaders do, and to apply those qualities & behaviors to our lives. The reality that these men may also have failed, sinned, or dishonored God at some time during their lives does not disqualify them from providing an example of good living to us.

We can also be encouraged that though we fail and make major mistakes in our integrity, God can still call us godly men if we obey His Word & follow His Ways. What an opportunity we have to experience the "walk" without fear of being thrown off the path.

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES TO ME

KING SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 1:9

Day 1

I am sure glad God keeps His promises better than we do. In fact, He keeps His promises absolutely & completely. We many times measure God's performance based on how we do things. We often fail because we do not have the power to keep a promise; sometimes, we change our minds about wanting to follow through; other times, that promise just doesn't seem important or relevant anymore. God does have these problems: He has the power; He doesn't change His mind; and, His promises are not based on what is going on at the moment. His plan & promises are designed for us for a lifetime, for an eternity.

Why do I treat God like He is incompetent & forgetful? Why do I confuse His promises with my desires? **He said He would never leave us nor forsake us.** I know that is a great promise but sometimes it does not give me warm fuzzies when my life is a mess. However, I lose sight of the things He is actually doing in the middle of the mess. **He said He would credit to my spiritual account eternal life, and would guarantee me a spot in God's family.** That is a priceless promise. Why, then, do I complain at times about what I am missing out on. Yes, we do it. We wonder why the evil people in the world get all the breaks in this life while we struggling every step of the way? **He said He would supply all my needs.** That is a famous verse (Philippians 4:19); I know it; I memorized it. Yet, I still complain that what I hoped to have just has not materialized yet.

Thank the Lord that King Solomon took some time to realize that God had given promises to King David & to himself that would enable him to do great things for God, things impossible without the intervention of Almighty God. The Bible is full of God's promises. Those promises carry us through life. We wouldn't make it another day without those promises. Everything you do & everything you accomplish is because of God's promises. Don't ever think you succeed by just muscling your way along. He keeps His promises & you keep getting blessed.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Write down three promises from God's Word that are carrying you along in your walk, and explain their value to you.
2. How have you failed in being thankful for God's promises, and in utilizing them in your daily life?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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MY GOD IS THE GREATEST

KING SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 2:5

Day 2

People have been trying to replace God with anything since the beginning of creation. Most religions of the world add things to God to make a religion that is comfortable to mankind. Most of us are not that extreme. We know that God alone is the answer for our lives & for our future. King Solomon could look around & see all the enemy countries nipping at the heels of his country. He could see their puny little gods, made of wood & stone, and he realized that they were dead & useless & powerless. Yet, this Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, erected these gods in Israel for the people to worship or rather lean upon.

We still have those kinds of gods with us, and people still worship the stupidest things. However, for the believer who thinks he is above idolatry, we have more psychologically sophisticated ways to replace God in our daily experience. We can use the god of anger to keep people away from us; that strategy cuts down on being hurt again. We can use the god of fear to justify why we never do anything beyond our normal comfort zones; we shun memories of past failures, never wanting to experience them again. The god of pride is a good one; we get "hung up" on ourselves, and we concentrate on meeting our own needs, living for all kinds of self-gratification, and being self-sufficient with no need for others (major isolation).

There are lots of "gods" that we lean upon to avoid having to obey & follow the leading of the Lord. It is subtle. Some people are pessimistic about everything to protect themselves from disappointments. Others never take a stand for anything for fear of rejection and criticism. Some never offer to help people for fear that may have to enter a commitment or on-going relationship.

The devil wants to keep us busy playing with our gods so that we will never see how powerful & sufficient God is to meet every one of our needs.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What gods have you battled with & allowed to replace God in His special role of meeting every need you have?
2. Describe the God of heaven who has the power to know all your secrets & meet all your troubles. Why is He different from what the world is offering as an answer to hope?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I AM WILLING TO MAKE SACRIFICES

KING SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 7:4

Day 3

King Solomon led the people in worship; that included offering sacrifices of animals on the altar. These animals were valuable to the people of that economy, and could have been used for some other profit-making or survival use. Sacrificing is giving up something that you would rather keep for yourself.

Good Christian people get around all this sacrifice talk by reminding each other that they have lived out Romans 12:1-2; they have given their lives to Christ for salvation, and they have told God they were willing to go to Africa, go to prayer meeting, and give money in the offering.

What about my money really? Am I willing to share it beyond the tithe? Some people need to buy books; some need food; some need car repairs; some need basic commodities. Maybe, someone needs a ride to the store or doctor.

How tightly do you hang on your precious time? Are you a schedule-oriented guy who allows nothing to slide in during the day? Some people need to walk with you; some need to talk; some won't admit it but they just need to eat with you or just sit with you for a while. When is the last time you wrote a short note or card & gave it to someone? Try giving someone an encouraging compliment. Share your struggles with someone. Ask someone to pray for you as you work through the issues of your complicated life. Volunteer to do something in your church, no matter how menial it might be.

Interruptions of our time do not normally come planned, and they are not often easy to agree to sometimes. Time is, however, a major sacrifice. You want to keep it, but when you shared time with someone, to you and to the other person that detour became an opportunity.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the hardest part of your life to share with other people (the hardest sacrifice)? Explain why it is so difficult.
2. List the sacrifices you make every day, whether for someone else's benefit, or for your own growth & maturity.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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GOD IS WORTH IT EVERYDAY

KING SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 8:12-13

Day 4

Worship is telling God that He is worth it. Many people think they do that while sitting in church singing a praise song; maybe, they are. Possibly, they worship when they are putting their money in the offering plate. Worship is supposed to happen before we get to church, before we even get into the car.

When I take time to help someone in some way during the week, I am telling God that He is worth it for me to use time that way. When my wife or child wants to talk or just be near me for no apparent reason, I tell God that He is worth it for me to stop what I am doing & spend time with this family member. How selfish I have been through the years in not being available to others in their times of need; I felt guilt about that. Then, it hit me. God was not worth it. Now, I was deeply grieved. I felt the tears fill my eyes. When I have been tempted to do something evil, like look at pornographic pictures, I could easily justify; all men face this. It's no big deal whether I stay pure & blameless; life is full of lots of experiences & the world that I live in is full of sin & evil.

Then I see a picture of a broken heart – God's heart. I am so sorry, Lord; I just didn't think you were worth it to stay pure & blameless. How embarrassed I feel having to admit that I did not think enough of You to protect myself from bad things. You, the very Savior of my life, I brushed aside because of my selfishness.

I remember the times that I did not want to go to church, take time to pray, or read His Word. Then, I saw Your heart again. Oh, no, not that pain again. Lord, You are worth whatever You ask of me. I will attend church because that brings joy to You; I will pray because that brings me to you; I will read Your Word because that brings Your will & guidance to me. You are worth it, Lord. Help me to keep Your worth & greatness always before me as I live my day.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you do with your life during any given day that proves to God you love Him, and that He is worth everything to you?
2. What improvements must you make so that you will not grieve the heart of God with your habits & behavior?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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IS HUMILITY REALLY NECESSARY?

KING REHOBOAM

2 CHRONICLES 12:6

Day 5

How many times have I tried to convince myself that I had all the answers? How many foolish words have I spoken in defense of my arrogance in having all the answers? King Rehoboam disregarded the good counsel of the experienced Godly men in his government, and he paid serious consequences that lingered for 500 years, and eventually brought down the governments of Israel & Judah. What a fool he was! How could a guy get so hung up on himself that he would deliberately do the wrong thing to protect his personal power & control?

In Rehoboam's case as well as in our lives, God has to often bring pressure upon us so that we will turn to him. I hate to admit it but, if the pressure had not come from an attacking Egyptian army, Rehoboam would have probably kept up his foolish ways. So would we all. Let's be honest; I would rather run my own life & chart my own path. When I have done that, my life has come unraveled. God is just waiting for me to tell Him I am powerless, that I need Him, that He is the only solution to what I am facing. That is not an admission that I am a worthless piece of meat. I am a child of the living God; I was made in the very image of God. I was never created to function apart from God; it does not work. I need Him for every step I take.

He wants to hear it from me, "Lord, I belong to You; I am special to You; I am wonderfully made by You; However, I cannot make it without You. I need You when I have to walk on the water. I need You when I get swallowed by a great fish. I need You if I must cross a big ocean on foot. I need You if I run out of food & water in the desert. I need You if those I trusted run away & desert me. I need You if a wicked queen is after me. I need You in my car, in my livingroom, in the arms of loved ones, in the church pew, & in my fears." Yes, being humble is necessary; it makes the crying of my heart clear. It tells God I am powerless & He is all-powerful. I need that kind of power; this life is too much for me.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you respond to the things of life to demonstrate that you have a humble heart & willing need for God?
2. What improvements need to be made in your life, so that God will see a humble, willing life, that He can guide, correct, & bless?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I AM COMMITTED FOR LIFE

KING ABIJAH

2 CHRONICLES 13:10

Day 6

I can almost picture King Abijah standing on that hill yelling down to the armies of Jeroboam, verbally attacking them for not staying true to what God had ordained for the nation of Israel. They all knew that God had designed the leadership of Israel to be handled by the descendents of David. Because they lost sight of the plan, the nation of Israel was split into, never to be the same again.

What causes us to lose sight of the plan? Maybe the problem is not losing sight of God's plan for us, but of not being willing to follow & obey it. Most Christians believe that God is trustworthy, but they have trouble trusting Him. Most Christians hold God's word to be true & relevant, yet they pay no attention to it when they face the struggles & decisions of life. Many of us believe that God is the absolute controller of all things, yet we worry ourselves almost to death over all kinds of things that we encounter. Most of us know that God is holy & expects us to live a holy life, yet we play in the gray areas & justify the things we do, say, think, and look at.

I suppose we thought that the devil was just going to sit by & let God lead us into lives of productivity, honor, and holiness. Think again! The devil has no intention of doing that. He throws up smoke, roadblocks, and detours constantly to get us off the path God has planned for us. He does not want me to trust God, read His word, or live a holy life. He wants me to join with the hecklers who badmouth God & His people; no, you will not do it out loud because you are a Christian.

You badmouth God by not saying or doing anything. The people of the world have slipped off into a ditch of no commitment; they have numbed themselves into believing very little except that they are the most important things about life; the universe orbits around their wants & desires. I am committed to trust the Lord for life, no matter what.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you have trouble trusting God about?
2. In the last year (12 months), what improvements have you seen in how you are demonstrating your commitment to follow & trust the Lord, no matter what?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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GOD IS WITH ME ALWAYS

KING ABIJAH

2 CHRONICLES 13:12

Day 7

It seems silly to think that God's people would actually not believe that God is with them all through the day & night; oh, they would never admit it but they feel He is at a distance. Oh sure, we pray & read the Bible like He is sitting right there, yet our behavior tells a different story. When life is tough & unpleasant, why do we immediately create a new doctrine that God is absent & detached from us.

When believers question God's presence, they isolate themselves away from people; they complain about what they do have & what they do not have; they use anger to hurt the people closest to them; they blame God for just about everything & they blame other believers for the rest; they also engage in activities that they would normally avoid because of their questionable or evil nature.

We're in good company: Elijah & Jonah & David all got caught up in it. Elijah & Jonah entertained suicide & David whined at God for years about the injustices all around. Suicide always seems so dirty in the presence of Christians, and so out of place. Why should it? When a person has decided that God's presence is gone: what is there to live for? What other emotions are there except depression & hopelessness? What use is there to live a Godly life if it will only be a waste of time? There is no purpose for my life because the One who gives us our purpose is gone.

Hold it! It is impossible for God to be gone; don't get trapped into thinking that because you sin, that God splits. The intimate fellowship may be marred, but God is still around & quite active in your life anyway. The purpose & hope & strength & purity & confidence & all the rest are still available because God is still very present. You & I have chosen to back away from everybody at times, & to reject the truths we know to be right at times so as to feel sorry for ourselves. God said that in the middle of the worst of it, My best is always present & available.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are you usually going through when you think that God is not close like He used to be? If this is not a problem for you, what do you do to maintain the confidence that He is near?
2. In the past year (12 months), how has God proven His closeness to you?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I MUST REMOVE THE DISTRACTIONS

KING ASA

2 CHRONICLES 14:3,5

Day 8

King Asa was described here as a man who did that which was right & good; he pleased the Lord with his life. Notice that in the process of living a Godly life, he was constantly removing the distractions that would interfere with pleasing God. In this case, it involved idols & idolatrous worship centers. In our case, it involves the things we either lean on or allow to crowd into our daily walk. Let's be honest here and talk about the relevant distractions that interfere with living a holy life. I have to monitor my thought life so that I will not allow thinking that is dishonorable; how is it possible to study the power of God's word one moment, and then undress some woman I don't know in the next moment? I believe in supporting my pastor in his role as the leader of our church. One moment I can tell him I love him & then send him a note of encouragement in the mail; in the next moment, I can criticize him behind his back. One moment I can affirm my love to my wife and commit myself to her forever; later the same day, I can blame her for all my problems & threaten to walk out of the marriage. One day I can be blessed beyond measure for my personal study of the Bible; the next day I can procrastinate reading it as though there is no importance to it at all. I can stand in church singing hymns with a wonderful spirit of worship & intimacy with the Lord; later, at home, I can complain about what God has allowed to come into my life. I can piously state that "all things work together for good" in my life, and then turn around & give up wanting to be in ministry because I am sick of having to trust God for my daily & regular needs.

The big distraction is that I have decided not to need anyone, not God, not my wife, not the Bible, not the church, not the pastor, not anyone. I must be always in control; I must be in charge. King Asa thought he was in control of his land. He tore down idols & allowed others to remain for idolatrous use. He chose what should be done, even if it was wrong or unpleasing to God. That no longer works for me. I must not allow my selfish control to distract me from God, the Controller of my life.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What really distracts you from maintaining a godly walk? How do you deal with the distractions & how long does it take you to face them?
2. How do you think God views it when you remove certain distractions from your life while leaving others in place? Do you do this? How could you improve this?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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GOD WANTS ME TO ASK HIM FOR HELP

KING ASA

2 CHRONICLES 14:7

Day 9

One of the basic principles of life is that a man will not ask for directions when lost while driving his car, especially if he has a woman with him. I have tried to analyze why I do this. First, I do not want to take the time; second, I do not want to admit that I need help; third, I do not want to look bad in front of my wife or other woman passenger. The way to save face in a marriage is to make your wife walk into the gasoline stop & get the directions. That way, you only lost your image to her. The dumb thing is that you still had to stop, so it still cost you time. You did not have to admit needing help, but you did broadcast throughout the car how truly pathetic you really are.

King Asa asked the Lord for help several times during his reign. It matters not whether he was pressured into it or not; he still had to ask God for help in a situation that he (the king) could not handle alone. God knows we do not like to ask for help. Growing up as child, one of my biggest goals was to accomplish as many tasks as possible without asking for help, even if I did it wrong. We think we are grown up, mature, strong, independent, reliable, productive, and respected if we do stuff alone, without needing anyone to help you. Many of us were raised wrong. We should have been taught how responsible it is to ask for help & work with other people on that task whenever possible, not demonstrating a weakness but a strength. Working with others develops quality & productivity in us, so that if we need to work alone, we can do it because it is necessary, not because we demand it.

When we ask help from God, He loves it!! He wants to prove Himself to be strong. Even when it sounds lame, ask God anyway. Rather than think about how awful it is for you to ask God for help, think about the Prodigal Son's father. He waited & waited & waited for his son to need Him. One day his son did need him. That father ran down the road to hug him & help him. Oh, Lord, I need You so much!

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Is it difficult for you to ask God for help? In what areas are the most difficult?
2. What strategies should you develop to begin involving God in more areas of your life – asking for help all the time?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I HAVE NO STRENGTH OF MY OWN

KING ASA

2 CHRONICLES 14:11

Day 10

King Asa admitted that he had no strength, even though he was surrounded by his warriors. That was a smart call. However, it is absolutely awful to have to admit that we are powerless. In the previous day's meditation, it was stated that getting into a habit of doing it all yourself is not wise. We can be fooled into thinking that our selfish & isolationistic successes of the past guarantee us succeeding in doing the harder things all by ourselves. We all have talents & strengths which assist us in accomplishing a great many things; but, if we rely on those talents to carry us through, we will be sorely disappointed.

I have no power to please God; I have no strength to successfully resist the strategies of the devil; I cannot keep my eyes from looking at lustful images; I cannot control my tongue from criticizing or swearing; I cannot want to grow closer to the Lord; I cannot love other people, especially those who are nasty; I cannot stay away from the habits or chemical dependencies that have plagued me so many years; I cannot understand the Bible with just my brain & a pencil; I cannot be joyful when the turns of life are unpleasant & scary; I cannot be a good father & husband; I cannot do anything without the power & strength of God.

This kind of a person sounds rather weak & pathetic; this guy cannot do anything; will he ever amount to anything? Will people like him? Will he ever have the confidence to volunteer for anything?

To God, this kind of person is the cream of the crop. The weak & powerless are the ones God uses to change the world & to shock all the wise guys. Yes, you are weak. Be glad. God does great things with the weak. You are powerless. Be content. God is powerful & does great things with the powerless. It takes a strong person to say that he is powerless to do anything apart from God. Powerless does not mean weak; it means a strong person who knows where his power limits are.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are you powerless to accomplish in your life?
2. Give examples of how your admission of powerlessness has led to great victories & successes in your life because you relied on God's power to handle the tough stuff.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I CANNOT PLAY WITH EVIL

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 17:3

Day 11

King Jehoshaphat made a point to not seek after the evil ways of men. The Lord was with him; that means the Lord was pleased with the king's choices. His guiding motto was WWKDD (What would King David do?). King Jehoshaphat, at this point in his life, chose not to seek after or play with evil. Yes, of course, the influences of evil are all around us; yes, many are involved in it; yes, the cultural values are changing; yes, things that seemed evil once do not seem so bad now. That, unfortunately, does not reveal an improvement in us but rather a willingness to wink at that which God does not wink at.

The point here is not to accuse & judge others, but rather to focus on that which will guarantee my purity & integrity.

I cannot look at pictures of people revealing too much bare skin; I cannot abandon developing relationships with other people, whether in the family or in the church; I cannot allow my mind to linger on improper images that I have looked at in the past; I cannot allow my eyes to scan female bodies when I am in social gatherings; I cannot allow pride to prohibit me from being vulnerable & honest with the people I trust; I cannot allow the devil to keep me from studying God's word daily & regularly; I cannot for one moment allow the devil to convince me that prayer does not work in my personal health & integrity; I cannot play with evil activities & then deny the existence of a pending problem; I must not exclude God from my daily struggles with impure thoughts, desires, and activities.

Playing with evil starts when we start staying away from church, from God, from the Bible, from wholesome activities, from people. When the world begins to revolve around me & solely me, then, let the playing with evil begin. When the devil convinces us that playing with evil is Ok, then the next step is to dive into evil. "Greater is He who is in me .."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What evils or potential evils do you play with, if any? How do you convince yourself that playing with evil is OK? If you are maintaining integrity presently, then, what evils still lurk out there, wanting you back?
2. What strategies should you take to stay away from evil? Be practical & not just theological.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I NEED GOD'S BEST FOR ME

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 17:4

Day 12

Obviously, in the middle of an evil world, we have a choice which life style we will pursue. Our choices are quite simple: God's best or the world's best. Since the world's best can never offer us anything free of evil, we are in a bind. We either pick God or we must choose the world & then try to improve it to meet our needs. Have you noticed that it's not the world that tries to be like the Christian community; it is the Christian community that tries to be like the world.

The world's best offers opportunities to promote ourselves; I am not talking about going to college & pursuing a good job. That stuff has to be done. I am speaking of erecting ourselves to a prideful level of self-sufficiency while at the same time destroying what is good & running down those that believe in what is good. Deep down, the world cannot develop a healthy person inside us because they have chosen to do it without God. After a while, the inner person created by the world's best gets sick of marriage, gets sick of being honest, gets sick of not having more money, gets sick of answering to others, gets sick of any moral structure, and gets sick of themselves. The very person that the world's best created & promoted we are now disgusted with. What is there to lose? Why not play with drugs & booze? Why not gamble away all your money? Why not abandon your family? Why not just break the law? Who cares??? Why is it that so many seemingly healthy & successful people try to kill themselves "somehow"?

God's best allows you to live in this same world with a totally different approach. To seek God's best: we become available to God ("Here I am, Lord"); we ask God to "Use our talents"; we allow Him to "Mold our hearts" to his plan: we choose to let Him "Break our stubborn wills"; we sincerely desire Him to "Lead our steps" (each step); and we bravely ask Him to "Enlarge our trust & our territory". "God's best" is for us to be **HUMBLE** before Him.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Which choice did you make in your past? How did that choice affect your life, possibly, to this very day?
2. Discuss the six steps to being humble before God. How are you doing in each of the areas? Be honest.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING IT

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 17:4

Day 13

King Jehoshaphat did not act like all Israel did. In other words, he did not do things because everyone else was doing them. It brings back memories of asking our parents for permission to do something a little off the wall; when we got a "no", we said, "But all the kids are doing it."

Let's get personal here. Maybe the things people do are not horribly evil. Do you smoke because the guys you hang with smoke? How about your language? Do you slip in a few well-used jewels of profanity to spice up your masculinity? Do you gamble in some way? Have you criticized the pastor of your church behind his back? Do you steal things out of the library or from the workplace? Do you have beer or wine in the refrigerator for "cooking"? Do you glance at pornographic pictures in a magazine or on the internet? Do your eyes spend a little too much time scanning the female underwear ad in the paper or on TV? What about jokes? Do you enjoy the "off-color" ones, and then tell them to other groups later?

You might say, "What do you think I am – some old sinner? Of course, I don't do those things?"

Are you jealous when someone gets something you wanted? Do you gossip about other brothers? Do you skip church too much because of all the sporting events on TV? Do you use your anger to hurt people when you want to get your own way? When is the last time you gathered with some guys to have a prayer meeting on a day besides Sunday? Do you skip reading the Bible several days a week? Have you lustfully looked at that female staff member or that female in the choir?

What is the problem? Everybody is doing it! We need not get worked up about any of these deficiencies. However, sometime, we must stand alone & please God for a change. King Jehoshaphat stood alone so God made his life count; he led a nation & God's control was with him.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the point of this meditation? What message did you receive & what action do you plan?
2. What are you saying to God when you refuse to do the many things listed in this meditation?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I AM PROUD OF MY GOD

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 17:6

Day 14

King Jehoshaphat took great pride in the things of the Lord. He was not ashamed to share his stand for God. He was not hesitant to say that there should be holiness in our lives. He had the old-fashioned idea that there was actually a difference between right & wrong. It was Ok to want to know God's will without laying down personal ultimatums. God is right; disobedience should be punished regardless of the person. People pursuing leadership should actually earn the right to lead with a honest & blameless record.

The Bible is true regardless what the skeptics say. There will be consequences for rejecting the clear Godly way. Man does not decide his own way, and man will never become god. Jesus Christ really did die on the cross Himself & He really did raise Himself from the dead.

I am proud that God revealed all this to me in His word.

I am proud & grateful that God: brought my parents together to have me; created the world without evolution; did not need millions of years to create everything; guided 40 people to write His inerrant word; through Jesus stayed on the cross despite the unbelief; forgave us for sins that we intentionally did; designed my body, face, intellect, & family just like He wanted them; had made no mistakes & never will; does allow the free will of man without taking His hands off the control button; knew me & loved me long before my ancestors were ever alive; used a fish to swallow a man; used a wooden ship to save the godly; used a teenager to slay a giant; used a humble queen to protect a race of people; and used a former murderer to win the lost & write 13 books of the New Testament.

I am proud & grateful & humbled & blessed that God does things His way. His way works. Why not spread it around?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. In your life, what things that the Lord has done in you make you sincerely & humbly proud?
2. What are the three main things about God & His ways that you are the most eager to share with others without shame or hesitation?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I MUST TEACH OTHERS

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 17:7-9

Day 15

King Jehoshaphat made sure people were taught the ways of the Lord. He even went out on occasion to participate. We are all teachers whether we have earned the credentials or not. There is no time off; a real teacher does not go home at 3:05 p.m. & then stops teaching. It is a 24-7 profession.

The first lesson we teach is how to become a Christian. If we stopped to think that one through, we would probably never breathe a word of it to anyone. We have suddenly introduced a way of life that has to be modeled. Oh brother! What have I gotten myself into?

Every time I open my mouth, I am teaching people how Christians talk. Every time I use a certain facial expression, I am demonstrating the art of having a right attitude. When I put on the head phones or turn on the radio, TV, CD player, etc., I am showing people what Christians approve of as good listening material. When I experience sorrow & grief, I am showing a hurting world how it is done. When someone offends me & does something to make me mad, I get the opportunity to show an angry world, angry town, or angry church how to allow God to use that event to build my character. When I get married, I show the world how to treat my wife properly. When my kids need me, I can show the world how a Christian father gives his time, his heart, and his love to guide them to be Christians who will show the world how Christian teenagers live. When the people in my church encounter a problem with unity, we can show the world how important unity is, and the lengths we will go to in preserving that love & unity.

Most of the actions described above did not require lesson plans nor a scheduled class session. They just happened because I asked the Lord to teach me from His word; I told Him I was ready to live for Him; and I asked Him to forgive me for all the times I messed up.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. From all the Christians that you know, describe the lessons you have learned from listening to them talk & by watching them live.
2. How are you teaching with your life? Consider how you talk, what attitudes you exhibit, and how you behave in all situations. Take a chance. Ask someone how your life & behavior has demonstrated the way God would want things done.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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HOW DO I MAKE DECISIONS?

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 18:4

Day 16

How did King Jehoshaphat make a decision about whether to form an alliance with King Ahab or not? The answer is the standard for all Christians – SEARCH OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD. In those days, they had to seek out a prophet. We just reach up on the shelf. Let's face it. As kids, we did not want to hear, "Read the Bible for the answer". We never believed that all the issues of a teenager's life were written in the old, old Bible. Show me where marijuana is referred to. What does the Bible say about beating your wife for a good reason? Give me the verse that forbids Christian kids to dance. Where is pre-marital sex outlawed?

We focused in on all the issues that were not actually itemized, and did not take seriously all the stuff that was in there. What about: honoring parents, not getting drunk, feeding on God's word, praying regularly, getting to know God better, pursuing humility & fleeing from pride, attending church, loving the people who are nasty, winning people to Jesus, teaching people the Godly way, etc. All these things are taught clearly in the Bible; we ignored most of them throughout our earlier years. Then, we have the nerve to complain because the Bible does not supposedly cover everything?

How do we make decisions? The answer is "seek God's wisdom on the matter" through His Word (the Bible) & through prayer. The more we study the Bible & the more we talk to God, the better we see God's view of things. God sees a broader prospective. You will not read. "Thou shalt snort cocaine". However, you will read about honoring God, honoring parents, tripping up other brothers, abusing your body, causing disunity in the body, interfering with your communion with the Lord, curbing selfish & prideful activities, redeeming the time, eagerly waiting for the return of the Lord, and many more. I think the Bible covered your question. Say, Jehoshaphat, way to go! You asked for the word from the Lord for your decision; you got the answer; YOU IGNORED IT.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Explain how you make decisions. Are there improvements you could make?
2. How much do you cherish & obey God's word? Describe how your love for God's word is demonstrated in your life.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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KEEP ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE WEAK & WOUNDED

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 19:1-4

Day 17

King Jehoshaphat came back from battle (barely), and enjoyed some time of peace & success in his kingdom. He even traveled around the kingdom bringing his people back to the Lord. These people had times of war & times of miserable leadership, and times of fear & disappointment. These people would have had every reason to be totally spent, desirous of isolation, & hesitant to trust anyone anymore.

I know the next line: "I barely have time for me, let alone all the needy of the world."

Here is the cold truth: if you do not involve yourself with the needy, depressed, and wounded, then you must have shipped your brain to another planet. Our world is full of needy, depressed, and wounded. If you have no desire to help folks like this, then you & I are in direct disobedience to the Lord's commands to minister in this world.

No, you need not become a psychologist or a therapist. Think more basic. Walk the track or block with someone. Write a note to someone in need. Make a phone call that is not expected. Share a personal pain with someone with whom you share part of your day. Invite a neighbor to dinner. Give someone a ride to some event. Take someone to church. Give someone a book to read. Study a Bible lesson with someone.

Think where you are. Being available is where it starts. Your time – your time – your time – is what people need. We live too fast & we miss most of the people who need us. People will approach us when they see the speedometer in our face down below 25 mph. They will share hurts & fears when they see us pull over & stop. They will want what we have when we invite them into our car.

What a weird thought. When we reach out to the wounded & hurting, then the wounds & hurts we have will not seem so paralyzing.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you reach out to the hurting & the wounded? If you do not, what strategies should you instigate?
2. Remember the people who reached out to you. What did they do?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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LORD, I'M SCARED TO DEATH

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 20:3

Day 18

King Jehoshaphat faced the armies of three different nations, all at the same time. It was to be an impossible situation. He was afraid. He did turn to the Lord in prayer, and he did involve others in the prayer time. He responded properly. I wonder if praying is the main issue here. No, I think not. Jehoshaphat was afraid & his prayer sounded like there was fear present.

Maybe, the main issue in our lives is whether we admit that we are afraid. A man does not like to reveal fear because it means he is weak (so he thinks). We would rather treat our tough times as troubles, trials, momentary interruptions, or "the breaks" just to hide the fear. Many of the times when I face troubles, I really am afraid. I do acknowledge that the Lord of the great "fear not's" is my strength & He will not fail me.

Deep in my being where no one can see, I am scared to death at times. I am afraid of: the future, watching the bank account go down, wondering how long the car will last, how long I will have to endure my current circumstances, the health & success of my children, letting down those who depend on me, the pending crises in the world, and a million other things.

"People who trust the Lord should not be afraid", you say? We are, though. If fear were no problem for us, then the Bible would not be full of "fear not's". I have quit denying it. At times, I am afraid of what might be coming. I tell the Lord now; I never used to. He has not laughed once. I feel apologetic sometimes, but I admit it anyway. I am tired of trying to be a tough guy with no problems. I am an average guy with lots of problems.

The Lord responded to me, "I understand your fear; it's OK. I'm here." Then He walked over & put His arms around me & said, "Fear Not".

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What things really scare you?
2. Look up all the "fear not's" in your concordance, and write down all the things we need not be afraid of.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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DO YOU PRAY IN FRONT OF OTHERS?

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 20:5-6

Day 19

When the king was afraid of the approaching armies, he called the people together & prayed out loud. I was asked in a 7th grade Sunday school class to open the class in prayer once. I refused. I told the teacher never to do that to me again. It took me an entire school year to muster up the courage to pray in front of people. I was too young to analyze the benefits of praying out loud; all I could focus on was not humiliating myself in front of my peers.

Since those days I have been enriched beyond words from the oral prayers of people. I heard a prisoner ask the Lord to forgive him for killing his father in a drunken rage; he talked about his selfishness and godless attitudes, and he told God he was willing to live His way. It is hard to cry with your eyes closed, but I did. I heard my pastor crying out to God to protect his grandson; the love & anguish I heard in that prayer gripped my heart (it still does). When I hear my wife thank the Lord for me, and commit her love to me no matter what, I can hardly contain the emotions within myself. I remember the night I was attending a men's conference; there were about 50 men present. During a share time, I sat in the middle of the group & shared a major struggle I was going through at that time. Before I was finished, all those men got up out of their chairs & stood all around me with their hands touching me. They began to pray out loud for me. The memory of that moment still melts my heart to tears.

Hearing people hurt & cry before the Lord encourages me to do the same thing. It reminds me that God is eagerly waiting for my tears; no matter what mess my heart is in, He has promised to mend it. I can still see the arms of Jesus wrapped around those praying people, I can hardly wait for those arms to wrap around me.

Well, what do you know. His arms are already around me. Pray out loud with others so that they will see the arms of Jesus wrapped around you.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Describe some meaningful times when you have prayed out loud & really emptied your heart before the Lord (with people listening).
2. What are the benefits to the other people when they hear you being honest & vulnerable before the Lord?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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EXPRESS YOUR JOY – IT'S OK

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 20:27

Day 20

After the victory over those three armies marching against Judah, King Jehoshaphat & his armies returned to Jerusalem with an attitude of joy. They used harps, lyres, & trumpets. It sounded like their expression of joy was somewhat obvious (maybe even noisy).

No, I don't think using a trumpet to express joy throughout your day would be very appropriate; it would be too noisy. However, how can you make your joy obvious? Haven't you ever met a total stranger in a place of business, and suspected that person to be a believer? Yes, you have. I'll bet many of your hunches were right.

As believers, we have a joy inside us; we are not always happy but we always have the joy. What gives us joy? List the obvious things: I am glad to be alive today. I am so proud of my children as they live lives of integrity. I have hope in my soul. That tree growing outside my office window is perfectly made by a perfect Creator. I am grateful that the sun is exactly where it is in the universe. I am content that my day is going just the way that God intended it to go. I know that whoever I meet today is supposed to enter my life today. No matter how strange my schedule becomes today, it is good for God's purpose.

Most of the stuff that comes out of our mouths is in the form of complaints – negative, pessimistic comments. What a shock for someone to hear positive, contented words coming from you. People want joy & happiness in themselves & in the world around them. However, they have about given up. Be alerted that when you express joy & hope in your words or demeanor, they might scoff or reject you. Give them time; their systems are not used to it.

Remember, joy starts in you long before it gets to your lips. People will often see it before you have said a thing. Enjoy God in your personal life & God will enable you to enjoy life in front of others.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Does your life express joy? Explain how you do it, or what improvements you need to make.
2. What impact will a life that radiates joy have on someone who watches you month after month?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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ARE YOU CONSISTENT?

JEHOSHAPHAT

2 CHRONICLES 20:32

Day 21

At the end of his life, it was said of King Jehoshaphat, that he did not depart from living a life honoring to the Lord. We called that a life of consistency. We are not talking about perfection here. We are talking about pursuing the same goals and using reliable & consistent strategies to reach those goals.

Is there anyone on earth that is consistent? As young parents we talked often about being consistent parents. However, we realized that being a consistent parent did not mean doing it the same way every time. It is not realistic to try & respond the same way to every situation. Maybe, the consistency has to be a deeper quality than what comes out of the mouth.

Maybe, we need to be consistent about: how much do we want to accomplish the will of God; how much are we willing to sacrifice to bring honor to God; how much time do we spend with God & His word each day; how much do we agree with God about the consequences for allowing sin into our lives; how intimate will we become with God when it comes to our personal holiness; what will you say "no" to in the areas of temptation; how much of the world system will you choose to keep out of your life; how willing will you be to let those around you know that you have chosen God to worship & serve; how quick will you be to confess and turn away from sinful & disobedient practices; how regularly will you be in telling God through your life that you love Him, and that He is worth whatever it takes; and, how glad will you be to do all the above items.

My consistency in Godly living does not come from what I say in response to a nasty remark; nor does it come from how I look at something that should be avoided. It comes from who I am, that person who God is developing every day. If my behavior is not consistent, then my Christian commitment & honesty with God is not consistent either.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How is your daily behavior showing a consistent Christian behavior that demonstrates something that works?
2. Where are you inconsistent? Where do you think those inconsistencies are coming from? What strategies could you develop with God's help to start becoming consistent in the way you live.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I MUST STUDY GOD'S WORD FOR ME

KING AMAZIAH

2 CHRONICLES 25:9-10

Day 22

King Ahaziah had a battle to engage in, and he was contemplating an unwise alliance with Israel (the Northern Kingdom). This was a very big decision, but there is no record that the king sought the Lord about the matter. However, a man of God approached the king & told him not to take Israel on this battle. The king obeyed the message. Good for you, oh, king.

How many times do we study the word of the Lord for someone else? Do we not study verses for courses, for sermons, for devotionals, or for counsel to a friend? In other words, many times, we read the Bible to get the material we need for an assignment, and yet do not personally apply any of it to our personal walk & circumstances. I have on several occasions heard a message on a piece of Scripture, agreed with its relevance, and then hoped that all the people in the church got the message that was directed to them. I walked away not allowing that message to impact my life & issues. I actually thought I had no need of those words; I was, after all, above that.

I have written course materials for many years; I am deeply submerged in Bible passages every single day of the week. I am writing outlines, composing questions, designing materials, and challenging students to study these passages with every intent to personalize them & use them in their growth. I can then go teach a class, using those very materials, and actually see & hear the men applying those passages personally & very effectively. Then, I can leave the class without having applied anything to my struggles; after all, I am the teacher.

I need to study God's word for me; the applying has to be for me; the readings must be aimed at me; the obedience must be done by me; the prayer time must be performed by me, and my failures & shortcomings must be confessed & faced by me. I need a good, healthy meal to make me strong before I can cook for someone else.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you read or study from the Bible that has nothing to do with college courses, your sermons, your devotionals, or any other activity you perform for someone else?
2. Explain what you should do with the Scripture verses that you read to ensure that they are reaching into the honest depths of where you live?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I CAN BE A MIGHTY MAN

KING JOTHAM

2 CHRONICLES 27:6

Day 23

King Jotham stepped into a difficult situation. His father, King Uzziah, was banished from the palace due to being punished for disobedience with leprosy. Jotham had to co-reign with his dad which meant that he ran the government. The man had to have some amazing character qualities, yet God used a total of 16 verses to record his reign. He was described as a man who became mighty because he planned to be mighty.

The word "mighty" means someone "tied down or committed to strength & courage", a person who knows what he needs to do & then gets it done. He could do this because he "he ordered his steps before the Lord". The word "ordered" means to prepare, to stand up & work at it, even if not everyone else is joining in.

I want to be a mighty man for God like Jotham was. However, notice that Jotham "became" a mighty man. It was a process; it was a daily thing, a monthly thing, a yearly thing. It involved successes & it involved failures; there were good times & bad times; there were mistakes and there were times of obedience. Sometimes, he loved God & sometimes he wondered where God was; sometimes, he wanted to hear the word of the Lord, and sometimes he wanted no part of it; sometimes, he was supported by Christian friends, & other times he was stabbed in the back; most times he wanted to only do good things, but other times evil things flooded his mind & tempted him to consider unspeakable behaviors. Often, he prayed & really enjoyed it, but many times he did other things & allowed his prayer time to be crowded out. Sometimes, he went to church & sometimes he wanted to sleep in.

All of us fit this behavior. It is filled with good behavior, good thoughts & good times; it is attacked with bad behavior, bad thoughts, and bad times. We hang on; we fall; we get up; we confess; we are honest; we rely on God; we read His word; we start over; we mess up; we hide our shamed faces; we stand up forgiven. Thus, the making of a mighty man.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of a "mighty man for God"?
2. Are you a mighty man? What do you have that is preparing you for being mighty? What do you lack which needs to be added?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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FACING PAST FAILURES WITH HONESTY

KING HEZEKIAH

2 CHRONICLES 29:6-9

Day 24

King Hezekiah admitted past failures & unfaithfulness for the entire nation of Judah. He said it out loud. It sounded bad; it was painful to say; it was humiliating.

How I hate to have to admit failure & evil doing. Yes, we can confess to God; of course, he knows all the facts already anyway. Telling some other person of my past failures was a painful yet a therapeutic experience. Regardless of how we face the past, it needs to be done with honesty & personal responsibility.

I met a man in prison once who had committed a murder in his late teenage years. He wanted to tell me about it one day. He did not start with the words, "I killed somebody that did not deserve to be killed". He started like this, "My mother was a drug addict and a slut. She did not love me and she spent most of my life on the streets. My father was a sperm donor, a thief, and a drug addict. He had no input into my life except to show up each month to take the welfare money from my mother, get drunk, and then beat me up. The neighborhood was bad; my friends were evil; the schools were a joke, and I had educational deficiencies. A friend once cheated me & tried to lie his way out of it. We fought; he had a stick; I had a knife; he died. It was him or me.

Another man approached me to share his story. He dropped his head, tears filled his eyes, his body actually shook; he took hold of both my hands and sobbed, "I killed my father; I made horrible decisions & mistakes; I was a fool. I am dedicating my life to prevent young guys from falling down the road I traveled."

Both men killed someone, and both men had horrible childhoods; both men made bad choices; both men probably were not totally at fault.

Lord, I did it. I am deeply, deeply sorry. Help me to grow from here.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How have you honestly faced your past, and the acts that you have committed that possibly hurt others?
2. Share your counsel with someone who may feel that he can never get past his evil & destructive past.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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GOD IS DOING IT RIGHT IN MY LIFE

KING HEZEKIAH

2 CHRONICLES 29:36

Day 25

King Hezekiah rejoiced about what the Lord was doing for his kingdom & the people. It actually sounds like Hezekiah thought God was doing it right. I never would have had the nerve to tell God out loud that He was not handling things right; yet, in my private selfish & unbelieving thoughts, I would think just that.

I look back at my life, replaying the events of past time. "Lord, why would you allow a certain past employer to fire me based on bogus reasons". God replied, "So that you would meet a certain realtor who would sell you the same house you still have." "Lord, why would you lead me to work at a certain place during a summer that paid poorly, required long hours, and got me plenty dirty". The Lord replied, "So that you could meet your future wife, who you are still married to". "Lord, why did you allow our income to be so low during the early years, that we could not buy the things that the kids wanted". The Lord replied, "First, your kids did not need everything they wanted; second, your kids all had jobs & bought their own clothes, and have become responsible adults to this very day, and they learned how to trust Me".

How ashamed I feel many times as I think back over my foolish thoughts about how God was slipping up. He has done the right thing every single time; I have not. He has led me to the right places; He has allowed me to meet the right people; He has given me the rights jobs; He has provided us the right amount of money; He has provided the right cars at the right times for the right trips; He led up to the right church with its right pastor & right elders; he provided the right parents in the right house with the right brothers & sisters; I have the right body with the right face.

After years of trying to guide us toward Him, He may allow us to do wrong things so that we will end up in the right place (for now) doing the right things with the right people for the right reasons.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What right things has God done in your life?
2. Consider the things in your past life that are bad. If God is not evil but only loving, why would He have allowed you to experience such things?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

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I WANT TO BE READY & FOCUSED

KING HEZEKIAH

2 CHRONICLES 30:19

Day 26

"May the good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God". This is what King Hezekiah prayed for his people. What is "preparing" your heart? When John the Baptist was ministering, he was preparing the way of the Lord; he was in place before the Lord Jesus came to announce what was to come, and to get ready for what was to come.

"Preparing" our hearts is no difference. I hold my heart up to God and decide beforehand what I will do. With all the distractions all around me, I need to have a plan before the troubles hit me in the face. I need to prepare.

Lord, when the next trial hits me, I will: not get prideful and figure that I can handle the situation myself; not isolate myself from people who love me and are standing with me in whatever situation I find myself; not complain about the problem & then whine about how You do not understand what I am going through; not ignore & deny the blessings coming through this trial; have already prayed extensively for Your perfect will to be always accomplished in my life; not skip reading the Bible everyday before the trial hits; fill my mouth, mind, and attitude with thanksgiving for whatever comes.

It sounds very simplistic, but we should decide ahead of time that we are going to allow God to run our lives any way He sees fit. Would you believe that we must tell this to the Lord everyday before we get started. We need to keep our commitment to the Lord fresh; we need to keep our strong wills sharply pointed to God; we need to keep what we want right behind what we need; we need to honor the only Will that is perfect and without selfish motivations.

Before life gets blurred with the dust storms of life, I need to be ready & focus to do things God's way.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you keep yourself focused throughout the day, so that no matter what comes, you are willing to trust God in it & follow His directions toward the light of His best?
2. What things mess up your focus in being prepared for what God has in store for you?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

What do you need to say to God as you face the topic being discussed in this devotional? Write out your prayer word for word just as if you were praying. Use separate lined paper to record your prayer. Make sure you actually pray this prayer to the Lord. Be honest & be personal. After all, you mean business with God here. You want this area of your life either fixed, strengthened, added, or removed.

TAKE THE TIME – ENCOURAGE OTHERS

KING HEZEKIAH

2 CHRONICLES 30:22

Day 27

The word “encourage” means “to put heart into” someone. This world is a heartless place, and people are ripping out hearts all day. They rip with negative attitudes, harsh words, rejection, jealousy, power abuse, inferiority attacks, fear-hiding tactics, and many more hurtful interactions.

Very few people know how to encourage because it has seldom been done to them, and because they are not going to take the time to deal with a “people” issue. There is only time for “task” issues. We have things that need to get done; the time is limited; we must keep the people producing & we must keep a professional distance between people.

After a long day at the office, workplace, school, etc., there needs to be a place where people can get their self-esteem recharged. If we do feel good about ourselves, then we cannot function. Can you imagine the person who loves you the most not liking you nor how you do things? That is devastating. The person who loves you the most is YOU; if YOU don't like YOU, where can you turn? Many people all around you DO NOT LIKE themselves; it's a fact. That means that someone else has to be dishing out the “strokes”.

You and I must be ready to give the “pats on the back”, the “I love you's”, “you're doing a great job”, “what would I do without you”, “you are special”, (you get the idea). It might be a verbal affirmation; it might be a letter or note; it might be some type of simple gift; it might be a hug. Maybe the person needs to know that you enjoy his company. Possibly, the person needs to know how they can help you; let them help you (if the shoe fits).

Some people hold on to the few compliments they get. Don't let an opportunity pass without encouraging someone. That person may be at the very end of their endurance. Always be ready.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How have people encouraged you through the years? How has it helped you in your growth & survival?
2. What kind of an encourager are you? Evaluate how well you do, and what improvements you can make.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

What do you need to say to God as you face the topic being discussed in this devotional? Write out your prayer word for word just as if you were praying. Use separate lined paper to record your prayer. Make sure you actually pray this prayer to the Lord. Be honest & be personal. After all, you mean business with God here. You want this area of your life either fixed, strengthened, added, or removed.

PUT YOUR ALL INTO IT

KING HEZEKIAH

2 CHRONICLES 31:21

Day 28

"And every work that King Hezekiah began, he did with all his heart". What a wonderful thing to have said about you. There are so many people who have no work ethic, no personal discipline, no pride in their work. They just put in their time, let the clock tick on while they waste somebody else's time. On the job, if you have poor work habits or poor discipline, you are wasting your employer's time. After all, you are there so you must be paid, no matter what you accomplish during that day.

What about in our Christian walk? When we do shoddy work, whether at home or at the church, we are wasting God's time. When we can't bother to help someone in need because our precious needs must be met first, we are wasting God's time. When we read the Bible for five minutes & can hardly wait to get it done, we are wasting God's time. When a Bible lesson needs to be done, but I watch four hours of television instead, I am wasting God's time. When someone comes to my door and wants nothing more than to just talk for a while, but I really do not want to take the time to talk, I have just wasted God's time. When a letter comes in the mail asking for some advice or just for some comfort, and I just cannot find the time to answer that letter, I have just wasted God's time. When a friend asks you to pray for an urgent personal matter, and you say "yes" and then forget to do it, you have just wasted God's time. When your mind is tempted to think evil thoughts and you say "no" to the thought and then do it anyway, you have just wasted God's time. When you get up on a Sunday morning & lazily decide to skip church, you have just wasted God's time. When you gossip about other people in the church, or criticize them behind their backs, you have just wasted God's time.

We are to redeem (use it wisely) the time in this evil world by putting everything we have into everything we do for the benefit of others & for the absolute privilege of serving the Living God. God will use our time in His time at the right time to bless & enrich & heal those around us.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Describe how generous you are with your time, and how that willingness to be available has reached people.
2. When you do a task or job, describe how you do that job with all the energy that you possess. Include any improvements you need to make in this area.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

What do you need to say to God as you face the topic being discussed in this devotional? Write out your prayer word for word just as if you were praying. Use separate lined paper to record your prayer. Make sure you actually pray this prayer to the Lord. Be honest & be personal. After all, you mean business with God here. You want this area of your life either fixed, strengthened, added, or removed.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN IN A TOUGH SPOT

KING MANASSEH

2 CHRONICLES 33:12

Day 29

What do most people do when they are in a tough spot? They are usually afraid, but rather than let that be known, they run. Adam & Eve ran & hid themselves from God (rather ridiculous, yes?). Esau pouted after losing the birthright, so he did some evil things to tick off his family, and then he ran off across the river to Edom. Jonah refused to go minister in Ninevah, so he ran away & was swallowed by a fish. When Elijah the prophet killed the baal worshippers & angered Jezebel, he ran away to Beersheba (a long way).

We run for a lot of reasons: we are disobedient; we did not get what we thought we deserved; we did not want to do what God asked us to do; we felt God had abandoned us through our self-pity; life is not fair; everybody else is doing it but I got caught; nobody really loves me; everything I do fails so why bother trying; I try hard to do what I am asked to do, but the system pays no attention to my efforts; people who I have trusted have let me down; I am not making any progress in my life; people have just forgotten that I exist.

When I am in a tough spot, I usually complain or want to just give up. I might even refuse to read the Bible or pray; why pray to Someone I am mad at. I might stop going to church; why go there & fake it. I sometimes get mad at people & say harsh things to them (I can't get mad at God). I might verbally run myself down & say negative things about myself just to convince myself that I was no good; besides, all these bad things that are happening to me prove that I am no good.

Well, isn't the devil just enjoying all these words!

King Manasseh was in a major bind. Being king did not help here; being smart & strong did not help either. He humbled himself, said he was powerless to fix the problem, and asked God to step in. God does His best work when He is invited into one of our tough spots.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you honestly do when you are facing a really tough situation that you have absolutely no control over?
2. Describe a past tough spot that you handled badly. What would you do differently now?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

What do you need to say to God as you face the topic being discussed in this devotional? Write out your prayer word for word just as if you were praying. Use separate lined paper to record your prayer. Make sure you actually pray this prayer to the Lord. Be honest & be personal. After all, you mean business with God here. You want this area of your life either fixed, strengthened, added, or removed.

I KNOW WHERE I'M HEADED

KING JOSIAH

2 CHRONICLES 34:2

Day 30

King Josiah knew where he was headed in life. He did not turn to the right nor to the left which revealed his unwavering purpose & integrity.

Many people are clueless where they are headed in life; many Christians are clueless too. When we become Christians, many of us hide our "lack of purpose in life" behind a good job. Christians can have good jobs; they can have nice houses with nice cars, go to a nice church, and attend church picnics. They look like people focused in Jesus & content with where their lives are. Some successful Christians are just as lost & aimless as are the street people who have no home no job & no nothing. Their aimless life is obvious for all to see; the happy Christian church-goer-family-person can be aimless too but no one sees it.

They play the game for several years, putting up with schedules, family duties, wives, husbands, higher expenses, lack of fun, more pay, longer hours, more responsibilities, periodic set-backs, criticism by those close, boring sermons, Sunday golf game, the new boat for weekends, unhappy teenagers, & it goes on.....

Many of these people could not sit down & tell you what their purpose in life is. They may have no idea why they exist & whether the world is any better because they are alive. They look like they have purpose, but all they have is a career, a schedule, a busy life. Some folks live a whole lifetime of career, schedule, & busy life before they realize they have had no purpose, no goals, no personal values to live for.

Look at yourself. Don't dwell on the mistakes & your current circumstances which probably depict consequences to actions. What is your life good for now? What do you have to offer the people whom you touch? What value can you offer others? How will people be different after having contacted me? Figure out where you are going, and put all your efforts into getting there. Paul said that he pressed on for Jesus.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Where is your life headed? What are you aiming for, and how do you want God to use your life in the not-to-distant future?
2. How will people be different after having come into contact with you?
3. What changes must you make to get your life more focused on the great plans God is reserving for you?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

What do you need to say to God as you face the topic being discussed in this devotional? Write out your prayer word for word just as if you were praying. Use separate lined paper to record your prayer. Make sure you actually pray this prayer to the Lord. Be honest & be personal. After all, you mean business with God here. You want this area of your life either fixed, strengthened, added, or removed.

NOW, YOU ARE TO WRITE FIVE (5) MEDITATIONS SIMILAR TO WHAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THE PAST 30 DAYS. THE FORMS ARE PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

YOU WILL SELECT A QUALITY DEPICTED BY ONE OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH (LIST IS PROVIDED). GIVE A TITLE TO THE MEDITATION; SELECT THE SCRIPTURE VERSE; WRITE THE MEDITATION (TO FIT IN THE SPACE PROVIDED); MAKE UP TWO QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION; THEN, WRITE A SAMPLE PRAYER.

GODLY BEHAVIOR OF THE KINGS

Solomon

- He recognized that God keeps His promises (2 Chronicles 1:9)
- He asked for wisdom to guide his people properly (1:10)
- He stated that His God was greater than all gods (2:5)
- He bowed down in prayer before the Lord (6:13)
- He realized that he was a servant of God (6:19)
- He made sacrifices to the Lord (7:4)
- He worshipped the Lord daily (8:13)
- He was willing to answer people's questions (9:2)
- He became greater than his comfort zone (9:22)

REHOBAM

- He listened to the words of the Lord (11:4)
- He acted wisely administratively (11:23)
- He humbled himself in a crisis & called God righteous (12:6)
- He humbled himself again (12:12)

ABIJAH

- He purposed not to forsake the Lord (13:10)
- He recognized that the Lord was with him (13:12)
- He knew fighting against God was futile (13:12)
- He trusted in the Lord (13:18)

ASA

- He did good & right in the sight of the Lord (14:2)
- He removed anything that distracted from God (14:3,5)
- He guided others to follow God & obey His word (14:4)
- He asked the Lord for help (14:7)
- He prayed to the Lord before a battle (14:11)
- He realized he had no strength apart from God (14:11)
- He knew victory was possible with God (14:11)
- He allowed God's word to give him strength (15:8)
- He had a blameless heart (15:17)

JEHOSHAPHAT

- He followed the examples of his godly ancestors (17:3)
- He did not entertain evil practices (17:3)
- He pursued the Lord's best & His word (17:4)
- He did not do things because everyone else did them (17:4)

JEHOSHAPHAT (CONTINUED)

- He was proud of God & not ashamed to say so (17:6)
- He equipped people to go out & teach God's word (17:7-9)
- He prayed to the Lord before making a decision (18:4)
- He traveled around bringing people back to the Lord (19:1)
- He believed in doing a job or activity for God (19:6)
- He believed in not allowing evil to invade their lives (19:7)
- He believed in being worshipful, faithful, & committed (19:9)
- He turned to the Lord when he was afraid (20:3)
- He prayed from his heart in public (20:5-6)
- He led others in humble worship (20:18)
- He was not afraid to be joyful in front of others (20:27)
- He was consistent in his godly walk (20:32)

JOASH

- He did what was right while Jehoiada was alive (24:2)
- He fixed up the temple & fairly paid the laborers (24:12)

AMAZIAH

- He was committed to the Lord about half way (25:2)
- He listened to the word of the Lord (25:9-10)
- He was willing to settle for God's best (25:9-10)

UZZIAH

- He followed the example of his father (26:4)
- He remembered the godly teaching received as a child (26:5)

JOTHAM

- He followed his father's example without the evil (27:2)
- He allowed God to order his steps & make him mighty (27:6)