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.10

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

1 His son Jehoshaphat became king in his place and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 He stationed troops in every fortified city of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured. 3 Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the former ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals 4 but sought the God of his father and walked by his commands, not according to the practices of Israel. 5 So the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. Then all Judah brought him tribute, and he had riches and honor in abundance. 6 His mind rejoiced in the Lord’s ways, and he again removed the high places and Asherah poles from Judah.

7 In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent his officials—Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah—to teach in the cities of Judah. 8 The Levites with them were Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah; the priests, Elishama and Jehoram, were with these Levites. 9 They taught throughout Judah, having the book of the Lord’s instruction with them. They went throughout the towns of Judah and taught the people.

10 The terror of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands that surrounded Judah, so they didn’t fight against Jehoshaphat. 11 Some of the Philistines also brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat, and the Arabs brought him flocks: 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats. 12 Jehoshaphat grew stronger and stronger. He built fortresses and storage cities in Judah 13 and carried out great works in the towns of Judah. He had fighting men, valiant warriors, in Jerusalem.

---

**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.
GET INTO THE STUDY

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 121 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “If you could be known for one unusual achievement, what would it be?” Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 122 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of godly living by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 9, the “Map of the Divided Kingdom” poster, to explain the geographical context for this study.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, gather obituaries from several newspapers. Mark out the names and any personally identifiable information. Distribute to group members, asking them to review the articles and give two or three items that speak to the legacy of the deceased. The leader can write answers on a white board or poster. Afterward, ask members what kinds of legacies they have received from people who have gone before them. Thank God for godly legacies.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 122 of the PSG: “Godly living impacts future generations.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help us reflect on the kind of godly legacy we would like to leave to those who follow. Thank Him for setting our feet upon such a path.
2 Chronicles 17:1-6

1 His son Jehoshaphat became king in his place and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 He stationed troops in every fortified city of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured. 3 Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the former ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals but sought the God of his father and walked by his commands, not according to the practices of Israel. 4 So the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. Then all Judah brought him tribute, and he had riches and honor in abundance. 5 His mind rejoiced in the Lord’s ways, and he again removed the high places and Asherah poles from Judah.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 17:1-6 on page 123 of the PSG.

RECAP: Growing up, Jehoshaphat 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.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 123 of the PSG: “How have you benefited from the spiritual legacy of those who’ve gone before you?”

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from pages 123-124 of the PSG.

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.

- **Spiritual protection.** The people had an ongoing tendency to follow their own ways, which led them down the path of worshiping the Baals. Like his father, Jehoshaphat was not going to have it in his kingdom.

TRANSITION: We should follow the example of godly leaders. In the next verses, we learn that we should also teach others the truth of God’s Word.
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 21:2.1

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 former 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 commands.

[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 rejoiced in the Loro’s ways. Jehoshaphat demonstrated his devotion by ordering the removal, like his father before him, of the high places and the Asherah poles out of Judah (2 Chron. 14:2-3).
2 Chronicles 17:7-9

"In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent his officials—Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah—to teach in the cities of Judah. The Levites with them were Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebediah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah; the priests, Elishama and Jehoram, were with these Levites. They taught throughout Judah, having the book of the Lord’s instruction with them. They went throughout the towns of Judah and taught 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.
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 Tob-adonijah (“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 Lord’s instruction. 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.
2 Chronicles 17:10-13

10 The terror of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands that surrounded Judah, so they didn’t fight against Jehoshaphat. 11 Some of the Philistines also brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat, and the Arabs brought him flocks: 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats. 12 Jehoshaphat grew stronger and stronger. He built fortresses and storage cities in Judah and carried out great works in the towns of Judah. He had fighting men, valiant warriors, 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?

- 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 each other up as you are already 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?”

ALTERNATE QUESTION: What are the rewards you’ve seen from studying God’s Word?
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 terror of the Lord was on all the kingdoms surrounding Judah. This terror (“fear,” “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 terror 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-zebub (“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.2

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 Cushites, 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 the ones who served the king” (17:19).

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 128 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week.

- **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.

---

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 128 of the PSG:

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.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking God for all those who have left a spiritual legacy for you and your group. Ask God to help you invest in others in the same way.

---

Grow with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog.

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry