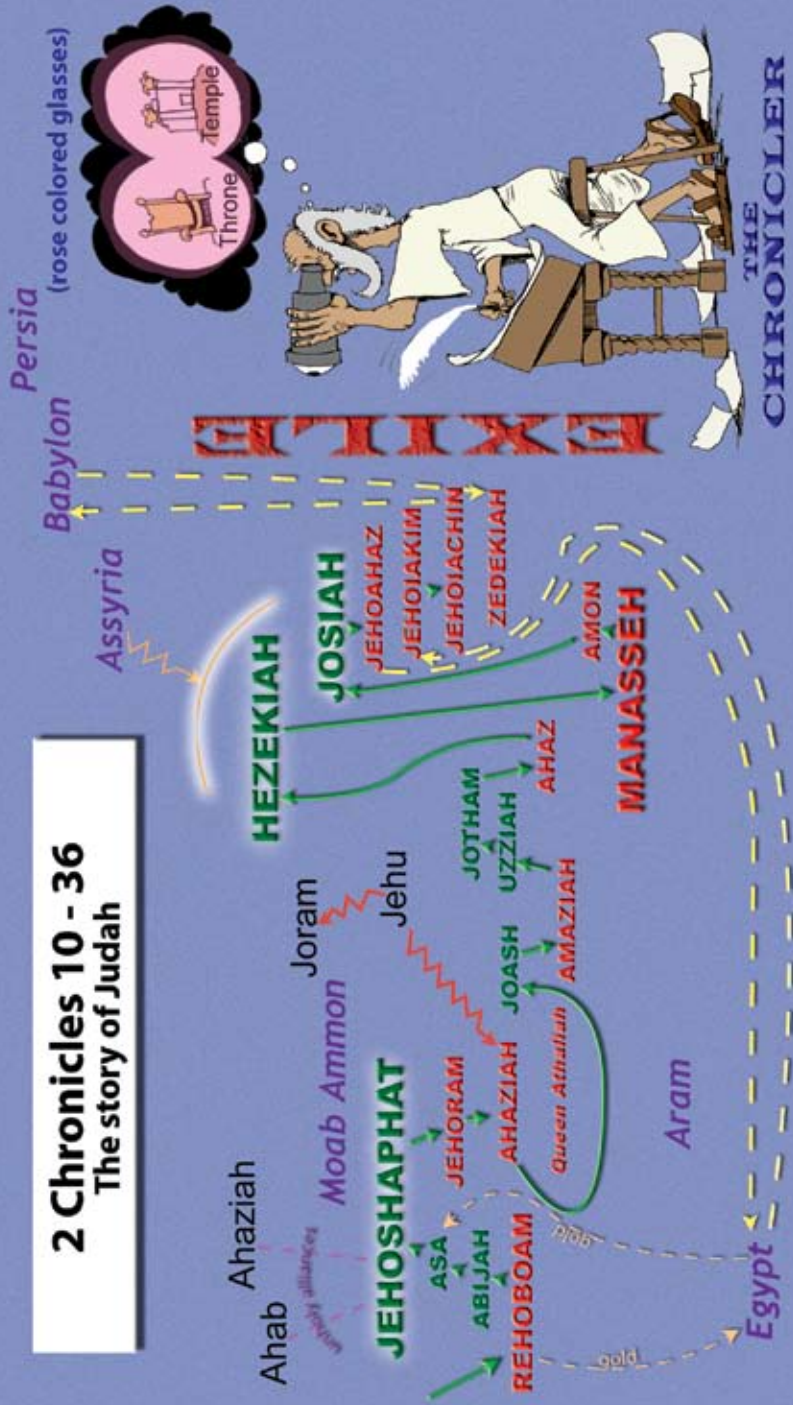


# 2 Chronicles

# 2 Chronicles 10 - 36

## The story of Judah



Monday: 2 Chronicles 12-17  
Tuesday: 2 Chronicles 18-23  
Wednesday: 2 Chronicles 24-28  
Thursday: 2 Chronicles 29-32  
Friday: 2 Chronicles 33-36

## Introduction

This week we conclude our journey with the Chronicler. In this study we have been revisiting the history of Judah's kings through the somewhat rose-colored glasses of this passionate writer. Please revisit the previous week's devotionals for the background and context of Chronicles.

This week we leave the era of the united monarchy, when Israel was one united kingdom, and enter the tumultuous time of the divided kingdom when brother fought brother.

It is interesting to compare this week's chart to that of 2 Kings. In 2 Kings there is a balanced presentation of the kings and events that took place in both the Northern Kingdom Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This is not the case in 2 Chronicles. Remember, all that matters to the Chronicler is the throne of David and the Temple. Neither of these things have anything to do with Israel. The Only time Israel gets any ink from the Chronicler is when it directly interacts with a Judean King. Otherwise, they don't exist.

As you read this history, keep a watchful eye for how the Chronicler is revolving his story around the Temple. When the Temple is in good shape, so is the kingdom. When the Temple is in disarray,

all hell breaks loose. Notice how 2 Kings ends with Jehoiachin in Babylon, while 2 Chronicles ends with the Persians allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile. Why? To rebuild the Temple of course!

# Monday: Victory through Teaching

2 Chronicles 17:3-13

Why was the Lord with Jehoshaphat? (vv. 3-6)

What mission did Jehoshaphat send his officials to do? (vv. 7-9)

What was the result of this mission? (vv. 10-13)

## Food for thought:

It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword. In today's reading we see this being very evident. When Jehoshaphat came to power, he was deeply convicted that the kingdom of Judah would only be successful if it was fully devoted to God and His ways. As the leader, it was his responsibility to instill this value into the population.

At this point in any reign of leadership, there comes a fork in the road and a decision has to be made as to how these convictions will be transferred to the group being led. Whether you are a parent, a pastor, a shift manager, a CEO, or the natural leader of a group of friends, you will be faced with this same decision. There are basically two choices. On the one side you could force your convictions upon others. Force takes on many forms. The most violent version is "evangelism at knifepoint" where the leader says, "convert or die." Unfortunately, many world leaders have used this method throughout both distant and recent history to strong-arm whole nations into conforming to their particular ideology. The natural result of this external coercion is that a military state must be established to enforce the state values and punish any person who even breathes a word against the state.

In our experience, we will probably not experience or employ such a violent form of manipulation. However, we may, far too often, fall into the trap of being coercive and manipulative leaders who strong-arm our constituency through the shame/blame game, and using emotional extortion. As parents we withhold our love if certain expectations are not met. As employers we threaten termination for shoddy work. As friends we whine and manipulate in order to get people to do what we want.

While this option may bring some short term results, history has proven time and again that forcing people to conform to your values is a fruitless endeavor. At best this form of external motivation will produce outward behavior, but it will never produce a lasting change.

There is a better way. There is the way that Jehoshaphat chose. This King decided to “conquer” his people by educating them. Here we are reminded of a crucial and fundamental truth. The war for winning people to the truth is fought on the battle field of the mind. In the human being there are three basic centers: the mind, the heart, and the body. The body is the physical actions, the behaviors that are motivated by the will. The heart is the emotional center that reacts to the stimulus of the world and informs us of what is going on around us. The mind is the control center that holds the core beliefs and dictates to the body how to behave.

Here is the main point. A person’s behaviors are governed by his core beliefs. If a person truly believes something to be true, then his mind will dictate to his body how to behave. For example, if you believe a chair is trustworthy, you will walk to it and plop down on it without hesitation. If, however, you have doubt about the trustworthiness of the chair, you will never plop on it. Instead, you will cautiously approach it and inspect it before sitting on it.

If the mind is the decision-making part of our makeup, then the emotions are our decision-influencing parts. The heart is our thermometer or our antennae that keep us in tune with how the environment is, while the mind is the thermostat that sets what our reaction WILL BE. The emotions react to stimulus. When a dog barks we get startled. When

our lover approaches our heart is warmed. When the enemy advances our defenses go up. When we are violated we become angry. These emotions are good and valid and necessary, yet they cannot dictate us. The emotions serve the mind by informing it. Yet, ultimately, the mind sifts through the emotions and makes a final decision as to their validity, then sends orders to the body to act upon the beliefs that the mind has chosen.

The brief discussion of the function of the mind is to emphasize that the only way to bring about lasting change in the lives of people that we lead is to teach them well. Many leaders and teachers are very gifted at getting people excited and stirring them emotionally toward concepts about the Kingdom of God. This is good, to a point. Emotions, as we have said, inform us, but they cannot convict us and cause transformation. The emotions can and will open the window to the mind, but, if the leader wants to truly win people over, he must teach them well. The leader must create a solid, compelling reason for why the values that the leader upholds are actually aligned with truth and will, if believed, result in the greater benefit for the whole community. When the mind is convinced then the core beliefs are transformed. When the core beliefs are transformed then the overflow of those core beliefs are behaviors that are in alignment with truth. In this case, good behavior is the authentic result of inward conviction rather than a reluctant reaction to an aggressive manipulation. The latter will die on the vine; the former will flourish and grow.

Simply put the church needs good, effective teaching at the core of who it is and what it does if it is going to be a force that advances the Kingdom of God in the world. Pray for your teachers. Pray that your

current teachers will be ever deepening in their walk with God, and that the Holy Spirit will be continually filling their hearts and minds with a deeper understanding of the eternal and absolute truths of the Kingdom. Also, pray that new, emerging teachers will be identified in your congregation and empowered to grow in their giftedness so that good teaching can be multiplied in the body of Christ.

## Tuesday: Singers Win!

2 Chronicles 20:1-30

What dangerous situation was Judah facing? (v. 1)

What was Jehoshaphat's response? (vv. 2-4)

In Jehoshaphat's prayer... (vv. 5-12)

-what was his perspective on the problem?

-what was his view of his own nation, or his self-perception?

-what was his request to God?

What was God's response? (vv. 14-17)

In vv. 20-21, what actions did the men of Judah take?

What was the result of these actions? (vv. 22-23)

## Food for thought:

They what?!? They sang praises? Hold on a second. Let's make sure we have the story straight. Judah is being invaded by a ravenous horde that is intent on destroying them, taking their property, raping and pillaging their women, and killing their men. Jehoshaphat is alarmed (I should hope so), and he cries out to God. Good move. God says go face them on the battle field. Makes sense so far. And then... they have a little praise and worship service on the hillside! At this point we would have expected that they would have followed the movement of God and rushed into battle, trusting that God would go ahead of them. But singing? That is pretty weird.

This story has got to be one of the most dramatic illustrations of the importance of keeping focus and not becoming distracted by circumstances. When Joshua defeated Jericho, at least the people were marching around the city in a war-like stance. When Gideon defeated the Midianites, at least the 300 were surrounding the enemy and blew horns. When David killed the giant, at least he threw a rock. All of these stories show trust in the hand of God to defeat an enemy, but they also show that the people were engaged in a warlike stance. In this story, the stakes are raised even higher. Not only are the people not rushing into battle, they are not even poisoning for it. The "frontline" is not the strong infantry, it is the worship team!

Just like Judah, even though we may be at peace with God and are authentically walking in His ways, there are always enemies on our borders that seek to invade us and do us harm. The old sins that were cast out when Jesus established His kingdom have cousins on the border who are seeking vengeance.

The adversary would like nothing more than to find your weak spot and send his villainous marauders to terrorize your heart.

Here are some observations from today's story that will help us in our on-going battle with this ever-present threat.

- 1. Be alarmed!** Jehoshaphat was alarmed when the invaders were approaching. We must have our antennae up for danger. To be alarmed is to be at a heightened state of alert. It is not the same as being fearful. Fear means weakness. Alarm means readiness. Jesus said to "watch," David said to guard your heart. As soon as we are no longer alarmed, and are overcome with complacency, that is when the invaders can stroll in through the front gate and take over without a fight.
- 2. Seek God.** The first thing Jehoshaphat led the people to do was to fall down before God and ask for his help, admitting that they were not strong enough to fight the battle. We must realize from the get-go that we do not have the strength, power, or wisdom to defeat this enemy. Many times Christians who have experienced God's victory in the past can start to believe that, because of that experience, they are now equipped to take on the enemy on their own. Big mistake. We must always remember that any victory that is won is because of the power of God flowing through us. He is the source of strength, we are the conduit. Our job is to keep the conduit clean, not to become the source of strength ourselves. When we let our pride puff us up, thinking we have what it takes, that is when the enemy knocks us down.

3. **Face the enemy.** God told Judah to go to the battle field and confidently face the enemy. Many times we try to hide from the enemy. We run away by denying that we are even being attacked. When you study the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) you will realize that all the armor is in the front. The back is exposed. When you turn and run in fear you will probably get shot in the back. We cannot be afraid or live in denial of the battle that we face every day. We must look sin right in the eye and call it what it is. "Bitterness, I see you standing there. Envy, I know your name. Unforgiveness, fear, self-indulgence, lust; I see you all, and I stand against you in the power of God, and I am not afraid."
4. **Forget the fight.** Here is the real key to winning these battles. You don't have to fight. What you have to do is immerse yourself in the presence of God through praise and prayer. When we worship God, when we submit everything in our lives to Him and lay them down at His feet as a sacrificial offering to bring glory to Him, then we are surrounded by His glory and the power that comes through His presence. When the enemy invades a worshipping heart they are blown away by the presence of God's glory and are sent scurrying in mass confusion like so many cock roaches that are exposed to the light. They are sent into a self-destructive frenzy and they kill themselves, leaving you with nothing but blessing and victory.

May we never take our eyes off of God. Let us engage in daily, moment by moment, authentic worship of Him, and experience the victory over our enemies that God has promised to those who would humbly submit to His loving power.

# Wednesday: The Cost of Doing Right

2 Chronicles 25

What did Amaziah do that God called into question?

What was Amaziah's reason for resisting God's instructions?

What was God's response to Amaziah's resistance?

## Food for thought:

Sometimes God asks us to do things that will cost us a great deal. In today's story Amaziah had made a mistake. He had hired soldiers from Israel (the disobedient Kingdom to the North) to bolster his own military power.

There are two reasons why this was a wrong decision. First, building up military strength was a demonstration that the king was trusting in his own army to protect the kingdom, rather than in the power of God. We saw that trip up great kings like David and Solomon. Second, hiring Israelites demonstrated that Amaziah was willing to compromise his own values in order to accomplish something that he had convinced himself was right. Too many times we fall into that trap. We will make ethical compromises in our decision making if we believe the end result will "advance the Kingdom." In our success-oriented culture, the church has many times bought into the sub-conscious belief that "success covers a multitude of sins." It was wrong for Amaziah to hire ungodly warriors to fight for God's people. It demonstrated that He didn't think God was strong enough to make up for the physical weakness of Judah's present army.

Before we beat up on Amaziah too harshly, let's examine our own hearts. It is so easy to evaluate our current situation by purely physical standards. Here's what typically happens in many churches. We want to accomplish great things for God, so we stop and evaluate our "horse power." Then we realize that we are just a rag-tag group of common folk who don't have a lot of money, aren't strikingly attractive, and aren't bristling with television-quality talent. After assessing the troops we think, "wow, with this sad bunch we won't be able to do diddly for God's

Kingdom.” So, using the same physical lenses that we used to evaluate our own troops, we scour the countryside looking for “10’s” who we can hire to come in and lead us into the battle field. The danger here is that our lenses have already been skewed to the physical realities before our search even started. Then we hire people based upon physical qualities, people who can “produce.” The problem is that the “production” is flowing from the physical resources which got them hired. The next thing you know, the church is growing and thriving, but it is bearing the fruit of physical realities.

So what is the alternative?

Let’s revisit the dialogue between the man of God and Amaziah (with a little artistic, interpretive license)

“Amaziah, stop the insanity! Send these soldiers back. Your standards and values are totally whacked and you need to start fresh.”

“You want me to do what? Do you know how much I have invested in these soldiers? I’ll lose my shirt if I backtrack now.”

“You’ll lose more than your shirt if you don’t do the right thing, right now. Don’t you think that God can cover your loses if you simply obey Him and trust Him?”

Amaziah did obey, and it cost him. He lost money, and he also made enemies...but he did what was right.

This theme comes up again throughout Jesus’ teaching. The rich young ruler was unwilling to give away all that he had to enter the Kingdom. Jesus said that, to be a disciple one had to count the cost. The

plowman could not look back when he left the plow. The spiritual pilgrim had to enter the narrow gate and climb the steep and difficult path. It is not easy, or cheap being a follower of Jesus, but it is free.

There are two lessons from today:

1. We cannot use physical lenses to evaluate the “horse power” of our church. Remember the Kingdom of God is a Spiritual reality. It is a matter of the heart. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. When did God ever use the “qualified” applicant to do His great and mighty work? He gave a son to an elderly couple. He chose a stuttering murderer to lead His people out of slavery. He chose a ruddy shepherd boy to create an eternal dynasty. He became a simple Galilean carpenter, surrounded by a band of backwater fisherman, radicals, tax-collectors and prostitutes, to change the world. It is God’s Kingdom and He distributes His gifts, to the people He chooses, and works through them in the way that He wants. As a church, it is not our job to “make things happen”, it is our job to seek the face of God, be filled with His presence, discern the overflow, and jump into it.
2. Remember that, from physical standards, it will probably cost us everything to walk according to the Kingdom of God. If you are entrenched in a physically dominated mode right now, and you are holding on to your power, possessions, prestige, and profit, then you will have to give them up in order to realign yourself with God’s Kingdom. The alcoholic will have to leave alcohol

behind. The sexual offender will have to trash the internet connection and/or cut off the relationship where sex has entered before marriage. The coveter will have to release the idea of ever having anything more than she currently has. We have to give something up, and it will cost us everything. But then... only then, after we have been stripped clean of the barnacles of life, God will open up the storehouse of the treasures of His kingdom and His glory that far outshines anything that you thought the physical realities you clung to could have ever offered.

## Thursday: Look Who's Coming to Dinner!

2 Chronicles 30:1-20, 2 Chronicles 31:1

To whom did Hezekiah send an invitation for the Passover Celebration?

What was the response to the invitation?

In vv. 18-20, what was Hezekiah's prayer for the ceremonially unclean? What was God's response?

What effect did this event have on the participant's hearts and actions? (31:1)

## Food for thought:

Here's the scene. During Hezekiah's reign in Jerusalem, he watched as the Assyrian empire swooped down from the North and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Everyone in Jerusalem knew that this horrific event was the act of God's punishment for centuries of rebelliousness in that Kingdom. In other words, the kingdom of Israel got what was coming to it.

With the fall of Israel there was probably great rejoicing among the people of Jerusalem. After all, these kingdoms had been in bitter civil war for several generations. The citizens of Jerusalem may have been tempted to further entrench their prejudice against the Northerners and justify their aversion to any type of social interaction based upon God's act of judgment against them.

Hezekiah did not bite on the bait of hatred and eternal segregation, however. Hezekiah extended an invitation to the remnant of Israel to come home. He opened the doors of the city to all who were ready to reconnect to the ways of God and enter in.

Let's draw an analogy between Jerusalem and the church. Jerusalem represented the authentic presence of God and His Kingdom on Earth because the Temple was housed within its walls. In the same way the church (meaning the people who comprise the body of Christ) is the spiritual city in which the presence of God's Kingdom is housed on Earth. The Northern Kingdom of Israel represents the world around us who was originally created for fellowship with God but, through rebellion, has been war-torn and devastated by the "Assyrian army" of sin.

Here we are, the church, the keepers of the Kingdom of God. How do we view the Kingdom of Israel? How do we view AIDS patients who are (in the majority) suffering because of lifestyle choices that run contrary to the Word of God? How do we view the single mom who has three children, each from different fathers, who has been caught up in her co-dependency with unhealthy men? How do we view the man who has lost his family due to pornography addiction or workaholicism or alcoholism? You get the idea.

Do we say, "You are getting what you deserve? We don't want you in here because you will defile the holy thing that we are trying to preserve?"

Look at how Hezekiah treated them:

- 1. He was aware of them.** It would have been easy for Hezekiah to get caught up in the pressures of managing his own kingdom. He could have kept his "holy blinders" on and stayed ignorant of the needs and the opportunities that were right outside the city walls.
- 2. He invited them to the feast.** Hezekiah did not allow social protocol or past political agendas to stand in the way of being totally open to engaging in fellowship and interaction with his former enemies. He had a spirit of openness and initiation.
- 3. He was not afraid to speak truth.** Hezekiah's invitation is not what we would consider "seeker friendly". He basically said, "You've been away from God long enough. Isn't it time to set your sin aside and come home? Get

right with God, come home, and God will be gracious to you.” He called sin sin, and then he extended grace. You can’t talk about grace until you have first established the need for it.

4. **He was not discouraged by rejection.** Most of the Israelites rejected him and ridiculed him for his invitation. They probably accused him of being “holier-than-thou” or of having a hidden agenda. Yet, in spite of a majority rejection, there were a few who humbled themselves and did come home, authentically seeking after the heart of God.
5. **He met them where they were.** Notice this amazing prayer in vv. 18-19. “May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets his heart on seeking God even if he is not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.” Wow! Hezekiah knew that the Kingdom of God is not about external behavior first. The Kingdom of God is about a heart that is seeking God authentically and is open to the transforming power of God. When “Israelites” first come into the Kingdom, they are not going to know how to behave. They are going to have “unclean hands.” We need to pray Hezekiah’s prayer and have Hezekiah’s big-picture attitude as we lead these new believers into the deep and wonderful places of God’s Kingdom.
6. **He allowed God to do the transforming.** Notice what happened when the Israelites went home. They smashed their idols! By being in the authentic, truth-honoring, open, gracious, space of the Lord’s table, the Israelites experienced an inward transformation. Only God can do that. We

must always remember that God's standard is high, and it never changes. He calls us all to that standard. Yet, He always meets us where we are and brings us to His standard through the instruction of a loving, gracious Heavenly Father.

As the "Jerusalem" on Earth today, may we be a church that follows the example of Hezekiah. May we be aware, sensitive, intentional, invitational, and gracious to the hurting in the world around us. May we openly welcome anyone who has "set his heart on seeking God," and love them to the standard of the Kingdom.

## Friday: Cleaning House

2 Chronicles 34

What did Josiah do in the eighth year of his reign?

What did he do in the twelfth year?

What did he do in the eighteenth year?

What discovery was made during this process?

What was Josiah's response to this discovery?

## Food for thought:

In the story of Josiah we see an excellent example of the three major phases that a person will go through in the process of spiritual formation.

### 1. **Tear it Down.**

Josiah inherited a pretty messed up world view. His grandfather was the most wicked king that Judah had ever had. Manasseh had infected the people with a terrible case of syncretism. They believed that all forms of religious practice were equally valid and that Yahweh was no different than the Baals of all the surrounding Canaanite cultures.

Josiah's father had been assassinated by a rebellious element in Jerusalem. Then he, as a young boy, had been placed on the throne in his father's place, most likely under the strong-armed leadership of the rebels. There must have been a great deal of emotional trauma and dysfunction within Josiah's mind and heart after having been raised in that situation.

For some reason, of which we are left unclear, Josiah was motivated to seek the heart of God. The first thing that he had to do was tear down the mess that he was in. He went through with a wrecking ball and ripped out everything that was obviously contrary to God.

We can think of it as being a gardener. If our heart is a garden, before we can plant anything or have anything healthy grow there, we must first tear out all the weeds and rocks that are choking everything out.

This is a painful process that will be met with great opposition. When a person who has been hanging

out with the “wrong crowd” and decides to clean up his act, are those friends generally supportive? No. Misery loves company. Those friends will be threatened and challenged by the changes and will try every tactic in the book to convince the new reformer to see the error of his ways and return to the comfort of pagan worship.

If we want to grow and know the heart of God, then we must be willing to join with Josiah and tear down the old ways. We must be willing to challenge the worldview and philosophical grid that governed our previous thinking. We must be willing to stop going places and doing things that set us up for bad choices. We must be willing to move away from unhealthy relationships that have strong roots wrapped round our heart.

We must feel the need, the need to weed.

## 2. **Build it Up.**

If phase one has a negative, deconstructive, tone, then phase two has a positive, reconstructive tone. In phase one we rip out the weeds, we tear down the walls, we strip everything away, and we start with a clean slate. In phase two we start to build something new. In our garden we begin the orderly work of tilling the soil, adding fertilizer, ploughing straight furrows, and planting the seeds.

In Josiah’s story, he invested a great deal of energy in rebuilding the temple and creating the space for the proper worship of God as best he knew how.

That’s the key to phase two; creating space. If the Kingdom of God is going to grow, it has to have the proper space to do so. If the Kingdom of God is like

a seed, then it needs to have a properly prepared field, with adequate water, fertilizer, and sunlight. If the Kingdom of God is a family, then it has to have a house in which to live.

The way that we create space in this phase of our spiritual development is through practicing what is called “The Spiritual Disciplines.” Just like an athlete needs to practice every day, and a farmer needs to walk the fields every day looking for weeds and bugs, so does the follower of Jesus need to practice some daily habits that will cultivate a heart in which the Kingdom of God can grow.

The Basic Disciplines are things like:

- ☀️ daily Bible reading
- ☀️ prayer
- ☀️ meditation
- ☀️ investigating the truth about God
- ☀️ worship
- ☀️ developing authentic relationships with other Christians
- ☀️ giving
- ☀️ serving others

Doing these things does not make us spiritual or “holy” or in touch with God. These activities are equivalent to the farmer tilling and preparing the soil. If the farmer doesn’t weed and feed, then the seed doesn’t grow. But, the farmer can’t make the seed grow, or dictate what it will look like; that is the miracle and mystery of life.

### 3. Turn it On!

Phase one is deconstructive, tearing down the old worldviews. Phase two is reconstructive, building a framework for the Kingdom of God in our heart. These two phases are preparatory phases that are getting us ready for the real deal; phase three is implementation. If Phase two is planting the seed, then phase three is watching it grow and bearing the fruit. If two is building a new house, then phase three is living in it!

The Kingdom of God is not a thing we do or a doctrine we adhere to, it is a living reality in which we engage! God is real and desires to know us and to be known. The Kingdom of God is a dynamic reality that grows and changes like the unfurling of a living plant.

When Josiah finally built the Temple, he was then exposed to the truth of God's Law. You see, had he not put in the effort to create the space for the correct worship of God, he would have never had the opportunity to be exposed to the deep truths of God.

The Kingdom of God is like an onion, it has layers. As soon as we think we have God figured out and we settle into a comfort zone of following Him, He peels back another layer of the onion and shows us a whole other field that needs to be tilled and another wing that needs to be added to our house, or a room that needs to be remodeled.

Phase three is the exciting, dynamic, ever-progressing, process of being filled with the living presence of God and overflowing God's Kingdom - His love, light, truth, and grace -- into the world around us.

Phase three is the goal of our life on Earth. We want to make the level of reforms that Josiah did in Jerusalem. Yet, we cannot get to phase three without passing through phase one and two first.

Where are you today? Are you stuck in a briar patch of sin and confusion, needing to get out and begin your journey toward the heart of God? Are you just starting the process of replacing the old ways with the new ways of the Spiritual Disciplines? Or, are you experiencing a very fruitful time of overflow right now where God is using your gifts and talents to bring about great things in the lives of the people around you? Or, perhaps, you have experienced a season of overflow, and now God has peeled back a new layer for you and you are in the process of weeding and tilling a new field.

Wherever you are today, rejoice that God has made His Kingdom available to us and has made the processes available to grow in our relationship with Him.