

2026-09-02 Small Group Guide

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Based on the Sermon from 2 Chronicles 22-23

Overview

This sermon walks through the reign of Ahaziah, the influence of his mother Athaliah, and the courageous response of the priest Jehoiada. Along the way, the pastor draws connections between ancient Israel and the present-day church, challenging believers to move from passive observers to active, truth-telling witnesses who are grounded in both grace and love.

Key Takeaways

1. Our lives are being written as we live them. The biblical record of these kings serves as a reminder that our choices, our influence on others, and our faithfulness to God form a lasting testimony -- for better or worse.
2. Encouragement toward evil is still evil. Athaliah actively encouraged her son toward wickedness. The sermon challenges us to consider whether we, through passivity or direct influence, are enabling those around us to continue in sin rather than pointing them toward truth.
3. Toxic empathy replaces truth with comfort. When compassion becomes a reason to avoid speaking truth, it stops being love. Jesus modeled a better way -- full of both grace and truth simultaneously, as seen in his conversation with the woman at the well.
4. Strength means acting on conviction, not just holding it. Jehoiada did not simply believe the right things. He organized, he acted, and he put himself at risk to see God's purposes fulfilled. Conviction without action is incomplete.
5. Playing it safe is not neutral. Choosing silence or inaction in the face of evil is not a neutral position. The pastor describes this as passively encouraging evil, and calls believers to prayerfully consider where God is calling them to act.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think of someone in your life who loved you enough to tell you a hard truth. What made that conversation meaningful rather than hurtful?

Section 1: The Influence We Carry

The sermon highlights that Athaliah actively encouraged her son in doing wrong, and that his advisors led to his undoing. The pastor asks: what is God writing about our lives while we live them?

In what areas of your life -- as a parent, friend, coworker, or neighbor -- do you carry the most influence over others? Are you using that influence intentionally?

The pastor distinguishes between active and passive encouragement toward evil. Which do you think is more common in the church today, and why?

Proverbs 13:24 describes the connection between discipline and love. How does our culture's discomfort with correction affect the way we raise children or speak into the lives of people we care about?

Section 2: Grace and Truth Together

The sermon revisits the idea that Jesus was full of both grace and truth, using the story of the woman at the well as an example. The pastor warns against toxic empathy -- becoming so focused on acceptance that we stop telling the truth.

In your own words, what is the difference between loving someone and enabling them? Where is the line, and how do you know when you have crossed it?

The pastor says: "The greatest, most loving way you can do that is tell them

where you've been screwed up, where you once thought that something that you did was fine, and you look back on it horrified now because you realize how evil it is." How does personal transparency make truth-telling more effective and more loving?

Have you ever been in a situation where you stayed silent about something you knew was wrong because you did not want to damage a relationship? Looking back, what would you do differently?

Section 3: Strength and Conviction

Jehoiada is described as a man who "showed his strength" -- not through physical force, but through conviction, organization, and willingness to act at personal risk. The pastor connects this to the idea of believers as a priesthood called to spiritual warfare.

The sermon describes Jehoiada as someone who did what he could with what he had. What resources, relationships, or positions of influence has God placed in your hands right now? Are you using them?

The pastor says that playing it safe is "passively encouraging evil." Do you agree or disagree? What makes inaction feel safer than action, even when we know what is right?

First Peter 2:9 describes believers as a royal priesthood. What does it look like practically for a believer today to function as a priest who is also willing to go to war for what is right?

Section 4: Communion and Renewal

The sermon closes with a call to communion as a covenant renewal -- a moment to ask God whether we are using our lives and breath for his kingdom or for ourselves.

The pastor closes with this question: "Lord, have you still given me life and breath so that I can have a voice for you? Or am I using my life and breath

for myself?" How would you honestly answer that question right now?

Mark's story from the sermon illustrates someone using a season of physical weakness as an opportunity for active witness. How does his example challenge or encourage you personally?

Practical Applications

This week, choose at least one of the following:

Pray specifically about your influence. Ask God to show you one person in your circle who needs truth spoken to them in love. Ask him how and when to do it.

Examine your silence. Identify one area where you have been passively going along with something you know is not right. Bring it before God and ask what faithful action looks like.

Pray before you vote. As the pastor encouraged, bring your civic decisions before God and ask him to guide you toward choices that reflect his values rather than habit, party loyalty, or apathy.

Share your story. Think of a sin or struggle from your past that God has redeemed. Look for an opportunity this week to share that story with someone who might need to hear that grace and truth can coexist.

Encourage someone who is suffering. Mark's witness from a hospital bed is a reminder that our circumstances do not have to silence our testimony. Reach out to someone going through difficulty and point them toward the faithfulness of God.

Closing Reflection

The pastor prays: "May we not be complainers, may we not only look at the downside of things, but may we not just be optimistic, but might we be joyful and rejoicing in you continually."

Close your group time by sharing one thing each person is genuinely thankful for, and one area where each person is asking God for courage to act rather than retreat.

Scriptures referenced in this sermon include 2 Chronicles 22-23, Romans 13, and 2 Corinthians 12. Members are encouraged to read these passages on their own before or after the group meeting.