

## The Statesman and Advisors

It is fascinating to consider mankind's journey in gaining knowledge of God and His intended role in the affairs of His creation. I believe an important element of that truth is revealed to us in the ninth century B.C. and continues to be relevant today:

*Throughout the time Jehoiada the priest instructed him, [King] Joash did what was right in the LORD's sight (2 Kings 12:2).*

The backdrop is that King Joash's grandfather and father before him had been so corrupt that corruption had become ingrained within the office. That corrupt mindset is demonstrated by his grandfather's widow, Athaliah, who, after the death of both her husband and her son, usurped the throne, then attempted to execute all the male descendants so that she might not be challenged for the throne. In the midst of the evil pervading this family, Athaliah's own daughter rescued Joash, the infant son of the later king. Together with her husband Jehoiada, they hid and protected him. They nurtured that young boy. Convinced of God's intent for Joash to be the king, they worked to overthrow the usurper and install Joash. Joash was still young when he became king. His uncle and mentor, Jehoida, continued to pour God's principles for governing into Joash. As a result, in contrast to the history of corruption within the leadership, King Joash was remarkably different from his predecessors. He did what was right in the eyes of God. We must recognize that King Joash's doing right in God's eyes led to his doing good for his countrymen. Unfortunately, Jehoiada died before Joash finished his reign. Tragically for the nation's people, Joash did not finish as the same good king that he had been earlier.

**What lessons can we learn for effective leadership?** First, every human leader has two natures – a nature to do good and a nature to do evil. This included Joash, even after the outstanding teaching he had received. One servant of God described the issue this way:

*For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate (Romans 7:15).*

The reality is that we too easily give in to the corrupt side of our nature. It is because of this that God warned us:

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways." This is the LORD's declaration. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

We need to be careful what voices we listen to, whether from others or from within. Hence, without Jehoiada's constant coaching, we conclude that Joash easily gave in to his selfish nature. Joash no longer had the same counsellor to help him keep his corrupt nature in check. Throughout Jehoiada's life, Joash had a distinct advantage in having a mentor in his life who also understood the mind of God. And we can learn a lot from the way Jehoiada invested in Joash while king. Let us look more deeply into the truth with which we began:

*Throughout the time Jehoiada the priest instructed him, Joash did what was right in the LORD's sight.*

The verb chosen to describe Jehoiada's role in the king's life is "instructed". In the original language, it means "to show", literally "to show the way". In order for Jehoiada to show

Joash the way, he had to understand the way before ever attempting to impart it. This indicates that he seriously studied God's principles and their application to the challenges that Joash would face. Apparently, Jehoiada did this more seriously than Joash did and was more motivated to do so. As a result, he contributed greatly to Joash's life and governing.

We must also look at the effectiveness of this relationship from Joash's perspective. I submit that Jehoiada proved himself in Joash's eyes to be the kind of shepherd that Jesus admonished His disciples to be when He told them "Shepherd My sheep ... Feed My sheep" (John 21) – a selfless shepherd who truly cares about the sheep entrusted to him. Furthermore, Jesus also described the sheep as being able to discern the trustworthy shepherd (John 10:4 and following). This was the kind of guide Joash perceived Jehoiada to be, as tested over a period of time – one whom he could trust. Based on that trust in Jehoiada's advice, Joash accepted this guidance to the benefit not only of himself as the king, but to all he governed.

**What lessons are there for the Statesman?** Good leadership is not genetic or familial. In Joash's case, his heritage would not have been a good influence. Jehoiada was convinced that King Joash was teachable and, therefore, worth investing in.

Jehoiada was a man of God. However, there is a broader lesson here. The history of government is that from the first governor, there was the recognition that one person could not fulfill the governing responsibility alone but must rely on others in the process, including both subordinate governors and advisors. All of these play a role in effective governance. Hence, the Statesman must be realistic about those surrounding them. These also have the same two natures – one for good, and one to benefit themselves. And from Joash's example, they must examine carefully everyone who would potentially influence them. Jehoiada proved himself reliable over the course of several decades.

Are there Jehoiada's available today? As we have explored statesmanship together on this journey, we have considered that Statesmen have a commitment to being God's instruments. I am convinced that those who desire to be Statesmen must best fulfill their calling by surrounding themselves with others who have the same commitment to be God's instruments. I believe this is the lesson of Jehoiada's and Joash's relationship. I do not believe one can become a Statesman without surrounding themselves with those with the heart of a Statesman.

This includes surrounding ourselves with Jesus, the greatest Statesman of all history. I believe all desiring to be Statesmen can best prepare by studying the life of Jesus. In reality, in facing a major challenge, it is often difficult to answer the question "What would a Statesman do in facing this situation?" However, when asking the different question "What would Jesus do?", the answer always seems much clearer. I am convinced we are best served by advisors who continually ask that same question "What would Jesus do?", in addition to seeking to answer that question for ourselves.