

Crutches

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus and staying true to God's word, rather than relying on spiritual crutches or drifting away from God.

Duration: 27:20

Scripture: Proverbs 18:24, Jeremiah 6:16, Joel 2:12, James 4:8

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses gratitude for the people in his life who have helped him grow in his faith. He shares a personal story of a minister who took the time to mentor him when he was a college student. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being kind to those who have shown kindness to us, rather than being mean in return. He also encourages the audience to draw near to God, make positive changes in their lives, and actively participate in the church community.

Transcript

Second Chronicles, chapter 24, verse one. Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 40 years, so 40 plus seven, he died at 47. His mother's name was Zibiah.

She was from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years of Jehoiada the priest. And then we read later on, as long as, in that chapter, as long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually in the temple of the Lord.

Now, Jehoiada was old and full of years, and he died at the age of 130. My mom's on the way, right, to 130. He was buried with the kings in the city of David because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple.

After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, Joash, and he listened to them. They abandoned the temple of the Lord, the God of their ancestors. They worshiped Asherah Poles.

Asherah was one of the Canaanite gods. Filthy sexual immorality was included in the worship of that god. And idols, because of their guilt, God's anger came on Judah and Jerusalem.

Although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen. By the way, isn't that interesting about God? Whenever we begin to drift, God

will send somebody to try to get us back. He'll send a song, he'll send a verse, he'll send a memory, he'll send a dream, he'll send a friend, you'll hear something, but God just doesn't let folks drift away.

He fights for them, he speaks to them. So what's this all about? It's weird. Joash became king when he was six years old.

But how he became king is amazing. His father was one of the wickedest kings in the history of Judah, the southern kingdom, where Jerusalem was the capital. His name was Ahaziah, and he was a mess.

Turned away from God and led the people away from God. Brought in idolatry left and right. And then Ahaziah died, and was the practice back then, you looked to one of his sons to succeed him.

But before they could find any of his sons to succeed him, Ahaziah's mother, who was one of the wickedest women, she was aligned with Ahab and Jezebel, she was related to the people who ruled up in the northern kingdom, she slew, killed, exterminated every single one of those children of her own son. Why? Because she wanted to be queen, no king. She would rule.

So she hunted them down and had them all killed. And because of her evil, nefarious ways and her cleverness and maneuvering, she became, it's the only time that you have this in the Bible, no king. There's no king sitting on the throne.

There's just this wicked queen. But before she could kill all of the children, a priest by the name of Jehoiada and his wife, they got a little baby named Joash and they hid him. They got him a nurse, they took the nurse, they put him in a separate little compartment that no one knew about, a little apartment, and that's where the baby lay.

And he was the only rightful heir of the throne. The queen was not rightful. Well, the priest guarded him along with his wife and the time came when he got to be six years old that they said, it's time to make our move.

So they got the leadership of the army and some of the priestly people and they said, on a given day, we're gonna make a big blast and we're gonna proclaim Joash king and you're gonna circle to protect him because we don't know what she'll do and we're gonna say God's man, the right man, is gonna be on the throne. One of the descendants of David. This lady is from Nowheresville.

So the Bible tells us that sure enough, they did it. They started yelling and screaming, Joash is king! Joash is king! And here's this little six-year-old kid. He's only being there because of the priest and his wife who had protected him since he was an infant.

And sure enough, the queen goes bonkers but it's too late. She protests but they slay her for all the evil that she's done. And Joash becomes king at six years old.

Well, he's only king because of the priest and his wife and they nurture him and they teach him and they pray over him and they cry over him and they realize how important he is. And he gets older. And as he gets older, all Israel recognizes, this kid, now he's 10, now he's 12, now he's 16, he's the king.

And always behind him and around him is the priest, Jehoiada. The king is named Joash but it's really the priest and his wife who are behind him, supporting him, guiding him, instructing him. No, here's what God says.

Go God's way. Honor God. Don't be like your father.

Here's what your father did. He made a mess of things. He was an idolater and they hold him together.

And then the Bible says, to finish this story and gather what we can, that all the days that the priest was alive, Jerusalem was cleaned up and they offered sacrifices and Joash was reigning as king but things were being done according to God's word as long as the priest was alive. And then the Bible says that a day came, he lived a long time, that the priest died. And the minute the priest died, some of his peers came to Joash and I can tell you how it sounded even though I wasn't there.

Yo, Joash, what are you going by that old priest for? What are you going by this antiquated stuff he talked about pleasing God and this is wrong and this is right and you can't have a few idols here and a few idols there. That's old school. Come on, it's a new day, Joash.

You can't be hung up with the guy. The dude was 130 when he died. What does he know? It's a new day and they buttered him up because usually when people want to influence you, they compliment you but they don't mean it and they sucked him in and he turned his back on God and he brought Jerusalem down with him and all the idols that had been pulled down, he set them back up again including in the temple, God's holy temple, he set up idols there.

Did away with the sacrifices, made for a moral disaster but it goes further before we get our lessons for today. God sent prophets, you heard that verse, right? To warn him and say, Joash, what are you doing? When you turn your back on God and you disobey God, it doesn't matter what your posse tells you, doesn't matter what the New York Times tells you, doesn't matter what the media tells you. When you turn your back on God, you're in a mess.

God is not, he's gonna judge you. He's not gonna bless you. Now you're in trouble with God.

One of the prophets, this you can't believe, one of the prophets that God sent was the priest's son. The priest had a son and he was a prophet and he went to the king and he said, king, this is Jehoiada, the priest's son. The only reason that kid is alive now he's grown up.

The only reason that the king is alive is because of the priest. The priest is dead, now his son's in front of him and the son says, thus sayeth the Lord. You're not gonna do right by turning your back on God.

Don't believe these jokers that are around you. Always remember this, brothers and sisters. If it's new, it's not true.

And if it's true, it's not new. There's nothing new under the sun. There is no old school truth, there is no new school truth.

There is no old fashioned Christianity, there is no new Christianity. There's no contemporary Christianity. There is not traditional Christianity.

There's only the Christianity of the word of God. That's the only Christianity that exists. You can't change one thing.

You can change it, you can laugh at it, you can get people to agree and say, come on, don't do away with that stuff, whatever. Come on, nobody does that anymore. But God's not changing.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God's word can never change. If immorality was wrong 1,000 years ago, it's wrong now.

If homosexuality, stealing, killing, racial prejudice, if these things are wrong, they're always wrong. Nothing becomes wrong at a certain day. Nothing that's wrong becomes right on a certain day.

But see, the desire to be hip and contemporary is what sucks so many people in. So you know what he did when Jehoiada, the priest's son, prophesied against him? He arranged for him to be killed. He killed the son of the man who kept him alive.

He killed the son of the man who put him on the throne. I wanna get back to just two other simple lessons for all of us, but I just wanna stop there. You know, when you're mean to people who are mean to you, that's one thing, but when you're mean to people who have been kind to you, I don't know about that.

And that's for all of us to listen. You know, it's one thing to have an enemy and lose control and act bad against your enemy instead of loving them, as Christ told us. But when people have been kind to you, tried to help you, I talk to pastors every week from around the country, travel, although because of doctor's orders I'm under, I've canceled everything here for the rest of the year so that I don't have a relapse and I get my strength back.

But I talk to pastors who are brokenhearted because members that they prayed for, wept over, visited in the hospital, I don't know, those members get a burr under their saddle and then start to try to destroy the pastor who loves them. I just, you know, or your mother or your father. Let's just stop here for a second.

The only reason he was alive was because of the priest and his wife, when he was two months old. Listen, you take a two-month-old baby and you drop that baby on a table and walk away. The baby will die.

The baby will die. No, but it's a cute baby. It'll be a cute baby that dies.

But the baby will die. Because at two months old, none of us can fend for ourselves. So let's just stop here.

Don't we need to stop and thank God for the people who took care of us when we were two months old and three months old? Can we clap our hands together and thank God for them? A mother, a father, a grandmother, an aunt. Some of us haven't had the best home situations, but boy, you gotta thank God you're alive today. How many thank God they're alive today? Somebody took care of them.

But let me go further, because this is what I wanna talk about. That's biological life. Who's part of the reason why you're where you are today and you're in God's house worshiping him? You say, well, God did it.

I give you that. But who did God use? Who did God use? Who cried over you? Who was your priest? Who was your Jehoiada? Was it some grandmother? Was it some mother or father or a Sunday school teacher or an uncle or an aunt? Some older person who kept after you, encouraging you, loving you, picking you up when you fell down? Do you have anybody like that in your life? Anybody here have some names that come to your mind and say, wow, if it wasn't for that pastor, if it wasn't for those sermons, if it wasn't for that uncle, son-in-law, that friend in Trinidad, that person in Jamaica, that person in Puerto Rico, wherever, however you were raised, aren't there people in our lives that God sent just like he sent Jehoiada, the priest, to keep Joash alive? And as long as Joash was next to that priest, as long as the priest lived, Joash

was serving God. We oughta thank God for those people.

We oughta thank God for those people who are serving God and not quickly depart from the deposit they put in our life. Can't be foolish like Joash. There's always some Johnny come lately who's gonna come by and say, what are you going by? What your grandma told you, that's all, I know, but it's in the Bible.

Yeah, but that was her interpretation. Everything's changed now. Nothing's changed now.

And sure enough, Joash got pulled away, like maybe you are, have been pulled away. You're not living now by the first principles of Christianity that were put in your heart by sincere people a long time ago, and you've bought into this idea of I'm older now and it's a new day, both false. You are older and it is a new day, but nothing ever changes with God.

He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Everyone who calls upon his name will be saved. He answers prayer, he is faithful.

So I think back in my own life of some of the people who God sent that I'm here today, and their influence, thank you, Jesus, their influence has not yet left me. I have sacred memories. Do you have any? One just comes to me now.

I would go away to Connecticut for summers. That was our vacation. I lived on Parkside Avenue in Brooklyn between Bedford and Flatbush.

My parents didn't have much money, but I had an aunt, my mother's sister, oldest sister who lived in Milford, Connecticut, and I would go there for a week or two. That was a big thing. That was like going to Bermuda to go to Connecticut.

And they were Christians at that time serving the Lord. And they would take me to church on Sunday. And I was nine or 10, and I was sitting, not paying attention on a Sunday night service, Sunday service.

My aunt was there. Preacher was talking about something. I wasn't listening.

He called people to the front to pray. And suddenly, someone came in the room. There weren't even 80 people in the church, but God's presence came in that place.

I was the least maneuverable, auto-suggestion person kid that you would meet. So I wasn't buying any of that hocus-pocus stuff. But I knew something had happened.

And I saw everybody in the front start to lift their hands and worship God. And suddenly, people were weeping and rejoicing. And I saw my Aunt May sitting right next to me just like this, and she had her hands up in tears.

And she was praising Jesus. But it wasn't like any other part of the service. I mean, God was there.

And those of you who are saying I was making it up, or whatever you think, it doesn't matter. I'm telling you what happened. And I turned to my aunt, and I said, Aunt May, what is that? She said, oh, Jimmy, I could see her with the tears.

Oh, Jimmy, that's the presence of the Lord. Sometimes when you worship Him, He'll come and visit you. And sometimes He makes you cry.

Sometimes He makes you get loud and shout. Sometimes He makes you excited. Sometimes He just melts you.

But Jimmy, there's nothing more important than the presence of the Lord. That was one of my priests. I know you've had them, too.

Nobody gets through life without God sending people to help. How many have had some helpers along the way? Could you lift your hand? Good, lift your hand high. You don't have to be embarrassed.

So let me close. But here's the tragedy. As long as the priest was alive, Joash was straight.

When the priest died, he went to pot. You know, God sends encouragements, but you can't have a crutch. Jesus is the only one that you have to have a relationship with.

Mothers come, mothers go. Pastors come, pastors go. Anything you lean on, God will take away eventually.

So that you have nothing left but your own relationship with Jesus Christ. I've seen that all my life. When there's some grandma praying, some godly mother or father, the kid stays right on track.

Ah, but then they go, they die, or the son gets married or goes away to college. Now what's gonna happen? No more Jehoiada, no more priest. Some get stronger because they have their roots in God, and others are like Joash.

They turn their back on God and don't even appreciate all the beautiful people God has sent into their life. I wonder how it is with all of us here in this room. If some of us have been seduced by people who have been brought us away, I'm talking about intellectually, spiritually seduced, and now you're living for the things of this world, and you're killing yourself to get that extra dollar, but that's not what you first learned when you learned about Jesus.

You learned seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added. So sooner or later, you're gonna lose the person, if you haven't lost some already, who's encouraged you. I've lost some.

I talked to a pastor one day who said, he followed a very successful, strong character, charismatic pastor who served 30 years at a church. He said when the pastor moved on, got sick and moved on, the whole church went to pot, because if the pastor wasn't in church, Jesus wasn't in church. It was all built around the personality of the pastor.

I say this for the sake of my own soul, because I wanna present you all to Jesus, that you don't lean on me, or you don't lean on anybody, but you're leaning on Jesus. Can we all say amen to that? Come on. Come on, let's say a loud amen to that.

I thank God for influences, and I thank God for the influences in your life. I thank God, and you oughta thank God. And you know what? Some of you oughta go home today and either make a call or send an email to someone and say, just thought of you today while the minister was preaching.

I wanna just say gracias por todo. Thank you for everything you've done in my life. The longer you walk with God, you realize the best gifts he ever gives you are not things, it's people.

My wife and I took a train up to Rhode Island earlier this year to visit the minister who married us. He took time with me. I was an off-the-wall college student.

Trust me, off the wall. Just interested in playing basketball and traveling around the country. And he took time.

He saw something in me I didn't even see in myself. What is that about? And he would talk to me and encourage me in the things of God. We oughta thank God.

Can we just lift our hands now? Don't clap, just lift your hands. And quietly there, just thank God for some name that comes to your mind. Your mother, your father, your grandmother.

Some minister, just thank God for them right now. Maybe you've only been a couple of years. You've been a Christian a couple of years, but whoever it's been, thank God for them.

God, I praise you for all the people, the Jehoiadas, the priests that you've sent in our life. Kept us alive spiritually. When we wanted to quit, they were there, Lord, praying for us, interceding.

I thank you for that. None of us are here on our own, Lord. And we can say it was all you, but you use people and we thank you for those people.

You may put your hands down, eyes closed. God, if there's anybody here who's drifted away from the ancient paths that they learned, found it in your word. We don't care if things are old or new.

We wanna know if they're true. Who wants old things? Who wants new things? We want true things. If there's anybody here, Lord, who's drifted away, they've bought into some sales job that there's a new kind of Christianity where it doesn't matter how you live, doesn't matter how you behave, doesn't matter, don't need to read your Bible, don't need to pray, doesn't matter what God thinks of you, just go have fun, follow your dream, and God'll help you.

If they bought into that, God, save them today. And we thank you that you're the best friend we could ever have. When everybody else departs, when every crutch is gone, when every minister, every relative is a distant memory, you remain the best friend we've ever had.

You're the friend that sticks closer than a brother. Every eye closed, is there anyone here today? I don't care if there's just two of you, I wanna just lay my hand on your shoulder. You say, Pastor, that message was for me in ways you don't even understand.

But that odd topic you picked today was what I needed to hear. I wanna draw near to God. I need God to be my best friend.

I've relied on people, I've relied on churches, I've been disappointed by ministers. The whole thing is just shaky. But I realize now I don't have to depend on them.

I thank God for encouragement, but I don't need a crutch. I want Jesus. Just get out of your seat in the balcony or downstairs and come up here.

I'll say one final prayer and we'll dismiss. Could you just come forward, any of two of you, three of you, 10 of you, 100 of you, I don't care. Just come, thank you.

Gonna come back home today. Come back home to the way you started with Jesus. Not church, not Pastor Cimbala, not denominationalism, not Brooklyn tabernacle-ism.

Oh, they're such a waste of time, those things. But Jesus, Jesus. Don't let your pride hold you back.

If you're visiting today and you say, I can't walk up there, although I'm convicted, just say no to that pride. Say no, I'm gonna ask the Lord to help me. I'm waiting for you from the balcony.

Everybody pray with me. Lord, I thank you for the, I thank you for your word because it's for all of us today. First of all, thank you for the Jehoiadas, the priests, the wives who cared for us, watched over us, prayed for us when we didn't even know what prayer meant.

That's happened in a lot of our lives. People prayed when we were too little to know. But God, we don't wanna serve you just when those influences are alive.

We wanna serve you no matter what. We wanna be close to you, Jesus. Please, Jesus, draw my brothers and sisters here in the front close to you today.

Have them have a new beginning, a new start, Lord, with you today. Let them go back. We sometimes go ahead by going back, God.

Let us go ahead by going back today. Let us recover the years the locusts have eaten, the hidden treasures, God, that we haven't been appropriating like we should. So thank you for your word.

Thank you for my brothers and sisters here in the front. Now respond, God, to their reaching out to you. Let your face shine upon your people today and grant us your peace.

We love you and we praise you today. With all of our hearts, we say thank you, God. Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Can we all put our hands together and just one more time say thank you, God. Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Come on, thank you, God, for everything, every one, every blessing, every day. Those of you here in the front, look up at me.

You prayed with me? Okay, now we're gonna walk with God, amen? We're gonna walk with God. God's gonna show you what to do now to change any wrong course you've been on, right? Draw near to God. Join with me this Tuesday in the prayer meeting.

Come again Sunday. Get involved. Just don't wander.

Don't be drifting around, okay? Everybody stand. You're dismissed. Turn around and hug a bunch of people.

God bless you. Love you. Love you, thank you.

Nice to have you here.

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