

JEHOSHAPHAT

When Compromise Is a Dirty Word
II Chronicles 17-20

I. The Family Tree

A. The Three Chairs

Bruce Wilkinson helps us to better understand how our family heritage has a huge impact on our spiritual development. He describes the **generational slide** that typically happens in a family as the faith is transferred from one generation to the next. His focus is on three generations, which he calls the three chairs.¹

CHAIR ONE	CHAIR TWO	CHAIR THREE
Commitment (whole heart) Spiritual God first, self second Has a relationship with God Shaped by the Word Firsthand faith	Compromise (divided heart) Carnal Self first, God second Has a responsibility to God Shaped by other believers Secondhand faith	Conflict (hard heart) Natural (unbelieving) Self only Has a religion (?) Shaped by society No faith

In the Scriptures, the basic outline of this generational slide can be discerned in various places. For example:

Abraham → Isaac → Jacob
 Joshua → the elders → the children of the elders
 David → Solomon → Rehoboam

However, this progression is not inevitable. In his prevenient grace, God moves to ensure that every generation has the opportunity to respond to the call of God. Though the influence of our parents and grandparents is great, in God's eyes it is never determinative (Thank God!). Our lives are ultimately determined not by our past but by **our future**.

B. A Tree of Knowledge.

1. Jehoshaphat's family tree.

Jehoshaphat cannot be fully understood without looking at his family tree. His ancestry alone can neither **explain** nor **excuse** his behavior but it does help us to better understand why he was the way he was.

- 1st Generation. Great-great-great-grandfather David.
Whole-hearted devotion to God.
- 2nd Generation. Great-great-grandfather Solomon.
Partial devotion.

¹ Wilkinson, Bruce. *Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs: The Powerful Principle of the Three Chairs*. Multnomah Press. Sisters, Oregon. 1999.

- 3rd Generation. Great-grandfather Rehoboam.
*When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord... He did **evil**, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord. (II Chron. 12:1, 14)*
- 4th Generation. Grandfather Abijah (Abijam).
*He walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not **wholly true** to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father. (I Kings 15:3)*
- 5th Generation. Father Asa.
And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God... In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians. (II Chron. 14:1; 16:12)
- 6th Generation. Himself, Jehoshaphat.
*The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David... He walked in the way of **Asa his father** and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. The high places, however, were not taken away... (II Chron. 17:3; 20:32)*
- 7th Generation. His Son Jehoram.
*And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel... for the daughter of Ahab (Athaliah) was his wife. And he did what was **evil** in the sight of the Lord. (II Chron. 21:6)*
- 8th Generation. His Grandson Ahaziah.
*He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother (Athaliah) was his counselor in doing wickedly. He did what was **evil** in the sight of the Lord, as the house of Ahab had done. (II Chron. 22:3-4)*
- 9th Generation. His Great grandson Joash.
*And Joash did what was **right** in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. (II Chron. 24:2)*

2. Your family tree.

Take a moment and think through your own family tree. Include as many ancestors and descendants as you have knowledge of. Include your children/grandchildren only if they are "grown." Describe their spiritual condition in one or two short phrases (perhaps borrowing from the chart of the three chairs on page 1).

Family Member	Spiritual Condition
Great-Grandparents	
Grandparents	
Parents	
You	
Your children	
Your grandchildren	

TABLE TALK

1. Look again at Wilkinson's chart of the three chairs (p. 1). Then look at the chart of your own family tree (p. 2). Discuss how Wilkinson's chart relates to your own family situation. Which chair are you sitting in?
2. Look again at the family tree of Jehoshaphat (pp. 1-2). Even before we open the Bible to look at the chapters that describe his reign, what could we guess might be some of the characteristics of his life? How could God's grace make the outcome different?
3. In Psalm 71:18, David says: *So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.* Discuss what it might mean if you were to truly begin to make this prayer your own.

II. Good King Jehoshaphat.

Like Solomon and Asa, Jehoshaphat had many godly qualities that characterized his life at the beginning of his reign. We will summarize these qualities under two headings:

A. He had a heart for God.

The best way to truly understand a life is to examine a man's heart. What makes him tick? What ignites his passions? What motivates his decisions? For Jehoshaphat, the answer is easy to discern: he sought God. Perhaps as a young man, he had heard what the prophet Azariah had said to his father Asa:

"Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. (II Chron. 15:1-2)

See how often the Scriptures describe Jehoshaphat as a man who "sought" the Lord.

- *The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments... (II Chron. 17:3-4)*
- *Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" He answered him, "I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war." And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word of the LORD." (II Chron. 18:3-4)*
- *But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God." (II Chron. 19:2-3)*

- *Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to **seek** the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to **seek** help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. (II Chron. 20:2-4)*
- *O God... we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our **eyes** are on you. (II Chron. 20:12)*

Long after Jehoshaphat had died, his wicked grandson King Ahaziah was assassinated by Jehu as he brought God's judgment on both Israel and Judah for their sins. But rather than leaving Ahaziah's body exposed, *they buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who **sought** the Lord with all his heart."* (II Chron. 22:9)

Jehoshaphat is a wonderful illustration of the blessings that come to those who seek the Lord with all their hearts:

- *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and **seek my face** and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (II Chron. 7:14)*
- *The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10)*
- *You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13)*
- *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)*

B. He had a **heart for people**.

As king, it would have been easy for Jehoshaphat to begin to think that his people existed to serve him. But no, he loved his people and looked for ways to serve them. We see two primary ways in which Jehoshaphat served his people.

1) Educational reform.

⁷In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; ⁸and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people. (II Chron. 17:7-9)

Rather than waiting for people to come to the Temple to be taught God's Word, Jehoshaphat helped to organize a mobile Bible school, a traveling seminary that fanned out over the land. He knew that any reforms he might bring about through government would not last long without a **biblically informed citizenship**.

2) Judicial reform.

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. ⁵ He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶ and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. ⁷ Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes." (II Chron. 19:4-7)

Jehoshaphat knew that few things are more discouraging and demoralizing to a people than **injustice** in the land (favoritism, bribes, corruption). He used his influence as king to insure that the judicial system was sound and working to uphold justice.

III. Moral Compromise.

However, Jehoshaphat had one major character flaw. This proved to be his undoing. On three occasions this good man made a **moral compromise** with evil. Rather than hiding this tragic fact, however, the Bible seems to **highlight** the problem so that readers will be sure to understand what brought about his downfall and learn the lesson he never did.

A. Marriage alliance with Israel.

Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. (II Chron. 18:1)

What appeared on the surface to be a very astute political move, turned out to be a decision for which Jehoshaphat and Judah would pay dearly. The marriage alliance involved the son of Jehoshaphat (Jehoram) and the daughter of the King and Queen of Israel (**Ahab** and **Jezebel**), named Athaliah.

- *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. ³¹ And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.... Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (I Kings 16:30-33)*
- *There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. (I Kings 21:25)*

Why would good king Jehoshaphat marry off his son to Athaliah, the daughter of one of the most wicked couples in history? We can suggest various answers to this question:

- **Politically** it was a wise move. Such a union may serve to re-unite the divided kingdom.
- **Militarily** the alliance was brilliant. No longer would the Northern Kingdom be perceived as an enemy.

- **Economically** it was a stroke of genius. The alliance would open new markets and increase trade leading to further prosperity.

Spiritually, however, the alliance was a disaster. Bringing Athaliah into the royal family of Judah was the moral equivalent of swallowing poison. Years later, when Athaliah's son, wicked King Ahaziah, was assassinated, she seized power herself.

Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah. ¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath... hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. ¹² And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land. (II Chron. 22:10-12)

Jehoshaphat's moral compromise almost resulted in the **Messianic line** being snuffed completely out.

B. Military alliance with Israel.

After some years (Jehoshaphat) went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. ³ Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" He answered him, "I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war." (II Chron. 18:2-3)

One compromise leads to another! Now that Jehoshaphat had formed a marriage alliance with wicked King Ahab of Israel, he had no reason not to form a military alliance as well when Ahab asks for help against his enemy, the Syrians. However, seeking perhaps to mitigate his dance with the devil, Jehoshaphat asks a question.

*⁴ And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the **word of the LORD**." ⁵ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for God will give it into the hand of the king." ⁶ But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?" ⁷ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." ⁸ Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah the son of Imlah." (II Chron. 18:4-8)*

As the two kings sat on their thrones in their regal splendor, all 400 prophets were preaching the same sermon! *"Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph. The LORD will give it into the hand of the king." (II Chron. 18:11)* The chief prophet, Zedekiah, dramatized the sermon in an unforgettable manner. He *made for himself horns of iron and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall push (gore) the Syrians until they are destroyed.'" (II Chron. 18:10)*

Finally, the prophet Micaiah arrived and gave his message. He stood alone against the 400 state prophets. He alone spoke the truth.

¹⁶ And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd...." ¹⁷ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" ¹⁸ And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD...behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets. The LORD has declared disaster concerning you." (II Chron. 18:16-22)

In blatant disregard of the prophet's warning, Ahab and Jehoshaphat went forward with their battle plans. Ahab was killed in the battle when a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. (II Chron. 18:33) By God's grace Jehoshaphat survived but he received a stern rebuke upon returning to Jerusalem.

*Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. ² But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the **wicked** and love those who **hate the LORD**? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. ³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."* (II Chron. 19:1-3)

C. Economic trade alliance with Israel.

³⁵ After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel (son of Ahab), who acted wickedly. ³⁶ He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷ Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish. (II Chron. 20:35-37)

A final scene from Jehoshaphat's life is tacked on, almost as a post-script. What may have made economic sense was again another example of Jehoshaphat's propensity for **moral compromise**.

IV. When Compromise Is a Dirty Word.

A. Jehoshaphat's fatal flaw.

Look again at the three occasions when we see good King Jehoshaphat compromising his principles by entangling himself in sinful alliances:

- 1) Marriage – He gives his blessing to the marriage of his son with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.
- 2) Military – He goes into battle (in spite of divine warnings!) to preserve his relationship with an evil king and enhance his own political ambitions.
- 3) Economics – He seeks financial prosperity for himself and others by allying himself with wicked men.

What common thread runs through each of these situations? What words best describe Jehoshaphat's behaviors?

- **Moral compromise.**
- **Unequally yoked.**

- Alliances with evil.
- Helping the wicked.
- Loving those who hate the Lord.
- Befriending God's enemies.

B. Choices have consequences.

If asked to make a list of what we consider to be the "greatest sins" few of us would include "compromise". Indeed, in some contexts, compromise is seen as a virtue, not as a vice! (Henry Clay was affectionately known as "The Great Compromiser.") But whenever compromise becomes a moral posture that lowers (changes!) God's standards or mixes truth and error, good and bad in a way that moral distinctions become no longer possible, then we are dealing with a very serious moral condition. Indeed, the consequences of moral compromise may sometimes be **worse** than the consequences of blatant immoral behavior! Look at some of the horrific consequences that were the result of good King Jehoshaphat's moral concessions:

- His children turned out badly.
- The Davidic dynasty was almost destroyed.
- The nation fought a needless war.
- A fleet of ships was destroyed.
- His witness was compromised and his legacy tarnished.

C. Application: What about me?

Try to put yourself in the shoes (sandals) of Jehoshaphat. How do you think *you* would have responded to these situations? More specifically, imagine what may have been some of the motivations that caused him to compromise his standards and make alliances with evil.

- Love. Desire to help others, to serve.
- Desire to be tolerant.
- Evangelistic opportunity.
- Desire to preserve a relationship.
- Optimistic outlook. Believe the best. See the silver lining.
- Naïvte. Gullibility.

Think about some areas in your life where you are in danger of moral compromise. The following list is meant only to be suggestive of those areas where all of us struggle to maintain God's standards in an immoral world.

- Sins I condone in which my children are involved.
- Entertainment, hobbies, sports, games, internet activity, etc. in which moral standards are compromised.
- Things I laugh at.
- Things that occur around me (bad language, dirty jokes, racist remarks, etc.) and I remain silent.
- Questionable financial involvements.
- Unhealthy relationships.
- Unequally yoked... business partnerships with unbelievers.

Areas where I am in danger of moral compromise:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

D. What can be done to prevent moral compromise?

1) Train your **powers of discernment**.

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Name some things one can do to train their powers of discernment:

- **Read and study the Word.**
- **Have a pure heart.**
- **Love not the world or the things in the world.**
- **Test everything.**
- **Seek godly counsel.**
- **Be smart as a snake and innocent as a dove. (Matt. 10:16)**
- **Have godly friends and counselors.**

2) Be **bold and courageous**.

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. (1 Cor. 16:13. NIV)

It takes great moral courage to maintain God's standards in a world where they are openly mocked and disregarded. It takes the infilling of the Spirit of God to make us able to withstand the pressure to conform to this evil world.

3) Be **holy!** (= be different).

- *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy** nation, a people for his own possession (a **peculiar** people. KJV)...(1 Peter 2:9)*
- *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,*

*I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
Therefore go out from their midst,
and **be separate** from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then
I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”*

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every
defilement of body and spirit, bringing **holiness** to completion in the fear of God.
(1 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1)*

Table Talk

1. Scripture indicates that Jehoshaphat was a “good” king and yet does nothing to hide his disastrous tendency to moral compromise. What conclusion should we draw from this?
2. On a personal level, what have you learned about yourself from this lesson?
3. What do you believe is the greatest reason for moral compromise in Christians today?
4. Look again at the list of things you made where you are tempted with moral compromise (p. 9). Discuss what steps you intend on taking so that your legacy is not like that of Jehoshaphat.