

Building A Culture of Life
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2 Kings 22:11-13; 23:1-3, 10, 24-25

What if the leaders of our country looked at God's Word as a BLUEPRINT for governing instead of as a "quaint" book of nice sayings and historical stories?

It would impact PUBLIC POLICY on many issues...especially THE SANCTITY OF LIFE. That's what happened with King Josiah in today's scripture lesson.

- How many have seen some of the recent 4D ULTRASOUND pictures from someone who is expecting a baby? Isn't the technology FASCINATING?
- The other night...daughter of some friends posted the baby's picture on Facebook.
- Annie's comment: "It looks just like her!"
- I believe one of the strongest tools we have to make the case for LIFE FOR THE UNBORN are those 4D ultrasound pictures.
- How can you look at those little faces...fingers...and toes...and NOT see that UNBORN CHILD as anything LESS than a PERSON.
- Several years ago when he was our Senator in Georgia Zell Miller was impacted in this way and it changed his position on ABORTION.

Miller writes in his book, "A National Party No More," that he began to change his mind on abortion with the birth of his great grandchildren.

The Georgia lawmakers says he remembers his twenty-year old grandson carrying a sonogram of his "yet unborn, but so alive daughter."

"It gave new meaning to the old Roberta Flack song 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face,'" Miller explains.

"I began to seriously wrestle with where I was on the real question," he writes. "I began to pray earnestly for God's guidance."

"I watched the demonstrators as they came to Washington, and the advocates for life, and the number of 42 million human beings having been killed because of Roe vs. Wade," Miller explained, "and it just grabbed ahold of me very strongly that what if one of my four great-grandchildren or four grandchildren had been one of those that never did get to enjoy the life that they have now."

"The most poignant sight for me at this year's annual pro-life march and demonstration in Washington, D.C.," wrote Miller, "was the large number of women holding signs saying they regretted their abortions."

"I know it is wrong to take these lives. For me it is no longer a political issue but a moral one, as it should have been from the beginning. I hope someday Roe v. Wade will be reversed,"

<http://www.lifenews.com/2004/09/01/nat-779/>

- What would happen if national leaders saw God's Word as a BLUEPRINT for governing and living?
- What can Christians like YOU and ME do to WORK TO BUILD A CULTURE OF LIFE? How have some Christians in our own class done that?
- First some background on our scripture lesson from 2 Kings chapters 21, 22, and 23.
- Out of 20 RULERS OF JUDAH recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles...ONLY EIGHT could be called GOOD.
- One of them was HEZEKIAH – 2 Kings 18:3: “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.”
- HEZEKIAH was GOOD. But then HEZEKIAH DIED...and his son MANASSEH became KING OF JUDAH. NOT SO GOOD!
- 2 Kings 21:2 – “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.” (V.6): “He sacrificed HIS OWN SON in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists.” (Emphasis mine.)
- God had made a covenant with David and Solomon: 2 Kings 21:8
- But Manasseh LES THEM ASTRAY 21:9
- And the LORD was angered 21:12-13
- How did MANASSEH feel about LIFE? 21:16
- What isn't written in 2 Kings for some reason is the fact that MANASSEH began to REPENT at the end of his life. 2 Chron. 33:10-13.
- But then MANASSEH died.
- His son AMON became King of Judah. AMON was even WORSE.
- And his officials CONSPIRED and ASSASSINATED HIM.
- But the people ROSE UP.
- And made his son JOSIAH king. At AGE 8.
- JOSIAH was a GOOD KING. 22:2
- Chapter 22...Josiah begins to turn to God. Rebuilds the temple.
- The book of the law was found. THEY HAD LOST IT! His Secretary SHAPHAN brought it to him. 22:10.
- He TORE HIS ROBES! 22:11

Pause for a quote: Warren Wiersbe writes:

“How people respond to God's Word is a good indication of their spiritual appetite and the strength of their desire to please the lord.”

- JOSIAH took what he read in scripture SERIOUSLY and as we'll see he TOOK ACTION.
- Key point: We as Christians are to TURN TO SCRIPTURES as the RIGHT BLUEPRINT for making a godly difference in our wayward culture!
- What did JOSIAH do next?

2 Kings 23:1-3

Josiah Renews the Covenant

1 Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 2 He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. 3 The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

- Key point: JOSIAH didn't just read some scripture and send everyone home. He LED the people in renewing their commitment to the Lord.
- He began with a PERSONAL COMMITMENT as king to follow the Lord with "all his mind and with all his heart."
- And the people RESPONDED: "Then all the people pledge themselves to the covenant."
- Josiah ordered the demolition of the PAGAN ALTARS and PRACTICES (23:4-23).
- When we talk about SANCTITY OF LIFE we see that JUDAH had a problem here too.

2 Kings 23:10 ¹⁰ He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek.

Jeremiah 32:35 (New International Version, ©2010)

(The Lord said to Jeremiah...)

35 They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molek, though I never commanded—nor did it enter my mind—that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

- Key point: Christians cannot ignore the fact that our culture has its own "altar of Topheth." "The practice of abortion is the taking of innocent, defenseless human lives."

- But the sanctity of life isn't just about protecting the unborn. It's also about the homeless, the abused, the neglected.

Our BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE (Article XV) says...

"We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death."

Question: How can we take JOSIAH's example to heart in helping to build a godly society? What are some ways WE can help to promote the SANCTITY OF LIFE in our community?

- Use our SPHERES OF INFLUENCE
- Get involved in ELECTING LEADERS who KNOW THE LORD and SEEK TO LIVE BY HIS WORD.
- Get involved in our churches efforts in MINISTERING TO UNWED MOTHERS, THE HOMELESS, THE ABUSED, THE NEGLECTED.
- Teach the SANCTITY OF LIFE to our children.

Some Christians have chosen to further the SANCTITY OF LIFE through ADOPTION. Many stories...(Holders testimony)

(Possible story re sanctity of life in the elderly...if time)

2 Kings 23:24-25

24 ... This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD. 25 Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

What's The Takeaway?

- What could be accomplished if the leaders of our country treated the Bible as the RIGHT BLUEPRINT for governing our nation.
- What could be accomplished by YOU and ME if WE got serious about following God's Word and loving Him with all our HEARTS and MINDS?
- Every Christian can play a part in building a CULTURE OF LIFE in our own SPHERE OF INFLUENCE!