

## Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead

God wants to say something this morning that will really make a difference in my life – and in your life. That is always what God wants to do when He speaks to us.

Whether it's through whatever words the Holy Spirit may have given me as I speak to you this morning, or whether it's in the much more important discussions that go on at the tables after the speaker has finished, God wants to make a difference this morning.

My prayer this morning is that every one of us would be open to hearing something meaningful from God.

Our Elisha text this morning is in 2 Kings 3, starting in verse 1.

### 2 Kings 3:1-10

3:1 Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years. 2 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father and mother had done. He got rid of the sacred stone of Baal that his father had made. 3 Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them.

4 Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to supply the king of Israel with a hundred thousand lambs and with the wool of a hundred thousand rams. 5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. 6 So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. 7 He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah:

"The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?"

"I will go with you," he replied. "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

8 "By what route shall we attack?" he asked.

"Through the Desert of Edom," he answered.

9 So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them.

10 "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the Lord called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?"

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

The text says that Joram did "evil in the eyes of the Lord." And although it does mention one good thing Joram did - getting rid of the stone of Baal - it points out that he "clung to the sins of Jeroboam."

Jeroboam is noted for instituting idol worship, and so Joram was an idol worshiper, and a king who not only ignored God and did nothing to get rid of the practice of idol worship in Israel, but the text actually says he "caused Israel" to practice idol worship.

Now, the last verse I read has Joram questioning why God would have called the three kings to form this alliance and march on Moab if God were going to allow them to run out of water, and become so weak and lose so many of their men and animals that they would be

wiped out by the forces of Moab.

Basically, Joram is saying, “God, did you bring me this far just to let me die?”

At this point, here’s what David Roper, the author of our book, says:

“It was the kings’ business from beginning to end, which manifests the extent to which we, like these men, in our own foolishness, leave God out of our decisions, dig ourselves into deep holes, and in our despair or stubborn defiance, keep on digging.”

[David Roper, p. 38 bot]

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

It seems to be what many of us men do: we plow ahead with our own plans, disregarding any advice we may have received to the contrary.

Often, we don’t even seek advice – from God or from anyone.

And we love to point out when other men do this – plow ahead without seeking wisdom from God – when we’ve done the same things so many times in our own lives it would be impossible to count them.

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

### **What does it mean to Forget God?**

When we take a look at this topic of Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead, I think maybe we get off track right off the bat.

You’re making plans to go golfing in the afternoon with some buddies, and your wife says, “Don’t forget to check the weather forecast before you leave. Remember how soaked you got the last time

you played golf and forgot to check.”

You’re going to take a driving vacation, and about a week before the vacation your wife says, “Don’t forget to check with the mechanic to see if we should have the timing belt changed before we go. I don’t want to spend three days in a dumpy motel like we did on last year’s vacation waiting for those replacement shocks to arrive at that gas station where the car broke down.”

You’re about to leave home for an elder meeting at church, and as you’re walking out the door, your wife yells, “Don’t forget to check with God to see if you should really fire the pastor.”

You’re about to meet with your investment advisor about investing half of your life savings in a Louisiana strip mall tax shelter. Your wife says, “Honey, don’t forget to check in with God and make

sure that the time is right for doing this investment now before you give our investment advisor the money.”

Is this really what we’re talking about: **CHECKING IN** with God for some specific advice so we don’t make the wrong decision? Is that what God wants, to be a consultant that we call on when **WE** think we need to, to either give us a red light or a green light on our plans for . . . **OUR** life?

Is that the sense in which Joram **FORGOT GOD**? – He forgot to ask God whether it was okay to declare war on Moab for trying to screw him out of a couple hundred thousand sheep?

Actually, think about it. Joram was the son of Ahab, and a man the bible says did “evil in the eyes of the Lord” and “clung to the sins of Jeroboam” (meaning he encouraged idol worship).

This guy was not a follower of God, was not at all interested in God. Later in the story we see it was actually Jehoshaphat, not Joram, who suggested they inquire of prophet. And when all the three kings came to Elisha, Elisha said if it were not for the fact that Jehoshaphat was there, he wouldn't have even talked to the kings.

Why should it surprise us one bit if Joram FORGOT GOD. I wouldn't expect him to "remember" God – either as someone to be consulted about decisions, or in a deeper, more meaningful way.

As Christians, I think we FORGET God in a much more serious way than by forgetting to ask him for advice. God wants to do so much more for us, and through us, than just to give us advice.

We forget to surrender our lives to him. God wants us to

surrender our lives to Him – every moment of every day, every single aspect of our lives – so that He can live His life through us.

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

There's a difference between asking God for advice, and surrendering control of your life to Him. Do you see the difference?

It's not even that surrender is a greater degree of asking for advice. They're just two completely different things.

When you ask for advice, you are seeking another point of view that you may or may not consider as you make your decision. But it's you making the decision, and the advice might come from several sources, God being only one of them. And the advice you get is just one factor among many you consider as you make your

decision. Other factors you consider would be your prior experience in similar situations, the experience of others in similar situations, research you've done about the science or psychology of the situation, your tolerance for risk, alternative courses of action you've read about, and on and on.

And there's a difference between giving over control of your life to the Lord for a short period in your life and giving Him control for good, resolving that you will never try to take it back.

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

**We can deceive ourselves, with a huge amount of help from Satan**

It's not really that we're forgetting God entirely. We know he exists. We've probably at some earlier point

in our lives "Prayed the Prayer" and said that we were turning from all our sinful ways and making Jesus the Lord of our lives.

No, we haven't forgotten God entirely. We've just forgotten, or never learned, and have no practice or experience of what it means to allow the Lord to be in control of our lives moment by moment; to give up our worldly life, and let Christ live His life through us.

I think many of us believe that if we read the bible some, or even daily; if we pray some, or even several times every day; if we go to church most Sundays, maybe even every Sunday, and put a check for some "meaningful amount" in the offering plate, maybe its even the full 10% tithe, or an offering beyond that; if we volunteer our time at our church or some Christian-

based nonprofit organization,  
or at Faithwalkers;  
if we're a member of a bible  
study or a small group, or  
maybe are even the leader or  
co-leader of the group;  
if we try to be a good husband,  
father, grandfather, son, friend,  
or employee;  
if we happen to speak to a  
neighbor or co-worker once in  
awhile about our faith;  
if we listen to the local  
Christian radio station, or  
sermon podcasts or TV  
broadcasts of nationally-known  
preachers;

**THAT SOMEHOW** these  
actions show that we have  
turned over complete control  
of our lives to Christ, and we  
become complacent and stop  
asking ourselves the question:  
“Am I completely surrendered  
to Christ?”

But these “things” do not show  
that we've surrendered our  
lives. I've been there and done  
all these “things,” and by

themselves, meaning those  
“things” were the extent of my  
focus, they were completely  
unsatisfying – both for me and  
for God. Unfortunately, it took  
me many years to realize that.

Combined with a reckless  
abandonment of our lives to  
Christ, however, those “things”  
can be an important part of the  
life God wants us to be living.

By the way, I'm not there yet.  
I've got a long way to go to get  
to reckless abandonment, but  
at least I know that's where  
God wants me headed.

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

### **Why do we plow ahead?**

This is the same question as:

### **Why are we afraid to surrender control of our lives to the Lord?**

My mother used to tell me that I started wanting to make my own decisions when I was about 2 years old. And she said it got worse every year. It's hard for me to imagine, but I think I may have been difficult to discipline.

My wife and I never had any children, so I don't have any first-hand experience at seeing how early a child begins to assert its independence. I'm sure many of you could tell me some interesting stories about your children and grandchildren.

We think we know what's best for us. In fact, we KNOW we know what's best for us. We know our own tolerance for pain or discomfort, and we're pretty sure we're not going to push ourselves out of that comfort zone. And I think that many of us are pretty sure that God IS going to push us out of that comfort zone. And if you're not sure whether God

wants to push you outside of your comfort zone, you should READ THE BIBLE. It's what God does. He pushes us outside of our comfort zone. And so we Plow Ahead.

## **Forgetting God and Plowing Ahead**

God does not want us to merely consult with Him! He wants us to give ourselves UP to Him.

Jesus didn't just consult with the Father – He gave himself up to the Father. He surrendered completely to the Father's Will. This is what caused the Father to say: "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased." The complete surrender of Jesus was all that the Father needed to accomplish his plan for the salvation of the world. Your complete surrender is all the Lord needs from you to accomplish His plan for your life.