

## Small Group Guide: Relationships and God's Presence

Based on 2 Kings 3



### Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to help you examine your relationships and recognize how He works through the people in your lives.

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### Ice Breaker

Share about a person who "dragged you into God's presence" when you weren't seeking it yourself, or a time when you brought someone else closer to God through your influence.

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### Sermon Summary

This passage shows Elisha's first major prophetic act for the kingdom of Israel. King Jehoram (wicked northern king) manipulates King Jehoshaphat (godly southern king) into a military alliance against Moab. When they seek God's guidance, Elisha refuses to help Jehoram but agrees because of Jehoshaphat's presence. God provides water and victory, demonstrating how godly people can bring others into God's presence—but also warning us about relationships that drag us down.

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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

1. **What was the difference between King Jehoram and King Jehoshaphat?** How did their approaches to seeking God differ?
2. **Why did Elisha refuse to help Jehoram initially?** What changed his mind?
3. **How did Jehoram try to manipulate both Jehoshaphat and Elisha?** What tactics did he use?

### Personal Reflection

4. **Have you ever been "dragged into God's presence" by someone else?** Share that story. How did it impact your faith journey?
5. **Have you ever been the person who brought someone else before God?** What was that experience like?
6. **The pastor mentioned that "sometimes it's okay to walk away" from manipulative relationships.** When is it appropriate to distance yourself from someone? How do we balance this with loving difficult people?

### Going Deeper

7. **Read Matthew 10:14 (shaking dust off feet).** How does this principle apply to modern relationships? When should we persist and when should we move on?
8. **The sermon suggested that the church acts as a "restrainer" in the world, similar to how Jehoshaphat's presence brought grace to Jehoram.** How does the presence of believers impact their communities, workplaces, and families?
9. **Jehoshaphat's desire for unity ultimately led to problems for his descendants.** How can we discern between healthy unity and compromising alliances? What are warning signs?

### Application

10. **Take a moment to mentally inventory your closest relationships.** Are they pulling you toward God or away from Him? What adjustments might you need to make?
11. **Who in your life might need you to be their "Jehoshaphat"—someone who brings them into God's presence?** What practical step can you take this week?

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## Key Takeaways

- ✓ **We are influenced by our relationships** - The people closest to us either draw us toward God or away from Him.
- ✓ **God honors the godly, even in mixed company** - Elisha helped because of Jehoshaphat's presence, showing how one faithful person can bring blessing to others.
- ✓ **It's okay to set boundaries** - Not every relationship is healthy. Sometimes separation protects our walk with God.
- ✓ **We can be bridge-builders** - Like Jehoshaphat brought others to the prophet, we can introduce people to God's presence.
- ✓ **Beware of manipulation** - People may use spiritual language or appeals to unity to manipulate us into compromising situations.

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## Practical Applications

**This Week's Challenge:** Choose one of the following:

1. **Relationship Audit:** List your five closest relationships. For each, honestly assess: Is this person drawing me closer to God or further away? Do I need to adjust any boundaries?
2. **Be a Bridge:** Identify one person in your life who is far from God. Pray for them daily and invite them to one spiritual activity this month (church, small group, Christian event, coffee to discuss faith).
3. **Gratitude Exercise:** Reach out to someone who brought you into God's presence when you weren't seeking it. Thank them specifically for their influence in your life.
4. **Boundary Setting:** If you identified a relationship that's pulling you away from God, take one concrete step to establish a healthier boundary (limit time together, change conversation patterns, seek accountability).

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## Scripture Memory

**2 Kings 3:14** - "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you."

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### **Prayer Prompts**

- Thank God for the people who have brought you into His presence
- Pray for wisdom to discern healthy vs. unhealthy relationships
- Ask God to use you as a bridge to bring others to Him
- Seek courage to set necessary boundaries
- Pray for those in your life who are far from God

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### **Leader Notes**

- Be sensitive that some group members may be in difficult relationship situations (family, marriage, work) where they can't simply "walk away"
- Emphasize that setting boundaries doesn't mean being unloving—sometimes it's the most loving thing
- If someone shares about a toxic relationship, avoid quick fixes; listen and pray
- The manipulation discussion may hit close to home for some—create a safe space for honesty

## 5-Day Devotional: Relationships, Influence, and God's Presence



### Day 1: The Power of Godly Influence

**Reading:** 2 Kings 3:1-14; Proverbs 13:20

#### **Devotional:**

Jehoshaphat's presence changed everything. Though Elisha had no regard for wicked King Jehoram, he ministered because of the godly king standing beside him. This reveals a profound truth: our presence matters. When we walk closely with God, we become conduits of His grace to others who might never seek Him on their own. Consider the relationships in your life—are you the Jehoshaphat, bringing others into God's presence? Or are you being pulled toward compromise? The people we surround ourselves with shape our spiritual trajectory. Today, thank God for those who brought you into His presence when you weren't seeking Him, and ask Him to make you that influence for someone else.

## **Day 2: Discerning Manipulation from Ministry**

**Reading:** 2 Kings 3:11-14; Matthew 7:15-20

### **Devotional:**

Jehoram attempted to manipulate Elisha by invoking God's name, claiming the Lord had brought them together. But Elisha saw through the deception. The world often uses God's language—love, unity, tolerance—while twisting Scripture's meaning to manipulate believers into compromising truth. Discernment is essential. Not every invitation that mentions God's name is from God. Not every call for unity honors Him. Like Elisha, we must learn to recognize when God's words are being weaponized against His purposes. Sometimes the most spiritual response is to "shake the dust off" and walk away. Ask God for wisdom to distinguish genuine faith from religious manipulation, and courage to stand firm when pressure comes to compromise.

## **Day 3: When It's Okay to Say No**

**Reading:** 2 Kings 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

### **Devotional:**

Jehoshaphat's desire for unity with the northern kingdom seemed noble, but it led to devastating consequences for future generations. His alliance eventually brought Ahab's descendant into his family line, nearly destroying the Messianic lineage. This teaches us that not all relationships should be pursued, even when they seem to promise reconciliation or peace. Some separations are necessary for spiritual survival. Saying no to certain relationships isn't unloving—it's protective. It guards our hearts, our families, and our faith. Evaluate your closest relationships honestly today. Are they drawing you closer to God or subtly pulling you away? Sometimes love means creating distance. Pray for wisdom to know when unity serves God's purposes and when boundaries honor Him more.

#### **Day 4: Carried by Another's Faith**

**Reading:** 2 Kings 3:15-20; Mark 2:1-5

#### **Devotional:**

The armies received water and victory not because of their own righteousness, but because of Jehoshaphat's presence. Similarly, in Mark 2, a paralyzed man was healed because of his friends' faith. This reveals God's beautiful design: sometimes we're carried into His presence by another's faith until our own develops. Before you knew Christ, someone's prayers, persistence, or invitation brought you before God. You were Jehoram in that moment—undeserving but blessed because of another's relationship with God. Now you have the privilege of being that person for someone else. Who in your life needs you to carry them into God's presence? Don't underestimate the power of your faithfulness to impact those around you who aren't yet seeking Him.

#### **Day 5: The Restrainer's Presence**

**Reading:** 2 Kings 3:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

#### **Devotional:**

Elisha's declaration—"Were it not for Jehoshaphat, I wouldn't even look at you"—echoes a profound theological truth: God's judgment is restrained because of His people's presence. The church serves as salt and light, preserving and illuminating a dark world. When believers engage culture with truth and grace, we restrain evil's full expression. This isn't about earning God's favor for others, but about representing His character in a fallen world. Your presence at work, in your neighborhood, in your family—it matters more than you realize. You may be the reason God's patience continues in that space. This should humble us and motivate us to faithful presence. Don't withdraw from the world; be the restraining, preserving influence God has called you to be until Christ returns.