

STORIES OF FAITH

Hezekiah

Emma West

PRAYER

Ask someone to open in prayer.

CONTEXT

After King David, false gods and idolatry were introduced into Israel which turned the people away from the very first commandment – that they should have no other God but the God of Israel (see Deuteronomy 5:6-7).

Hezekiah is one of only two kings (the other being Josiah who comes after him) that remains faithful to God and holds firm to the commandments God gave to Moses.

READ Read 2 Kings 18:1-8 out loud together.

Hezekiah's life highlights three characteristics present in every story of faith:

1. Trust
2. Reliance
3. Obedience

TRUST

Despite being the son of King Ahaz, who did evil in the eyes of the Lord and worshipped false gods and shut the doors of the temple, Hezekiah chose a different path. He 'trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel' (2 Kings 18:5)

Read this quote aloud by commentator Gina Hens-Piazza:

'When faith ignites, it's manifestation flies in the face of common sense. Indeed, Hezekiah's circumstance as well as his eventual decision to seek out and follow God's word was indefensible by human standards. It lacked political savvy; some might even charge that it lacked a level of public responsibility. This king decided to set his heart upon a God who cannot be seen or heard, rather than on a tyrant whose violence and vengeance has been made audible, visible, and palpable throughout the land.'

1. What do you find hard about trusting in an unseen God?
2. Can you think of any examples of where you have trusted God, or where you've been encouraged by other people's trust in God?
3. Where might God be inviting you to trust him right now?

RELIANCE

We're told that Hezekiah held fast to the Lord; he cried out to him in prayer on numerous occasions, and his prayers even led to God adding 15 years to his life after it was prophesied that he would die! (see 2 Kings 20:1-11)

As well as seeking God's wisdom, Isaiah also sought the wisdom of the prophet Isaiah (see 2 Kings 19)

1. If you were to take God out of your life, would you notice a difference? If so, how? What might this show you about where your strength lies and who or what you're relying on?
2. How do you feel about relying on others or involving them when you're in times of need? Share any examples you have of times you've relied on others and what happened as a result.
3. Where can you create more space in your life to rely less on yourself?

OBEDIENCE

Hezekiah 'kept the commandments the Lord had given Moses'. In the days before Jesus, God's blessing was dependent on his people following the laws. Following the laws and offering animal sacrifices to atone for sins was the only way that people could be made right with God and receive his blessing.

Jesus completely changed all this by coming to earth and fulfilling the law by dying on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for sin. Now, God's blessing is not dependent on our performance or ability, but on our willingness to believe in and accept Jesus and what he has done for us. As Ephesians 2:10 puts it, 'for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God'.

Where it once was about following rules, obedience now looks like following Jesus – 'the author and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12:2).

1. Are there any areas where you are scared to step out in faith? (e.g praying aloud, sharing your faith, inviting someone to Church, leading a small group discussion).
2. What's one small (or big) step could you take in the next week to 'feel the fear and do it anyway?' – Share in pairs and make a note to ask that person about it at your next small group

PRAYER

Which area of trust, reliance or obedience do you most struggle with?
Bring that area to God in prayer and ask him to increase your faith.

