

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Learning from Those Who Walked Before Us

The Influence of a Woman

1 Kings 17-21

INTRODUCTION: Welcome all. We are especially glad to have all of you ladies on this special day and your families who have come to honor you and the Lord.

The sermon has a special focus for the females in our congregation today, or those who are watching our live stream.

However, to set the stage for what the Bible has to say about your influence ladies, we need to look a little bit more at the life of Ahab, the wicked King of Israel, from whose life we have been gleaning valuable lessons for the last two weeks.

We have already observed from the Scripture

- **Ahab provoked the Lord to anger by worshipping Baal instead of YHWH.**
- **Ahab led many fellow citizens to worship Baal and Asherah by building temples and idols for worship.**

And now to that list we must sadly add

AHAB'S GREED AND COVETOUSNESS LED TO HIS OWN DESTRUCTION.

The facts laid out in 1 Kings 21 and following.

- While the capital of Israel was Samaria, wicked King Ahab had a vacation palace in the luscious valley of Jezreel.
- Next to this palace was a vineyard that was not part of the King's estate, but was owned by a man named Naboth, his wife, and two little sons.
- Ahab owned land all over Israel, and anything produced on any of Israel's land was his for the asking.
- But Ahab decided he wanted the vineyard next to his vacation palace so he could have it transformed into an herb garden.
- He sent word to Naboth that he wanted the vineyard and would either give him a better piece of land in exchange or he would pay him whatever it was worth.

- Nothing wrong with what Ahab is offering at this point. His greed may be poking its head out of his kingly robes a bit, but the transaction offered seems fair enough.
- All things being equal, we would expect a loyal citizen like Naboth to honor his king and bless him in the sale or exchange of his land.
- But, Naboth was not only a follower of YHWH God, he was an obedient servant of the Almighty.
- And God had said,

Numbers 36:7 NKJV So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

- So Naboth said to his king, "I cannot! The Lord forbids me to sell or trade this land. It is part of the inheritance God gave to my tribe and my family in the days of Joshua. I cannot sell it, not even to you, o king."
- So Ahab did what many a godless politician or otherwise powerful men do when they are denied some trinket they desire, he went back to his palace and began to pout.
- His countenance fell, his mood became grouchy, and he went on a hunger strike like a sulking child who didn't get his way.
- Never mind that he already owned a thousand times the land that was called Naboth's vineyard, he wanted that land!
- Now the wicked king was not only trying to entice a God-fearing Israelite to disobey the command of his Lord, Ahab himself was defying God.
- God said, "You shall not covet."
 - To covet means to desire what God has entrusted to someone else.
 - God gave the inheritance of the Promised Land to each of the tribes and told the families who possessed it to keep it all of their days because it was a gift from the Lord.
 - Ahab and his family had their inherited land. But Ahab was not satisfied with what God had entrusted to him.
 - He coveted Naboth's vineyard. He coveted one little bit of land more.
- The pouting potentate went into his room and threw himself upon the bed and turned his face to the wall.

And that is where his wife Jezebel found him.

- Maybe she leaned over the bed and put a hand on his forehead to check him for a fever. Feeling nothing indicating physical illness, she said in our vernacular, “What’s the matter, big boy?”
- The king, like a bully who thinks he deserves everybody’s candy, complained to his wife, “I want Naboth’s vineyard to make a garden of herbs, but he will not sell it to me or trade it!”
- Her anger at the king being refused by the likes of a YHWH worshipper quickly engulfed her in rage, and in a harsh, deriding tone she said in essence, “You’re the king! You can take it!”
- Her fury did not ignite the wrath of her husband against Naboth, so she tried a different approach.
- She said softly, “I can get you the vineyard. Cheer up. Trust me. I’ll take care of it!”
- So Jezebel wrote some letters and signed Ahab’s name and used Ahab’s royal seal on them so they would carry the full weight of the office of the king.
- The letters were instructions from the king to the rulers of Jezreel.
 - They were to take Naboth into custody and find some scoundrels to testify that Naboth had blasphemed both God and the king, each one a capital offense.
 - The trial was held and the bribed witnesses told their story and Naboth was convicted.
 - He was immediately taken out and stoned to death.
- Word was quickly sent back to the queen that the deed was done.
- Jezebel went to Ahab and said, “Go take possession of the vineyard. Naboth is dead!”
- And so he did!

JEZEBEL’S GREAT INFLUENCE WAS THE FERTILIZER THAT CAUSED HER HUSBAND’S WICKEDNESS TO BLOOM.

My point here is not about the wickedness of Jezebel because I doubt any woman here is at all like Jezebel in her hatred of God and love for false gods and witchcraft. My

point here from the text is the very large influence women have in the lives of those around them.

- Wives with husbands
- Mothers with children
- Women at the workplace with those they supervise, those they work beside, and even those who supervise them, whether women or men.

Ladies, both young and seasoned,

- Understand that God created you with the power of great influence in the lives of men.
- I am not speaking only of your physical attractiveness, although that is a part of it.
- I am also talking about your emotional attractiveness, mental attractiveness, even spiritual attractiveness.
- You have qualities in an abundance that are sometimes sparse in those of us of the male gender.
- And we like it.
- And that gives you great influence over us to be used for good or for evil.

Jezebel used her womanly influence for evil and multiplied the evil of her husband's heart. The Scripture says this,

1 Kings 21:25 NKJV But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.

But ladies, you can and you do use your lives to influence people around you, especially people you love for good and for godliness.

- Your life Your example Your words Your tone of voice
- Your love Your affection Your manner

All of the things that make you the unique woman that you are, God has given you to fulfill His chief purpose in your life.

What is that purpose? The same that it is for men. Go, and make disciples.

But God has given you abilities and characteristics that give you a special influence with which you can either advance or hinder that purpose.

A woman's influence can be the fertilizer that causes goodness to bloom in the lives of her husband, children, grandchildren, and others.

Let me tell you about one lady in Louisiana that made this kind of difference that impacted the entire state and surrounding region.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary is called Angola. For many years it was known as the bloodiest prison in the United States. There were more murders and vicious assaults committed in that prison than in any other prison in the country.

The influence of a woman changed that.

In 1995, Burl Cain became the new warden of Angola. No warden before him lasted more than five years because the place was so violent and out of control.

After Mr. Cain was chosen for the job, his mother said to him, **“You know, Burl, God holds YOU accountable for the souls of the men in your prison.”**

Not long after he began the job, a prisoner who had been convicted of murdering his own mother-in-law was scheduled for execution.

It was the warden's duty to attend. Mr. Cain told my church in Slidell years later, “I could see how frightened the man was. When he was given the opportunity to say some final words, he just choked up.”

Four minutes after the lethal injection was given, the man was dead.

That night, Burl couldn't sleep. He said to himself, “You did not say one thing to that man about his soul. You forgot everything your mama told you. God is going to hold YOU accountable!”

Thereafter, he never forgot his mother's words.

In the executions that followed, Warden Cain read Scripture, prayed with the inmate, and if the inmate was willing, held his hand as he died.

Burl Cain realized pretty quickly that no positive change could be made in Angola without a change in the hearts of the inmates. The Warden was a Christian, so he knew who could make that change, but how is it possible in a state penitentiary?

Burl also knew that the beginning of the change needed would come from inmates being able to read the Word of God, but many of the inmates could not read. So Cain started looking for schools who would teach inmates to read and learn beyond just reading.

Public and private schools alike had no interest in opening a branch at the penitentiary. There was no profit in it. In the providence of God, one school said, “We will open a

branch campus at the penitentiary and furnish professors at no cost." The school was New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

They opened enrollment to the inmate population. In a few years, inmates were receiving diplomas. Men and women could enroll without having to pledge loyalty to any particular religion. But the seminary professors taught the Bible and other books about the Bible and about Christ.

At the first full-fledge graduation, 300 inmates graduated with bachelor's degrees. A number of them started churches within the prison. Then they started sending missionaries. Converted inmates who had graduated from seminary volunteered to be transferred two by two to other prisons where they could start churches on the inside.

Angola was changed. From the bloodiest prison in America to a place filled with church congregations operating inside the prison.

And it all began with a single sentence from a mother to her son.

A woman's influence can be the fertilizer that causes goodness to bloom in the lives of her husband, children, grandchildren, and others.

Ladies, you have no idea how much influence God Himself built into you. With Christ living in you, there is no limit to your potential for doing good and changing lives all around you.

The question to be answered is whether you will choose to use your influence to make disciples of the Lord Jesus or will you waste it on selfish enterprises like Jezebel did.

It is not too late to change. It is not too late to more purposefully use the influence the Lord has given you.

Will you decide to do that on this Mother's Day?