

## Protagonists Anonymous – Joash (and Jehoiada)

For every hero, there's almost always a hero maker.  
We see it again and again in the stories of most protagonists.

“**The Hero with a Thousand Faces**” & the hero's journey.  
For the thousands of heroes in film and literature, they share a common journey.

And it is early in the journey, step 4 of 12, where the hero meets their mentor.  
It's a stage for character development as confidence, advice, training and alike are passed on.

John Crosby - *“a mentor is a brain to pick, a shoulder to cry on, and a kick in the seat of the pants.”*

Harvard Business Review interviewed hundreds of successful CEO's to find the secret sauce to success and found only one common thread. It was the title of the article:  
“**Everyone Who Makes it Has a Mentor.**”

It's spelled out for us in the Bible. In the book of Proverbs alone:  
**Proverbs 15:22** - *Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail; take good counsel and watch them succeed.*

**Proverbs 11:14** - *Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances.*

**Proverbs 20:18** - *Form your purpose by asking for counsel, then carry it out using all the help you can get.*

And then look throughout the narrative portions of scripture...

Moses mentored Joshua.

Naomi mentored Ruth.

Elijah mentored Elisha.

Mordecai mentored Esther.

Jesus mentored his disciples.

The mentors in literature take different forms and classifications.

The guide – what Gandalf was to Frodo.

The trainer – what Mickey was to Rocky.

The father or mother figure – what Tony Stark was to Peter Parker

**The priest** – what we see in **2 Chronicles 24** as we turn to the text tonight,  
where we meet a courageous priest and an adolescent king. **Jehoiada and Joash.**

Our protagonist Joash is found in 2Kings 11-12 and 2Chronicles 22-24. He actually gets a decent amount of ink, despite the fact he's mostly forgotten.

Joash's father was **King Ahaziah**. His mother - Joash's grandmother - **Athaliah**, it says  
*“was Ahaziah's counselor in wickedness,”* or as another translation says she  
*“encouraged him in to act wickedly.”*

Chosen poorly, **your ‘mentor’ can be your menace.**

Your influences can be your undoing.

Athaliah isn't just the end of Ahaziah. It's the end of his children.

When Ahaziah was murdered due to his own wicked reign, Athaliah was so wicked she had all the descendants of her son, *her own grandchildren* – killed so that she would reign. Pure evil!

This is one of the most significant moments in the lineage of Jesus. Because it's almost completely wiped out, were it not for the forgotten heroics or a forgotten man, **Jehoiada**. He was the priest in the temple, and he took the youngest son of Ahaziah – a baby named Joash – and he hid him in the temple.

After seven years they execute a plan to proclaim his reign from the temple, and Athaliah freaks out, runs to the temple too late, and is killed.

So Joash officially becomes king at *seven years old*.

Jehoiada serves as his mentor – his advisor, influence, guide, and father figure.

Where his grandmother had influenced his father for evil,  
Joash was influenced by Jehoiada for good.

You will be influenced this week. You will influence others this week.

Who is telling you “follow me as I follow Christ?”

And who are you telling “follow me as I follow Christ?”

A lot of church folk spend way more time with cable news than with Jesus, and it shows.

We become influences of division instead of love.

A lot of folks spend more time with Facebook than Jesus and it shows.

We become influences of fear instead of hope.

What is influencing you? What is the loudest voice in your life?

But back to Joash – under the influence of Jehoiada they get off to a glorious start.

Jehoiada gets the nation together and makes a covenant between King Joash, his people and God.

And then we see Joash – this young man who spent the first seven years of his life confined to the Temple, order it restored and cleaned up.

He grew up in the temple, so his heart for it shouldn't surprise us!

*But the pivot point of the whole narrative?*

**2 Chronicles 24:2 - Joash did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest.**

Jehoiada wasn't around forever. He died at the ripe old age of 130 and was buried with the kings. This man was a living legend, he had preserved the line of David, and he was buried with them.

Joash was around 30 at the time of his mentor's death.

Joash found a new influence in the next verse. It says in the next verse:

*But after Jehoiada's death, the leaders of Judah came and bowed before King Joash and persuaded him to listen to their advice. They decided to abandon the Temple of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and they worshiped Asherah poles and idols instead! Because of this sin, divine anger fell on Judah and Jerusalem.*

This man Joash grew up in the temple. This man Joash ordered it's restoration.

And then at the counsel of people who bowed before him – he abandoned it.

How many people do you know that grew up in the church, had a passion for the church, DID so much for the church – only to abandoned it.

### **Fast starts don't guarantee happy endings.**

Look no further than **the parable of the four soils**. The seed shoots up immediately in both the shallow and the thorny soil! And yet in one case it was scorched, and the other it was choked out. In the case of the scorched seedling... it was due to its shallow roots.

Joash's faith was without root, it was shallow compliance and the path of least resistance.

His faith wasn't rooted into his character. It was rooted in compliance to the loudest influence.

And wait - it gets worse!

Jehoiada's son, Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied to the people, saying: *"This is what God says: Why do you disobey the Lord's commands and keep yourselves from prospering? You have abandoned the Lord, and now he has abandoned you!"*

Joash was so triggered by this simple reminder of God's law and God's covenant that he ordered his stoning and death.

Scripture says: *That was how King Joash repaid Jehoiada for his loyalty—by killing his son. Zechariah's last words as he died were, "May the Lord see what they are doing and avenge my death!"*

And unlike Jehoiada, when Joash eventually dies after a downward spiral, he isn't honored like Jehoiada after a long and courageous life, he goes out like his evil father and grandmother did... murdered. He was killed in bed by those avenging those he had murdered Zechariah before he even hit 50. And not only is he not buried with the kings, he isn't even listed in the genealogy of Jesus in the New Testament.

This is a mind blowing 180 in King Joash's life and reign.

And it all pivots in 2 Chronicles 24:2 – he did what was pleasing while his mentor was around.

In the Hero's Journey, meeting one's mentor is simply step four of twelve.

To get stuck there is to get stuck at an early stage of development, void of growth

In the Hero's Journey, "Meeting the Mentor" is supposed to be followed with "Crossing the threshold" ...this is ***the hero's initiation***.

And we witness 180s like Joash's because some folks are holding onto a faith that's propped on other people. They've never initiated it.

Meeting one's mentor is supposed to be a stage of crucial character development. When one is completely dependent it can cripple development.

We see this with our kids. At some point you have to let them spread their wings. So many of us want our kids to go out into the world and make *the right* decisions. But they'll never get there until we start letting them make *their own* decisions.

Yes our kids need safety and self esteem. But they also desperately need the identity and confidence that comes with making decisions and taking risks. We can fear the dangers of our kids exercising their independence to the point we risk making them dependent.

And they can end up like Joash, so dependent that they only know how to comply, not make decisions rooted in character. And when they move out and meet other influences, they keep on complying...

Proverbs 25:28 says that *"he who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls."*

Joash was equipped by Jehoiada to rule on his physical throne. But he was crippled by dependence and never learned to sit on his spiritual throne.

We may not have a crown like Joash, but we're called to rule our own spirit. We're called to sit on a throne as we rule over the impulses of our flesh.

How do we know we are walking in the path of Joash?

You may receive prayer and ask for prayer, but you hardly pray yourself.  
You may receive the Word and listen to clips, but you hardly read it yourself.  
You depend on people.  
But you hardly depend on God.

Joash didn't just need a personal relationship with **Jehoiada**.  
He needed a personal relationship with **Jehovah**.

You need more than a deep relationship with a mentor.  
You need a deeply personal relationship with Jesus.

This doesn't diminish the role of mentors and the family of faith and those relationships.  
But none of those relationships save us.  
Jesus saves us.

And oh sure we talk about our *"personal relationship with Jesus"* all the time in our day and age. But more and more *personal* is just another word for *"customizable."*

Jesus didn't come to indulge us. He came to transform us.  
This isn't just character development. This is character transformation.  
He makes us new creations.

That Jesus takes us as we are is infinitely Good News.  
I didn't have to clean my life up to come to Christ. Grace met me where I was.  
But if God left me where I was – the Good News would cease to be good news.

My mouth had to be transformed.  
My habits. My impulses. My character.  
It all had to be transformed.

Praise God for influences in my life in those early months and years.  
**Stuart Honenberger** who led the first small group I ever attended in the Sadler Center at W&M.  
**Nick Hokkanen** who some of you remember, who helped plant this church over a decade ago  
and became a Paul to my Timothy.

These were mentors that helped me discover my strengths, develop my character, determine my  
focus, and discern my blind spots. All that helped get me where I am today.

But here's the thing... those relationships aren't what they once were.  
I graduated W&M and moved away. Stu still lives up in Williamsburg.  
Nick moved and now lives in Georgia.

The crucial question:  
What happens to your faith when your Jehoiada leaves?  
Is your faith propped on a person, or connected to Christ?  
What would happen if City Life disappeared tomorrow?

Does your faith and character crumble because it was entirely dependent and never developed?  
We all need people in our lives who we can imitate as they imitate Christ.  
But at some point we have to graduate from an imitated faith to an initiated one.

Just because we've initiated our faith doesn't mean we've completed the journey. And none of  
this is meant to say that a genuine faith doesn't falter and fall flat on its face most days.

That's why we praise Jesus that he died for our failings.

**Jehoiada's** son's last words: *"May the Lord see what they are doing and avenge my death!"*  
But **Jehovah's** son's last words: *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

Thank God that when we fail we aren't met with vengeance, but forgiveness.  
Maybe you haven't gone full Joash, but you know you aren't where you once were...  
You know you aren't where you need to be... You've succumbed to the wrong influences...  
You've listened to the wrong voices.... **PRAY**

*“I’m doing well. I’m no Joash.”*

Well then: **WHO IS WAITING ON YOU?**

The standard of our culture is *“I’m not hurting anyone.”*

The standard of our call in Christ is much higher – *“Who am I helping?”*

**If your faith is so strong – share it.**

*“Well I’m not a pastor.”*

Neither was Stuart or Nick. But their faith was strong. And they shared it.

And I thank God they did.

Joash’s story doesn’t have a happy ending.

So let me end with this verse in **1 Corinthians 4:14-16**

*I’m not writing all this as a neighborhood scold just to make you feel rotten. I’m writing as a father to you, my children. I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled. There are a lot of people around who can’t wait to tell you what you’ve done wrong, but there aren’t many fathers willing to take the time and effort to help you grow up.*

We’ve got a lot of people who are good at calling things out.

What about calling things forth?

A truly initiated faith won’t focus inward.

May we have eyes to see and a heart to influence our world for Christ this week...