

## Manasseh

My name is Manasseh. I grew up in pampered privilege as a prince of Judah. I became king at age 12.

Think back on the 12 year-old yourself. What would you have done if you were king at that age? I had begun my adolescent rebellion and was fascinated with having power. Having started to feel resentful of my father's arbitrary rules, I realized that I didn't have to obey them anymore!

As a little child, I thought my father could do anything. And I heard impressive stories of how he defeated the Assyrians and how 185,000 soldiers were struck dead! That was a great story. I have to admit that my father explained that it was not him. He said that after he humbled himself and prayed, the power of the LORD did it all.

But as I got a little older, I heard other stories that weren't so flattering. Dad had shown all his wealth to a delegation from Babylon who came to congratulate him on being healed from a fatal illness. After he gave a complete tour of his wealth, he was told by the prophet that it would all be taken away by that very nation, which at the time he thought was distant and not a threat. He had not consulted the LORD about showing off. Also, he didn't seem particularly brave but constantly worried about his health.

When I was young, some of my friends were from families that worshipped other gods. They had heard their parents talk about how my dad was not fair. My friends said that their parents had no temples where they could worship. Well, I thought that was not right. Now I was king and I could fix that.

I could say the word and my officials would call the craftsmen and the temples would be built. I didn't know exactly what was different about them and when they asked to put altars in Solomon's Temple, I thought, "Why not?"

When I started to find out exactly what they did in those temples, to begin with I was repulsed. There were all sorts of activities having to do with sex. Eventually, as I got a little older, I started to become increasingly fascinated and when I actually went there to participate, well, how do you describe it? I wanted to keep coming back.

So that pattern got started early, and maybe you have noticed with yourself that things you start doing when you are a teenager are hard to stop as you get older. There was also sacrifice of infants. At first, I thought I could never do that but after seeing it happen a few times, it didn't bother me anymore. And there was power that came to those who made that kind of offering. I eventually sacrificed some of my own children. I found out my grandfather had done it, too.

But I had an experience that changed me. I was captured by the commander of the Assyrian army, shackled with a ring through my nose and carried off to Babylon. That was the place my father had been told of by the prophet: "The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

That got to me! I humbled myself and called out to the LORD. Nobody had really explained it like that before! I did try to undo what I had done to the Temple of the LORD. I removed the pagan altars and temples from the countryside. I rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem and stationed military companies in all the towns of Judah.

But I could not get all the people to change. It took captivity to change me and maybe that's what it would take for them.

I guess that's how I started to understand why the LORD allowed us to be defeated by our enemies. I reigned 55 years and by the end I was starting to come out of my adolescence.

What's your level of maturity?

2 Kings 21, 2 Chronicles 33

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