

## The “Go-To” Gal

2 Chronicles 34:1-32

### Slide 1

This week I want you to read through Esther to prepare for next week’s message. You’ll need to do this to get the full benefit of the message.

In order to understand the story of Huldah, we have to understand the story of Israel at this point in their history.

2 Chronicles 34 was written long after the “golden days” of King David and King Solomon’s reign.

The twelve tribes had been divided into two kingdoms; ten were joined into the Kingdom of Israel in the north, and the other two into the Kingdom of Judah in the south.

By this time, the Northern Kingdom, Israel, had been conquered by the Assyrians, while the Southern Kingdom had suffered under the poor leadership of King Manasseh and his son Amon.

Now, King Manasseh was the longest reigning of any king in Judah’s history. He ruled for 55 years. And the Bible tells us, *“he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.”*

Then his son, Amon, followed in his father’s footsteps. In fact, Amon was so evil that his servants assassinated him after only two years on the throne.

When he died, the immediate heir to the throne was an eight-year-old boy named Josiah.

Today, we would cringe at the thought of an eight-year-old ruling a kingdom, but in the ancient world of kings and queens, this sort of thing didn’t cause the havoc we’d expect.

Regardless that a king's power was absolute, most of the day-by-day administration was in the hands of a variety of royal servants, not the boy.

The real question wasn't his current age, but how would the king use his extensive power once he was old enough to figure out that he had it. The good news is that, in Josiah's case, it was a happy story.

*2 Chronicles 34:3, "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols."*

This verse tells us that, at 16 years of age, Josiah began to seek God, then four years later he began to set things straight through a series of vigorous reforms.

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During these reforms, Josiah cleared away many of the pagan altars and practices that had come to dominate Judah's worship.

And once he got that under control, six years later Josiah turned his attention to the temple.

*2 Chronicles 34:8, "In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the ruler of the city, with Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the LORD his God."*

If not maintained on a regular basis, buildings deteriorate. Paint begins peeling, walls crumble, the roofs need replacing, etc.

And since the Temple had been ignored during the reign of the previous two kings, it had fallen into disrepair, so Josiah decided a renovation was needed.

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Teams of workers were sent to evaluate the situation. After appraising the damage, they began to make the necessary repairs.

It was in the midst of this construction, when Hilkiah, the priest, sends word that he has found the book of the law given by Moses.

*2 Chronicles 34:14, "While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD that had been given through Moses."*

Most likely, this was what we know as the book of Deuteronomy. How they had managed to lose it is another question, but I think it goes to show the extreme waywardness in Judah at the time.

In any case, when the book was brought to King Josiah, he did what I believe any of us would have done with an ancient book found buried like a treasure beneath years of discarded goods; he read it.

*2 Chronicles 34:18, "When Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king."*

It wouldn't take a genius to understand that the Israelites had been living way off base. As soon as Shaphan finished reading the scroll, Josiah tore his clothes in distress.

2 Chronicles 34:19, *“When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes.”*

Josiah was serious about following God. And when he realized how far short he and his nation were from living according God’s will of God, he was terrified.

### **Slide 3**

Even though Josiah was trying to reform his kingdom and get his people back on track, he now realized a lot more was needed to be done.

But he wasn’t comfortable proceeding on his own. He knew he needed the advice of a spiritual “advisor.”

Josiah realized he needed a prophet’s advice. One who could explain the Word of God and tell him what could happen to his kingdom because of their waywardness.

Now, at this time in Judah’s history, there were two prophets working in the land. There may have been more, but the Bible tells us of two. One was a man named Jeremiah. The other, a woman named Huldah.

Josiah gives his servants instructions. 2 Chronicles 34:21a, *“Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found.”*

We aren’t told why, but Hilkiah and the royal officials went to the prophetess, Huldah.

Like Deborah, the Bible doesn’t tell us much about her except she was married to Shallum and lived in Jerusalem’s second district or New Quarter.

*2 Chronicles 34:22, "Hilkiah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter."*

This was clearly a critical point in Israel's history, and it's worth noting that, as the Kingdom of Judah was seeking a way forward in following God, they chose to go to one of God's prophets for advice.

#### **Slide 4**

I don't think I have to remind you that women weren't called upon to do much of anything in the ancient world. They birthed and raised the children, fetched the water, cooked the meals, and kept the house clean.

They weren't found in the royal court or teaching in the synagogues; that was a man's place.

The interesting fact here is that regardless that a male prophet, Jeremiah, was available, Josiah and his royal servants didn't choose to go to him. They chose to go to Huldah.

So, at this point in Judah's history, Huldah was the "go-to gal." That kind of thing only happens when you have a good reputation in your community.

In fact, we can conclude that Huldah had a great reputation in Jerusalem, both as a person and a prophet. The Bible doesn't explain how Huldah developed such a wonderful reputation, but we can speculate.

Because, as Christians, we need to have that same sort of reputation in our own communities. We're not bringing glory to God if we don't. So, what was it that made Huldah great?

Most obviously, she had a clear connection with God and people knew it.

We don't know how the people knew it; maybe it was because she had been warning them for years, or maybe it was something more subtle, like a certain glow in her appearance.

We don't know, but the people did. And if you have a strong connection with God, that can only mean that you're a faithful person.

Therefore, we can conclude, even as the people around her were following pagan ways and worshipping pagan gods, Huldah remained faithful to the one true God.

She wasn't swayed by popular practice, nor by any promptings or urgings from neighbors or friends; Huldah was trustworthy.

Kings and royal councils don't approach just anyone for advice. In fact, these days, you must go through an extensive background check and be granted special clearance just to meet some of our congressmen.

So, for the leaders of the kingdom of Judah to approach Huldah, and even further to seek her advice, they had to trust her.

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One more thing about Huldah, and it stems directly from her gender. Most of us are aware that women tend to be a little bit more compassionate than men.

It may be a mothering instinct, or it may be something else, but it's generally true. Think about a child that falls and skins his knee. The father says, "*Suck it up!*"

But the mother cradles the child in a hug, wipes the tears away, kisses the wound and covers it with a band-aid.

Josiah knew they had pulled the scab off a big wound, and it's entirely possible that he was feeling the need for a little compassion as they faced the pain that might result.

So, Huldah wasn't only faithful and trustworthy; she was compassionate. She was the prophet God's people needed at that time in their history, and they didn't hesitate to call upon her.

We Christians have reputations, too. And it's true that most of the time they aren't all that great. We're called judgmental and hypocritical. We're insensitive and not accepting of others or their opinions.

The direct result of such reputations is that we're not sought out when people are lost or in need. An indirect, and far worse, result of such a reputation is that people think poorly of God, too.

But people who're lost and broken need to know God above all else, don't they?

And Jesus has told us that the only way people are going to know God is through us, the people of Christ. We are Christ's body at work in the world.

That means we must be like Huldah. We may never have the President calling us for advice, but we have friends who need guidance don't we?

Perhaps they need someone trustworthy just to listen to them. Or maybe they need some compassion after a terrible sin.

We have to be those people; people with unquestionable character, people who're not swayed by the ways of the world but remain true to God in all things.

People who're faithful to God and aren't afraid to show it. People who're trustworthy to a fault, and people who show compassion to our neighbors above all else.

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

If we aren't the "go-to" people, then who is? If we don't share God with people, who will?

For the most part, the world has forgotten Huldah. But Huldah was as great as any apostle, prophet, or king because Huldah showed us God.

Let's be like Huldah. Let's live our lives so that others see God's life in us and seek God because of us.

That's the greatest work any disciple of Christ could ever do, and it's what we all should do!