The Good Book: Story #1

A Lost Book

2 Kings 22:1-23:3 and 2 Chronicles 34, 35

1. King Josiah became the ruler in Judah when he was only eight years old. Of course some older men helped him manage the kingdom until he grew up, but Josiah loved God and wanted to be a good king even when he was just a child. God knew that Josiah had a good heart, so the Lord helped him to rule wisely for thirty-one years. (Handout 1a)

When King Josiah was a very young man, he decided that it was important to clean up the temple of the Lord, the church everyone went to in Jerusalem. It had been a long time since anyone had repaired the temple, and it was getting pretty run down and shabby in spots. Wood had rotted, paint had peeled away, and things were not as clean as they should have been.

The temple had even been mistreated, for one bad king had set up altars for the idol of Baal (an evil made-up god) right in the courts of the Lord's house. But now, Josiah was trying to do right. He had given the command that God's house should be repaired and made ready for the proper kind of worship. (Handouts 1b and 1c)

2. Many skillful workmen were hired to help repair the temple. And the idol altars were torn out of the temple courts and carried outside the city, where they were burned with fire. While this work was going on, the high priest was setting things in order in the rooms of the temple. And there, hidden away beneath some other stuff, he found a strange book. (The books they had back then were written on parchment or paper and rolled up on sticks or rods. Show and demonstrate how a scroll works.) (Handout 1d)

3. This strange book turned out to be the same as one Moses had written before he died. It was called the Book of the Law because in it Moses had written the words of the law which God gave to the Israelites. (What was the law called? The Ten Commandments. The law and all the other things Moses had written became the first part of what today we call the Bible.) (Handout 1e)

Moses had commanded that the Book of the Law should be read in the hearing of all the people once every seven years. But now many years had passed by since the book had been read. And during those years the book had been entirely forgotten.

The high priest carefully removed the dust from this precious book and called for a servant of King Josiah. Shaphan, the servant, came quickly, and the high priest gave him the book. So, Shaphan carried the Book of the Law to the King.
4. King Josiah had never heard the words of God's law before this time. He asked his servant to read aloud from the book, and Shaphan read about God's promise to bless the people if they should serve him faithfully. Then he continued to read, and Josiah heard about God's promise to punish the people if they forgot him and turned to worshiping idols (like Baal). Josiah was alarmed. He knew the people had disobeyed God's law, and he feared the awful punishments which God had promised to send upon them. He tore his clothes and wept bitter tears because he was so sad. Then he sent servants to a woman named Huldah, who was a prophetess, to ask her about God's plan to punish the people for their great sins. (A prophet or prophetess is a person whom God gives messages to so that they can tell everyone what God wants people to know.) (Handout 1f)

Huldah told the servants that God was definitely going to send all the great punishments upon the people just as he had promised to do if they should forsake his law and worship idols. But because Josiah, the king, had humbled his heart and had wept tears of sorrow for their sins, Huldah said that God would not let the punishments come upon the land during his (King Josiah's) lifetime.

The King was happy about that, and Josiah did not forget about the words of God's law in the lost book. He wanted all his people to hear them, too. So he called for a great meeting in Jerusalem, and when the people came together he read to them out of the lost book. Then he promised God to keep the law and to serve God with all his heart. And all of the people promised to obey God's law, too.

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