



RENEW

One Generation Away | 8.9.26

Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00

How many of you remember January 28, 1986? Maybe a few of you. Yeah, it was the day the Challenger lifted off from Cape Canaveral in Florida. Seven astronauts were aboard, including a teacher who would be the first citizen, ordinary citizen, to teach a lesson from space. So they lifted off, and for 73 seconds, everything seemed to be going just according to plan. And then the unthinkable happened: the shuttle exploded. It broke apart, and all seven lives were lost. To the millions of people watching that morning, it seemed like the disaster was sudden. But actually, investigators later will reveal that what went wrong that morning didn't start that morning. What happened was that these rocket boosters, shuttle boosters, were held together by these massive rubber rings called the O-rings, and engineers had evidence that in the previous few takeoffs, that these O-rings were being damaged during liftoff. But they didn't feel like the risk was catastrophic, and so they said, "Well, it's risky, but the shuttle is taking off. The missions are being accomplished, and people are returning safely. So we'll just live with the danger. We'll live with the risk until that morning. It's what sociologists have come to term the normalization of deviance. The normalization of deviance. It's when something goes outside of its intended boundary, but there are no immediate consequences. So what we do is instead of correcting the problem, we change the definition of what is safe. So the danger didn't go away, but the concern did. And over time, because of a lack of immediate consequences, the abnormal becomes familiar, the familiar becomes tolerated, and the tolerated becomes normal. It's normalization of deviance. So it might sound something like, "Hey, I know what I'm doing isn't really honest at my work, but my boss doesn't know it yet. I know what I'm kind of keeping hidden in my marriage isn't appropriate, but my spouse hasn't found out. I know this anger thing that keeps rising up; it's not good for me or my family, but my kids are learning to tolerate it. There doesn't seem to be an immediate set of consequences. I know that I should get more involved in kingdom work in the local church, or my faith to be more alive. But life is busy, and things seem okay. And so the abnormal has become normalized. I think this is one of the meanings of complacency. Complacency is not this sudden decision to stop caring. Complacency sometimes is living with compromise for so long that we stop believing it will ever cost us anything. Living with consequences so long that we stop believing it will ever cost us anything, and sometimes complacency and compromise do not send the bills to our generation; they send the bill to the next generation. So last week we began this series called "One Generation Away, and we're talking about how it's just really just one generation away from either remembering or forgetting, from stewarding or squandering from revival or ruin, one generation away. Last week we looked at the story of Joshua and the 12 memorial stones and this invitation to remember what God had done. But today I want to build on that and say that remembrance is actually not the destination. Remembrance is the lead to renewal. So last week was the call to remember. Today is the call, the invitation to renewal. In just a few weeks, we will celebrate our 50th anniversary, and we will remember. We will celebrate what God has done. We will tell stories. We will honor people who are part of our history. We will give thanks to God for every evidence of His grace. But hear me: an anniversary is not merely a monument to the past. An anniversary is an altar of renewal for our future. It's an altar of renewal. We're not just standing on anniversary day and looking back and admiring what has happened, but rather we are

presenting ourselves anew for God to use us, for Jesus to continue His work in us and through us. Because friends, He isn't done. It's an altar of renewal for our future. There's one specific story I want to dive into about the call to renewal. It's what happened in the lifetime of Josiah. Josiah led perhaps one of the greatest seasons of reform and revival among God's people.

Libin Abraham 5:12

He removed idols and restored worship and repaired the temple, rediscovered the word of God. But before we can understand what Josiah renewed. We must understand what Josiah inherited. What Josiah inherited, and for us to understand what Josiah inherited, we've got to go back three generations to his great grandfather, whose name was Hezekiah. Josiah's great grandfather, Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a good and godly king for the most of the part. He was a good king. He sought the Lord in his day. He removed idols and he restored worship. He repaired the temple. He sought the Lord. There's one instance where the enemies of Israel come to destroy the people of God. Hezekiah goes directly into the temple, gives God their threats, and God supernaturally delivers the people of God. Over time, Hezekiah becomes deathly ill, so he gets a visit from the prophet Isaiah, who comes to Hezekiah in Second Kings chapter 20, verse one. And here's the not so great news Hezekiah receives. This is what the Lord says: Set your house in order, for you are about to die. You will not recover. Hope it's been a great morning. We hope you have a great rest of the week. Not the news you want to hear. Isaiah says, loosen up everything you need to get life insurance. Just set your house in order. Pass down your passwords to those who need to know, because you're going to die and you're not going to recover. So how did Hezekiah respond? Look at the next verse. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Please, Lord, remember how I have walked before you and faithfully and wholeheartedly and have done what pleases you, and Hezekiah wept bitterly. I mean, he was so heartbroken over this news about his fatality, his his impending death. He cried out to God, and you know what God did? God heard him before Isaiah leaves the property. God sends a word to Isaiah and says, "Tell Hezekiah, I've seen his tears, I've heard his prayer, and guess what? I'm going to heal him. But not only am I going to heal Hezekiah, I'm going to give him 15 extra years. It's amazing what a gift when you know exactly the number of years God has extended to your life: 15 years to love your family, 15 years to lead a nation, 15 years to invest in the next generation. It's nice when you have a target date to when the Lord's going to call you home. You can prepare, and God gave Hezekiah 15 years. Well, as he recovers from this illness, he gets a visit from messengers from Babylon, and they heard about how Hezekiah has been supernaturally cured, but they have come to woo him with gifts and letters from the kingdom. And Hezekiah gives in, and instead of giving God glory and praising the true God for His healing, you know what Hezekiah does? He shows them the greatness of His kingdom. He shows them everything in Judah, everything in Jerusalem. He showed them everything because He wanted to show off everything. And Second Chronicles says Hezekiah was filled with pride and boastfulness, he showed the Babylonians everything in the kingdom. God sees his pride, and God has a word for him. So, guess who's back? Who's back? The prophet Isaiah comes back, and Isaiah has this word from the Lord in Second Kings 20. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord. Look, the days are coming when everything in your palace and all that your predecessors have stored up until today will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. Some of your descendants who come from you, whom you father, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. It's another tragic news, Hezekiah. Here's essentially God is saying, "You wanted to show off everything. Well, everything you have is going to be taken from you, from the very Babylonians you showed it off to. Everything, your descendants will go into exile into Babylon, the people, even you, father, will be taken. What a devastating news! But notice Hezekiah's response. This is probably one of the most unsettling response in the Old Testament. Hezekiah replies, and here's what he says.

Libin Abraham 10:02

Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good. Wait, what? What you've spoken is good. Well, why? For he thought, why not? If there will be peace and security during my lifetime. Okay, my descendants, everything my predecessors have built, all of the kingdom's possession, our own people are going to be taken into exile. Even the people I father are going to be

taken into exile. Well, that's fine. It's good. Why? Because at least in my lifetime, there's going to be safety and security. What a horrible way to live and to respond to such a verdict. And isn't that what complacency does? Isn't that what delayed consequence sometimes can do? Delayed consequences can make room for complacency and compromise. Because as a guy is thinking, at least it's fine in my lifetime. I think about this and I'm thinking, man, when it came to your health, you wept bitterly. You were devastated, but when it came to what will happen one generation away, you just kicked the can down the road. At least that ain't going to impact me, so I'm fine. Sometimes complacency is being satisfied with personal peace while the next generation inherits spiritual ruin, as long as I have personal peace, I'm good. But what about the next generation? When I look at the climate, societally and spiritually, in our day in America, I do wonder what version of faith are we passing down to the next generation? What version of Christianity? What version of Christ are we embodying and living from? We don't want to be a people who are simply praying for God to bless us in our lifetime. No, no, we want to be a people who are contending for faith that is true and pure and faithful to the witness of Scripture, so the next generation sees and see a faith worth choosing. We can't choose their faith on their behalf, but we can embody a kind of living faith that is worth choosing. What will be the new norm a generation from now? May we never be a people who grow complacent because it's good enough for us in our lifetime. This is why biblical convictions and gospel-centered convictions have to be renewed in every generation. Because if not, what was convictions in one generation becomes assumptions in the next, and assumptions don't have to be personally embraced. So conviction becomes assumptions, and assumptions become preferences, and preferences become optional. So what one generation would give everything to protect simply becomes preferences or opinions that are optional, and therefore the call to renew our convictions. So Hezekiah says, "Elisa's song is as good in my lifetime. I'm good. What happened afterwards? Well, his son took the throne. Manasseh became the next king. Manasseh didn't just drift from God; he ran in the exact opposite direction of God, Manasseh would bring Baal for the people of God to worship. He would set up the Asher a pole. He was marked by witchcraft. He worshiped the stars, sought mediums. He even brought pagan worship into the temple of God. And at one point, he sacrifices his own son in the fire. That's how wicked things were, and it says about Manasseh's rule in Second Kings 21 that Manasseh caused them to stray, so that they did worse evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites. So all the nations got judged because of their evil. Manasseh took God's own people in a worse direction, because what one generation tolerated through complacency became compromised in the next generation. Now, to be fair, towards the end of Manassa's life, God disciplined him, and he humbled himself. He repented and returned to the Lord, which is amazing, but then his son takes over, Ammon. And when you look at Ammon's life, he sinned greatly against God, and it's apparent that his life reflected not his dad's repentance, but his dad's rebellion. And Ammon would. Such great evil in the eyes of God that two years after assuming the throne, he would be killed by his own servants, and this then led to a civil war, and other common people kill those who killed Ammon with violence and rebellion. Well, Ammon has a son named Josiah. Three generations from Hezekiah, Manasseh, Ammon. Now you get Josiah, and y'all know how old Josiah was when he assumed the throne. He was how old?

Libin Abraham 15:33

Eight years old. Eight years old. My middle son Liam, he's seven, and I'm just thinking about what kind of a king he could be in one year. Not a great one, I don't think, unless it's Pokemon Kingdom because that's all he's into. But Josiah takes the throne at eight years of age. But think about what Josiah inherited. He inherited three generations of godlessness and idolatry and false worship and pagan deities in his land inherited a nation that has neglected the word of God and the law of God. He inherits a ruined temple where the Passover and worship really isn't being observed according to the ordinances of God. He inherited a family line of violence and civil war and rebellion. If anyone had reasons to be complacent or complicit, or to pass the buck to somebody else, or blame somebody before them, or to say, "Man, this isn't really my problem. It was Josiah. He could have abdicated responsibility, or blamed the condition of the land on somebody else, but that's not what Josiah did. Josiah did not continue in the path of ruin. Josiah chose the path of renewal and revival. Unlike his dad, here's what Josiah did. Second Kings 22 verse two. He did what was right in the Lord's sight, and

walked in all the ways of his ancestors. Not Hezekiah, Manasseh, or Ammon, but he walked in the ways of David, a man who sought the Lord and had a heart after him. He did not turn to the right or to the left, this is what Josiah was committed to. I'm going to choose the path of renewal. I'm going to walk in God's way. I don't know your story, and I don't know what you what story you inherited. You could have inherited a story of brokenness, or addiction, or anger, or abuse, a story of spiritual indifference or apathy, but here's the good news I want to give you: your history does not have to be your story. Your history does not have to be your story. You do not have to perpetuate what was passed down to you. You can set a new trail. You can blaze a new story by the power and the grace of God. You don't have to live the story you were handed down, nor do you have to hand down the story somebody else gave you. You can start a new line of faith by the grace and power of God. Amen. You can do that. Why? Because we serve a God who can renew in just one generation what previous generations had ruined. We're always just one generation away. For me, the ruin of revival. Here, Josiah takes the path of renewal. He comes back to God. Leads a nation back to God. Here is the turn of events in Josiah's life. At age eight, Josiah becomes king. At age 16, Josiah begins to seek God. At age 20, he removes the idols, and age 26, he restores worship in the temple. Thing is fascinating that he actually began to seek God at the age of 16, before God sent a revival at the age of 26. For 10 years, Josiah sought the Lord, removed idols, and restored worship. Long before there was visible revival in the land. There was renewal in a heart. There was a recommitment. There was a heart that was seeking the Lord. Why? Because in every revival history, inner renewal must begin before outer revival. Inner renewal must begin before outer revival. Josiah did not wait for the culture to improve before he sought God. He did not blame his family history for his spiritual passivity. He did not look to something else to say, "Well, this is somebody else's issue. No, no, no. He sought the Lord for himself. And God does something remarkable. Can I just tell you, you don't have to wait for your spouse to become more spiritually interested before you seek God. You don't have to wait for your kids to make better decisions before you truly surrender them into the hands of Jesus. You don't have to wait for a city to experience revival before you say to God, "Lord, renew my heart, because that's where it begins with a heart that is willing to seek God long before we see a revival out there. Let there be a renewal in here, Lord. Let it begin in me.

Libin Abraham 20:35

Let it begin inside us. Inner renewal must begin before outer renewal is seen. Here are the ways that God renewed the people through Josiah's leadership, and what I believe God is inviting us into in this altar of renewal that we're coming up on for our 50th renewal returns to the Word of God. Every time there's been a season of revival and rule. There was a return to the Word of God. What happened in Josiah's time? The temple was still there. It was in disarray, but it was still there. Guess what? The priests were still doing their thing. Religion kept continuing, but they had completely neglected the law of God. In fact, they didn't even know that there was a law of God. So, the age of 26, Josiah sends the servants to go repair the temple. And as they're in this reconstruction process of the temple, guess what they find? They find the book of the law. So, in chapter 22, verse eight of Second Kings, it says the high priest Helkiah told the court secretary Shafan, "I have found the book of the law. They weren't even looking for it, but they found the book of the law in the Lord's temple, and he gave the book to Shafan, who read it. I think it's amazing this statement: "I found the book of the law in the Lord's temple. So where was God's law lost in His temple? Think about that. God's word was lost in God's house. The institution remained. Sacrifices continued. Priests still showed up to work, but they had gone decades, generations void of the word of God, void of the voice of God and the stories of God. It's possible to be religious, do the Christian thing, say the Christian words, sing the Christian songs, show up to Christian gatherings, and still build a life where God's voice and God's word is absent at the core of who we are, and this is what had happened. But they found the word of God, the law of God, and Chathan takes it to Josiah, the king. And here's what happened next in verse 11. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. Hezekiah heard hard words, chose complacency. Josiah hears even harder words, and when Josiah hears the words of God. He didn't say, "Okay, well, that's one opinion. Let me go online and see what everybody else thinks about it. He didn't say, "Well, did God really mean that? Maybe He's changed the bar for us. Maybe that was good for Hezekiah, but doesn't have to be our story. He did not evaluate God's word.

He allowed the word of God to evaluate him. He opened the word of God, and he allowed the word to get deep inside of him to a point that he tore his clothes in repentance and humility. And here is how God responded to Josiah's repentance. God says to him in verse 19, "Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I myself have heard. This is the Lord's declaration. This is the moment that everything changed for Josiah, let me tell you, the reason for the change was not simply because the law of the Lord was found. The reason for revival and the reason for renewal was because there was one heart that was willing to humble himself or humble herself. It's not because the word of God was found. Because today we have the word of God. We've done it in so many translations on your devices in print. It's not about do we have the word of God, but does God's word have us? There was a person here who was willing to. Humble himself and to open the Word of God and say, God, show me what must change. Show me how far we have drifted. Show me what we have forgotten. Show us what we have tolerated. We must repent of. And here, this renewal was not coming to a truth that no one had ever heard. No renewal is not finding new truth; it is simply returning to truth if it's been neglected. Renewal is not asking God to endorse our life. Renewal is opening God's word and say, "God, what do you want to correct in me?"

Libin Abraham 25:39

What do you want to confront? I give you full permission. What do you want to comfort? What do you want to change? What are you inviting me into? That's renewal, an open heart, a surrendered will, an open, tender heart, like Josiah did to humble himself to the Word of God. Patriots want to know. I want you to know. As we turn this corner to our 50th, God's word is not a decorative stone from our history. We believe the Bible. We believe God's word is God's revelation of Himself. It's God's revelation of you. It's God's revelation of His Son. The final word of God given to us so that we might enter eternal life and we might live this abundant life in Jesus. It is God's self-disclosure of Himself, and what we need as we cross this threshold of our 50th year, what we need is not a more fashionable gospel for a new generation. What we need are fresh ears to hear the word of the Lord, not a new gospel, not a new fashionable gospel. No, no. May God give us fresh ears and humble hearts to hear His voice and to hear His word. One gospel, yes, that we would come to Scripture with humble hearts, open eyes, open hearts, saying to Him, "What have we forgotten? We need to be reminded of. Where have we strayed? How has pride crept in? What do you need to change in us, God? Where do you want to restore first love in our Life and letting the Word of God take deep root, even if it means tearing our clothes. Don't do it today, but even if it means removing places of covering, so that God's light shines to the deepest crevices of who we are, and having the courage to trust and obey Him. Renewal always involves a return to the voice and word of God. But when you see it by Josiah, is that repentance wasn't merely emotional. What you see is Josiah was committed in the season of renewal to remove and to restore, renewal involved removing and restoring. When you go to Second Kings 23, Josiah calls the elders, he calls the community, and he reads out the word of the Lord in front of all of them. Then he mobilizes the leaders to go and make changes, so they go and tear down the idols. They remove false places of worship. They get rid of the priests who led the people of God astray. They take down false deities that were established in their land, and they restored the Passover and restored worship. It was costly, but for Josiah, repentance was not merely something he felt. Repentance was something he did, having the courage to name the idols and to tear down the idols, and that's the same for us. If things have crept up in our heart that we have prioritized more than God, if we have found security in a person, or in a thing, or an establishment above God. We ask God to name our idols, and then may we hear the sound of idols crashing at the feet of Jesus, tearing down idols, whatever the cost may be. So, for our 50th, I'm not just asking God to renew our excitement. I'm asking God to renew our surrender, our devotion to come back to first love with Jesus. It's a renewal of removing and restoring God's rightful place among His people in our heart in our city. So after all this, here is what God says about Josiah, Second Kings 23 verse 25. Before him, there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and with all his strength, according to all the law of Moses. And no one like him rose after him. What a compliment! Don't you want to hear that from the Lord? When I hear that, you know, I'm kind of tempted to just end the message and say, "Well, go be like Josiah, because there's a lot of good in

what he did. God was pleased in what he did, but that's actually not the greatest invitation for us, and here's why: Josiah led a great reform, but you know what happened to Josiah?

Libin Abraham 30:29

He too would die, and after Josiah, his son assumed the throne, and then his son led the nation right back into the idols that Josiah torn down, they went right back to sinning against the Lord, right back into idolatry and worshiping Baal. Josiah could remove idols from the temple, but he could not renew idols from their heart. Josiah could present the covenant of the Lord in front of the people, but he could not write the covenant inside of people. Josiah could lead and needed outward reformation, but he could not bring about inward transformation. Josiah was a good king; he was the needed king, but we needed a greater king who could do more than what Josiah was capable of. We needed Jesus to enter the story and change us once and for all. So during the reign of Josiah, there's a prophet who comes on the scene. His name was Jeremiah, and Jeremiah would witness and see the outward transformation, the reformations of Josiah, how the idols were removed and how the temple was restored. But then, right after Josiah's life, Jeremiah would see how quickly people went right back into their own patterns and false idolatry and worship, and how quickly idols were erected, and Jeremiah is troubled. He's wondering, is there any hope at all, God, that we could have a sustained relationship with you? And God says yes. Why? Because there's a greater King coming, and God, through the prophet Jeremiah, speaks a promise of the new covenant. And here's what God says through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31 verse 33: I will put my teaching where within them, and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. This is what Jesus came to inaugurate, not a return to the old covenant that Josiah brought the people to through the sacrifice of animals and through their shedding of blood, but the coming in of a new covenant through His own blood. Josiah could lead a nation to cleanse the temple, but Jesus would make us the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Josiah could read out loud the words of truth, but only Jesus could write those truths in our heart. Josiah could call the people to return to God with all of their hearts, but let me tell you what happens in Jesus. He doesn't just call us to return to Him with our heart. He gives us a new heart. He gives us a new life, and He gives us a spirit, so that we could truly love Him and obey Him and follow Him with everything we have. So, friends, the good news of the gospel for those who felt like they have failed renewal projects. Is this Jesus did not come simply to improve our behavior or reform our morality? He came to make us new. We could not renew ourselves. We needed to be made a new creation, and Jesus did what Josiah couldn't do, as great as he was, he came to make us new from the inside. Because never really been about external reformation, anyway. It's always been about a new heart. The heart of stone is removed, and a heart of flesh, a new heart and a new spirit is given to us. Maybe some of you are here and you've tried the Outward Renewal Project, and you made some changes to try to be more religious, more disciplined, even more respectable, but it hasn't worked. And today, I'm inviting you to receive a new heart. What you need is not more new pain over an old heart. What you need is new life in Jesus. But but you can't do that by trusting in your own goodness, in your own religion, in your own effort. You can only do that by trusting in the One, this greater King who showed up on scenes 2000 years ago. Bring new life and lasting transformation, beginning from within, to write His law on our heart, to not just give us a new command, but to give us a new desire and a passion to love Him with all that we are. It happens when we trust in the finished work of Jesus. See, renewal is God's work. Renewal is a work of God's Spirit among God's people that are surrendered because of the finished work of Jesus.

Libin Abraham 35:32

So today, if you're far from Jesus, if you don't have a relationship with you, He's here to make you new and to begin a beautiful work in you, for those of us who are followers of Jesus, I know that's many of us in this room and online. What could renewal look like for you? I think it's coming back to our first love. I think it's asking the Holy Spirit to reveal idols we have set up in our own heart, and having the courage to trust Him to tear those idols down, I think today it could be asking yourself, "What have I normalized because of a lack of immediate consequences? Just because I've gotten away with it doesn't mean I'm safe. What have we normalized? What is Jesus calling us to remove and restore? Are there patterns in our thought, patterns in our behavior, patterns in our affection that

are disordered? The Holy Spirit wants to renew and restore and correct. Can we, like Josiah, be a people with humble hearts. Say, God, here we are. But not just for you to start on the outside. Start on the inside. What does renewed surrender and trust look like? Would you bow your heads with me? And at this time, I want to invite our prayer team to join me in the front because there may be some people right after this prayer. You need to continue to pray. You need to confess. You need to ask God to renew something in you. Maybe for the first time, some of you are coming to surrender your heart to Jesus. Think, God, here I am. I've tried to bring renewal myself, but I can't. I failed. Jesus, would you give me a new heart? Write your law on my heart. So, Father, we come today in this posture of humility and surrender. If there are things that we need to return, to remove, to restore, would you give us courage by the Holy Spirit inside of us? Strengthen your church today. May we in the spirit realm hear the clashing of idols and the coming down of strongholds. May our worship to you be pure, not divided attentions or divided affections, but truly to be a heart and a soul, and with our strength to love you with everything we have, because you are worthy of it, Jesus. Thank you for making us new when we could not renew us, for giving us lasting transformation from within. Thank you for giving us your own spirit to equip, enable us by grace from within. So, God, wherever we might find ourselves today, we thank you. There is hope. Our history doesn't have to be our story. Today is a day of renewal. Forgive us if we have normalized, if we've tolerated unhealthy things, sinful things. Would you wash us clean. Thank you that because of the cross, our past, present, and future are forgiven. And today is the day of grace. Today is the day of refreshing. Today is the day of experiencing that your mercies are new every morning. We yield. We love. We surrender our hearts to you. In Jesus' name, we pray. And the church together said, "Amen, amen. Aren't you thankful for a God who makes us new and who continually renews our heart to Him? Thank you, Jesus.