

LESSON 01 A Heart for Worship

Week of September 1 Alternate Title: Repentance and Renewal

Teacher's Devotional

A Rebellious Heart

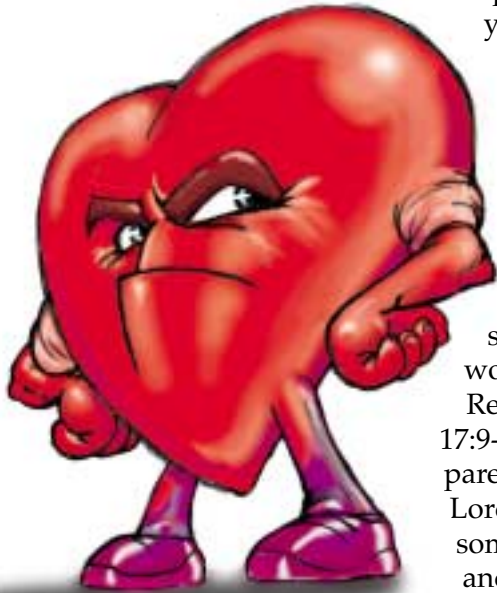
How do you respond to authority? Are rules your friend, or are they things begging to be broken? Did you listen to and obey your “elders” as you were growing up, or did you always want to do the opposite of what they said?

When it comes to God, the Bible says that all of us are rebellious. Ray Ortland reminds us of that fact and ties it in to how we come to worship God: “Worship is the highest and noblest act that any

person can do. When [people] worship, God is satisfied! And when you worship, you are fulfilled!

Think about this: why did Jesus Christ come? He came to make worshipers out of rebels. We who were once self-centered have to be completely changed so that we can shift our attention outside of ourselves and become able to worship him.”

Read Psalm 24:3-6 and Jeremiah 17:9-10. What do you do to prepare yourself to worship the Lord? Do you need to set aside some personal rebelliousness and bring a changed heart to worship Him?



Lesson Focus:

A changed heart brings you to worship.

Lesson Scripture:

2 Chronicles 30:1-6, 8-12.

Lesson Path

1 Life Connection:

Discuss the importance of how Christians should approach God.



2 Bible Exploration:

Examine Hezekiah's invitation for the Israelites to celebrate the Passover.

Suggested material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster—The Fall of Judah and accompanying reproducible sheet

3 Bible Interaction:

Consider what moves people to revere the Lord.

Suggested material:

■ Strips of newsprint in the shape of a banner, colored markers, craft sticks

4 Life Application:

Pledge to earnestly worship the Lord.

Understanding the Bible

In your preparation, be sure to read 2 Chronicles 28–31, which describes the efforts of King Hezekiah to renew the worship of the Lord in Judah. Hezekiah was one of Judah's more godly kings. During his reign (715–686 B.C.), he restored temple worship, removed outward signs of idolatry from both Judah and the northern kingdom, and renewed the Passover celebration, as we see in this lesson.

Assyria was the dominant force in the area during the reign of Hezekiah. While he was king, Assyria completed its defeat of the northern kingdom, taking many of its people captive. Ever since the nation broke away from Judah after the death of Solomon, Israel had remained steeped in idolatry. Every one of her kings behaved wickedly and led the nation away from the worship of God.

Even in Judah, some of the kings before Hezekiah—including Ahaz, his father—did evil in the sight of God and furthered idolatrous worship. Ahaz publicly served pagan gods during his reign and did much to turn the people away from God. Hezekiah, however, served the Lord and did much to restore true worship among the people of Judah and the remaining people of the northern kingdom.

As Your Students Arrive

Prior to class, write the following quotation by Erwin W. Lutzer on a chalkboard or sheet of newsprint: “If we haven’t learned to be worshipers, it doesn’t really matter how well we do anything else.” Ask your adults as they come in to think about how they learned to worship and why worship is so important in our Christian life. Remind them that our worship style is not as important to God as the attitude of our heart when we come to worship.

Link to Last Week

Ask a few of your students as they are coming to class if they had any opportunities this past week to show God’s generosity to someone. If so, let them share what may have resulted from that generosity.

Step 1

Life Connection

Discuss the importance of how Christians should approach God



Begin by reading the anecdote on page 5. You can have your adults read this article silently to themselves or ask for a volunteer to read it aloud.

Next, break into small groups and discuss **Statements 1, 2, and 3**. If they all agree or disagree with one or more of the statements, urge them to consider the merits of the other view.

Finally, come back together and talk about the groups’ responses to the statements. There are many reasons people come to church—out of habit or a sense of guilt, to see friends, to find help for living, to study the Bible, etc.—but God wants us foremost to gather to worship Him. While your adults may first think of worship in terms of a corporate gathering on Sunday morning, a “worship experience” can occur anytime someone with a humble heart glorifies God and seeks to obey Him. Worship must be done with zealous sincerity and be God-centered, not self-focused. That was the attitude Hezekiah had when he called the people to turn to God—but not everyone had that attitude.

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A Heart for Worship

Bill had memorized the verse when he was in Sunday school years ago: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Ps. 122:1, KJV). He had probably recited it dozens of times when he was younger.

But this Sunday morning, as he left for church, the words of that familiar verse were bothering him—especially that word *glad*. Was he truly glad to be going to church this morning, or even most mornings? For some reason he had developed almost a belligerent attitude toward God and church. He often thought something like, *God, I showed up today. Let’s see what You can do for me. Can you make the Sunday school lesson interesting? Can you liven up the sermon? Can we sing songs I know? Can I leave church feeling good this morning?*

The Scripture verse continued to bother Bill through the morning. The class lesson was about preparing your hearts to worship, and the teacher quoted someone named Richard Foster, who said, “If worship does not change us, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change. Worship begins in holy expectancy [and] ends in holy obedience.”

As Bill left class to attend the coming worship service, he already was feeling changed—surprisingly glad to be in church this morning, and ready to worship God with all of his heart.

Write **agree** or **disagree** next to each statement. Briefly explain your answers.

_____ **1.** *My main reason for going to church is to worship God.*

_____ **2.** *I have felt my life changed at past worship experiences.*

_____ **3.** *All believers should worship God passionately during a worship service.*

Lesson Focus: A changed heart brings you to worship.

Step 2

Bible Exploration



Examine Hezekiah's invitation for the Israelites to celebrate the Passover

Before you begin, put up the teaching-aid poster, "The Fall of Judah," which you will refer to in each lesson this quarter. Also, you have a reproducible sheet that



Adult Creative Teaching Aid



Adult Creative Teaching Aid

includes the time line from the poster and other information to share each week with your class, so photocopy the sheet and have them bring it every week. Note Hezekiah's sole reign probably began in 715 B.C.,

shortly after Israel fell to the Assyrians. Note on the map the locations of Dan and Beersheba. To describe the land as "from Beersheba to Dan" (vs. 5, NIV) encompasses the whole country. Point out on the map that the people who left from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun (vs. 11) would have lived in the area from Jerusalem north to the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee), then west to the Great Sea. This was part of the former northern kingdom.

Renewal of the Passover Celebration

Read 2 Chronicles 30:1-4 and the commentary. Here are key points:

- King Hezekiah of Judah invited the people from the former northern kingdom and also from Judah to wor-

ship God in Jerusalem during the Passover.

- However, celebration of the Passover would have to be later than usual because not enough priests had prepared themselves and not enough people had gathered in the holy city.

- Hezekiah approved of this delay.

❑ BIBLE COMMENTARY

Good King Hezekiah

Hezekiah may have reigned with his father, Ahaz, for 14 years before he became sole ruler about 715 B.C. When Hezekiah became king on his own, he faced a nation

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Renewal of the Passover Celebration

2 Chronicles 30:1-4, KJV

1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

2 Chronicles 30:1-4, NIV

¹Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. ²The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. ³They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. ⁴The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly.

Hezekiah became king of Judah in a time of great turmoil in the Middle East. The Assyrian Empire had recently gobbled up the northern kingdom of Israel and taken many of its people into captivity, a direct result of their turning away from God (2 Kings 17). As the prophet Hosea predicted, Judah survived because most people still served the Lord (Hos. 1:7), a trait exemplified in Hezekiah's leadership. Early in his reign, the king purified the temple and restored its sacrifices and offerings (2 Chron. 29). Later, he announced the renewed celebration of the Passover and invited those Israelites left behind in the old northern kingdom (represented by "Ephraim and Manasseh," 30:1) to join Judah in keeping this feast.

The king announced that the Passover would be observed in the second month, rather than in the first month as prescribed by law. The Lord had earlier allowed Moses to celebrate the Passover in the second month because several of the priests were ceremonially unclean (Num. 9:6-13). Hezekiah followed that precedent in allowing the delay because many of the priests were

in need of great reform, both politically and in worship. His father had allowed the Assyrians to dominate Judah and had curried their favor by worshiping their gods. Hezekiah did not allow the Assyrians to exert that degree of influence over his kingdom. Besides the religious reforms, King Hezekiah carried out many military reforms to prepare for the Assyrian threat and had a tunnel dug to bring water from the Gihon Spring inside Jerusalem's walls so the city could withstand a siege.

Later in his reign, in 701 B.C., Assyria did invade Judah and threaten to capture Jerusalem. The Lord, however, spared the nation by annihilating the Assyrian forces (2 Chron. 32:1-23). By removing idolatry from the land, renewing worship, and reforming the military, Hezekiah helped spare Judah from complete Assyrian conquest.

Now answer **Questions 4 and 5.**

4. What was significant about this time in the history of Judah and Israel?

(Suggested Answer) The Assyrians had just destroyed the northern kingdom because the people had refused to return to God. Hezekiah was calling for both Judah and those left in the north to repent and join together to worship God through the Passover celebration. Only God could save His remaining people from destruction.

5. Why was the celebration of the Passover delayed by one month?

(Suggested Answer) The Passover celebration was delayed one month so the priests would have time to become ceremonially cleansed for the feast. The additional time also allowed more opportunity for the people to make arrangements and travel to Jerusalem.

Proclamation of the Passover Celebration

Read 2 Chronicles 30:5-6, 8-9 and highlight these main ideas:

- Hezekiah made a royal declara-

tion, inviting all of Israel to celebrate the Passover together, which had not occurred for many centuries.

- He sent emissaries throughout the former northern kingdom and into Judah, asking the people to return to the Lord.
- The letters warned them not to turn away from God as their fathers had done, but come back to God, who would receive them again.

□ BIBLE COMMENTARY

Those Who Were Left

Assyrian records from the time of King

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not yet "consecrated" (2 Chron. 30:3, NIV) in large enough numbers to handle all the sacrifices required at the Passover celebration. The delay also gave time for the entire nation to gather in Jerusalem for the feast.

4. What was significant about this time in the history of Judah and Israel?

5. Why was the celebration of the Passover delayed by one month?

Proclamation of the Passover Celebration

2 Chronicles 30:5-6, 8-9, KJV

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. . . .

8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

2 Chronicles 30:5-6, 8-9, NIV

⁵They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.

⁶At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read:

"People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. . . . ⁸Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. ⁹If you return to the LORD, then your

Sargon II claim that when he captured Israel in 722 B.C., he took 27,290 Israelites captive from the capital city of Samaria. Israelites were also taken from several other key cities in the kingdom. The poorest of the land and residents of the smaller cities, however, were left to take care of the vineyards and till the land. The Assyrians imported a wide variety of people to replace the Israelites they had removed from the land (see 2 Kings 17:7-24).

Now answer **Questions 6 and 7** concerning this passage.

6. Why would this Passover celebration be so significant?

(Suggested Answer) The Passover celebration announced by Hezekiah was significant because it was the first time since the reign of Solomon, David's son, that both Israel and Judah would celebrate the feast together. Because of the defeat of the northern kingdom, the survivors were invited to Jerusalem to join in the observance.

7. What encouragement did Hezekiah give to the people of the former northern kingdom?

(Suggested Answer) Besides asking the remaining people in Israel to join Judah in keeping the Passover, Hezekiah also encouraged them to repent and return to the Lord. They could show their obedience to the Lord just by coming to Jerusalem for the feast. Additionally, the king implied that if they turned away from their sins, those in captivity would return to the land.

Reception of the Passover Invitation

Finally, read 2 Chronicles 30:10-12 and consider these major ideas:

- Most of the people in the northern tribes of Israel rejected Hezekiah's invitation and treated his couriers with disdain.
- Some people from the tribes of

Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, however, humbly observed the Passover in Jerusalem.

- They joined the people of Judah, and together they complied with the king's decree and obeyed God's word.

□ BIBLE COMMENTARY

The Tribe of Asher

The tribe of Asher occupied the most geographically remote area in the promised land. Joshua assigned the tribe a fertile strip of coastline along the Mediterranean Sea, north of Mount Carmel. After that, however,

KJV

9 For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

NIV

brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

The princes, along with Hezekiah, agreed to send a proclamation throughout all Judah and Israel inviting people to the Passover. This would be the first time since Solomon, centuries earlier, that those from the northern tribes of Israel would celebrate the Passover with Judah. As the couriers went out with letters from the king, they carried a special message for the surviving Israelites in the north to join in the celebration.

The messengers also encouraged the people of Israel to turn away from the stubbornness and idolatry of their fathers and relatives who had been carried away into captivity. This was a chance for the survivors to show obedience to God. Furthermore, the proclamation message stated that if the remaining Israelites repented and returned to the Lord, even their families in captivity would be shown mercy and allowed to return to the land. Hezekiah sought to give hope to the people of the former northern kingdom and to show many reasons for them to join in the Passover celebration.

6. Why would this Passover celebration be so significant?

7. What encouragement did Hezekiah give to the people of the former northern kingdom?

Reception of the Passover Invitation

2 Chronicles 30:10-12, KJV

10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but

2 Chronicles 30:10-12, NIV

¹⁰The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but the people

Asher does not occupy a prominent place in Israel's history and seems to have been a weak tribe in terms of defeating the Canaanites in its area.

The inclusion of Asher in the list of those who came to Hezekiah's Passover celebration shows that the announcement of the feast reached into all of Israel. That some from this obscure tribe were mentioned as being in attendance shows both the heart of the king in reaching out to Israel and God's desire for all His people to renew their worship of Him.

Now answer **Questions 8 and 9.**

8. *Despite their desperate situation, how did many in the former northern kingdom react to the invitation to the Passover?*

(Suggested Answer) Despite their humiliating defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, many in the former northern kingdom ridiculed and mocked the messengers who announced the Passover. They rejected calls for repentance, even though those sins had brought about the destruction of their nation. Many still did not fear the Lord or have any desire to obey Him.

9. *How did God show His favor toward the renewed Passover celebration?*

(Suggested Answer) God showed His favor by working in a mighty way through the planning and announcement of the Passover. He brought unity to the people and gave them a desire to carry out the plans and make the gathering a success.

□ WINDOW ON THE WORD

The Passover

According to the Hebrew calendar, God's people were to observe the Passover on the 14th day of the first month of their year, and the festival was supposed to last seven days (see Num. 28:16-25). It was one of three annual pilgrim feasts requiring

attendance at the temple.

The Hebrew word for Passover is a verb, which means "to spare." It is a memorial to the Exodus, when God delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage.

The Passover refers to the time (described in Exod. 12) when the angel of death "passed over" the children of Israel, yet killed all the other first-born in Egypt. During this incident, each Hebrew family sacrificed an unblemished lamb (or goat) and smeared its blood on their doorposts and then ate a special meal, which the Jews have traditionally observed ever since.

KJV

they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

NIV

scorned and ridiculed them.

¹¹Nevertheless, some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem.

¹²Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.

Despite suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Assyrians and existing on the brink of disaster, many people in the former northern kingdom ridiculed Hezekiah's appeal for repentance and obedience. However, as a result of the message, some people from even the most northern parts of Israel responded to the proclamation. The humble attitude of these people (vs. 11) indicates that they accepted the invitation to return to the Lord as well as to the Passover. They were ready to set their hearts right with God as well as to take the step of obedience in observing the feast.

In response to the people's obedience, God worked in a mighty way to unite the people in carrying out all the planning and celebration of the Passover. A large crowd eventually gathered to observe the feast (30:13-27).

8. *Despite their desperate situation, how did many in the former northern kingdom react to the invitation to the Passover?*

9. *How did God show His favor toward the renewed Passover celebration?*



King Hezekiah had this 1,700-foot tunnel chiseled through solid rock to bring the waters of the Gihon Spring from outside the walls of Jerusalem into the city (see 2 Kings 20:20). This reduced the city's chances of being taken by siege—and an Assyrian siege did occur in Hezekiah's time, in 701 B.C. (see 18:13–19:36). In A.D. 1880 an inscription in ancient Hebrew script describing the tunnel's construction was found just inside the tunnel's entrance. Photo: © dlp Studios

Step 3

Bible Interaction



Consider what moves people to revere the Lord

This step will help your class think about why Christians want to worship God when He touches their hearts. If you wish, you may photocopy this page, cut out the boxes, and give the instructions to each one of the groups. Give the strips of newsprint, colored markers, and craft sticks to the banner-making group.

• Discussion Group

Read “A Change of Hearts” and respond to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. Only by focusing on Christ could the Korean and Japanese Christians come together and worship. Christ’s love is the most powerful force in the world to change hearts. When we submit to Him, we find that we want to worship and praise Him for His goodness and mercy (for example, see David’s change of heart in Psalm 51).

• News Report: Passover in Jerusalem

Perform a skit in which one member of your group pretends to be a TV reporter who interviews King Hezekiah and ordinary Israelites who have come to the Passover. Let these people tell the reporter why they are celebrating and how worshiping God has affected their lives, particularly their relationship with God. Remember that some people from the former northern kingdom have turned to God after watching their country be destroyed because most people would not obey Him.

• Mini-Banners of Worship

Think of a phrase that expresses the strongest reason why you want to worship God at this time—for example: “Lord, I praise You for Your mercy!” Write this phrase on the strip of newsprint with a colored marker. Decorate this banner with other colored markers, then tape it to a craft stick and put it in your shirt pocket or have it sticking out of your Bible. If someone asks, explain why you chose this phrase.

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A Change of Hearts

During the 1930s and 40s, the Japanese military committed terrible acts of cruelty against different peoples throughout Asia. One such crime occurred in Korea when Japanese soldiers nailed boards across the doors and windows of a Korean church and then set the church on fire while Korean Christians were worshipping. All of the people inside the church perished in the flames.

Word of this atrocity eventually reached the Japanese homeland, but many refused to believe that it had happened. After all, there were so many accounts of atrocity—how could one know what was true and what was false? When a group of Japanese Christians heard this story, however, they were struck with shame. They knew that Japan had done horrible things in Nanjing (Nanking), China; Manila; and many other places, so this news was quite believable.

After the war, the hearts of those Japanese Christians continued to agonize over this tragic incident, so they decided to go to that Korean village, beg the forgiveness of the people there, and help rebuild their church. Despite the understandable hatred that those Koreans felt toward the Japanese, when they saw the tears and heard the sincere words of remorse, God changed the Koreans’ hearts, and they were able to forgive and receive the Japanese Christians as their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Together they rebuilt the Korean church and then joined in worshipping the Lord, praising Him for the bond that transcends all human sins. Only Christ can change the heart in this way, and when He does, we can’t help but come together and worship Him.

10. How did God affect the hearts of the Japanese and Korean Christians? Why did this transformation lead them to worship Christ?

11. In what ways does the power of Christ’s love affect human relationships in this world?

12. Do you immediately want to worship Christ when He touches your heart? If so, why?

Step 4

Life Application



Pledge to earnestly worship the Lord

Your students have just participated in activities that started them thinking about reasons why God’s people desire to revere God with gratitude and praise. This step encourages your adults to be more committed to the worship of Christ.

To start this step, have your class read together Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (NIV). Note that the apostle Paul spoke of the “gratitude” to God in our hearts that leads us to praise and worship Him. Ask them to think about times when they have felt that gratitude as they read “Praise Him!” on page 11 of *Comprehensive Bible Study* and do the activity there. Times when God has touched their hearts could include during a recent worship service, after an answer to prayer, or when they forgave someone and mended a relationship.

Finally, ask them to return to the small groups they had in Step 1 and invite them to read their prayers to one another in their group. Then ask them to pray aloud for each other, pledging to devote more of their time and more of their heart to the worship of Christ.

End the class session with a final prayer. As you pray, thank God for how Christ has touched the hearts of your students and for the wonderful experience we have when the Holy Spirit fills us during worship.

As class members are leaving, distribute copies of this week’s *Power for Living*.



□ PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-20, which relates the wickedness of King Manasseh and his eventual repentance. Ask your students to think about this question this week: “If you were God, what sins would you have the most difficulty forgiving?”

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Praise Him!

King Hezekiah invited God’s people from both the former northern kingdom and from Judah to assemble in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Those who accepted his invitation came to worship God because He had touched their hearts. It is still true today—when the Lord touches our hearts, we immediately want to revere Him with praises and with our gratitude.

► *Identify three times or ways that Christ has touched your heart recently. Then write a prayer that praises Him for what He has done.*

KEY VERSES

But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers.
—2 Chronicles 30:18b-19a, KJV

But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone who sets his heart on seeking God—the LORD, the God of his fathers.”
—2 Chronicles 30:18b-19a, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

September 2 through September 8

Mon. 2 Chronicles 33:1-6—Manasseh Does Much Evil.

Tues. 2 Chronicles 33:7-13—Manasseh Repents and Is Restored.

Wed. 2 Chronicles 6:36-42—Solomon’s Prayer.

Thurs. 2 Chronicles 7:11-16—If My People Will Pray.

Fri. 2 Chronicles 33:14-20—Manasseh Sacrifices to God.

Sat. Luke 18:9-14—A Tax Collector’s Prayer Is Heard.

Sun. 2 Corinthians 7:5-13—Repentance That Leads to Salvation.