

*Day 1*  
*November 27*



*Pray | Ask God to reveal how pride diminishes your influence for him*

Pride promotes self-dependence and blocks God-dependence.

This week we will be looking at the story of King Zedekiah and the final downfall of the nation of Judah. The start of this downfall is marked by a continued hardening of the hearts of the people and the king toward God. A hardened heart is one that no longer recognizes God as Lord and King. The first sign of this heart hardening is pride. We see this pride in King Zedekiah and his lack of humility in dealing with his enemy, King Nebuchadnezzar; as well as how he fails to truly listen to the prophets from God.

We too face the challenges of the same sinful nature that led to hardened hearts in Judah and in King Zedekiah. Pride that promotes self-interest over the interests of God can so easily take over our hearts, and draw us away from a close and loving relationship with God. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to humility and recognition of our complete dependence on God. The story of the final downfall of Judah is a reminder and a wake-up call for us. Humility is the first key to avoiding a spiritual downfall.



*Read | 2 Chronicles 36:11-16; Proverbs 18:12*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Take a few minutes to reflect on an area of your life where you struggle to turn over control to God, and to be fully dependent on him. What is one concrete step you can take this week to trust God more in that area of your life?

Proverbs 18:12 tells us that pride or haughtiness precedes destruction, and humility precedes honor (author's paraphrase). How have you experienced the reality of one or both of these situations in your life?

Humility and dependence are not typically considered characteristics of strength. Especially for someone like King Zedekiah, the leader of a nation, humbling himself to listen to a man like Jeremiah could certainly have been seen as a sign of weakness. How can truly living a life of humility and dependence be your greatest witness for your God and Savior?

*Day 2*  
November 28

*Read | 2 Chronicles 36:11-16; Proverbs 28:13-14*



*Pray | Confess your sins to God and turn your heart toward him*

Repentance is both confession of sin AND turning away from that sin.

As we saw yesterday, the first sign of the increasing hardness of heart of the people of Judah toward God was their pride. The second sign of their hardened hearts toward God was their refusal to acknowledge their separation from God and their need to turn back to him. Despite their pride and lack of repentance, God did not give up on the people of Judah. He regularly sent messengers to the people to remind them of the need to repent. However, the hardness of heart of the people of Judah had become so great that messengers and words were no longer enough to draw them back to God.

Ever since man fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, the resulting separation from God has made repentance the key for all humans to restore their relationship with God. Each of us must recognize our sin, confess it to God, and turn our hearts and minds away from that sin. It is only then that we will truly experience the presence and blessings of our Godly Father and Savior.





*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Proverbs 28:13 tells us that “those who conceal their sins will fall into calamity, but those who confess and forsake their sins will receive mercy” (author’s paraphrase). Many times it’s the calamity that drives us to confession. Reflect on a time in your life when hiding your sin cost you dearly and/or when God’s mercy filled your life after confession.

Sin represents separation from God. Is there a part of your life that you keep separate from God? Take that area of your life to God in prayer. Confess the state of separation and ask for his strength and wisdom to see how to turn that part of your life over to him as well.

1 John 1:8-9 tells us, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Satan the great deceiver wants you to deny sin is a problem in your life. Jesus your Savior wants you to acknowledge your sin and live a life of freedom and confidence because he paid the debt due for your sins. Both denial and confession can provide a level of freedom – which is more compelling to you? Why?

## *Day 3*

*November 29*

*Read | 2 Chronicles 36:11-16; Matthew 5:13-16*



*Pray | Praise God for the gift of Jesus Christ*

As children of God we are called to be salt and light in a dark world.

Looking back on the Story of God, we remember that God made a covenant with Abraham establishing a special relationship between God and his descendants. These descendants would be a great nation, specially blessed by God, for the purpose of blessing the entire world. They were called to be distinct and set-apart from natural behaviors of the world; and through that distinction bring honor and glory to their Godly King. The people of Judah that we read about today were the final remnant of that great nation. Their pride and refusal to listen and return to God has transformed them into a nation that is indistinguishable from the rest of the world. This final failure marks their true spiritual downfall. As children of God and followers of Jesus Christ, we too are called to live distinctive lives: to be salt and light in a dark world and to draw the world to the light of Jesus Christ. This distinction is the true measure of our spiritual health.





*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

2 Chronicles 36:14 gives a pretty grim assessment of the actions and behavior of the priests and people of Judah. Included in this assessment is the comment that they followed “the abominations of the nations”. Rather than living distinctive lives, they were conforming. Take a few minutes to name a few “abominations” that you see in the behavior of the world around you. Are you conforming to the world in any of these areas? Commit to taking one concrete action to make your life more distinctive.

God blessed the descendants of Abraham for the express purpose of blessing the rest of the world. The same is true for his followers today. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus tells his followers to “let your light shine before others” for the express purpose of bringing glory to our Heavenly Father. Reflect on the areas of your life where you may be hiding the light of Jesus Christ. What steps can you take to better shine the light of Jesus in that area of your life?

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16 renew the expectations that his followers live lives that are distinct from the world, bringing light in the darkness and flavor where there is none. Think of one person or situation that you encounter in your day-to-day routines that is in need of salt and light. Ask God to reveal how you can interject that much needed perspective.

*Day 4*  
November 30



*Pray | Ask God to help you live each day with eternity in mind*

God's love demands that he reveals our self-deception.

The situation that King Zedekiah faced was so desperate that eventually he did reach out to the prophet Jeremiah to hear the will of God. We see the full nature of God in his response to Zedekiah: absolute honesty, righteous judgment, and mercy. God could not ignore the unacceptable behavior – justice demanded a punishment. In his great mercy, God offered Zedekiah the option to turn from his pride and disobedience, obey the words of Lord, and reduce the punishment. King Zedekiah went to God looking for comfort and relief from a difficult situation. How often do we all do the same? We pursue a path of sin and self-reliance until we really get into trouble, and only then do we come to God for help. God desperately loves us and desires that we depend on him and make him Lord, but he cannot ignore our sin. Like Zedekiah, we can expect honesty, justice, and mercy from God. The mercy comes when we choose to turn to him in humility and obedience.



*Read | Jeremiah 38:14-18, 24-28*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions*

We don't use the term mercy often these days. In Matthew 5:7 Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." How would you define mercy? In what situations do you most commonly give and receive mercy?

Part of God's mercy to Zedekiah, and to us, is his absolute honesty. God does not try to soften difficult messages so we don't "feel so bad". God knows that only the absolute truth will put us on the right path. God's absolute truth came to Zedekiah through Jeremiah. His absolute truth comes to us in the Bible, but also through true friends. Proverbs 27:6 tells us, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Consider the relationships that you have. Are you trying to be "merciful" by softening the blow of difficult messages, when sharing the absolute truth would be true "mercy"?

Reflect on the behaviors of your life today. Are you pursuing a path that you know in your heart of hearts takes you away from God? Prayerfully consider turning around now – don't wait to turn to God until you get to the desperate end of that path. God is calling you back now!

*Day 5*  
*December 1*

*Read | 2 Chronicles 36:15-21*



*Pray | Thank God for his assurance of justice for all*

God's justice demands that his patience will not last forever.

The heart of King Zedekiah was so hard that he was unable to accept the words of God from Jeremiah and turn back to God in humility and obedience. The incredible patience of God with the stubborn people of Israel and Judah had finally come to an end. The full measure of the justice of God was delivered on the people of Judah. The great city of Jerusalem was destroyed and the people of Judah were all killed or taken captive.

The just nature of God, and the fact that sin requires payment, causes many people to reject God. Satan has convinced the world that a just God is an unloving God, when in reality it is the opposite. Our heavenly Father loves the people of this world so much that he is willing to intervene to draw us back to him. Ultimately the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ paid the debt for all our sin – the ultimate demonstration of the love of God.



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*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Are you comfortable with the reality of God’s just nature, and how true love cannot exist without justice? It is critical that all followers of Jesus Christ understand this and can articulate it to those who don’t. Take a few minutes to test your ability to explain this to someone else.

It’s so important to remember the patience of God when reading a story like this. 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” How have you witnessed the patience of God in your life?

The people of Judah were so far from God that they could not believe that the end would come. This is the reality for many people in our world today. The final judgment of God is coming. If you have not yet made Jesus lord of your life, do not wait. Go to God in prayer and commit your life to him. If you have already made Jesus the lord of your life, remember it is your Great Commission to make sure the people you encounter know the truth of Jesus’ final return. How are you delivering on that mission?