

Long Story Short: Why Kingdoms Fall

Reflect

1. What is your definition of a good life?
2. What are some things that cause lives to fall apart?
3. When you come to the end of your life, what do you hope people will remember about you?
4. Compare how you responded to question 1 and 3. How are your responses the same? How are they different?

Read Your Bible

- 2 Samuel 12 & 13
- Matthew 16:23

Apply God's Word to Your Life

1. In 2 Samuel 12 & 13, King David learns the hard way that his decisions can quickly cause his life, even his kingdom, to crumble. What actions or decisions of King David led to the strife in his family and kingdom?
2. What do you believe motivated David to make the decisions he did?
3. Read Matthew 16:21-23. For Jesus to fulfill His mission on earth, He had to make some hard decisions and do some hard things. Peter wanted to save Jesus from doing what was needed and right. What were the "human concerns" Peter had in mind when he wanted to stop Jesus? What were the "concerns of God" Jesus referenced to Peter?
4. How can you tell the difference between "human concerns" and "concerns of God?"
5. Think about the decisions you have to make on a daily basis – what to eat, what to wear, what to say to others, how to handle conflict, etc. What are the primary drivers/motivators for your decision making? What category would you put each one under: "human concerns" or "concerns of God."
6. When is there conflict between human concerns and the concerns of God? When are they in harmony?
7. What are some ways you can learn to lean more into the concerns of God when making decisions for your life, from the little things to the biggest things?

David and Peter stumbled in their lives when they kept their decisions all about worldly comfort, what would make them feel good and what would personally bring them the best immediate outcome. In other words, they kept in mind and made decisions from human concerns. David didn't see how his choices affected others and snowballed; one bad choice to many more bad choices throughout his family. Peter couldn't see how Jesus giving His life up on the cross would change more than his life, but all lives throughout the world. But when we set our hearts and minds on the concerns of God, it changes how we approach our decision-making process. And by Jesus' example, it might not make our decisions easier, but harder. The difference between keeping our decision making out of human concerns or concerns of God is, the first has the power to destroy us, the second has the power to save us and give us and those around us life. God wants to give us life, so we can live abundantly (John 10), and when we make the concerns of God our own, God will build His everlasting kingdom in and through us.

Pray

Father, I confess that I'm often more concerned with human things than the things You are concerned with. I focus on my own pleasure, security and contentment, and that often leads to alienation, hurt and broken relationship with You and with those around me. My kingdom and my life fall apart. Thank You

for Your unending and never-failing love and mercy towards me. Even when I get it wrong, You have the power to make it right. Help me to focus on those things that concern You. Help me to daily ask how I can be a vehicle for Your love, mercy and grace at work in this world. Let me be about what You care about in this world, so Your kingdom will come, and Your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.