

Fixing our BIG mistakes

In case of emergency – when I make a mess of life – break glass and try this study

Stealing. Speaking cruel, brutal words to another. Betraying a trust. Having an affair. Falling yet again to an addiction. Being violent in its many forms. Killing someone... These are things that happen in life. Some of these are things we have done. We may have lots of reasons why we did what we did, but that doesn't change things: once done, we can't undo our actions. So, is there no comeback from this? Do these failures of ours mean that we are doomed to live ruined lives?



This study looks at some of the people in the Bible who made a mess of their lives and how they got out of the hole they were in. If you have stuffed up badly – or know of someone who has – and can see no way out, then this could be a life-changing study for you.

Things to do/ Questions to consider

The Jewish kings in the Old Testament were a real 'mixed bag'. Some were good, but generally most of them failed in significant ways. Here are 4 of their stories.

Rehoboam

Rehoboam was Solomon's son. He was the last King of the united Israel, and on his watch the country was split in two: Judah in the south, and Israel in the north. A rival, Jeroboam, took over the larger kingdom in the north, while Rehoboam had to work hard to create a new Kingdom of Judah in the south. Once he had done this, Rehoboam abandoned following God's ways.

➔ **Read 2 Chronicles 12:1-12**

- How did Rehoboam respond to the Prophet's rebuke? And how did God respond to the response of Rehoboam?

"the LORD says, 'You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak.' The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is just." When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: "Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance..."

2Chron 12:5-7

"Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day..."

1 Kings 21:29

Ahab

Ahab was a king over the northern Kingdom of Israel for 22 years. From a faith perspective, his reign was disastrous. He was credited with doing more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any before him (1Kings 16:29-33). As background to the passage we will read, Ahab wanted to buy his neighbour's land from him so he could turn it into a vegetable garden. His neighbour, Naboth, refused because it was the inheritance of his ancestors. Ahab had him killed and took over the land by force. At this point, the Lord sent Elijah the Prophet to confront him.

➔ **Read 1 Kings 21:17-29**

- What was Ahab's reaction to Elijah's message for him? How did the Lord respond?

Manasseh

Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was King over Judah for 55 years. He chose not to follow the Lord, and instead welcomed many different religious practices into his kingdom, including making altars for Baal, worshipping

the stars, and sacrificing his children in the fire. At that time, Assyria was the superpower and in response to Manasseh's actions, the Lord used the Assyrians to invade the Kingdom of Judah and capture Manasseh, taking him to Babylon.

➔ **Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-13**

- What did Manasseh do following his capture? How did the Lord respond?

Josiah

Josiah became a King of Judah at 8 years old and reigned in Jerusalem for 31 years. When he was 16 he started to seek the Lord, and by the age of 20 he was removing Baal worship and Asherah poles from his kingdom. A few years later he ordered a clean-up of the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem, and in the process the workers found a copy of the Book of the Law

(their Bible). Somehow, it seems, they didn't already have a copy, and when they read it, they realised how far they had drifted from what the Lord was asking them to do.

➔ **Read 2 Kings 22:8-20**

- How did Josiah respond in his heart and actions when he heard the bad news? How did God respond to him?

"In his distress (Manasseh) sought the favour of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea..."

2Chron 33:12-13

"These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."

Isaiah 66:2

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

Questions to consider

- We are told that in one way or another these people 'humbled' themselves, which was more than just saying 'sorry'. From these accounts, how would you describe what it means to genuinely 'humble yourself'?
- For these kings and their people, there were still consequences as a result of their wrongdoing. So what do you think was the benefit of them humbling themselves?
- What is it about people 'humbling' themselves that so moves the Lord to save people from their self-inflicted disasters? What does this say about what God is like? (Consider also Matthew 11:28-30, John 13:12-17, Philippians 2:3-11, 1Peter 5:5-7)
- Given what we've looked at, do you think there is anyone that God would not be moved by if they humbled themselves, regardless of what they did?
- Do you think having this humility might help us to not make future big mistakes? What can we do to make humility a feature of our way of living and being?

Thought to finish

We all make mistakes. Not just innocent errors, but also intentional decisions to do things that cause damage to ourselves, others, or our world. And these things also bring pain to God. At some stage, when we realise the significance of what we've done, we find ourselves in a moment of decision: will I say "It doesn't matter" or "It's just too late to change" or "I can fix this"? OR will I acknowledge I have done wrong, I'm out of my depth and I need God to do something to fix this mess I've made? The stories from the Bible remind us that it is **never** too late nor are my mistakes too bad to be able to come back from. There are consequences for our wrongdoing, but **no-one** is beyond the redeeming love of God. In humility, when we seek help from God, He is always there to lift us out of the mess. His love for us is deep. He is the Fixer of big mistakes.