

Grace Guide



AUGUST 17-23

“Should Have Known Better...”

MONDAY
8/17

2 SAMUEL 12:1-15

David had been chosen by God, blessed with extraordinary responsibility, and given every reason to trust him, yet he still made terrible choices (read chapter 11...). Nathan's confrontation forces David to stop hiding behind his position and acknowledge, “I have sinned against the LORD.” David's sin had serious consequences (immediately the death of his son, but far reaching consequences for the kingdom of Israel), but his failure did not mean that God was finished with him. God's grace does not require us to pretend our mistakes don't matter. Instead, grace gives us the courage to admit where we have gone wrong and turn back to God. When we fail, one of the most important questions we can ask is not “How could I have done that?” but “What will I do (and in the future NOT do) now that I have done it?” Through Jesus Christ, we can face our failures honestly, receive God's forgiveness, and allow him to shape us into people who live differently.

1. Why do you think David needed Nathan to confront him before he was willing to acknowledge his sin?
2. David failed terribly. How is there a difference between feeling guilty about something you have done and allowing that failure to define who you are?

TUESDAY
8/18

PROVERBS 24:15-16

We all stumble. Sometimes we make a poor decision, sometimes we give in to temptation, sometimes we hurt someone we love, and sometimes our own weakness catches us by surprise. The writer of Proverbs does not describe the righteous as people who never fall, but, instead, they are described as people who get back up. There is an important difference. Falling is an event, staying down is a decision. God does not call us to a life in which we never make mistakes, but God *does* call us to keep turning toward him when we do. Because of Jesus, our failures do not have to become the end of our story. When we stumble, we can confess what happened, receive God's grace, learn from our mistakes, and rise again.

1. What is the difference between being faithful and being perfect?
2. When you have failed, what can it difficult for you to “rise again”?

WEDNESDAY
8/19

HOSEA 4:1-4

The prophet Hosea's message comes to people who have repeatedly turned away from God, yet God's invitation is remarkably simple: “Return.” God does not tell them to fix everything before they come back, God calls them to return to him, confess their dependence, and trust in his mercy. Then God promises to heal their faithfulness and love them freely. That is the heart of restoration: God does not merely point out what is wrong with us, he invites us back into relationship with him. We may have wandered, made poor choices, or disappointed ourselves and others, but none of that changes God's willingness to receive those who turn toward him. In Jesus Christ, we see this restoring love most clearly. Our failures may expose our need for God, but they cannot exhaust his grace.

1. Why is it sometimes easier to stay away from God in shame than to turn toward him in repentance?
2. What does it mean for you that God promises to “heal” faithlessness rather than simply condemn it?

THURSDAY

8/20

ROMANS 8:1-4

The apostle Paul makes a remarkable declaration, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That does not mean our choices no longer matter or that sin has no consequences. It means that our failures do not have the final word over our identity or our relationship with God. In Christ, we are not trapped beneath a sentence of condemnation, we are invited into a new way of living through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we are harder on ourselves than God is, carrying shame long after we have confessed and received forgiveness. The gospel calls us to take sin seriously while taking God's grace even more seriously. Because of Jesus, we can acknowledge where we have fallen short without believing that we are beyond redemption.

1. What is the difference between recognizing that something you have done is wrong and believing that you yourself are hopeless?
2. Is there something from your past that you need to entrust more fully to God's grace rather than continuing to punish yourself for it?

FRIDAY

8/21

PSALM 130

We sometimes read psalm 130 at funerals because this prayer of lament begins in “the depths,” in that place of desperation, guilt, and need that we experience in grief, and gradually the prayer moves toward hope. The psalmist recognizes that if God kept a record of every wrong, no one could stand. Yet instead of running from God, he cries out to the Lord because he knows that God is a God of forgiveness. Waiting for the Lord does not mean pretending everything is fine, it means trusting that God's mercy is greater than our failures and that his redemption is worth hoping for. We often want to erase our mistakes, but God offers something better – forgiveness and a restored relationship with him. When we find ourselves in our own “depths,” we can still turn toward God, because his grace reaches farther down than our failures.

1. What do you think it means that the psalmist cries out to God “from the depths” rather than trying to escape those depths on his own?
2. What are you currently waiting for God to redeem, heal, or make right?

**SATURDAY/
SUNDAY
8/22-23**

MARK 8:27-38

Peter gets one of the most important answers in the entire Gospel exactly right when he says, “You are the Christ.” But almost immediately, he gets something profoundly wrong. Peter cannot understand how the Messiah could suffer and die, and he tries to correct Jesus himself. His confidence (arrogance?) leads him into a serious mistake, yet Jesus does not abandon him. Peter’s story reminds us that sincere faith does not mean we will always understand God correctly or respond perfectly. Sometimes we can be genuinely devoted to Jesus and still get things badly wrong. What matters is what we do when Jesus exposes our misunderstanding. Following him means letting go of our need to have everything figured out and being willing to take up our cross and keep walking with him. Our mistakes can humble us, teach us, and draw us into deeper dependence on Christ.

1. Why do you think Peter moved so quickly from correctly identifying Jesus as the Christ to completely misunderstanding what that really means?
2. What does Jesus’ call to “deny yourself and take up your cross” mean for the way you respond when your plans or expectations conflict with his?

VERSE OF THE SERIES

“And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?’”
(Luke 9:23-25)