

One Person Can Make a Difference (Hezekiah)

Big Idea: One person can make a difference by leading others to worship, trusting God in times of trouble, and by repenting quickly when they sin.

Are you ready for some good news? It's summer. I'm ready for some good news.

When things are bad, we have even more potential to do good. When things are bad, one person has the potential to bring change. One person can change the spiritual temperature of things. One person can make a difference.

As we work through the Bible this year, we're in one of the low points. Things have been bad. For over 200 years now, things have been rough in both Israel and Judah. Think about that. 200 years ago was 1823. Canada didn't exist. Fort York was still being used. The population of Toronto, or York as it was called then, was about 1,200 people. Imagine if the years between then and now were mostly bad.

After 200 bad years, can one person make a difference? The person we're going to look at today shows us: yes, one person can make a difference. Not a perfect, person, mind you, but a godly one, especially if that person trusts God.

Let's look at what helped this one person make a difference after so many nasty years.

First, one person can make a difference by leading others to worship.

If you read about the kings in this period of history, this is what you'd hear: "And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done" (2 Kings 16:2). You hear something like this for king after king. All the kings of Israel were bad, and half of the 12 kings before the one we're looking at today were bad. Things were so bad that in 2 Kings 17, God uses the Assyrians to carry Israel into captivity. 2 Kings 17:18 says, "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only."

Given all the bad things, it's surprising to find a good king come along. Not just a good king, but one who calls the whole nation back to worship the one true God.

Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem ... In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east and said to them, "Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God ... Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, in order that his fierce anger may turn away from us. (2 Chronicles 29:1, 3-6, 10)

I love every word of this. One man comes to power. One man decides to go a different way than many of those who went before him. One man makes a difference.

He got rid of the idols. He reinstated the Passover. He reorganized the priests. He brought reform to the whole way that Judah worshiped. One person called an entire nation back to worship God.

And it had an effect! We read in 2 Chronicles 31:26, "So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem." He led others to delight in God.

You may be thinking, "Yes, but he was a king." Fair point. You and I aren't kings. But I've noticed that one person who decides to take God seriously can infect others. One person in a church can say, "Let's lean in! Let's stop playing games. Let's take God seriously." We've seen this at this church. There have been a number of times that one person has changed the spiritual temperature of the church.

I wrote [this](#) a couple of years ago, and I still mean every word.

I've been a pastor for a long time now. One thing I've learned: one or two people can make a huge difference in a church, both positively and negatively...

I've seen this over and over. One or two people can positively affect the entire feel of a church and lead others to faithfulness by their example. As a pastor, I can feel the difference when these people are present in the church...

A lot of us think that our influence is negligible. Never underestimate the power of living as a faithful follower of Jesus in a local church. Do radically ordinary things: show up every Sunday. Look for someone to encourage. Pray. Serve. Lean in during the sermon. Not only will you benefit, but others will see your example and begin to take these steps too. Given enough time, as others join you, God might shape the entire direction of the church through your example.

Sometimes low-maintenance believers don't get much attention in a church. They just faithfully show up, serve, and encourage. But don't overlook the power of what a few godly people in a church can do. Pray for them. Encourage them. Thank God for them. They may be easy to overlook, but they're one of God's gracious provisions to the church.

When one person leads others back to worship, it makes a world of difference. That's the first thing that Hezekiah did. Here's the second.

Second, one person can make a difference by trusting God in times of trouble.

Who are you under stress? Who are you when things get hard? The thing I love about Hezekiah is that he didn't just reform worship when things were going well. He also trusted God when it was really hard.

In Isaiah 36:1 we read, "In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." This is a very big deal. Assyria was a major world power. They had already carried Israel into exile. It is ridiculously scary to have this happen.

But that's not all. They taunt Hezekiah publicly. The Assyrians actually claim that the Lord, the God of Israel, sent them to attack Judah.

"Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours? Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? ... Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you

two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, "Go up against this land and destroy it." ' ' (Isaiah 36:4-5, 8-10)

What does Hezekiah do? He feels afraid, of course. Who wouldn't? But then he prays.

Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God ... So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD." (Isaiah 37:14-17, 20)

How does God respond?

And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. (Isaiah 37:36)

So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side. (2 Chronicles 32:22)

This isn't the only time that Hezekiah faced a crisis. In 2 Chronicles 32, we read, "In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the

LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign" (2 Chronicles 32:24). Hezekiah trusted God, and God answered his prayer.

What do you do when you face a crisis? One person can make a difference by trusting God in times of trouble. One person can demonstrate to others what it means to trust God in times of trouble. One person can show others that it's worth trusting God when we face impossible situations.

Ray Ortlund asks:

Are we shocking anybody by our faith? If God were to show us in one instant the full meaning of living by faith, we might all gasp and say, "Nobody can live that way, not in this world." That's why he keeps throwing our lives into upheaval. He wants us to experience what it's like for him to come through when the only thing that will suffice is what is directly and immediately of God.

Where do you turn when you face impossible situations? Hezekiah shows us where we can turn. We can always turn to God.

One person can make a difference by leading others to worship. One person can make a difference by trusting God in times of trouble. But there's one more thing.

One person can make a difference by repenting quickly when they sin.

Up until now, you may think that Hezekiah's close to perfect. He is really good. He comes close to David as king, but like David, he's not perfect. None of us are. He makes a major mistake. After God healed him, he sinned against God.

2 Chronicles 32:25 says, "But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem."

Hezekiah became proud. God hates pride. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). But when Hezekiah repented, God heard his prayer.

But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 32:26)

Hezekiah's sin was serious. It had a devastating effect on Jerusalem later. Sin still has consequences. But Hezekiah showed people how to repent.

Sometimes we think that God can't use us because we're imperfect. Apart from Jesus, we're all imperfect. We're sinners. But we can also be repenters. We can be quick to turn back to God, to show to others what it looks like to turn to God when we sin. We can run to the cross, to the one who has made full and complete payment for our sins.

But what you most need in a leader is someone who has been broken by the knowledge of his or her sin, and even greater knowledge of Jesus' costly grace. The number one leaders in every church ought to be the people who repent the most fully without excuses, because you don't need any now; the most easily without bitterness; the most publicly and the most joyfully. (Tim Keller)

Most of us think that our lives can't make a difference. But God can use us, even – especially – in dark times like this. **One person can make a difference by leading oth-**

ers to worship, trusting God in times of trouble, and by repenting quickly when they sin.