

5-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: Isolate Yourself (Hebrews 10:24-25)

To ruin your life, simply allow the foundation of your life to weaken. Then, toppling is inevitable.

If you ignore erosion of your integrity, you will implode. If you shrug at the explosives beneath the surface, explosives that threaten to weaken your character, you will implode. If your competence and gifting outpace your integrity, you will implode. If the weight of your responsibilities and burdens is greater than your character, you will implode.

King David in the Old Testament—that great King whom God called “one after my own heart”—imploded. (Read 2 Samuel 11-12 for the full story.) The story of David’s implosion jumps out in the biblical narrative and disturbs us. It jolts us because David’s implosion is so out of sync with all we read about him beforehand. His implosion confronts us with the reality of our own fragility and struggles.

If you want to implode, the first step is to isolate yourself. This is exactly what David did. We read in 2 Samuel 11:1, “In the spring when kings march out to war . . . David remained in Jerusalem.” He was away from his responsibilities. He isolated himself. And by isolating himself, he left himself vulnerable to implosion.

We must guard against the same vulnerability. This is one of the many reasons the Bible exhorts us to stay connected to God’s people—to a local church. “Don’t neglect gathering together,” the writer of Hebrews tells us. Are you guarding against that vulnerability, or are you at risk of imploding? Are you living in a community that will provoke love and good works, or are you on the road to ruining your life?

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Day 2: Ignore Your Boredom (Romans 11:33–36)

Sitting with an older man, a man I love and respect, I asked him about the dark period in his life—the period when he abandoned the wife of his youth for another woman. He realized the folly of his ways, repented, came home to his wife, and she graciously and fully forgave him. There was, of course, struggle and regret before the beauty of the restoration, but they are happily married now and have counseled many other couples through a similar period of darkness and strife.

“So was your marriage rocky leading up to your affair?” I asked and expected to hear of challenging times, years of distance, or a hardening of his heart toward his wife.

“No. She was great. The affair didn’t begin with my marriage,” he responded.

“What was it then?”

“I was bored with work, bored with my life. I was just bored.”

Though boredom can sound innocent, boredom can ruin us.

We see this again when we return to the implosion of King David. What was David doing when he saw Bathsheba bathing and responded by sinning against her, her husband, and God? Walking around on the roof. He couldn’t sleep, so he got up, walked around, and looked for something to fill his boredom. His boredom pulled him from his bed, drove him to a late night walk in search of something, and urged him to invite a married woman into his palace and into his arms.

But if God is as great as He truly is, we have no reason, no excuse, to ever be bored! Consider the words of Paul in Romans 11: *depth, riches, wisdom, knowledge, unsearchable, untraceable*. There is no one like the Lord.

The cure to our boredom is not to try to replace it with unfulfilling things that Satan tells us will give us pleasure and enjoyment, but that will ultimately ruin our lives; the cure to our boredom is to look to Jesus. Where are you looking? Are your eyes fixed on your boring career, relationships, and possessions, or on the eternally satisfying glory of God?

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Day 3: Believe in Yourself (Matthew 23:12)

While the explosive sins of isolation and boredom were active in David's heart, pride was the first to take root. It was his pride that pulled him into isolation, his pride that shrugged off accountability, and his pride that drove him away from others and toward the absurd thinking that he did not need anyone. It was also pride that fostered boredom in David's heart. His pride caused him to see himself as greater than he was, which inevitably led him to view God's blessings as less than they were. His pride caused him to look at himself more and God less, which amplified and multiplied his boredom and isolation.

We get the term *narcissism* from the Greek mythological figure Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image. He was a hunter and was well known for his beauty. His arch-nemesis was named, well, he was named Nemesis, and he lured Narcissus to a pool where Narcissus saw his own reflection. Narcissus was in awe of himself and stared at his reflection until he died. His pride paralyzed him and prohibited him from walking in wisdom. In some versions of the story, he killed himself because his own image could not quench and satisfy him. Like the mythical Narcissus, David was preoccupied with himself and it led to his own demise.

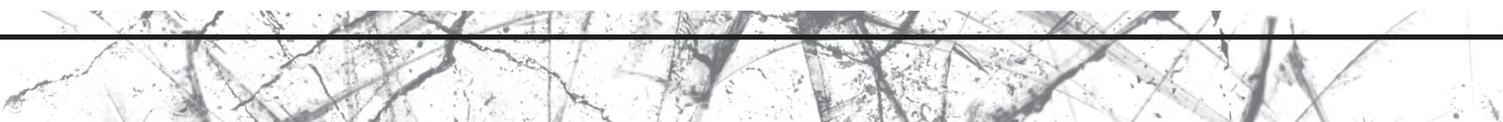
This pride is not limited to Narcissus or to David. Pride was the first sin, and it still lives in you and me. In every sin we commit, we ultimately commit an act of pride, an act of treason that says we belong on God's throne.

This is why Jesus said in Matthew 23, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." If you believe in yourself, you've already exalted yourself. You're operating in pride and "pride comes before destruction". (Proverbs 16:18)

If you want your life to be saved, believe in Jesus; if you want to ruin your life, believe in yourself.

Where are you placing your belief?

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HOW TO RUIN YOUR LIFE

(and how to come back)

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Day 4: Confession (Psalm 51)

If you want to ruin your life, you now have a roadmap: isolate yourself, ignore your boredom, and believe in yourself. But if you want to start over . . .

There is good news. God is eager to forgive. No matter how great your sin is, His grace is greater. Wondering if there is enough forgiveness for your sin is like a child wondering if there is enough water in the ocean to fill his sippy cup. No matter how much you feel you have ruined your life, you have not out-sinned God's grace. If you will come to Him, He will receive you. If you will glance toward Him, He will run to you just as the father, in a story Jesus told, ran to his wayward son and kissed and clothed him before throwing a party. More than you want to be forgiven, He wants to forgive. More than you want to come home to Him, He wants you home. If you can't walk, crawl. He will receive you and shower you with His mercy and love.

David paints a beautiful picture of this crawling back to the mercy and love of God in Psalm 51. He wrote the psalm after his implosion, after he had ruined his life. He recognized his sin and he recognized what he needed. Ultimately, David didn't need help managing his lust; he didn't need help with his self control. The root of all David's problems was his heart, and he realized it. Thus, he prayed for a new, clean heart.

This is what we all need. The only cure for our sin sickness is a new heart. If you are not yet a follower of Christ, you don't need to turn over a new leaf; you need a new heart. Ask God to give you one and He will. If you are a follower of Christ, confess your sins to Him again. Turn to Him in faith and trust that He will finish the good work He started—making you new.

What unconfessed sin do you need to take to God right now? What big, scary sin are you afraid He won't forgive?

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Day 5: Celebration (Psalm 32)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

This promise from the apostle John is true in all cases, for all time. It’s true for you. Regardless of how great your sin, how horrific your mistakes, how ruinous your implosion, God will forgive you because of His faithfulness and righteousness.

After David confessed his sin in Psalm 51, he celebrated the forgiveness he received in Psalm 32. The Psalms were compiled over several hundred years and are placed by themes and not in chronological order in the book of Psalms. David’s implosion is chronicled in 2 Samuel 11, the confrontation with the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12, his prayer of confession in Psalm 51, and his celebration of forgiveness in Psalm 32.

In God’s grace, David’s misery and mourning were replaced with joy as his sin was carried away. If you have confessed your sin to Him, He has carried your sin away too. He has not placed it close to you so you can reflect on it or stare at it. He has carried it so far away that it is infinitely separated from you—as far as the east is from the west.

Celebrate this forgiveness! Take joy in the reality that you are no longer bound by your past mistakes, your past sins, or your past struggles. Even for those who have ruined their life, there is a chance for restoration. His name is Jesus Christ, and we should celebrate when we see what He has done.

Do you believe that God is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins? To cleanse you? Do you trust that Jesus will finish the good work He started in you?

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