

Q: Historically, the leaders God developed included, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. But God continues to raise up quality leaders for his people in every generation. Discuss some of the people (unknown or known) who have brought spiritual leadership into your life in a positive way.

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Q: Discuss some of the individuals God has put into your life that you might influence (with his help) in a positive direction. What's the next step for you?

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The greatest part of God's solution to the problem of bad leaders comes in verses 5-6 where God promises the perfect leader who will lead you well. This one, called the "branch of David" is the Messiah Jesus. He is the perfect king who now rules over the church and will one day rule for 1,000 years. (See Revelation 20:8.)

Q: Discuss the characteristics of the way Christ rules in verses 5-6. What does he offer us that human leaders will not be able to match?

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Q: Not all the Jews in the first century saw Jesus' rule as something wonderful. Some opposed him. Some questioned him. Believers can do the same, choosing personal independence instead of trusting in him. Discuss some of the reasons we are often more inclined to follow our own ways of doing things than to yield to the kingship of Jesus over our lives.

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# Harvest **Reaching Beyond**

Evangelical Free Church

*A Disciplemaking Tool of Harvest Evangelical Free Church  
(for personal study and/or growth groups)*

Week of December 17, 2017

Jeremiah 23:1-8

## Week Overview:

## When Leaders Fail

**O**ur culture seems awash with poor leaders. Some do all kinds of hurtful and damaging things to those they are supposed to lead. Others lose their positions because they abuse subordinates, embezzle money, take bribes, or lie about their accomplishments. Members of Congress resign because of current or past misbehavior.

Promising teachers go to jail because of sexual contact with underage students. Financial officials bankrupt their companies or the city or county government for which they work.

Workers who are unwisely given supervisory roles frustrate fellow workers. They become workplace Nazis who are never wrong and demand perfection. They try to motivate by complaining, threatening, and belittling others. They destroy trust and demotivate everyone around them. They grow lazy while expecting those who report to them to work twice as hard.

Small business owners or managers constantly hire new staff because no one lasts very long. They blame the workforce, but fail to realize that they don't know how to manage conflict, inspire, build a sense of teamwork, or give value to the lives of those who serve them.

Family members who are given authority over the estate of someone who died manipulate the outcome to favor them. A groom turns into a suspicious tyrant over his wife. A bride becomes a wife who insists that her husband satisfy every wish and desire that she has.

Most of us have unpleasant experiences with bad leadership. That can leave us jaded, disillusioned, and frustrated. We can even begin to doubt God's care or his power to deal with such things. Or we can become chronically discontent and suspicious. We can move from being contributors who bear fruit wherever we find ourselves to disgruntled critics who find fault with everyone and who only think about ourselves. These are some of the dark places we can go if we don't bring God into the leadership equation. We're going to see how God fits in as we look at Jeremiah 23:1-8.

## When leaders fail

**Jeremiah 23:1** “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. <sup>4</sup> I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’ <sup>7</sup> “Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ <sup>8</sup> but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.”

Q: As a group, discuss some of the experiences you have had or know about that illustrate failed leadership and its consequences.

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Q: Share with others how you feel when you see high profile national or regional leaders evicted from their jobs.

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Q: In Jeremiah 23:1-2a God describes his people as sheep and their leaders as shepherds. Discuss what God expected of the leaders and what they did instead.

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Q: All of us have led others (as parents, volunteer leaders, or men and women in the workplace). There have been times when we have failed and those under our leadership did not flourish as they might have. As a group, discuss some of the factors in ordinary life that can make it a challenge for us to lead well.

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When people don’t lead wisely or well, we can become embittered, discouraged, or frustrated. God wants us to prevent us from becoming disengaged cynics who simply grumble or mutter about how rotten the leaders are. *So he tells us four steps he takes when we suffer under poor leadership.*

Q: What does God promise to do to the leaders who abuse his people in verse 2? [Note the word translated *attend* is translated *punish* 50 times in the Old Testament.] How is this an encouragement to us?

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Q: In verses 3 and again in verses 7-8 God acknowledges that the nation will go into exile. But he has something good in store for them after that. What does he promise?

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Q: The exile, though horrible, was not permanent. The people would return to a place God had prepared for them. But that earthly kingdom would be temporary too. What does 1 Peter 1:3-4 promise for believers who trust in Jesus?

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Q: The Jews did not have to wait until the return from exile to find relief from God. What else did he promise them in verse 4?

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