

PAY ATTENTION TO THE RIPPLE EFFECT

The decisions you make and the actions you take affect those around you.

Rehoboam learned that lesson the hard way. Rehoboam followed his father Solomon to the throne of Israel. Solomon had exacted harsh labor on the people. A delegation, led by Jeroboam, went to the new king and asked him to take away the harshness.

In private, Rehoboam asked his elder council what he should do. They advised that he become a servant to the people, lighten their load, and the people would always be faithful servants to the king.

His circle of younger friends gave him just the opposite advice. They told him to work the people harder. He liked that idea, told the delegation his plans, and wound up with a divided kingdom.

At one time or another all of us are impacted by someone else's decisions or actions. When we suffer the negative consequences of another's wrongheaded decision, God can redeem the situation. Although Rehoboam wound up ruling only two tribes—Judah and Benjamin (as opposed to Jeroboam's rule over ten tribes)—it was through Judah that Jesus came to us. God can work, and often does what seems to us as his best work, in situations that seem the most difficult.

We should always consider how our decisions and actions affect those around us. In “systems thinking” it is said that “you are the highest leverage point in any system you are in.” More simply stated, you can make a difference. You are more “powerful” than you think you are—no matter your station in life.

Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus* tells the story of Nelson Mandela's use of the South African rugby team to help heal a nation divided by apartheid. In one scene of the movie he explains to a team member, “Reconciliation starts here. Forgiveness starts here.” He knew his actions would have a ripple effect on those around him. Eventually the blessing of that “ripple” washed across the nation.

Rehoboam made a bad decision, but it was really his father Solomon's actions that divided the kingdom. He forsook the one true God and chased after other “gods,” he neglected to serve the people and instead forced them to work harder, and he was focused on himself, as reflected in his accumulation of wives, gold, and horses in direct disobedience to God's counsel. His son Rehoboam was merely living out consequence of those decisions and actions.

Learn from Solomon's mistake. Love God first. Love others second. And serve those that do not yet know God. You will be surprised to see how far your ripple will travel.