

Devotional Guide

September 7–12, 2026
Choices Along The Line #7



The Choice to Intervene

When what God intends is under attack, don't look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

Speaker: Mike Kleven, Lead Pastor

Bible Text(s): Jeremiah 38–39

The message explores the moment we see something going wrong and calculate the cost of stepping in. In Jeremiah 38, Jerusalem is under siege, God's prophet is sinking in a cistern of mud, and King Zedekiah sits silent in the gate where kings were meant to do justice. A Cushite palace servant named Ebed-Melech walks across those same stones, tells the truth, and pulls Jeremiah up with surprising care. God later meets his fear with a promise: you will not be given into the hands of those you fear, because you trust Me. The Big Idea is clear: When what God intends is under attack, don't look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

How to Use This Guide:

Set aside 10-15 minutes daily. Read the Bible, reflect on the thought, answer questions, pray, and take the action step. Commit to this for growth—journal insights and share with a friend for accountability.

Keep this guide close this week. Return to the Big Idea each day: When what God intends is under attack, don't look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

Day 1: The Cost of Stepping In

Bible Reading: James 4:17; Proverbs 31:8-9

James 4:17 (NIV) "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV) "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Devotional Thought:

The sermon opened at a kitchen table after a duck hunt. A hired man sat down to supper. One of the brothers reached down, scooped mashed potatoes and gravy with his fingers, and ate. The hired man's shoulders slumped. The brother laughed. A guest saw the humiliation, calculated the cost of stepping in, and said nothing. Fear never calls itself cowardice. It calls itself prudence.

Rural life knows that fear well. Speak up and it will be remembered. So we wait for someone with more cover to go first. "That's not my place." "The pastor should handle that." The Big Idea presses the other way: When what God intends is under attack, don't look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What does James 4:17 reveal about knowing the good and refusing to do it?**
- 2. Where have you watched someone be humiliated or run over and stayed quiet?**
- 3. How does "prudence" sometimes dress up a decision to look the other way?**
- 4. What emotion rises when you remember a moment you did not step in?**
- 5. What is one small way you can refuse the easy exit today?**

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, forgive the times I calculated the cost and chose silence. Give me courage to see my part when what You intend is under attack. Amen.

Action Step:

Write down one recent moment you stayed quiet. Pray James 4:17 over it, then ask God what a next faithful step would have been.

Day 2: Silence at the Gate

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 38:4-6

Jeremiah 38:5-6 (NIV) “He is in your hands,” King Zedekiah answered. “The king can do nothing to oppose you.” So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king’s son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

Devotional Thought:

Jerusalem is out of bread. Jeremiah has been preaching surrender to Babylon as the Lord’s judgment—not as treason, as God’s plan. Powerful men in Zedekiah’s court treat that word as a threat to what they want done. They seize the prophet and lower him into a cistern. Intent: he dies quietly. The word of God is down there in the mud.

Zedekiah is David’s last sitting king. He stands in the Benjamin Gate—the place a king does justice—and he will not stop the murder. He does not throw Jeremiah in. He allows it. Refusal is a choice. Many failures along David’s line were not loud rebellions. They were silence in the gate. The Big Idea names the fork: don’t look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do the officials hope will happen if Jeremiah stays in the cistern?
2. How is “He is in your hands... I can do nothing” still a decision?
3. Where do you see silence functioning as surrender in families, churches, or workplaces?
4. Why is it easier to wait for a safer person to go first?
5. What “gate” has God given you where justice or truth is supposed to be done?

Prayer Prompt:

Father, I do not want to sit in the gate and call my silence wisdom. Show me where I have allowed harm by looking away. Give me a king’s courage under King Jesus. Amen.

Action Step:

Identify one place you have said, “I can do nothing.” Ask whether that is truth—or fear dressed as caution.

Day 3: The Servant Who Spoke Up

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 38:7-9

Jeremiah 38:7, 9 (NIV) “But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate... Ebed-Melech said to him, ‘My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city.’”

Devotional Thought:

Ebed-Melech means “servant of the king.” He is a Cushite—from Nubia, south of Egypt, an African outsider in Judah’s court—and a palace official with access to Zedekiah but no clan, no land, and no seat in the assembly. The man with the least standing is the one who stands.

He leaves the king’s house, walks to the gate, and speaks to the king’s face. Honor for the office. No cover for the sin. He names the officials’ act as evil. He names Jeremiah as the prophet. He will not let the king hide behind procedure. The Big Idea takes on flesh: look for your part in His plan.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What details in Jeremiah 38:7-9 show Ebed-Melech’s courage and clarity?**
- 2. Why does it matter that the outsider is the one who tells the truth?**
- 3. How does “My lord the king” model honor without enabling sin?**
- 4. Where are you tempted to hide behind procedure when a person is being harmed?**
- 5. Who might God be asking you to name truly this week—without cruelty and without cover?**

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, You are the King who never sits silent in the gate. Give me Ebed-Melech’s walk and Ebed-Melech’s words. Amen.

Action Step:

Practice one true sentence you may need to speak this week. Write it. Pray it. Do not rehearse the exit.

Day 4: Rescue With Rags

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 38:10-13

Jeremiah 38:11-12 (NIV) “Then Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went to a room under the treasury in the palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from there and let them down with ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern. Ebed-Melech the Cushite said to Jeremiah, ‘Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes.’ Jeremiah did so.”

Devotional Thought:

When the king orders thirty men to pull Jeremiah up before he dies, the Cushite does not grab the nearest rope and haul. Officials think about mud. The servant thinks about rope-burn. How you do the right thing is part of the obedience. Tone, timing, presence, and follow-through belong to the assignment.

Ebed-Melech does not save Jerusalem. That is not what God intends for Jerusalem in that hour. He takes two steps: he confronts the king, and he gets one man out of one cistern with surprising care. Your assignment is similarly sized. The Big Idea is not “fix the whole city.” It is “look for your part.”

Reflection Questions:

1. What does the detail of old rags reveal about Ebed-Melech’s heart?
2. When have you seen someone do the right thing in a way that still wounded people?
3. Why is a “sized step” more faithful than a fantasy of saving the whole city?
4. Who near you needs to be lifted without being cut on the way up?
5. What rags—patience, gentleness, timing—do you need to gather before you act?

Prayer Prompt:

Father, teach me to stand without becoming harsh. If I lift someone this week, let me pad the ropes. Amen.

Action Step:

If you intervene, refuse to cut the person on the way up. Choose tone and timing as carefully as you choose the words.

Day 5: Afraid—and Still Trusting

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 39:15-18; Psalm 56:3-4

Jeremiah 39:17-18 (NIV) “But I will rescue you on that day, declares the Lord; you will not be given into the hands of those you fear. I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the Lord.” Psalm 56:3-4 (NIV) “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid.”

Devotional Thought:

God does not commend Ebed-Melech for having no fear. He commends him for trust. “You will not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid.” Fear-plus-trust is the doctrine of this sermon. Both Zedekiah and Ebed-Melech are afraid. Only one trusts God enough to do what is right.

The city still falls. Zedekiah loses sons, eyes, and throne. Jeremiah lives; the word is not silenced. The remnant on the day the city falls includes a Cushite servant marked by trust, not pedigree. You are never more secure than when you stand up for what is right. The Big Idea holds: don’t look for a way out.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What does Jeremiah 39:17-18 tell you about God’s view of fear?**
- 2. Where do you feel afraid of people you might have to face if you speak?**
- 3. Why is “trust,” not “fearlessness,” the word God uses?**
- 4. How does Jesus—the King from David’s line—complete this story for you?**
- 5. What would it sound like to pray 39:17 out loud before you take your step?**

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, I am afraid of these people. I still trust You. Rescue me from the deeper harm of becoming someone who saw the wrong and chose the exit. Amen.

Action Step:

Pray Jeremiah 39:17 out loud once today. Then take one small walk toward the thing you have been avoiding.

Day 6: Look for Your Part

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 39:18; Matthew 25:40

Jeremiah 39:18 (NIV) “I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the Lord.”
Matthew 25:40 (NIV) “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Devotional Thought:

Review the week: a table where no one spoke, a king silent in the gate, a servant who walked across the stones, rags under a prophet’s arms, and a personal word to a man who was afraid and still trusted. David’s last sitting king would not pull God’s prophet out of the mud. A servant who was not even Judean did. The Final King will never leave you there.

Stop waiting for a safer king—the pastor, a more mature believer, your spouse—to go first. Trust the King you already have. His name is Jesus. This week take the step God places before you. Stepping into God’s will is the safest place to be. Live the Big Idea: When what God intends is under attack, don’t look for a way out. Look for your part in His plan.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What key insight are you taking from Ebed-Melech’s story this week?**
- 2. How has your view of fear, silence, and courage changed?**
- 3. Where will you apply the Big Idea in the coming week?**
- 4. Who could you encourage—or lift—with surprising care today?**
- 5. How will you keep trusting Jesus when the cost of standing feels high?**

Prayer Prompt:

Loving Father, thank You for Ebed-Melech’s trust and for Jesus, the King who never leaves His people in the mud. Show me my part. Give me courage and care. Amen.

Action Step:

Memorize Jeremiah 39:18 this week. Share one takeaway from this guide with a friend or family member today.



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