

Life Group Discussion Guide

Against All Odds: How the Name of Jesus Spreads
Week 4: Pride Falls • Acts 12:20–24

Throughout the historical accounts recorded in Scripture, the pride of man is continually confronted by the power of the Word of God. The events of Acts 12:20–24 are no different, as the shocking and disgraceful death of King Herod reveals 3 key truths about human pride:

1. Pride exalts self

In this week's message, Pastor Caleb defined pride as, *"self-worship and the desire to lift up and exalt ourselves beyond our place as God's creatures."*

Thanks to the nature we inherited from our ancestors, Adam and Eve, we live in opposition to God from birth. We are predisposed to depend on our own knowledge, strength, plans, and to think ourselves more superior than we should. Apart from the Gospel and its redeeming work in our lives, our pride drives us to oppose our Creator and live an autonomous yet unsatisfying life.

- What are the signs and symptoms of a life of pride, as opposed to a life of submission to God's authority?
- How have you experienced pridefulness as an "empty promise" that leads only to dissatisfaction?

Absent of a work of God in our lives, we will be proud people. One key way that God humbles our prideful hearts is through biblical community, a truth to which Dietrich Bonhoeffer attested:

"But God has put his Word into the mouth of men in order that it may be communicated to other men. When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find his living Word in the witness of a brother." (Life Together 22–23)

- How/why does a life in biblical community produce humility?
- Have you personally experienced the power of biblical community? In what ways?
- Who are you walking with that speaks the Word of God to you?
- To whom are you intentionally speaking the Word of God?

2. Pride opposes God

As our passage continues, verse 21 tells us, "On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people." Josephus, a Jewish Historian from the first century, recorded the event this way:

"After the completion of the third year of his reign over the whole of Judea, Agrippa came to the city of Caesarea...(where) he celebrated spectacles in honor of Caesar. On the second day of the

spectacles, clad in a garment woven completely of silver so that its texture was indeed wonderful, he entered the theatre at daybreak. There the sliver, illumined by the touch of the first rays of the sun, was wondrously radiant and by its glitter inspired fear and awe in those who gazed intently upon it."

Impressed by Herod's oration and awed by his glittering garment, the people responded, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man" (v. 22). Left unchecked, Herod's consuming pride allowed him to believe he was worthy of such praise—of being worshiped as a god himself. His arrogance placed him in opposition to the One True God, for which he would pay a steep price.

- Like the people of Tyre and Sidon, have you enthroned someone or something else in God's rightful place in your life? What has been the outcome?
- Like Herod, has pride ever led you to live as if you're the god of your own life? What has been the outcome?

3. Pride falls before God

"Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died." (v. 23) God's powerful act of justice against Herod's pride reveals an important truth: the Word of God overpowers the pride of man. Pastor Caleb put it this way:

"The Name of Jesus will either break us so we can be restored in Him or it will crush us because, in the end, God's Word will vanquish the pride of every person."

- Have you allowed the Gospel to break you? To shatter your pride and humbly bring you to dependence on Jesus? What has been the evidence of that change in your life?

Following God's righteous judgment against Herod, verse 24 tells us, *"But the Word of God continued to spread and flourish."* This paves the way for our **Big Idea: God's Word spreads in spite of prideful opposition.** As Pastor Caleb encouraged us:

"We live in a culture that openly opposes the Word of God. Does this mean we should be discouraged, shrink back, or give up? No! The conditions are right for us to see the Name of Jesus spread in power to our friends and family who are far from Him!"

King Jesus made the ultimate demonstration of humility when He laid down His life in order that we could be rescued from our prideful opposition to the Word of God. Just as salvation was bought through a radical act of humility, it's only through humbled hearts that we can be used to spread the Name of Jesus today.

- Why is humility essential to the spread of the Gospel?
- What would it look like for you to walk in the type of humility that spreads the Name of Jesus? What would need to change in your mind, heart, and life?

- Take time now to confess any pride that has taken up residence in your mind and heart, asking God to humble you by His Word and use you to spread His Name.