

DAVID, THE FAILED KING

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. Temptation leads to sin and death (2 Sam. 11:2-5,14-17,26-27).
2. Sin leads to confrontation and judgment (2 Sam. 12:1-10).
3. Repentance leads to grace and forgiveness (2 Sam. 12:13-15,24-25).

Background Passages: 2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God is gracious to forgive even the greatest of evil when a sinner repents.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Even David, the greatest of Israel's kings and a man after God's own heart, was a sinner in need of salvation. No one is good enough to be right with God. We too need forgiveness found only through the sacrifice of Jesus, a perfect King, who took upon Himself the punishment our sins deserve.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we are a forgiven people, we live with appropriate transparency before others, celebrating Christ's transforming work so that they too might repent and find forgiveness of their sin in Jesus Christ.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: If you love King David's victorious story, now might be the time to put down your Bible (but don't!). Though he was chosen of God, mighty in battle, patient in faith, and merciful to the needy (see 2 Sam. 9), he was in no way perfect. And though David was at the peak of his power, it took only one sinful decision to watch his reputation, family, and respect fall like a house of cards. Like a lion watching his prey from afar, waiting for the perfect moment to strike, Satan had chosen his strategy carefully. And it worked.

INSTRUCT: Write the following names on a board or large piece of paper: Ben Johnson, Barry Bonds, Lance Armstrong, John Calipari, Rosie Ruiz. Say: "All of these names are likely familiar to you. They were some of the greatest sports stars of their eras. But is that the first thing that comes to mind when you see these names? If not what is it?" (These stars were convicted of cheating.)

DISCUSS: How do most people in society respond to others who don't play by the rules? (they are offended; they choose to boycott the athlete, sport, team, or sponsors; they express anger; they complain; some consider cheating to gain an edge a worthwhile play; some join in cheating because they see its potential benefits)

TRANSITION: The old saying "Cheaters never prosper" is sometimes true. Some cheaters are caught, exposed to the public, and made an example to others. But sometimes people cheat for years, in any number of ways, and are never brought to justice. Cheating is breaking the rules for your advantage. In God's gymnasium, cheating is called "sin." We all know the rules, and some try to follow them, but we are all guilty of thinking we can break the rules without getting caught. In today's passage, our beloved King David doesn't simply sin once, his sin gets out of control.

POINT 1

TEMPTATION LEADS TO SIN AND DEATH

(2 SAM. 11:2-5,14-17,26-27).

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. **3** And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" **4** So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. **5** And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." . . . **14** In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. **15** In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." **16** And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. **17** And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. . . . **26** When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. **27** And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

NOTES

URIAH THE HITTITE

The Hittites, also called Hethites, were descendants of Heth, a son of Canaan, and a people originally located in the hill country of Canaan (Gen. 10:15; Ex. 13:5; Num. 13:29). Because Uriah was identified as a Hittite (2 Sam. 11:3), many Bible scholars believe he likely chose to leave his gods behind and follow Yahweh. This may have happened when many men joined David while he was on the run from King Saul (see 1 Sam. 22:1-2).

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Never deliberate about what is clearly wrong, and try to persuade yourself that it is not."¹

-Frederick Temple (1821-1902)

READ: Ask three volunteers to read aloud **2 Samuel 11:2-5, 14-17, and 26-27** from their Bibles.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 2-5** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

David put himself in the path of **temptation** and chose to **sin**. He then found himself in the position of needing to **hide** his actions.

DISCUSS: What steps should we take to minimize our exposure to **temptation and sin?** (regular confession of sins to God; confessing sins to a trusted brother or sister in Christ; seek accountability from the family of God; meditate on God's Word; be mindful and wise about the places we go and the media choices we make)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 14-17,26-27** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Keeping sin hidden requires **new** sins and piles on consequences, but we cannot keep our sins hidden from **God**.

TRANSITION: David thought he got away with his adultery and murder, but the omniscient God sees, knows, and will take into account all sins.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 2-5 / In 2 Samuel 11:1, we find the setting and the context that ground the following narrative: It was springtime. This was the customary time for warfare because the crops were in the ground but not yet ready for regular maintenance, meaning the men of the nation had time on their hands. On top of that, marching armies lived off the land as they traveled, and springtime would have provided the fighters with more sustenance than at other times of the year.

Verse 1 also informs us that kings generally went out to war with their armies, but here we read that King David remained in Jerusalem, sending his general in his stead. We're not told why David didn't go, but as we discover, David ended up being where he shouldn't have been—on his roof alone with wandering eyes.

David's palace would have been the tallest building in the city. From his vantage point, he saw **"Bathsheba"** bathing. Some have speculated that Bathsheba was attempting to seduce David or in some way entice him to sin, but there is no basis to this. The problem was that David, where he shouldn't have been, indulged his eyes and his imagination. God's followers cannot always prevent tempting sights, sounds, and images from entering their awareness, but they can resist such temptations, knowing that God is faithful to protect them from temptation beyond what they can bear, always providing a way out (see 1 Cor. 10:13). But we always sin when we don't seek the way out and instead indulge the temptation.

David found out who Bathsheba was, who her father was (**"Eliam"**), and who her husband was (**"Uriah the Hittite"**)—two of his best warriors (see 2 Sam. 23:34,39). But thinking only of himself, David sent for her. David yielded to sin that he likely thought to be his secret. When Bathsheba realized she was **"pregnant,"** however, David's secrecy was going to require some careful manipulating to maintain.

VERSES 14-17,26-27 / David's attempt at deceit to cover his adultery was to summon Uriah back home under the guise of needing a war report, hoping the soldier might go home and sleep with his wife. Yet Uriah, loyal and true, delivered the news to his king and twice refused to go home to his wife while his fellow soldiers were fighting on the battlefield (11:6-13). Even Uriah's consummate faithfulness to the men of Israel didn't stir up enough conviction in David to abandon his evil plan.

Uriah's honor and honesty contrast greatly with David's sin and deception. Uriah the Hittite, a former pagan who joined the people of God, was showing proof of his faith in the holy God of Israel while David, God's chosen king, was committing sin after sin to try to keep his actions hidden.

When David's attempts at cover with Uriah alive failed, he determined to have Uriah killed so that he could make his soldier's widow his wife and thereby explain away her pregnancy. So at David's command to Joab, with a death sentence carried by the king's unwitting victim, Uriah died for David's sin. David was now guilty of murder as he put his own men at risk, just so Uriah would fall on the battlefield.

When Bathsheba found out about Uriah's death, she **"lamented"** for her husband. We can only imagine the depths of her despair. As many widows and widowers can attest, the death of a spouse is also the death of dreams. Bathsheba was now attached to a man who had already proven his treachery and who also had many other wives.

According to plan, David married Bathsheba and she bore his son. We have no idea if the rumors were flying, but David likely thought his troubles were over. To his face, perhaps no one would have ever accused him of his sin, and sin upon sin. **"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD,"** and the holy God of justice will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7).

POINT 2

SIN LEADS TO CONFRONTATION AND JUDGMENT (2 SAM. 12:1-10).

NOTES

1 And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. **2** The rich man had very many flocks and herds, **3** but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. **4** Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” **5** Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, **6** and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” **7** Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. **8** And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. **9** Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. **10** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Samuel 12:1-10** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 1-6** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

David, who knew the law, was very quick to **judge** sin in another’s life while **denying** and **covering** up his own sin.

DISCUSS: Why do you think we are prone to be angry about the sins of others while overlooking our own sins? (we feel guilty and ashamed about our own sins and project the resulting anger upon others; we want to mask our own guilt and shame by showing ourselves to be concerned with the unrighteousness of others; inwardly we are angry with ourselves for our sin)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 7-10** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

When we disregard God’s **blessings** by being **disobedient**, we disregard His sovereignty and rule, but God will not **ignore** our sin.

“THE SWORD”

Nathan’s prophecy about “the sword,” or strife and death, never leaving David’s house was fulfilled in a number of ways: one son raped a half-sister (2 Sam. 13:1-20); her brother killed her rapist (2 Sam. 13:21-39); that brother also went on to usurp the throne and seek to hunt his father David down to kill him, but he ended up dying instead (2 Sam. 15-18). Also, the transition of power from David to Solomon included some familial intrigue and bloodshed (1 Kings 1-2).

COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-6 / As the Lord's prophet, Nathan had delivered God's message to David before, concerning the king's desire to build a temple (2 Sam. 7:4-17). On that occasion, the Lord spoke in specifics to Nathan, who relayed the message to David. Concerning David's sin with Bathsheba and the consequential lying and murder plan, we don't know if God revealed to Nathan what had transpired or if God gave Nathan only the parable. Either way, we see Nathan heeding God's command and speaking the truth of God to David.

Nathan had much to lose. If David was willing to arrange the death of one of his own mighty men in order to cover up his transgression, what would he have been willing to do to silence the Lord's prophet? Yet the Bible gives no indication that Nathan wavered.

Nathan spoke a parable to the king, one that would grab the attention and tug at the heartstrings of the former shepherd. In this way, he presented an obvious parallel to David and Uriah, even though the king was oblivious to its meaning. David was calloused to his own sin but was quickly judgmental about the sin of others: his **"anger was greatly kindled."** We can picture his extreme reaction, flared nostrils, and red face. The ruddy complexion of young David was nothing compared to the red-faced anger of middle-aged David.

The king was quick to enact justice against the fictional man who had taken a neighbor's beloved lamb, but he had ignored justice when it came to his own sinful crimes and cover-up. His first instinct was to sentence the man to death, a much harsher penalty than the Mosaic law prescribed. But then he commanded precisely what God had given to Moses in the law, a fourfold repayment of the stolen sheep (see Ex. 22:1). David was familiar with Moses's instructions when it came to a stolen lamb. However, he had conveniently ignored the commandments against coveting your neighbor's wife (Ex. 20:17),

against adultery (Ex. 20:14), against murder (Ex. 20:13), and against giving false testimony (Ex. 20:16).

VERSES 7-10 / Like the iconic scene in the movie *A Few Good Men* in which Jack Nicholson yells, "You can't handle the truth!" Nathan returned David's graceless sentencing of the fictional lamb thief with the harsh truth: **"You are the man!"** As the scales of self-deceit fell from David's eyes, he was reminded of the truth. God had anointed him, rescued him from Saul, and given him the kingdom and all its blessings; yet David had chosen to take Uriah's wife because he could. One man's life was ended, one woman would forever be a widow, and the man who had carried God's banner so bravely would now be scorned for his sin.

God, perfect in His judgments, saw David not only as the arranger of Uriah's demise but as his murderer. By taking a wife who was most certainly not his, David had **"despised the word of the LORD"** by doing evil. Jesus echoed this truth when He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of all things, and God assured His people there would be blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (see Deut. 28). When we defy the commands of the Lord, we are denying that God is the almighty, holy, sovereign One; we are striving for His spot over the universe and deciding we belong there instead, but God does not take usurpers lightly.

Because David had used the sword of the Ammonites as his tool to kill Uriah, the judgment of the Lord was that **"the sword"** would never leave David's house. If you know the rest of this story, you know the heartbreak, fear, and treachery just around the corner for David's family. We're not sure if God's words were a punishment or just a revelation, but the sinful example set by David in this narrative would come back around to afflict him. Like their father, some of David's sons would be guilty of treachery, rape, murder, and more.

POINT 3

REPENTANCE LEADS TO GRACE AND FORGIVENESS (2 SAM. 12:13-15,24-25).

13 David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.” **15** Then Nathan went to his house. And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and he became sick. . . . **24** Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him **25** and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Samuel 12:13-15** and **24-25** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 13-15** commentary to draw the parallel between David’s sin, repentance, and forgiveness and our justification by faith in Christ (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #71: *Justification by Faith:* Justification refers to the moment when a person is objectively **declared** righteous before God based on the righteousness of Christ’s atoning **death** (Rom. 8:33-34). This act of declaration takes place through **faith** in Christ and not as a result of human **works** or effort (Eph. 2:8-9). Through justification, a person is made to be in right standing before God, changing what was once an estranged and hostile relationship to one of adoption into the family of God.

DISCUSS: **What are some ways people mistakenly hope to justify themselves before God?** (with good works that outnumber or outweigh their bad deeds; through some measure of penance to atone for their sins; by comparing themselves to others who are “worse” than they are; they think God won’t care about sin)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 24-25** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

God **forgives** and does not hold a grudge when we **repent**, though earthly consequences of our sin may still remain. In spite of our sin, the Lord remains committed to His **promises** for our good and His glory.

DISCUSS: **How should we respond to the God who is faithful to forgive when His people repent?** (with ready repentance for our sin; with humility; with praise and worship directed toward the Lord; with joy in telling others about our gracious and forgiving God; with a desire to obey and please the Lord)

NOTES

JEDIDIAH

According to the Lord’s covenant declaration to David recorded in 1 Chronicles 22, the name “Solomon” was foretold to David as the name of the son after him who would reign on his throne. Additionally, Solomon was named “Jedidiah” by the Lord, meaning “Beloved of the LORD.”

COMMENTARY

VERSES 13-15 / When faced with the reality of his sin under the knowledgeable gaze of the holy God, David confessed—no excuses, no blaming, no hiding. His response when Nathan confronted him was what we should all practice saying: **“I have sinned against the LORD.”**

David’s response in this passage was short, but his thoughts were more fully fleshed out in Psalm 51, which is titled “A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone to Bathsheba.” Psalm 51 reveals a man painfully aware of his own rebellion (Ps. 51:3). His confession was not only that he had sinned but he had sinned supremely against God: “Against you, you only, I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps. 51:4). Even when we sin against other people, we are ultimately sinning against God and His holy standard.

Psalm 51 also records David’s plea to God to “blot out” his rebellion, “wash” away his guilt, and “cleanse” him from his sin (Ps. 51:1-2). David wasn’t concerned simply to feel better about his sin; he wanted God to create a clean heart for him (Ps. 51:10), one that would again find joy in God’s salvation and presence. How amazingly merciful our God is! As soon as David confessed his sin, even though it included adultery and murder, Nathan declared, **“The LORD also has put away your sin.”** David was forgiven! But the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). David would not die, but the baby born out of his adultery would (2 Sam. 12:14-18). This passage is a grave reminder of the severity of sin and its lasting impact on our lives and on the lives of those around us.

There are so many excuses given when people are caught in willful sin: “I have an addiction”; “It’s his/her fault”; “I’m lonely/depressed/hurting”; “I am unloved.” Yet when we read God’s Word carefully, we see that He leaves no room for sin or excuses. He gave us His Word so that we would know His expectations, yet all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But as New Testament believers in Christ

who confess our sins and repent, we are forgiven of our sins and made righteous through the blood of Jesus our Lord, the Son of God who died in our place. God graciously has taken away the eternal punishment for our sin and declared us to be righteous in His sight so we would then live righteously, turn away from sin, and walk in the light, which we are able to do through the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

VERSES 24-25 / David knew the Lord. He knew God’s promises and His character. According to Psalm 86:15, He knew that the Lord is compassionate, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love (see also Pss. 103:8; 145:8). And because David knew this about God, as soon as the baby became ill, he fasted, lay on the ground, and prayed for seven days for God to have compassion (2 Sam. 12:15-18). But what did David do after the baby’s death? He worshiped the Lord (12:20). He didn’t turn his back on God but instead clung more tightly to the One who had forgiven him. God alone is the source of life and death, and only in faith-filled worship can we find solace, hope, and peace.

Regardless of the circumstances of his conception, the baby’s death caused great grief and sorrow for both David and Bathsheba, who was not far removed from mourning her husband Uriah’s death. David comforted his wife, and soon she was pregnant again. When Bathsheba gave birth to another son for David, we see that **“the LORD loved him”** and gave him a special name through the prophet Nathan.

This is what the grace of God looks like: love that never turns its back. David’s sin was atrocious and needed to be confronted. But God never let go of the man whose heart followed after Him. God didn’t hold a grudge. In fact, this son would be the initial fulfillment of God’s prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:12 and the first in a long line of kings from the line of David that would lead to the Messiah, who saves His people from their sin (Matt. 1:21).

MY RESPONSE

PACK ITEM 9: THE VICTORIOUS LIFE: Hand out copies of this bookmark to help remind your group of the importance of repentance in the Christian life.

Because we are a forgiven people, we live with appropriate transparency before others, celebrating Christ's transforming work so that they too might repent and find forgiveness of their sin in Jesus Christ.

HEAD:

Head knowledge isn't the answer to defending ourselves from temptation. Almost every Christian would say that adultery is wrong, and all sin is wrong, yet most everyone knows a family that has been torn apart by unfaithfulness. Rather than count on what we know to shape our actions, we must ask ourselves what we believe, and how we live reveals what we believe. If we take steps to strengthen our marriages, purify our minds, and encourage our spouses, we truly believe what God says about adultery.

What do your actions reveal about your beliefs regarding sin and temptation?

HEART:

For whom did your heart break as you studied this story? Was it the innocent baby? Was it brokenhearted and widowed Bathsheba? Was it repentant and God-seeking David? Was it the loss of hope and a future for Uriah? Regardless of your personal impression of the story, we all need to be brokenhearted over sin and its effects, not just in the life of David but in each life. In order to see sin as God sees it, we must feel its crushing effects and take actions to rid our own hearts and minds of the lies of the enemy and the desires of the flesh.

What sins do you need to repent of, and what steps will you take to combat those temptations in your life?

HANDS:

Nathan's confrontation is the turning point in this story. With Nathan's powerful parable, David saw his own dreadful sin and immediately repented. Perhaps you wondered, "What if Nathan had spoken up sooner?" That's a great application question for our own lives. Are we speaking up when we see friends and family tread closely to sin or diving head first into it? Are we willing to put our relationships to the test and speak truth to someone whose words or actions reveal a sinful intent? Are we intentionally building strong, honest relationships so that we see these tendencies before they happen?

Who do you know that needs a confrontation regarding sin, an encouragement for obedience, or to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ? How will you express these truths in love this week?

NOTES



VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Beloved, don't go staring too long in the mirror examining your imperfections before lifting your eyes to the One who desires to meet you with compassion, relentless love and help."²

-Yana Conner

INTRODUCTION

+ INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Before beginning the lesson, you may want to have a lighthearted discussion about tempting foods. If you have a personal story, tell of a time you were trying to be healthier in your eating habits but struggled with one particular food. You may want to engage a few other learners to share similar experiences. Reveal the “7 Most Tempting Sugary Foods” according to webmd.com found at this website: www.webmd.com/diet/features/tempting-sugary-foods#1. Ask: “What are some things you do to avoid foods that tempt you to be unhealthy?” Some may suggest eating before going to a social gathering, drinking plenty of water, or keeping the tempting foods out of your home. Before the discussion gets too deep into the temptations of food, say something to this effect: “If we struggle this much with food, is it any wonder we struggle daily with sin? We know that consistently eating foods that are bad for us leads to high blood pressure, weight gain, and all kinds of terrible health consequences. And yet we do it.”

Open with a time of silent prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to bring our own sinful hearts and sinful natures to our minds before beginning the lesson. Invite learners to privately confess their sin and thank the Lord for His mercy in their own lives.

POINT 1: TEMPTATION LEADS TO SIN AND DEATH

(2 SAM. 11:2-5,14-17,26-27).

+ COMMENTARY

“We live in times of gross immorality. The stability of the institution of marriage is threatened on every hand. The sanctity of the unique relationship between husbands and wives is disregarded all too often. Jesus spoke of the danger of the lust of the eyes. In Matthew 5:27-30, he called for purity of thought. Adultery, like other sin, begins with the entertainment of the idea in the mind. Jesus warned against the lustful look by saying, “. . . every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Sin almost never consists of one deed alone. One sin begets another. In an attempt to cover one sin, David committed almost all of the other sins. He set himself up as his own god. A woman became his idol. In the name of Jehovah he did the will of Satan. He dishonored motherhood and fatherhood. He murdered. He stole his neighbor’s wife. He became a liar of the worst sort. His coveting was of the basest kind.” **3**

EXTRA

+ COMMENTARY

“David noticed that ‘the woman was very beautiful,’ and his desires were aroused . . . Bathsheba ‘came to him,’ perhaps because she was naive or simply lacked the will to resist the powerful king’s request, or perhaps because she desired to be unfaithful to her husband. The writer’s omission of an explicit motive behind Bathsheba’s action reinforces the conviction that this story is not so much about Bathsheba’s actions but David’s . . . David’s sinful encounter with Bathsheba occurred ‘after she had purified herself from her uncleanness’ (cf. Lev. 15:19), that is, during the part of her monthly cycle when she was not menstruating and thus was more likely to conceive, which she did. When she had become aware of the bodily changes that accompanied the pregnancy, Bathsheba sent someone to David informing him of her situation.”⁴

POINT 2: SIN LEADS TO CONFRONTATION AND JUDGMENT

(2 SAM. 12:1-10).

+ COMMENTARY

“This exquisitely pathetic parable was founded on a common custom of pastoral people who have pet lambs, which they bring up with their children, and which they address in terms of endearment. The atrocity of the real, however, far exceeded that of the fictitious offense . . . [David’s prescribed punishment] was more severe than the case deserved, or than was warranted by the divine statute (Exodus 22:1). The sympathies of the king had been deeply enlisted, and his indignation aroused, but his conscience was still asleep; and at the time when he was most fatally indulgent to his own sins, he was most ready to condemn the delinquencies and errors of others.”⁵

+ ILLUSTRATION

Refresh your memory on some of the following stories with a moral by reading them from the following website: momlovesbest.com/short-moral-stories-kids. Be prepared to read or summarize a few of the stories, and be sure you know the moral portrayed in the story.

Before delving into the passage for Point 2, say something like: “Nathan, God’s prophet, is going to use a parable to draw out the importance and seriousness of David’s sin. Jesus used parables in His teaching, and many parents have used similar stories to teach valuable lessons to their children.” Read or summarize the stories you chose from the website, and invite learners to guess what each story’s moral is. Say: “Many times, God uses His Word as a parable for our own lives. You may be reading a passage and realize you’re struggling in ways similar to a Bible character. Or you may sense the Holy Spirit leading you to see a spiritual truth in your own life through the eyes of someone in the Word.” Challenge learners to consider every Bible narrative on some level as a personal story with a moral from the Lord. In every passage, we see clearly who God is and, through the example of others, who we can be, could be, should be, or should avoid. But remember that while these morals help indict us for our sin or inspire us for obedience, ultimately they point us to our need for Jesus, upon whom we should fix our eyes for our forgiveness and our strength (Heb. 12:1-2).

POINT 3: REPENTANCE LEADS TO GRACE AND FORGIVENESS (2 SAM. 12:13-15,24-25).

+ COMMENTARY

"[Nathan's] words went to David's heart, and removed the ban of hardening which pressed upon it. He confessed to the prophet, "I have sinned against the Lord." "The words are very few, just as in the case of the publican in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 18:13). But that is a good sign of a thoroughly broken spirit . . . There is no excuse, no cloaking, no palliation of the sin. There is no searching for a loophole . . . no pretext put forward, no human weakness pleaded. He acknowledges his guilt openly, candidly, and without prevarication' (Berleb. Bible)." ⁶

+ COMMENTARY

"The good news of this tragic chapter of history of God's people did not finally rest even on David. Despite being a man after God's own heart, and despite the fact that David knows how to repent sincerely in the wake of grievous sin (Psalm 51), David cannot save God's people. He too is weak. He fails. A son of David needs to come who will not fail. In Jesus Christ, this Davidic heir arrives." ⁷

+ INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION GUIDE

After discussing the Scripture for Point 3, point to the phrase in 2 Samuel 12:24, "Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba," and say something like: "We cannot fathom the grief and sorrow that was filling Bathsheba's heart and mind here. But we see that David was able to comfort her, which seems quite remarkable." Encourage learners to consider how they comfort—or should be comforting—others when they are dealing with difficult situations. Say: "Often times, we don't know what to say, and we're afraid we might bring up difficult emotions or thoughts. But just as the Holy Spirit comforts us, we have found that, through our afflictions, we can then comfort others (see 2 Cor. 1:4)." Be familiar with the tips of what to say and what not to say at the following website: healthline.com/health/what-to-say-to-someone-with-depression#what-to-say. (The website deals specifically with helping a loved one with depression, but the tips work for almost any devastating situation.) Say: "This is a helpful but secular website. What else might we say or not say to someone who is a Christian?" If anyone has helpful advice based on their own experiences, when a friend's words helped or harmed them in the midst of a hard time, invite them to share that. Close the activity by saying something like: "We may not be experts and we may not have experience, but we can still reach out to help and to love."

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7. V. Philips Long, "1–2 Samuel," in *Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 395, n. 11:1-27.