

The Life of David | The Seriousness of Sin | 2 Samuel 12:1-18

August 10, 2025 | Matthew McNutt

[Title slide] We are continuing our journey through the life of David today, Israel's favorite king. Up until last week David has been the hero of the story. Dedicated to God, slayer of Goliath, God's anointed king and replacement for Saul. The people loved him, God blessed him.

But all that changed in 2 Samuel 11. From his palace roof he spied on Bathsheba, a married woman unaware she was being watched. After finding out she was the wife of one of his most loyal soldiers, the daughter of one of his most loyal soldiers, and the granddaughter of one of his trusted chief advisors,¹ David made a choice:

2 Samuel 11:4a (ESV) David sent messengers and took her.

They took her. When the king's "messengers" show up, you don't get to say no. This wasn't adultery. Nowhere in scripture is Bathsheba described as having sinned – because it wasn't an affair. She was a victim. In fact, in Matthew 1, she is one of only four women highlighted as part of the genealogy of Jesus. Why? Because something about her story enhances and contributes to the story of Jesus. Her suffering points to His redemption. God was able to work something beautiful out of her pain and loss – the arrival of the Messiah.

We heard the story last week. David takes her, sleeps with her, and then sends her home. But it didn't end there; she was pregnant. And the coverup began – ultimately resulting in David having her husband killed. 2 Samuel 11 ends with these words:

2 Samuel 11:26-27 (NLT) ²⁶ When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son.

David assumed the ordeal was over. The coverup succeeded. He could move on.

But the Lord was displeased with what David had done.

It doesn't matter how successful we think we are at covering up sin. It always catches up to us. Sometimes immediately, sometimes years later, sometimes in eternity when we stand before God. We may not know when, but we will face it.

Today, we will learn two powerful truths: First, like Nathan, we are called to thoughtfully and courageously challenge others to grow. Second, like David, we must remember that God will always forgive when we come to Him with a repentant heart.

¹ Sandra Glahn, *Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 101.

For David, we don't know the exact timing, but his sin caught up to him after the child was born so time had definitely passed. David probably thought it was all over. He had gotten what he wanted and he got away with it.

2 Samuel 12:1- (NLT) ¹ So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story:

To us, this parable is an obvious retelling of what David has done, but for David, this was business as usual. As king he would regularly hear about disagreements, injustices, cases that needed to be decided. He thought this was just one of many that he would hear and pass judgment on.

"There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. ² The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. ³ The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. ⁴ One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest."

A man in power taking from someone without power. Maybe he rationalized it in some way, but at the end of the day, it simply boiled down to this: the rich man wanted the glory of hospitality without the expense. So, in his abundance, he took all that someone else had. This word "took"? It is the same ancient Hebrew word used to describe how David took Bathsheba.² It was an act of power, of greed, of violence.

⁵ David was furious. "As surely as the Lord lives," he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! ⁶ He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity."

David was outraged at the injustice. It's the same outrage that demanded Goliath's death for mocking God and the Israelites. While he claimed the man deserves death, his judgement is that he must give back four lambs. David recognized that this injustice demanded action.

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man!"

How shocked was David to realize Nathan had found him out?

More importantly, how much courage did it take for Nathan to deliver this message? Nathan knew he might be headed to his own death; David had already killed to cover up his crime. Bathsheba's husband wasn't the only one to die; when David had his unit left undefended in battle, others would have gone down with him to cover David's awful secret. What is one more body to add to the coverup?

² Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 279.

Confronting David was no simple task. He continued:

“The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more.

Notice the contrast: David took, God gave.

⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. ¹⁰ From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own.

Which came to pass. David’s sons would go on to fight and kill one another.

¹¹ “This is what the Lord says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. ¹² You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel.”

David’s son, Absalom, would go on to do exactly this.

Have you ever had someone confront you with something you didn’t want to hear? How did you react? With anger? With defensiveness? Isn’t that our tendency? Especially if the confrontation comes with these kinds of warnings of coming destruction?

What if you were a king, used to getting everything you wanted? Surrounded by people afraid to deny you? How would you react?

For all his failings, David’s reaction is one we can learn from:

¹³ Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

David didn’t confess because he was in a corner. He was anything but trapped. Most kings in his position would have killed the prophet and moved on. It would have been easy for David. No, this confession was late, but sincere.

Walter Bruggeman points out that **“there is not much to celebrate about David in this narrative.”** But there are two things to notice: David still has enough moral courage to confess, and perhaps more importantly, it is never too late for forgiveness from God.³

³ Ibid, 281.

Nathan replied, “Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because you have shown utter contempt for the word of the Lord by doing this, your child will die.”

¹⁵ After Nathan returned to his home, the Lord sent a deadly illness to the child of David and Uriah’s wife. ¹⁶ David begged God to spare the child. He went without food and lay all night on the bare ground. ¹⁷ The elders of his household pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused.

^{18a} Then on the seventh day the child died.

Why did the child die and not David? I’ll be honest, I’m not entirely sure and it’s one of those things that makes me uncomfortable when I try to wrestle with it. Most of what Nathan described would be consequences of David’s actions; his family’s disarray and violence are the natural result of David’s action and inaction. We can be forgiven but still must reckon with the real-world consequences of our actions.

But his son’s death was a direct punishment. Some suggest that because David’s son with Bathsheba would one day become king, it could not be this child. The king of Israel could not be a child born from such a crime. Too many knew what happened. Why do I say too many? The men who took Bathsheba, those who arranged for her husband’s death, the servants and attendants in the palace who knew what David was doing with her and the timing of the baby’s birth. He may have covered it up, but it wasn’t unknown. And so, the child died. Which is devastating and disturbing.

And it’s such a contrast; this story ends in death, but a thousand years later, another unexpected pregnancy – for Mary - would end in life, the birth of Jesus, who would die for David’s sin and ours. But now I’m getting really ahead of the story.

A few verses later, today’s passage concludes with this note of hope:

²⁴ Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife, and slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and David named him Solomon. The Lord loved the child ²⁵ and sent word through Nathan the prophet that they should name him Jedidiah (which means “beloved of the Lord”), as the Lord had commanded.

Out of this story of death emerged a note of hope, the future king of Israel, Solomon, beloved of the Lord.

There is hope for us as well, hope that we can learn from both of these men, Nathan and David.

The first is this; as followers of God, we have a responsibility to help others honor God. God calls us to lovingly confront others—not to condemn, but to restore—so they can grow and be made right with Him.

We are **Called to Thoughtfully Challenge Others to Grow.**

I love that Nathan approached David with a parable. Why? Because he clearly put thought into the conversation he was going to have. His goal was restoration, to see David be restored to God. Yes, there would be consequences and ramifications, but the goal was not punishment, it was healing. So he considered his approach, he put time into understanding what would be effective in reaching David with that goal of healing in mind.

Jesus communicates this same value in Matthew 18:

Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT) ¹⁵ “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.

Did you catch the goal? The goal is not revenge, getting the upper hand, showing someone their wrong – it’s to win them back, to see restoration, to find healing. When that is our goal, it impacts how we approach someone, doesn’t it? Jesus continued:

¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

Why are there so many steps? Because we are called to bring about God’s kingdom, to point others to God, and when we confront someone, it needs to be with the ultimate goal of seeing them grow. If we genuinely and lovingly want healing for someone, we don’t give up the first time they shoot us down.

Nathan wanted healing for David, so he prepared and found a way in. Each one of us is called to step in and help others – Nathan and Jesus teach us to do so thoughtfully, carefully, with boldness in spite of the risk, and with the goal of connecting someone back to God.

The second thing we learn is from David; **God Will Always Forgive.**

It is never too late to ask for forgiveness, it is never too far for God to forgive. David committed horrible sins; most likely worse than most of us will do ... yet when he was confronted by Nathan, he directly confessed:

2 Samuel 12:13 (NLT) David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

He didn’t defend himself, he didn’t make excuses, he didn’t deny it ... he simply acknowledged the truth of what he had done. Psalm 51 is a prayer David wrote in response to all he had done wrong in these chapters, here are few highlights from it:

Psalm 51:1-3, 16-17 (NLT) ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. ² Wash me clean from

my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ³ For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.

*¹⁶ You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering.
¹⁷ The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.*

God will not reject a broken and repentant heart. If there is something haunting you, something disrupting your life, something unconfessed that you need to deal with ... it's time. Stop waiting. Unconfessed sin takes a toll on us; it disrupts our health, hurts our bodies and our souls, it leaves us stressed and anxious, without peace. It's why James writes:

James 5:16 (NLT) Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

When we are healed spiritually, when we are restored to God through confession, our bodies, our souls, our lives feel the healing from that, from the release from the torment of guilt, tension, fear, anxiety.

I want to close with this promise:

1 John 1:9 (NLT) But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

If you confess, God will forgive. There is nothing you can say that will shock Him, that will cause Him to turn away from you, that will have Him caught off guard and unwilling to forgive – unlike us, God's love is perfect and endless. Bring it to God and He will wash it away. At the end of this service, we have a prayer team that will be down here – I want to invite you, don't wait. Come down and pray with one of them, or just simply come down and pray.

No matter the sin, no matter the shame, God's mercy is greater. Today is the day to come clean, to come home, to find the freedom only He can give.

Let's pray.