

Week 23: David's Great Sin

Hook



Main Point: A godly person confesses and repents when he or she sins.

The Leaning Tower of Pisa is the bell tower for the Pisa Cathedral in Pisa, Italy. Construction began in August 1173 and was completed in the mid-1300s. The building is constructed of white marble and designed to be 185 feet tall. By 1178, during the construction of the third story, the structure began to lean, a predicament caused by shifting soil that destabilized the foundation. War broke out, and construction paused for nearly a century, allowing the foundation to settle and avoid a collapse. Compensating for the lean was at the top of the priority list when construction resumed. Craftsmen built additional stories slightly taller on the short side of the tower. However, the “solution” caused more problems. The added masonry caused the tower to sink further. The tower construction concluded in the 14th century. It wasn't until the late 20th century that a substantial straightening effort took place, improving the lean and eventually leading to a cease in the tower's movement.¹

Q: Why was adding more stories to the tower a problem?

Q: Like adding tiers to a sinking structure, attempting to cover up sin with more sin only worsens the problem. Why is acting sinfully (often lying) a tempting “solution” when trying to solve the problems that sin creates?

RECAP: Now we've entered the final period of David's life (lessons 23–31), when David committed his great sin, and experienced all the fallout and consequences. This week, we'll look at David's sin, Nathan's confrontation, and David's confession and repentance. In future lessons, we'll see how things with his children grew even worse. Though David sinned greatly, his repentance shows us the heart of a man who loved and trusted God.

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2 Samuel 11 and 1 Corinthians 10:11–13 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Even godly people can sin greatly when they aren't careful.

Q: At how many different points could David have made a different choice?

Q: What were the results of David's sinful choices?

This chapter describes the snowball effect of David's bad choices. At many points in the story, David could have stopped the snowball and made a different decision, preventing more damage to others. But he didn't stop it, and the consequences were dire. It started with his decision not to go to war with his army, which the text emphasizes by explicitly saying it was "the time when kings go out to battle." But David didn't go; he sent Joab instead (11:1–3).

David's first choice indicates a huge shift. He was starting to behave more like the kings of the pagan nations than a king of Israel. God's design was that a king should see himself as a servant to the people, not as being above any of them (Deuteronomy 17:20). In God's design, the king would go into battle with his army, not lounge around the palace. Throughout the story, David continued to act like one of these kings of the world, feeling entitled to what didn't belong to him, using people as pawns in his game to cover up his sin, sending messengers to do his dirty work – until Nathan finally smacked him in the face with the cold, hard reality of what he had become.²

As David lounged around, he saw a beautiful woman bathing on her roof. At this point, he could have chosen to look away and nothing more would have happened. Paul tells us that God *always* provides a way out of temptation for us (1 Corinthians 10:13), but David didn't take it.

David, a man with several wives and many concubines, was told that Bathsheba was already married to Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was off fighting in the battle, which is where David should have been. Again, he could have chosen to leave her alone, but he didn't. Instead, he "took her" and laid with her (11:4). Like a powerful king, not a servant leader, he just took what he wanted, even though it belonged to someone else.³

After Bathsheba became pregnant, we see how David used Uriah as a pawn in his scheme to try to cover up his own sin. But Uriah (who was not even an Israelite but a Hittite!) showed more honor and integrity than David by refusing to sleep with his wife while his army was off at battle (11:11). Everything Uriah said and did in this story illustrates an intentional contrast to the way David acted. At this point, Uriah's integrity

should have exposed to David his own lack of integrity and sense of entitlement. He could have confessed his sin and stopped the snowball from rolling down the hill, but he didn't. Instead, he arranged for Uriah to die in battle so he could legally marry Bathsheba.⁴

This is a very different picture of David than we have seen so far. It is a warning to all of us. Godly people can get sucked into sin when they are given unlimited power, money or status, especially if they haven't established good boundaries for themselves and have no one keeping them accountable. David lacked strong boundaries. Those around him did whatever he said. No one challenged his actions until it was all over, and Uriah was already dead.

How might things have been different if David had possessed good boundaries? He could have stopped himself so many times, but he didn't. He kept trying to cover up his sin. And things just kept getting worse.

David's story reminds us that sin will *always* be found out. Trying to cover things up only makes a bigger mess. Had he confessed after the pregnancy was revealed, things would have been messy, but Uriah would still be alive. But David's selfish desire to not be found out costs Uriah his life. And everyone found out anyway. David's story is a grim reminder that *all of us* are capable of committing horrible sins. Paul tells those who think they can withstand temptation to "take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). None of us is immune to sin. We must put boundaries and accountability in place and lean on the Lord's strength to stand.

Q: How have you seen the snowball effect of sin in your own life? Why is it hard to stop the snowball once it has started?

Q: What kind of boundaries have you set up for yourself to keep you from temptation? How have you allowed others to hold you accountable?

2 Samuel 12:1–9 and Ephesians 5:8–13 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people confront their loved ones when it is needed.

Q: Why do you think Nathan used a story of a lamb to make his point with David?

After all this happened, the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke David. Nathan used a creative approach to make David understand the impact of his actions. He told David a story in which he would have identified with the injured party. Storytelling is a powerful medium to help us understand other people's experiences and points of view and help us empathize with others because stories help us experience what another person is going through. Jesus often used storytelling in His teaching. Stories help us get past our conscious biases about a topic because all our emotions and reactions to a story are instinctual. When you experience a story, such as watching a movie or reading a book, you may find yourself crying or laughing without thinking about it. You are just

experiencing the story. You don't stop to think about whether something is sad or funny; you just cry or laugh. This is how Nathan was able to catch David off guard and help him see the damage he had done.⁵

The story centered around a lamb, which would have been especially meaningful to David because he had been a shepherd. It would be like Jesus making His point by telling Peter a story about fishing or a crowd of country folk a story about farming. The scenario was different but similar enough to the way David treated Bathsheba and Uriah that Nathan could use it to give David a "gut punch" moment. David treated Bathsheba like a piece of property, like an animal. But to Uriah, she was dearly loved. David had many wives, yet he still took Uriah's wife as if he were entitled to her.

David became very angry at the story and declared that this rich man deserved to die, not only because he did this evil thing but because he "had no pity" (12:5–6). Just like this man, David had acted with no concern for the people he had hurt. He had thought only about himself, first his sexual desires and then his desire to hide his sin. It's amazing how we can so clearly see the sin in someone else yet not see the same thing in ourselves – as Jesus said about seeing the speck in our friends' eyes when we have a log in our own (Matthew 7:3–5).

Nathan started with a story, but once David got the point, Nathan confronted him boldly. Nathan knew the Lord was with him, but it took courage to confront David. David had just demonstrated that he had no qualms about having Uriah killed; he could have easily had Nathan killed as well. Yet confronting kings with God's Word was one of the responsibilities of the prophets. As believers, we have a responsibility to confront one another when we sin, not to be critical but to help one another (Matthew 18:15–17; Luke 17:3–4; 1 Corinthians 5:12; Galatians 6:1–2; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2)! It's not judge-y or pushy or nosy to speak truth into friends' lives to try to prevent them from hurting themselves or others.

Paul tells us to expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). Like turning on a light for someone in a dark room, exposing someone's sin can be a gift to that person. Like interventions with addicts, you can save them from hurting others and themselves. We don't know why Nathan waited until this point to confront David; maybe he didn't know before. But imagine if Nathan had rebuked David *before* he sent Uriah to battle? Or if Joab had said no to his plan to let Uriah die? Or if the messengers had refused to take Bathsheba to him in the beginning? Or if *anyone* had stood up to David at any point? Think of all the damage that could have been prevented!

Q: How have accountability and rebuke been helpful in your walk with Jesus?

Q: How can we balance speaking the *truth* in *love* when confronting people?

2 Samuel 12:10–23 and Psalm 51 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people repent and accept the consequences of their sin.

Q: Why did God say (through Nathan) that David's sin had "utterly scorned" Him?

Q: In what ways do you see the focus on David's heart (inner man) in Psalm 51?

Through Nathan, God made it very clear that He did not approve of David's actions at all. Sometimes people think that just because a story is in the Bible, it means God approves of what the people were doing. Many of the stories of the Bible show us what *not* to do! Sometimes, we can tell by the way the story is written and by comparing it to the rest of Scripture. But sometimes, as in this story, God flat out says it! David's sin not only hurt many other people, it also "scorned" God, His Word and His standards for sexual purity, honor, honesty and the sanctity of life (12:9, 10, 14).⁶

As punishment, God raised up evil against David from his own family (12:11). We will see a lot of evil from David's house in the coming chapters. One of his sons would rape his daughter, and another son (Absalom) would kill him for it. The sword would "never depart" from his house (12:10). God was specifically saying here that David's son Absalom would sleep with his concubines in broad daylight (16:22), which was not only hurtful but also had a political meaning, symbolizing Absalom taking David's throne and power.⁷ Also, the child conceived from David's sin would die, too. When the child became sick, David fasted, wept, and prayed that perhaps the Lord would show mercy. But once he died, David worshipped. Though he had despised God's Word with his sin, now he honored God's authority by accepting his punishment.

The heading of Psalm 51 tells us that David wrote it when Nathan confronted him about his sin. David did not challenge God's judgment (51:4). He confessed that his sin was "always before me" (51:3), even his original sin from birth (51:5). But he did not despair. He knew God could cleanse him, renew his spirit, and create a pure heart in him (51:7–10). Again, the emphasis is on the heart. David knew that the heart (inner person) is key to rightness with God. He also knew that only God could change his heart. He didn't try to figure out how he could make it up to God; he asked *God* to make him new. David said that when God forgave him, saved him, and restored him, he would be able to tell his story of God's grace to others, "so that sinners will turn back to you" (51:13). The presence of stories such as this in the Bible reminds us that when we mess up (as we all do), we can be assured that we can come to God for forgiveness and grace. A Bible full of perfect, sinless people would not only be fictional, but it would also never help us understand the greatness of God's love, mercy, and grace that are the heart of the Gospel.

Q: In what ways have you experienced God's grace and forgiveness? How do you think your testimony about it could help other people?

Q: Why is it important to confess our sins openly before God? What does the process of confession accomplish in our hearts?

Q: How do our biggest sins help us appreciate God's grace more?

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Took

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Do you find yourself entangled in sin? Today is the day to confess and repent. Perhaps you've embraced the lie that covering up your mistakes is the answer to your guilt and shame. If you'd like to break free from a destructive pattern of sin and need help, consider the Prestonwood Life Recovery class, *XChanged Life*. *Xchanged Life* is a spiritual process that delivers hope and support to anyone seeking a life free from the snares of lies that limit our God-designed destiny. *Xchanged Life* is designed to help you exchange your agreement with lies for trust in the truth of God's Word. For more information, visit <https://prestonwood.org/connect/life-recovery/>.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Reflect on times when you have sinned greatly. Whom did you hurt? What other damage did you cause? How did God show you that what you had done was wrong? Did you know it all along, or was there a moment you realized it, or did someone confront you, as Nathan did David? What could you have done differently to prevent yourself from making those choices? How did you experience God's grace and forgiveness? What damages were unable to be fixed, such as the deaths of David's son and Uriah? How can you use your situation as a testimony to others?

PRAY about any situations in which you need to confess wrongdoing. We all have them, even those of us with a heart for Jesus. Pray for God to reveal to you where you are not walking with Him, where you may be hurting others or doing damage to yourself and your family. Ask Him for the strength to stop in your tracks, confess, and repent (turn back to Him).

ACT: Worship. After David sinned, was confronted, confessed, and accepted his punishment, he worshipped God. He came back to his foundation of worship and trust. He surrendered his will to God's and prayed for God to make his heart new. Take some time to worship God now. You may pray Psalm 51 or listen to a song based on Psalm 51 (there are several online). You may simply choose to sing along to worship music or speak your own words of praise to God. However you do it, take time to acknowledge God's sovereignty in your life and turn to Him in worship and trust.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we'll see what happens as a result of David's sin, how one of his sons repeated David's own sexual sins but took it even further, and how another son reacted with murderous anger, which eventually led him to challenge David for the throne. Although David did turn his heart back to God, his sin caused a ripple effect through the next generation of his family.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Leaning-Tower-of-Pisa>

² Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999).

³ J. Vernon McGee, *1 and 2 Samuel, Through the Bible Commentary Series* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

⁴ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁵ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁶ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁷ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).