

We've been in a series called Reroute focusing on the second half of King David's life. David is a very important figure in the story of the Bible. Born around 1000 B.C., he became the second King of Israel when he was 30 and ruled 40 years. He was known as, "a man after God's own heart" but as true as that is, David was a very complicated man.

This is seen in the two names unforgettably linked with David. Even if you're a newcomer to the Bible, you probably know these names. One is a giant man named Goliath; the other is a woman named Bathsheba. They're two very different people: Goliath was an ugly, cruel Philistine; Bathsheba was a beautiful, gentle, Israelite. Goliath was an evil tyrant; Bathsheba, an innocent victim.

David encountered Goliath in his youth when he's unknown and untested; Bathsheba encountered David in his prime after he had passed through many tests and shown himself to be a mighty warrior, skilled leader, and loyal friend.

But as different as these two people were, they both revealed something about David's heart. David's encounter with Goliath revealed David's great faith. David's encounter with Bathsheba revealed David's great selfishness and sin.

Nobody's perfect, right? As we say, "to err is human." We all mess up; we all sin. But the real question is, how do we handle that? Whenever we fail or fall, we experience an opportunity for a reroute. One of the choices we must make is whether we're going to own it or do something else. We can justify it. We can blame others. We can hide it.

I know for me, as a kid, I usually went the route of trying to hide my misdeeds. Like a lot of kids growing up in the '60s and '70s, I started drinking and partying when I hit my teenage years. And I got pretty good at hiding it from my parents and my coaches. But then one day, as a freshman in high school, I was with three high school friends driving through Santa Cruz. Let me just say we had illegal substances in the car. I still remember the feeling when I saw the red lights flashing behind us. I still remember being arrested, pushed into the backseat of the squad car, and driven to juvenile hall. I still remember the look on my Dad's face when he picked me up. I still remember the long, silent drive home.

I was in trouble. I'd been caught. I'd tried to hide what I was doing, conning and living a lie, but now I'd been found out. What could I do now? When we do something wrong, even when we're caught, we have options. We are going to look at how David handled his own sin, and perhaps even more importantly how God acted in his life to bring him out of hiding. And, we're going to be introduced to another defining figure in his life, a man named Nathan. The story is told in 2 Sam. 11-12.

David falls to sexual temptation

When we come to these chapters, David had reached the height of his success. He's consolidated the nation and led Israel in several military victories. He had been assured by God that one of his descendants would always be on the throne. He had shown himself to be a man of unusual kindness and loyalty.

It was springtime. That meant it was time to go to battle because the winter rains were over. David sent his military general, Joab, out with the rest of Israel to fight the Ammonites. The text then says, "But David remained in Jerusalem" (v. 1b). This was out of character for David. He was a great warrior; he had always led Israel into war.

Why did he stay home? Maybe these were just minor battles he didn't need to fight. He certainly had nothing to prove. He was a well-established king and war hero. So, one evening he got up and took a stroll on his rooftop terrace. As he looked out over the surrounding city, he saw a woman bathing in her courtyard. Her name was Bathsheba. By the way, she was doing nothing wrong. It sounds like she was skinny dipping in public, but it's possible she was partially clothed and washing just one part of her body. What we do know is she was quite beautiful, and David was drawn in by her beauty. For David, it was more than just a look, it was a look that became a stare, and David's desire was ignited.

So, he took it a step further. It says, he "sent someone to find out about her" (v. 3). This seems like a harmless act. He's just curious; nothing wrong with asking a few questions, finding out more about her. The answer came back that she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David knew Uriah. He was part of an elite group of soldiers who served Israel. David's interest in this woman should have stopped there.

But it says, "Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her" (v. 4). There's no hesitation. Where it says, "to get her," the writer used an interesting verb, meaning "he took (laqah) her." It means to greedily take something. The same word is used earlier to describe how David added women to his harem (1 Sam 25:39-40; 2 Sam 3:15; 5:13) against God's instructions for Israel's kings. Whether Bathsheba consented or not, this was clearly an abuse of David's power. This was a "Me Too Moment." And this was an act of defiance of God's law. David not only coveted another man's wife, but he committed adultery with her.

A month or so later, David got a message from Bathsheba. Three words he would never forget: "I am pregnant." They're words he didn't expect to hear; few men do. Up until now, David was in complete control. Now something happened to him he could not control.

The writer skillfully describes what's going on with a repetition of a single, seemingly insignificant word: send. Normally this is a neutral word, but in this story, it signals David's mindset and fall.

Verse 1 — "David sent Joab" out with the Israelite army.

Verse 3 — "David sent someone to find out" about Bathsheba.

Verse 4 — "David sent messengers to get her." Notice everything that happened was on his terms, initiated by him. But then something happened he could not control.

Verse 5 — Bathsheba "sent word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant.'"

This is reroute opportunity #1 — stop, face your sin, confess it to God; take responsibility for what you've done. But, unfortunately, David wasted very little time thinking of ways to use his power and hide his sin.

David continued sinning to cover up his sin

Verse 6 says, "David sent this word to Uriah, 'Send me the Uriah the Hittite.'" David was back in control. Uriah returned from the battlefield, and David told him to go home and wash his feet. It seems strange to us, but this was a common Hebrew expression for having sex. David was saying, "Go home, Uriah, and make love to your wife." I'll bet David gave him a little wink as he said this. He even sent a gift, something like champagne and fruit! David was scheming. His obvious motive was to pass off the paternity of the child to Uriah.

But Uriah didn't sleep with his wife; instead, he slept with David's servants on the porch! Then David questioned his manhood. But the reason Uriah would not go home was that he was such a man of integrity. He couldn't imagine sleeping with his wife while the rest of the troops were sleeping in tents. Even after David tried to loosen him up by getting him drunk, Uriah still wouldn't do it.

This is reroute opportunity #2. Again, David ran into something he could not control. He couldn't control Uriah. Though he had become so powerful he thought he could control everything, Uriah had a will of his own. That should have given David pause. Uriah's integrity stood as a subtle rebuke to David. Uriah would not sleep with his own wife while the troops were in battle. David had no such qualms. He slept with someone else's wife while her husband was on the battlefield! This should have stopped David in his tracks.

But he didn't stop. He sent Uriah back to Joab, telling Joab to put Uriah alone on the front lines where he would certainly be killed. Joab pulled it off, with the only glitch being more soldiers died than just Uriah. So now David had more blood on his hands than he ever thought possible. Now he was not just hiding adultery, but the murder of many good men.

David still was not ready to come out of hiding. After Joab sent a messenger back to David with news of Uriah's death, look at what happened.

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. vv. 26-27a

David attempted to make everything look respectable. And he pulled it off. For at least nine months his adultery and murder were kept secret. Joab wouldn't tell. Bathsheba wouldn't tell. David was back in control. Maybe sin pays off after all.

But look at the very last sentence of the chapter, "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord" (v. 27b). God's verdict on David's deed was displeasing and evil. Because of his sin, God had rejected David's predecessor, Saul, as Israel's King. Will David suffer the same fate? You see, David could hide from people, but not from God. Do you think David knew that? Of course! Deep down, he knew God's law. And we know it too, don't we? Why then do we so often try to hide?

In reality, this is the beginning of the most miserable year in David's life. Later, when he wrote Psalm 32, this is how he described his state of mind, "When I kept silent about my sin, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long." We might think David breathed a big sigh of relief here, but he was in great turmoil. But still, he continued to hide for the better part of a year.

Before we go on, let's pause for just a moment. It's easy for us to stand in judgment of David, but the truth is his story is your story and my story. We may not fall in the exact way David fell, but we all fall. The Bible is very forthright about this. All its heroes fall. Noah fell into drunkenness and shame. Abraham lied about his wife being his sister to save his own skin. Moses lost it and struck a rock in anger at God. Peter denied Christ three times.

The Bible tells the whole truth. I'm glad the Bible isn't being written today. I wouldn't want to get into the pages in the wrong way! And like David, so often it's pride and power that leads to our fall. David had it all; he'd "hit his stride" as a man. Most of the frustrations and struggles that marked his youth were over. You see, we're most susceptible to sin, not in the midst of struggle, but when our youth has been fought and won. The devil can use adversity in our lives, but he can use prosperity even more. Often, when things are going well, our defenses are down. Our enemy knows that, and that's when he likes to strike.

God graciously sends Nathan to confront David

So how will God get David's attention? When I was a boy, we had a magnolia tree in our front yard. When we played baseball or frisbee once in a while, they'd get caught up in the tree. When they did, the first thing we did was shake the tree or throw something up there to knock it down. If that didn't work, the next step was to send someone to climb up the tree and bring it down.

For nine months, God was shaking the tree of David's life, through his emotional turmoil, to get him to confess his sin. But he didn't come down. So, God sent someone up the tree to bring him down. The chapter begins in verse one with these pregnant words, "The Lord sent Nathan to David." Until now, most of the sending was done by David, but now it was God's turn to send someone to him. He sent him this crusty old prophet. Even though Israel had a king who ran the show, they still had prophets. They were there to get in the king's face when he began to act too big for his britches and think he was God.

But this was God's grace at work in David's life, as it is in ours. God's faithfulness is such He'll get in your face when you sin. God loves you too much to let you remain in hiding. We often think of confrontation as being harsh and judgmental, but the motive behind it is love. God's love is such he'll root out anything that diminishes your joy. And notice here how he confronts — he sends people to us like Nathan.

Look at Nathan's approach.

When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." vv. 1b-4

It's an indirect approach. He didn't start by pointing the finger at David, spelling out his sin. Rather he presented a case to decide on. Instead of coming to David as a judge, he allowed David to be the judge. The point of the story is clear. How could this rich man be so cold and unjust as to take (laqah) this poor man's only lamb? The story is told to invoke a sense of moral outrage at the abuse of his power. We all want to clobber him! You see, Nathan wanted David to enter into his own judgment. It was really about David's abuse of power. When David reacted with outrage, he was judging himself.

And this is exactly what happens.

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." vv. 5-6

David took the bait — hook, line, and sinker! Isn't it amazing how enlightened we can be about other people's sin? Sin is insidiousness — it blinds us to ourselves while we think we have clear vision about other. Usually, our anger at others for their sin is a sign of something deeper going on within us.

But David didn't have long to be mad, because Nathan projected his long, bony finger at David and said, "You are the man" (v. 7a). There's a time to be direct and personal. You are the man. You are the woman. It's not about someone else; it's about you; it's about me. It's not about sin in general. It's about your sin and my sin.

Then David hears directly, not just from Nathan, but from God.

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck

down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. vv. 7b-9

Notice where God began — rehearsing for David all the things he'd done for him, "I anointed you... I delivered you... I gave you..." Why say that? Because in his pride David forgot who'd gotten him to where he was. He was not a self-made man; he was a God-made man. He forgot that. He failed to stay grateful to God, dependent on God, and humbled before God. So, God reminded him of all he'd done for him. He also spelled out his sin — you despised my word, you did what was evil, you struck down Uriah, and you took his wife.

David confessed his sin and was forgiven

Here's reroute opportunity #3. How will David respond to Nathan? For that, skip down to verse 13.

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." v. 13a.

In a brief, but courageous statement, David confessed his sin and began his reroute journey. Here's why David was a man after God's heart. It was not that he was without sin, but he was willing to confess it.

David teaches us the nature of confession is simple — admit your sin. There's no need for prolonged begging, to beat yourself up, or to use eloquent words or theological jargon. Just come out with it: "I've sinned against the Lord." He did this without any justification, minimization, or rationalization. He didn't try to justify himself. He didn't give any extenuating circumstances. He didn't say, "Well, all the others kings are doing it." He didn't blame it on Bathsheba's bathing habits. He simply admitted his guilt with no excuse.

And he saw the offense as being primarily against God. Though we may hurt others, sin is first an offense against God. In verse ten, God said, "You despised me and took the wife of Uriah to be your own." Sin is an act of despising of God. In Psalm 51, where David recorded his confession, he said to God, "Against you, you only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4a). So, our concern shouldn't be just to make amends with others but with God.

David confessed his sin, and immediately Nathan announced his forgiveness.

Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. v. 13b

I love the way he put it. The Lord also has taken away your sin. When we confess, that's what the Lord does, he takes away our sin, removes it from his sight. I like the way David put it in Psalm 103, "As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgression from us." Once we confess, the problem of guilt isn't with God; it's with us. We may have a hard time removing the sin from our sight, but not God. And this is where we must take God at his word, believing what he says about us is true.

Nathan then told David he wouldn't have to suffer the just penalty of his sin, which was death. The Torah penalized adulterers and murderers with death, but Nathan said, "You're not going to die." Not only has that

sin's presence been removed but its penalty also. That's called mercy — God not giving us what we do deserve. What do we deserve? Death: eternal separation from God. But since he's rich in mercy, he doesn't give us what we deserve.

That raises the question of consequences. Does God's removal of the presence and penalty of our sin mean there's no consequences?

David will suffer the consequences of his sin

If you look back at verse ten, God said to David as a result of his actions, "The sword will never depart from your house." In fact, three of David's sons will later die by the sword. And in verse 14 he said of the fourth, Bathsheba's newborn son, "the son born to you will die." This may seem awfully severe to us, but it shows how serious a thing it is to represent the Lord. As with David, the stakes are higher with visible leaders. With David, it cost him something far more precious than his job; it cost him his son.

You see, even though we're forgiven, we still reap what we sow. So often we confuse the removal of our guilt with the removal of consequences. It doesn't work that way. If you break an arm in a fight, even after you've repaired the relationship with the person you fought with, you still have a broken arm. Even with fellowship with God restored, we still live with the consequences. That's part of our reroute story. But we can live in that, knowing God's grace is sufficient. We can live in that, not moving away from God, but continuing to engage with God and looking for his grace and mercy even in the midst of the reality of consequences.

And what's great about this is there is grace. Look at how the story closes.

Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved him; and because the Lord loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah. vv. 24-25

Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, but grace is God giving us what we don't deserve — that's what we see here — grace. The birth of Solomon was a gesture of grace in David's life. Though he has walked through some tough times, with more ahead, God reminded him through the birth of Solomon of his grace. Nathan came and confirmed this fact by giving Solomon a second name, Jedidiah, which means "loved by the Lord."

Solomon would be the next king, the son of David, in the line of the Messiah. One of the amazing things about this is how God used the sin of David and Bathsheba to accomplish a greater purpose. I can't explain it, but he did it. When he does this for us, our response shouldn't be to sin more but to stand back and marvel at his grace and providence. God

will accomplish his purposes in us and through us, using even our sin in the process.

Let me ask you, where do you find yourself in David's story? David and Goliath: David's great faith. Is this a faith moment for you, a time of victory? David and Bathsheba: David's great sin. Is this a sin moment for you? David and Nathan: David's great confession and forgiveness. Is this a repentance moment for you?

If it is, it's an invitation to come clean. Everything David did was lavishly outdone by God's grace. No one minimizes David's sin. It's horrific. But God's grace looms infinitely larger. Let me give you some homework. Read Psalm 51 this week. It's David's full confession before the Lord. There, David used only four words to describe sin, but 19 words to describe God's grace and forgiveness. You see, sin is stale, dull, and routine, but God's grace is always fresh, original, and surprising. It never gets old. So, if you're trying to hide something from God, or trying to rewrite history by making something that's evil not appear so, just come out with it. That can be the start of a wonderful reroute. The consequences you may suffer aren't nearly as bad as living a lie. Confess your sin and let God begin to repair your life and lives of those you've damaged.

It's also an invitation to trust. Tim Keller says, "The gospel is this: We're more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we're more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." The prophet Jeremiah put this is this way, "Because of the Lord's great love we're not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They're new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). Will you trust that this is true?

You see, ultimately, this is a story inviting each of us to experience God's mercy and grace. Even in the midst of an ugly story about ugly sins, we discover the Gospel. The Gospel is God's invitation to come to Jesus Christ in the midst of our ugliness and brokenness.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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