

T H E S T O R Y

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 12: The Trials of a King

Key Question: What qualities of King David's do you most need to imitate?

Bathsheba

Pages 161–163

One evening David looked from the roof of his palace and saw a beautiful woman bathing. He asked about her and discovered she was Bathsheba, the wife of a valiant soldier he knew, Uriah.¹ Nonetheless, he slept with her and she became pregnant.

David brought Bathsheba's husband home, hoping Uriah would sleep with her. But he didn't.

1. (a) What did David ask Joab—the commander of the army—to do (2 Samuel 11:14–15)? (b) If you've ever been asked by a boss to do something wrong, explain how the request affected your opinion of and trust for the person. (c) What is a good way to respond when someone in leadership asks you to do something you believe is wrong?

After Uriah died, David married Bathsheba. But the Lord was displeased and sent the prophet Nathan to him.

2. (a) What was David's reaction when Nathan told him of the rich man stealing the poor man's precious sheep (2 Samuel 12:5–6)? (b) On whom had David actually pronounced judgment (12:7)? (c) We tend to find fault in others for the faults we don't want to see in ourselves. If you're angry with someone right now, prayerfully consider whether you've done the same sort of thing yourself.²

¹ Uriah was a member of David's elite military unit called the Thirty. Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, another member of the Thirty. Eliam's father was Ahithophel, David's wisest counselor. See 2 Samuel 11:3; 16:23; 23:34.

² See Jesus' teaching on this in Matthew 7:3–5.

God detailed the wonderful things he had done for David.

3. (a) How can remembering what God has done for us help keep us from temptation (2 Samuel 12:8)? (b) Why is doing what is evil in God's eyes equivalent to despising the word of the Lord (12:9a) and despising God (12:10)?

David's sin had been found out. When Nathan confronted him, David didn't make excuses or argue: He simply confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord."

That's what God wants us to do when we've done something wrong. And when we do, he promises to forgive us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."³

God forgave David. Nonetheless, David's actions would bring painful consequences that God wasn't going to stop.⁴

Psalms of Mercy

Pages 163–166

After David talked to Nathan, he wrote Psalm 51 as a prayer asking God to forgive him.

4. (a) In Psalm 51:1, upon what two attributes of God does David call? (b) How does knowing God has these attributes give us hope when we've sinned?

³ 1 John 1:9.

⁴ Nathan said the sword wouldn't depart from David's house and someone close to him would sleep with his wives in broad daylight. In those days, kings took the harems of their predecessors, so to sleep with a king's wife was to claim his throne.

5. (a) In Psalm 51:7, what did David know would happen if God cleansed him?⁵ (b) Why is this important to remember?

6. (a) David asked God for pure heart, steadfast spirit, and willing spirit (Psalm 51:10, 12). Why is a willingness to obey important to have before temptation strikes? (b) Take a few moments to ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is sin you need to confess. If so, confess like David did, “I have sinned against you.” Then pray Psalm 51.

David didn't just ask for forgiveness: he accepted it and rejoiced in it. In Psalm 32, David described the joy of being forgiven.

7. (a) What is the state of those whose sins God forgives (Psalm 32:1)? (b) What had life been like before David admitted his sin (32:3–4)? (c) What did David finally do (32:5a)? (d) What did God do in response (32:5b)?

Our merciful and compassionate God sent Jesus Christ to pay for our sins so we might be thoroughly cleansed.

8. Write a short prayer below accepting and rejoicing in God's forgiveness and cleansing.

⁵ Priests used hyssop branches to sprinkle people or things that were ceremonially unclean with the blood of a specially sacrificed animal or the water of cleansing.

Absalom

Pages 166–169

One day, David’s son Absalom conspired to take over the throne.⁶ In the ensuing battle, David commanded his men to treat Absalom gently. But Joab, David’s commander, ignored his wishes and killed the young man, ending the rebellion, but breaking David’s heart.

9. David’s son turned on him and led a rebellion against him. Both Samuel and David loved God wholeheartedly, but faced the heartbreak of children who didn’t. Are you in the same place, or do you know someone who is? Take a moment to pray the verse below for the wayward one. If you have a child who is not walking with God as you desire, ask your small group to pray for him or her this week.

Create in _____ a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within _____. *Psalm 51:10*

Giving Back

Pages 169–172

God restored David’s kingdom. Eventually, the time came for David to pass the throne to his son Solomon.

10. David prayed the following prayer for Solomon. Stop and pray the same prayer for yourself and your loved ones.

Give _____ the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands,
statutes and decrees. *1 Chronicles 29:19a*

King David knew all that he had came from God, and in gratitude and deep love, found ways to give to God what he could.

⁶ Bathsheba’s grandfather, the brilliant Ahithophel—David’s most trusted counselor—joined Absalom. When Absalom’s forces overtook Jerusalem causing David to flee, Ahithophel advised Absalom to sleep with his father’s concubines in a rooftop tent and then to quickly send a large force to kill only David. Absalom followed the first part of the advice, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord foretold by Nathan. The Lord prevented him from following the second part of the advice and so saved David’s life. It may be Ahithophel sought revenge over David sleeping with his granddaughter and murdering her husband.

11. David gave God heartfelt praise and gratitude. (a) What strikes you most about how David saw God in 1 Chronicles 29:11–13? (b) David had wealth, honor, strength, power, and exaltation. From where did they come (29:12)? (c) Write a prayer of thanksgiving for what God has given you.

David gave God his possessions. He gave above and beyond the tithes required by the law and provided lavishly for the construction of the temple his son Solomon would build to glorify God.

12. (a) What did David recognize about the gifts he gave to God (1 Chronicles 29:14, 16)? (b) How did recognizing this enable him to give with a willing and grateful heart? (c) David praised God as he gave gifts to him. Write a prayer to accompany your next offering to God.

Psalm 23

Pages 172–173

David reigned forty years and then departed to be with the God he loved. In this psalm, the shepherd who became king pictured himself as a sheep cared for by the Lord.

13. Psalm 23:1–2 describes the Lord as a shepherd who *provides* for the sheep. What is a way God has provided for your needs?

14. Psalm 23:3 describes the Lord as a shepherd who *perfects* the sheep. What is a way God has been perfecting you?

15. Psalm 23:4 describes the Lord as a shepherd who *protects* the sheep, using a rod to discipline errant sheep and to chase off predators, and using a staff to keep the sheep from danger and to lift up a fallen sheep. What is a way God has protected you?

16. Psalm 23:5–6 describe the Lord as a shepherd who *prepares* good things for the sheep. What is a way God has prepared good things for you?

David, the man after God's own heart, went home to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.