



# New Day Church

Need a fresh start?

## ANOTHER GOOD REASON FOR INDOOR PLUMBING

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Most of my growing up years were in a house with a basement. It was a house built back around 1930, when I think most houses had basements. I hated going down there. You'd stand at the top of the creaky stairs and look down into this black hole. It was dark and creepy and cold. There's a basement smell, too, that I can't quite describe, but if you've ever had a basement, you know what I'm talking about. Even after we finished off part of it and made it into a family room, I never really felt comfortable down there, especially when I was all by myself. If I had a choice of where to hang out, it was never in the basement and I was always glad to rush back up the stairs to where it was light.

There's part of me that feels like I'm standing at the top of those stairs this morning, looking down into the blackness. We're about to step into some dark and scary passages today, places I'd just as soon not go all that often. Because it deals with sin – that heavy, nasty subject that's no fun to talk about. Because it's failure. It's rebellion against God. It's bad choices with negative results. But it's an important chapter in David's story, one that marked him for the rest of his life. And any study of his life would be less than honest if we ignored the elephant in the living room. Plus, it's incredibly relevant for us, because when it comes to sin, we're no different than David. So we're going to be brave and step down into that dark, cold place. My goal is not to leave us down there, though. Hopefully by the end of the morning, we'll be running back up the stairs toward the light.

Many people are linked with David's name, but two stand out above all the rest. Two individuals are forever remembered for their role in David's life. We've already talked about Goliath. Today it's time to talk about Bathsheba. We go from the ugly giant to the bathing beauty. We think about Goliath as the big fight of David's life, but what happened with Bathsheba was in many ways a bigger fight, one he didn't win.

Even if you don't know all the details, chances are you at least know that David and Bathsheba had an affair. Hollywood has loved filling in the gaps for anyone who hasn't read the Bible for themselves. And you can see why, because the story of David and Bathsheba reads like a soap opera. All the elements of a scandal were there. But David's pursuit of a moment of pleasure with Bathsheba turned into a string of heartaches that far outlasted the initial happiness.

This could be a sermon on lust, and in a way it is. David wanted Bathsheba and went after her. But their story isn't just about sex. It's much bigger than that. It's a look into

the nature of sin itself, how it grows, how destructive it is. We see it transform from being enticing and attractive into a hideous monster. And then, in a surprise twist, we see this huge pile of sin swallowed up by God's grace. That's what makes this story bearable and so important for us to hear.

Because we all share the same underlying struggle. Whether or not you've been in David's shoes specifically doesn't matter. There are patterns to sin that show up again and again, and as we look at his experiences, we can easily recognize the same patterns in our own lives.

## **2 Samuel 11:1-12:25**

*In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.*

*One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home.*

It seems strange in some ways that the incident with Bathsheba would occur at this point in David's life. You would almost expect it to have happened at the height of his fame with Goliath, when he was a popular young hunk who could have his pick of the ladies.

In the current season of his life, he's not only much older, he has also walked with God through many difficult days. You would think his faith would be more mature. He has seen the importance of obeying God's commands and he has seen the results when people haven't. He should know better than what he's about to do.

It just goes to show that we are never through battling sin, no matter how strong we may think we are. We are all fragile and susceptible to temptation, and it can hit us at times in our life when we least expect it. For David, it all began one unsuspecting spring day.

### **A VULNERABLE SPOT**

Springtime was the time in olden days when the armies would go out and raid neighboring villages and kings would seek to expand their kingdoms. The author specifically mentions that it was the time kings themselves rode off to war. But for whatever reason, David did not choose to go. He sent all his men, while he stayed behind in the palace. He is disengaged and removed from the action.

Not only that, he's conveniently chosen to hang out on top of the palace, which gives him a peep show into everybody else's backyard. And as the king, he has the power to find out more about anything he sees.

In other words, David is in a vulnerable spot because he is isolated, he has put himself someplace he shouldn't be, he has the power to act on what he wants and he can do it all fairly anonymously while the army is out of town. That's a classic formula for temptation.

Can you identify with that? Take yourself out of any relationships that hold you accountable then go somewhere that gives you access to whatever weakness you have. Then make sure that there's little chance anyone will ever know what you did. Suddenly the likelihood of you sinning has increased substantially.

David put himself in a vulnerable position. Then he made a whole series of decisions that became increasingly more deliberate. He stayed home. He let his eyes wander. Then he investigated what he saw, until finally he sent for Bathsheba. Sleeping with her didn't suddenly happen – it was a snowball effect. There were any number of opportunities for him to walk away before he got anywhere close to her.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians and said,

**Ephesians 4:27**

*...and do not give the devil a foothold.*

David gave footholds left and right. There are so many ways we give just an inch of ground, and it's enough for the devil to catch with his toe. One key to avoiding sin is to watch the signs for where we're putting ourselves in the first place. Are we making ourselves vulnerable?

I've talked to many men who find the Internet to be a huge temptation for them. It's like David's palace roof – they can see everything from there and feel completely anonymous. So if you work on your computer, how do you keep from giving the devil a foothold?

I have one friend who completely reoriented his desk so that anybody walking by his office could see what was on his screen and he would be less tempted to go where he shouldn't. If we can find ways of cutting temptation off early, we can spare ourselves from a lot of grief.

Maybe you find yourself tempted to gossip every time you're with a particular friend. You don't start out intending to trash talk about somebody else, but one thing leads to another and before you know it, you're stirring the pot. How do you shut the process down early, so you don't end up where you don't want to go?

Whether you wrestle with anger or food or ambition or laziness or greed or shopping or fear, any struggle progresses down a path. The longer we stay on the path, the harder it gets to stop. David ignored the signs and gave into his desires.

It's funny, because even the writing tells you something important here. It took the author one sentence to talk about David's one night stand. But it will take almost two full chapters to deal with the repercussions.

*The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?"*

*Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"*

*Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.*

*In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."*

Everything changes as soon as there is evidence. David can't hide what he did when there is a baby to explain. And that's bad news for he and Bathsheba. Look at what Jewish law said about adultery:

### **Deuteronomy 22:22**

*If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die.*

### **THE COVER UP**

That's pretty black and white. As the king, David could undoubtedly get around that rule, and he could probably work out a deal for Bathsheba, too. But it would be a big scandal any way you look at it.

So rather than come clean, David begins scrambling to cover up what he did. He tries to get Uriah to go home for a night so that maybe somehow he'll believe the child is his own. When that doesn't work, David resorts to plotting the murder of Uriah. The fun is over. Now it is all about damage control.

We seem to have an inborn skill for covering up our guilt. In the parenting section of about.com, it says, "All children at some point will try lying to divert blame for something they did wrong. Younger ones will blame an infraction or accident on an imaginary 'bad' child. Older kids will tell an outright lie to cover up their guilt and avoid punishment. The emotions at work here are guilt, anxiety, and fear."

After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they ran and hid as soon as they heard God's voice. We've been running and hiding ever since. Sin wants to be hidden. It will drive us to do all kinds of strange things to prevent it from being exposed. In the process, it can take us into even darker places where our bad choices are compounded.

**That's how sin keeps it's grip on us – with the fear of being discovered.** What would people think if they knew this about me? What would happen to me if I told anyone about what I did or what I'm really like?

While David's first cover up plan failed, his second one was successful. Uriah was killed in battle. He had been one of David's best fighting men, one of his elite royal guard. You can sense his loyalty in his responses to David about why he won't go home. It makes David's actions seem all the more evil. It is this decent, innocent man who will pay the price for David to cover his tracks.

When we've done something wrong, we often try to justify covering it up because it would really hurt the other person to know the truth. In fact, it is the cover up itself that damages other people.

After Uriah died, his commander Joab sent word to David via messenger.

*The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."*

*David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."*

That shocks me every time I read it. David has never had much trouble lying, but this is a new level of being completely insincere.

*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. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*

David got what he wanted. It looks like his ploy worked. As far as he can tell, nobody except Joab knows what happened to Uriah. Nobody knows yet that Bathsheba is

pregnant. By the time the baby arrives, she will be his wife and nobody will think anything of it. Everything has worked out in his favor.

Sometimes, that's how it is. Sometimes we do seem to get away with our sin. There aren't always obvious or devastating consequences. It may feel like we can move on and just forget about it, if it weren't for that last line of the paragraph:

*But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*

God saw what had happened. David didn't fool him. The outside world had no idea of the evil that had happened behind the palace walls, but God was fully aware and it didn't sit well with him.

There may be no compelling outward reason to deal with some sin in our life. It may be so well hidden that it doesn't even bother US anymore. But know this: If it displeases God, he's not going to be content to let it go unaddressed.

To get through to David, the Lord sends his pastor to him – the prophet Nathan. Nathan doesn't come right out and confront David immediately. Instead, he paints a scenario for him about two unnamed men in the kingdom.

*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."*

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

*Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"*

You are the man. Nathan's strategy is brilliant. He draws David into the emotion of a story that is different enough from his own situation that David doesn't feel threatened by it. To top it off, it's about a cute, cuddly little sheep, which would take David instantly back to his own experience as a shepherd. He identifies with the poor man in the story, the victim.

And he wastes no time forming an opinion about the rich man. David knows immediately that the rich man is clearly in the wrong, and it makes him mad. It's cruel and heartless. It's an outrageous thing, as anybody can see.

This is the irony of sin: We have no trouble recognizing it in other people. In fact, the more wrongs we can point to outside of ourselves, the better we feel.

Nathan's words change all that when he says, "You are the man." Sin moves from being an abstract, general concept to one that's very personal. David had to see himself in the story, not as the victim, but as the one doing the wrong.

## THE CRISIS POINT

Here's the crisis point of the whole message. This is where everything hangs in balance for David, and it is where it hangs in the balance for us. How do we respond when God says, "You are the man. You are the woman. Quit pointing the fingers at the rest of the world. Quit finding fault with everyone else. It's you I'm talking about. The problem is yours – no one else's."

Are you up for another band story? When I was a senior in high school, I developed a major clash with my band teacher. He would make me so angry. I thought he was verbally abusive. He was manipulative and unpleasant. He had a short temper and he would put major pressure on students to take band who wanted out. Everything he did grated on me.

It got to the point where I talked to my dad about it. And my dad decided he was going to go in and talk to my teacher. I just knew this was going to be devastating for my teacher, because my dad was a pretty strong individual who couldn't be pushed around. I was finally going to get justice.

When my dad got home from his meeting with the teacher, the look on his face wasn't what I thought it would be. He looked troubled. Apparently, there was another side to the story. My band teacher had been keeping a running list of things I had been doing in class all year. My dad got an earful of news about his son that he had not anticipated. I was causing trouble. I was being uncooperative. I was being obnoxious. It turns out that I was the man, or at least the 127 lb. boy.

Seeing my dad's disappointment in me and hearing in black and white my own offenses shook me up. I saw that I had been pointing the finger the other way without ever considering my own actions. And once I heard it from my dad, I knew he was right. I went in the next day and apologized to my teacher and worked to make the rest of the year better. It was a humbling lesson.

I don't care what the sin is, I don't care how many times you've gotten away with it or how far under the rug you may have swept it. At some point, God will confront you with your guilt. And that will be the defining moment in your struggle with that sin. I've seen

some people reach that point and turn their lives around, and I've seen others shrug their shoulders and continue with what they're doing. They haven't accepted responsibility for their choices.

David could have made that choice. He could have refused to accept that word from Nathan, and he could have just had him killed, too. Instead, this is what happened.

*Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."*

He knew everything Nathan said was true, and this time, instead of trying to hide it, he chose to admit it. He had sinned against the Lord.

When we think of holy, saintly people, we tend to think of people who are less tempted than the rest of us, people who are less inclined to sin. But if you've ever met anyone who you'd place in that category, you discover that what really defines them is a deep understanding of just how sinful they are. Becoming godly is not about being perfect – it's about being able to say, "I'm the real sinner here." People like that are no longer judgmental of other people because they're so in tune with their own weaknesses.

They say confession is good for the soul, and this was the watershed moment for David. Once it was out on the table, the healing could begin.

I know I've been quoting Eugene Peterson frequently over the last few weeks, but his book on David's life is so good I just can't help it. He says this:

One of the frequently misunderstood features of the gospel by outsiders – maybe THE most frequently misunderstood – is this: that a confession of sin isn't a groveling admission that I'm a terrible person; it doesn't require what's sometimes described as "beating yourself up." Insiders to the gospel know that the sentence "I have sinned against the Lord" is a sentence full of hope. It's full of hope because it's a sentence full of God."

As destructive and powerful as sin is, it is no match for the grace of God. No sooner are the words "I have sinned against the Lord" out of David's mouth than grace is there to meet him.

*Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."*

## THE FAR SIDE

God is not going to carry out the punishment. He had already taken away David's sin. It's past tense. It's a done deal. What a beautiful picture for us. When we come and confess to our sins to God, he says, "your sins are taken away." And he pardons us from our death sentence. It's not because our confession is so powerful – we're just accepting what has already been done, what Jesus took care of on the cross.

Sin still had its consequences for David – God took away the baby that he and Bathsheba had from their affair. There was still the pain of knowing he had caused Uriah’s death. But God had David’s heart again, and he would not hold his guilt against him.

In fact, God confirms how complete his forgiveness is for David in two ways. The first came in the birth of Solomon.

*Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with 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.*

David and Bathsheba have this second child that they name Solomon, related to the Hebrew word for peace. They have come to terms with their past and are now at peace with it. But God wanted David to know that he was more than okay – he was restored. So God tells Nathan, “Go tell them to call the boy Jedidiah.” That name means loved by God. Hearing it from Nathan must have been especially meaningful. God loved David and he loved Solomon.

He also loved Bathsheba. One day, she would be included by special mention in the genealogy of Jesus himself. It was as if to say that God’s complete salvation was for her as well. Whatever shame she carried from the whole affair, God would more than wipe it away by including her in his greatest plan for healing up and restoring the world.

Many of you here today are on the far side of some sin. You’ve felt the pain, you’ve gone through the process of admitting it and you are maybe even at peace with your past. But you still struggle with knowing that God has completely and truly forgiven you. I want to be your Nathan this morning and say to you, “Your name is Jedidiah. You are loved by God.”

There is nothing in your life too big for his grace. There is no basement so dark that his light can’t reach. And he wants to set you back on your feet and make you whole, without there being some permanent scar on your relationship. He can heal you up.

My sin wants me to think it’s so attractive that it’s irresistible. Once I give in to it, my sin wants me to think it can’t be exposed. It wants me to think that the problem is with other people. And it wants me to think that God won’t ever love me the same way again. I don’t want it to have that kind of power in my life.

We can be fighting sin on all those levels at any given time. As you think about your own situation, where is your struggle?

1. Am I ignoring the warning signs?
2. What am I covering up?
3. Can I say that the problem is me?
4. Can I call myself Jedidiah?