

# The Life of David

## Week 9: The Funeral of Hope

2 Samuel 11

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- October 22, 2023

Well, hey, good morning, Grace! We are back studying the life of David.

If you'll turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 11 ... many of you know what that means. 2 Samuel 11, the top answers, fill in the blank.

David and ... \_\_\_\_\_ (Goliath)

Next answer: David and ... \_\_\_\_\_ (Bathsheba)

That's the story that we're going to look at today. Matthew Henry has a wonderful commentary on this section, and he says that this story of David is a funeral. It is a dirge. He says that the eulogy that was given to Saul by Jonathan—"Let it not be said to Ashkelon and in the streets of Gath (the bad guys' capital cities) that David has done this, that people outside of the faith might mock God and His people because of it." And then he says, "These stories are written for the instruction, and particularly, for those who think that they stand, lest they fall." Other people's sorrows are to be warnings for us. Other people's pain is to be a warning for us.

David, the one-time great defender of the weak, is now a bully. David is known for his generosity and his giving. Now he'll take. And he'll take what does not belong to him.

And the most frightening lesson we're going to learn today is how natural this descent is. And by natural, I mean, sin nature. The sin nature in all of us puts us on this road to perdition where, unless we're diligent, we will destroy our own lives. There are a thousand different roads. You can call them all lanes in the superhighway of the road to ruin, including the various ways we can modify them according to our temperaments or personalities, or even our life histories. But they have this common theme. We all end up saying one way or another what David's going to say here:

*I had this coming to me.*

*Now it's my turn.*

*Look at all I've done. I want to get a little something back.*

*I'm in charge now. I'm the one that gets to call the shots.*

And we say to our conscience, *Be still.*

I want you to listen carefully. I'll point it out to you, but there are **four forks in the road** in this story for David changing the trajectory of his life. There are **four exit ramps** on this highway to hell. **There are four different chances where David could have ended his self-centeredness and repent and return to some kind of normal, and he fails.**

Today is a funeral for anyone who still has bright-eyed naïveté to think that you have to be a bad guy to be able to bring total destruction to things that are good and true and beautiful. No. The capacity for nuclear evil is in the hearts and souls of every human being, saved and non-saved.

Today what is frightening is how easy and simple the transition and change is from this icon of righteousness to this villain who's nothing more than a thug.

If you remember the story that we looked at last week in 2 Samuel 5-10, it's Camelot. It's the highwater mark of the Old Testament, and in some respects, human civilization, where you have a righteous king leading a righteous nation with a beautiful capital city that belongs to God—Jerusalem—all with the presence of the righteous Jehovah, speaking to his people through His priests and His king. And this great Camelot's glory is balancing on a head of a pin. It's frail. You think it's strong, but it's not.

### **Word of the Day: Sent**

The word of the day that I want you to take notice of is the word “sent.” “Sent” will be used twenty-three times in chapters 10, 11, and 12. And the reason for that is the author wants us to see that that word “sent” or “send” is a word of someone expressing power. It is the premeditated, deliberate moving of people as though you are a chess master moving pieces on a board because you can. It's not good or bad. It's just authority. It's given to you by God and it's going to be abused in this case—in David's case. It's not so good.

Chapter 10 ends with David defeating another set of enemies of Israel, and all is well in the kingdom of God. And then we turn the page, and in chapter 11, verse 1, all is not well within the king, within the soul of that king.

In 2 Samuel 11 in one sentence the author is going to try and emphasize—and he's going to do this three different ways—he's going to say, *You are in the wrong place at the wrong time,*

David. He has three different ways of projecting to David that he should be listening to this. He's saying, *Get out ... danger.*

## 2 Samuel 11:1

**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.**

Look what he says in verse 1. This is the first time he says it. "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent"—there's that power word again—"Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained"—literally, "was sitting"—"in Jerusalem."

### Decision #1: David Stays in Jerusalem at Wartime

David, the good shepherd who serves his flock is going to be defeated—not in a battlefield of war, but in a battlefield where he was never supposed to be in the first place.

The first part says "In the spring, when kings go out to war ..." *Go to war, David! This is what you're supposed to do. And somewhere in David's mind, he felt he became the exception.* It happens every time. There's the word—I'm *exceptional*. The men and women who I've known, the boys and girls who I've known over forty years of ministry and just watching life—that word finds its way into people's values. And they just think they're different. They'll say, maybe, *Look what I have done. Look at my giving. Look at my service. Look at the ministry. I'm going to use all of that, those exceptional acts of mine, to justify any behavior I want. Now I can become a taker.*

Sometimes I've heard this said multiple times—I'm *an exception. I can burn the candle at both ends. That won't hurt me.* Or a version of that is, *I'm exceptional. I've done all that burning of the candle at both ends. And now it's my turn to sleep in. Now I get the rest. Now I can just send. I'll have other people do what God has given me the responsibility to do.*

And in this one sentence, David shows this value right here—"When kings go out to war ..." *Look at all I've done. You guys read chapters 5 through 10, right? Did you go to the sermon last week? I mean, that was me. I did that. So, this spring I'm just going to stay here.*

The second way that even this first sentence is showing that David's heart and soul is rotting from within, is that he says the word "sent." Look at everybody he sends! He sent Joab and all the king's men and the entire Israeli army. Are you listening? Can you picture who's left in Jerusalem? There are four old guys in the retirement home and everyone else is a female. David sends every able-bodied male out of town, and he's going to chaperone the women. Oh, what could happen? What could possibly happen?

And then a third way this writer wants us to know that David's heart has now turned towards vanity is the verbs that are being used in contrast to one another. It says that the troops, the men—Joab and the guys—destroyed the Ammonites and they besieged the city. But David was sitting in the palace. It's just screaming off the page here. These are warnings, one after another. And they're warnings for us.

Are you on a battlefield where you were never meant to be, where you don't have a chance in the world of winning? And it sounds like it's subtle. But you know, when you hear of it in someone else's life, you want to just slap them and say, "What?! What were you doing there then?"

But when we do it in our own lives, somehow, we think, *Oh, I'm the exception, so what could happen? I'm me.* At this year's Halloween party, Betty sent her husband and her children home and stayed until almost the very end. Or at the annual sales' convention at that big fancy resort, John sent his sales team to the afterparty, but stayed back to spend some extra time with the vice-president of sales, Rhonda. And your friend is telling you this, and you're saying, *What?! In the spring when kings go out to war, you were where?*

## **2 Samuel 11:2a**

**One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace.**

Well, what you would predict happens here, verse 2: "And one evening David got up from his bed"—that's where he sleeps, on a bed—"and walked around on the roof of the palace." And he's going to work his way through the three big categories of sin that are described in the newer Testament: the lust of the eyes are going to lead to the lust of the flesh and give birth to

the pride of life. And here it is: this once protector of the weak will now bully the weak, because he can.

## **2 Samuel 11:2b-3**

**From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,<sup>3</sup> 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?”**

The verse continues: “From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. So, David sent someone to find out about here. The man said, ‘Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’”

His answer is not typical of a person responding to a simple question from a king. This is as close to a confrontation as you will see between a servant and a monarch. He’s telling David, *Stop, right here, right now. Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam?* He’s going to give him the family tree. *Do you know who we’re talking about here?* Because Eliam is going to be in a list later on in 2 Samuel 23 of all the men of valor and honor. These are called David’s mighty men—in Hebrew, the Gibborim. These are men who have risked their very lives and have given their safety for the sake of protecting God’s king and God’s kingdom. That list in chapter 23 is just a list of men receiving the highest honor. In our military it would be the Medal of Honor. And that’s Eliam, Bathsheba’s father. And the servant says, *Isn’t this Bathsheba? She’s married to Uriah the Hittite.* Bing, bing, bing ... Uriah the Hittite. He’s always going to be described as a Hittite because he’s not Jewish. He comes over because he’s drawn to the nature of Jehovah and the way He blesses Israel. And his name means “the Lord Yahweh is my light.”

That list of medal honor winners in chapter 23? Yeah, Uriah is on that list as well. He’s received that because of his valor and because of his honor. And you wonder, how did he end up with Bathsheba? You know, maybe Eliam was team chief and they were on a mission and he saw Uriah do what he does, and he saw his great courage, his honor, and his love for God, and he said, “You know, I have a daughter who is worthy of your husbanding.” That must have been some wedding, right?

What’s interesting is that there’s a third member of the family, Eliam’s father. So that’s the grandfather of Bathsheba, and he’s named Ahithophel. I’ll tell you that, because Ahithophel

is one of the primary counselors to King David. When David was trying to find out the wisdom of God, he would go to Ahithophel.

## Decision #2: Servant Pushing Back

So, we have Bathsheba's father, a military hero, as well as her husband. And then her grandfather is a man of wisdom. And so, "Who is this woman?" And the answer is, *You know her, David. You went to the wedding. I mean, everyone was there. It was right there at the Naval Academy at Annapolis. We were out there on the lawn. There have never been so many blue ribbons with five-point stars in the history of our nation gathered at one place.*

And so, this is David's second big chance to change his location and change his trajectory. He shouldn't have been in Jerusalem. That was his first chance to repent. And now, this warning—*Hey, this woman is from a family of noble men who served you and will give their very lives for the kingdom and for your life. So, those are trusted soldiers.*

And this is a chance for David to get slapped in the face with a cold plunge and say, *Thank you, servant. What was I thinking and why am I here and why am I looking at a woman bathe from my balcony? You're right. Pack my bags. I'm going to war.* A line is drawn. And if he crosses that line, the road steepens toward darkness.

### 2 Samuel 11:4

**Then David sent messengers and took her. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she went back home.**

The word of the day ... David sends. Verse 4: "And then David sent messengers and took her. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she went back home." Boom, boom, boom. He sent for her. His conscience was screaming in the time it takes to go and send the royal chariot and come back. It's roaring inside of his head. *David, David ... what? No! Don't do this. Just leave. Lock the doors. You don't have to go through with this.*

And then David says, *Shut up, conscience. Be still. Stand down.*

Fear this about the nature of the Holy Spirit. He's polite. He will comply. And so ... *Fine. Go and do what you want to do.*

David sent the messengers. It's showing that he has power, that he's a bully. He sends out and they come back, and just to know what's happening in this story, there's nobody making love here. He had sex with her. There's no affair. He doesn't call her. There's no relationship. *She's pretty, I want her, I deserve her.* That's it. He doesn't even call her by name. One time she's referred to in the whole rest of the story, and she's called "the woman." And the only person who calls her "Bathsheba" is this servant who tried to stop it in the first place.

**Proverbs 30:20**

**This is the way of an adulterous person: He eats and wipes his mouth and says, "I've done nothing wrong."**

It's like the Proverb that says, "This is the way of the adulterous person: he eats and wipes his mouth and says, 'I have done nothing wrong.'"

**2 Samuel 11:5**

**The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."**

His twenty minutes is up. He sends her home. Tongue-in-cheek humor for a Hebrew sense of humor—guess who's sending now? The next sentence says, "And the woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant.'"

**Decision #3: To Take Responsibility or Not**

This is the third exit ramp for David to get off while he still can. The road to perdition is still a good distance away, and if he just changes right now—*Just stop here, I can't go on any further. I did this, I will take responsibility. I'll give up the crown and the throne if the Lord wants me to do that, but I just need to be right. I need to be right with you, your husband, and the Lord himself.*

Or he can accelerate down this steepening trajectory to the fateful destruction of his soul. He's just going to double down. And I want you to note this: that from this point forward, all the decisions made by David are going to be to protect his precious reputation; to make sure people

still think that he's the good and the righteous king. And he loves that reputation so much and he is out to save face, that he'll pay whatever it costs. He wants to be known as King David, God's king—God's righteous king. King Arthur. The pride of life ... that's it. The pride of life. *I want people to like me and to think well of me.*

And right at this moment David is joining the great fraternity of hypocrites. When people think you're right here in the context of character and morals and reputation, but you know you're down here, that gap is a lie. And how did that gap get there? Usually, the person is manipulating and conniving and using their own press to make sure they stay up there. And that's what David is doing now.

David's humility is rotten—completely. And now his pride is free to roam. And this is what his pride is going to do to maintain his reputation. He's going to keep this thing going.

When I was working on my doctorate, one of the best classes I've had in my life was called "The Pastor as Crisis Counselor." And the man teaching it had been in ministry for maybe seventy years. So, he just called in a lot of favors. He flew them into Los Angeles, and we sat down, and these were people who had experienced life-altering crises; sometimes because of illness or death of a loved one, betrayal, unjust accusations. But there were three people who self-inflicted ruin in their lives. And one of them I was familiar with—everybody was familiar with him. He was the pastor of a huge church out in Los Angeles with maybe fifteen to twenty thousand attending any given Sunday. It had a very expansive radio ministry, the books ... all that sort of thing.

And so, he tells a story about how because of the success that he'd been propelled into, the stress was causing all sorts of cracks and quakes in his soul. And on Saturday night, to get ready for Sunday morning, one of the things he would do is just go for a long drive. That is tranquilizing at times. And it also lets you think through your sermon and what you might be saying the next day. He did it every Saturday night.

On one Saturday night he stopped on a street corner and asked a prostitute to come in the car with him. And he experienced in those few minutes the most exhilarating, guilt-inflicted adrenaline rush that he'd ever had in his entire life. And then, he continued to say that he did that again for eighteen months.

End of story. Now it's Q & A time. Everybody's saying, "I want to hear—how did you do that?"



And he said, “Here’s what happened. The first night I was scared and I couldn’t believe what had just happened. I came home. I sweat through the sheets. I cried to myself all through the night and didn’t sleep—not one minute. But I had resolved that I was going to start tomorrow, I was going to walk up those stairs, and I was going to look the people in the eye and tell them what had happened and resign.”

So, the next day he got up, walked up the stairs, the light hit him in the face. He heard his voice over the sound system. And then he just gave the sermon that he was supposed to give. And on his ride home, he said to himself, “I can have both. I can visit prostitutes on Saturday and preach on Sunday.” He said, “The hypocrisy and the duplicity became normative for me. I did a sermon series on addiction and it was the most popular one I’d done in maybe a decade. People were saying, ‘You’re reading my mind!’” And he thought, “I’m reading my diary.”

So, here’s what happened. David is trying to get himself out of this problem. So, he’s going to send to have Uriah come back to Jerusalem and spend some time with him, that he might spend some time with his lovely wife. They’d enjoy a night of love together, and then they would think that the baby came a month early, but it’s his, and they’re just hoping, hoping, hoping, that he doesn’t have red hair and blue eyes to look a little too much like the king.

At this point, David’s parachute of life has failed him and he’s in a freefall. How the might have fallen! This is the death of Camelot. It’s the death of a king. Because at this point in David’s life—this is David, who has defended the honor and the integrity and the righteousness of God against giants. *Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?* He knew no one could challenge God. *You come to me with a sword and a spear and a javelin. I come to you in just the name of the Lord God Almighty.* And now David thinks he can face Jehovah down and live this double life? At this point, David’s mad. He’s insane. He’s connecting dots that don’t connect. He thinks he can have his cake and eat it too.

This is David the bully. All the power and resources that God gave him, having raised him up from being a shepherd, are so that he can give and serve and protect. Now watch what happens. He’s going to use that power to send, send, send—three times in a single sentence.

## 2 Samuel 11:6

So David **sent** this word to Joab: “**Send** me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab **sent** him to David.

“So David sent word to Joab: ‘Send me Uriah the Hittite.’ And Joab sent him to David.” He has Uriah come and join him in the palace. *Hey, let’s have a quick interview. I’m just wondering, How’s Joab? (Don’t care.) How’s the army? (I still don’t care.) How’s the war going? Fine. Great. (There’s the small talk.) Hey, you know what? Now that you’re here, why don’t you go home and wash your feet?* Yes, that’s a Hebrew phrase for “enjoy your wife.” And it says that David sent him home with gifts—bubble bath. *You go have yourself a great time—you’ve earned it. (It’s all going to work great.) Just do what any good soldier on leave would do.*

## 2 Samuel 11:9-10

**However, Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup> 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?”**

However—that’s the next word—“However”—oh, the plans of mice and men. “However, 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 great distance? Why didn’t you go home?’” You have a very beautiful wife ... so I’ve been told. What were you thinking?

And this part of the passage is a master class in storytelling. Because at this point all the story has been a rapid-fire succession, short sentences, quick actions, not a lot of speaking. And now Uriah’s going to answer the question about why he didn’t go home. This is the longest soliloquy in chapter 11, and it’s to slow everything down and heighten the character and the goodness of Uriah, in contrast to David--Uriah the Hittite, the foreigner. And four times in his answer he kind of is saying, *David, you should be out on the battle field when kings go out to war.* He’s not doing it to punch David. He’s just saying these things that are true. But each one of these things is a zing. *Why are you in Jerusalem ... now?*

## 2 Samuel 11:11

**Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel is 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!”**

Here’s Uriah’s answer. “And Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel is 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!’” *What kind of able-bodied man would be missing out on a battlefield experience? Everyone and everything, even the ark of the covenant, is in a tent. I don’t know anyone who’s not on duty right now.*

David projected his entitlement onto Uriah. And Uriah is not entitled. He’s grateful. And he won’t use his power to get what he ought to get. He’s going to use it to serve God’s kingdom and God’s king.

## 2 Samuel 11:13

**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.**

And so, David says, *Okay. Why don’t you spend one more night? I’ll send you back, but why don’t you have dinner with me?* David’s setting him up. “At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk.” When the king says, “Drink,” you drink. “But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.”

And this is the pinnacle of the character of contrast between David and Uriah. Their characters are being contrasted by their caricature. One has character and one does not. Seven times it says that Uriah the Hittite is not from Israel. He’s following and serving and giving honor to the Lord and his nation. David is from Judah, and everything he owns has been given from God, hand-picked. And the repetition is exaggerating this contrast. And now, with this last

part of the story, here's what's being said: Uriah the Hittite drunk is more pious than David sober. Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

#### **Decision #4: Confess to Uriah or Not**

And this is David's fourth and final chance to be convicted by all that's happening around him. He hears Uriah give that answer and he just says, *Your honor, your integrity, your holiness, is crushing my guilty spirit. I can't live this way anymore. Uriah, come ... here's what I've done. I've sinned against you and your wife and against the holiness of God. I'll do whatever, face down. I just want to start all over again. I want to go back in time ... when kings go to war in the spring.*

#### **2 Samuel 11:14-15**

**In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> 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."**

That's not what happens. He's all in. In verse 14, "In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. He wrote, 'Put Uriah on the front line where the fighting is fiercest and then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.'"

King Arthur is dead. This is not the David we even know or had fears about that this could happen. And do you know what's interesting? Do you know why this plan works? Because of the nobility and honor of Uriah the Hittite. He doesn't even open the letter that is his assassination letter. Because of his honesty, he brings that to Joab. And Joab obeys. And he sends Uriah and some of his platoon into some ridiculous battle plan, then withdraws enough people to have that whole group of people die pointlessly. Everyone knows this. Everyone knows a good battle plan from a bad battle plan. And this was murder. Every man on that battlefield knew that. And that funeral ... Arlington National Cemetery. Six caskets ... let's say that's how many died. Certainly Uriah, but there was collateral damage. Six caskets with flags. And one, that beautiful baby blue ribbon and that five-point star, Medal of Honor ... that's Uriah.

And in the crowd are his fellow soldiers—more Medal of Honor recipients, his band of brothers, his team members. And they're all confused. And the ones who are thinkers are not

confused; they're angry. I mean, the tombstones are just vibrating. They know that these men were set up. There was a conspiracy to kill these men. They were betrayed by their king and by their commanding officer Joab. You can bet Eliam, the father of Bathsheba, the chief, the officer overseeing the special forces—I'm sure he saw the debrief and saw it for what it was. He's at this funeral and he's grinding his teeth and staring at Joab. He's making a terminal list. He knows what happened.

How about Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba, the advisor to the king? What's taken place here just smacks of treason. And in a few short years there will be a mutiny that will take place. One of David's own sons will run David out of town and become king, and Ahithophel will have to choose between King David and the mutineer, the treasonous son. And Ahithophel says, *Something is rotten in Jerusalem. I'll take this one before I'll take that killer of my grandson-in-law.* Ahithophel is the pastor on call. He's performing this funeral. He says, *Let us close in prayer.* And everybody bows their head. And David looks up, and out of the corner of his eye looks at Bathsheba. Bathsheba looks up out of the corner of her eyes and they connect. And across the caskets is Joab looking at both of them. There will not be a United Kingdom ever again. Now it's *MacBeth* and *Hamlet*.

## **2 Samuel 11:27a**

**After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.**

Verse 27: "After the time of mourning was over, David had her"—her, the woman—"brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son ..."

*I did it. I'm home free. This bully can have his cake and eat it too. Ha, ha! Reputation intact with a little mumbling, some gossip. But sure.*

Anybody notice a missing character in the storyline? Any key people in the story of God's redemption so far? Jehovah not one time is mentioned. Not one time. No one is consulting Jehovah in this mess. It's like David is thinking, like the old country song, "No one knows what goes on behind closed doors." Whooo!

## 2 Samuel 11:27b

**But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.**

The last sentence of chapter 11: “But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.” Yeah. Someone does know what goes on behind closed doors.

Months go by and David is living his new normal. He has Bathsheba as a wife now. People say he’s really restless at night now. And he drinks a lot more wine than he used to and he gets started a lot sooner. But hey, it’s all good. It’s all good. We’re just going to carry on.

**Here are four lessons I want us to learn from this passage that I think jump off the page.** But I think we all need to reminded of it.

### **Lesson #1: Look at the High Cost of Sin**

The first is to look at the high cost of sin. We’ll continue this series together, but I want you to see that sin is way more expensive than you and I are able to pay for. There’s one verse committed to this act of adultery; there are eight chapters that will follow with nothing but death and destruction. This one night is going to lead to generational trauma. There’s a high cost to sin and you can’t afford to pay that.

I think if any one of us said, *I’m going to go do this sin. I’ll get out a pad of paper and count how much it’s going to cost.* That alone will make me say, *Whoa, let’s not.*

### **Lesson #2: Men and Women Don’t Fall into Sin; They Erode**

Second would be that men and women don’t fall into sin. That’s the key. Men and women don’t fall into sin; they erode. We rot slowly from the inside out. It’s like that oak tree right in the middle of our courtyard—that 200-and-something-year-old oak tree that all of us thought was healthy and doing great, until that ice storm. And then it cracks and splits open and we said, “Oh, dear God, thank you that we weren’t bouncing on that tree.” It was already dead. God knew it. The tree knew it. We didn’t.

It’s not a story of adultery. This is the story of the gentle decline into ruin. Jesus would say that it’s the deceitfulness of riches and the worries of the world. And I love it that’s it’s the

“deceitfulness of riches.” Riches don’t ring your doorbell and say, *Hey, you want to be successful? Awesome. Just give me your soul.* No, it just creeps in slowly. You think you’re doing the right thing, but you might be doing it for the wrong reason.

And this story is frightening for us because if this happens to David—there’s that death of our naïveté—that David could kill and destroy what is good and beautiful and true—yeah ... us.

### Lesson #3: Innocence Must Be Maintained

And so, that leads us to the third lesson: his innocence must be maintained. Hear this, listen carefully, about the frailty of a tender heart towards God. The fragility of our ability to hear the Spirit’s voice and guide us and direct us—let me say it another way. There is nothing more precious than a clear conscience. I’m using the word “precious” on purpose. There is nothing more precious than a clear conscience; to lay your head on a pillow every night and be at peace with God and at peace with men, and to know you’re in the right place and you can hear His voice. And it’s so precious that you would pay anything and everything to maintain that innocence. Rewind, interview David after the fact, his Saturday night/Sunday morning hypocrisy. *What would you pay to get in a DeLorean and go back in time and pick up and go to war?* He’d pay anything and everything—an arm and a leg—whatever it costs.

This is a great sentence to remember. Memorize this. **You will be killing sin or sin will be killing you.** And in David’s case, the lesson for us, in so many ways, is that you have to kill the sin when it’s early, when it’s young, before it has too much power over us.

What’s the best way to kill an oak tree? Squash it when it’s an acorn. We all hate cedar trees. Pull it up when it’s a sapling. You don’t need to get a root grinder now.

You deal with underlying values while they’re bouncing around in your soul. And instead of entertaining them, you just destroy them with God’s values. So, instead of fantasizing about revenge or even sexual exchanges—whatever the word might be—instead of entertaining that, stop those thoughts. Instead of being dedicated to jealousy and envy and feeding that demon inside of you, how about you memorize words from God’s Word? We should have no tolerance towards self-absorption and vanity. How long are we going to spend in front of a mirror before it’s the spring when kings go to war? We should have a no-tolerance value—we see that in schools, right?—no tolerance, zero tolerance—on this—on sin. Because if we’re not killing sin,

sin is killing us. And there's nothing more precious than a clear conscience. That's what David would say. Whatever it costs, pay it. It's cheaper than the cost of sin.

If you're thinking in this storyline, particularly to even prevent something like this in your own life, and you're thinking, *How did this happen? How did David get to a place in his life where he's taking another woman and then killing her husband? Wasn't he the giant killer? Wasn't he the one standing up for the righteousness of God? Wasn't he the giver and the protector? How did Dr. Jekyll turn into Mr. Hyde so quickly?*

The lesson is not how it happened. You're missing the point. The question is when. When did it happen? When did the rot start in David? Because if you think it started at the rooftop, oh no, no—he was dead already. He was just a dead man walking on the roof at the wrong time. It started when his heart began to meditate on the value that he was exceptional; that he was different. *I mean, look at all the service and the giving and the generosity. I'm God's king in God's city with God's presence. That'd be me. I'm the exception. I get to do stuff other people don't get to do. I've been burning the candle at both ends. When's it my turn? When do I get to put my feet up and rest? When other kings go to war in the spring ... but then there's me.* That's the day it happened.

That spring, that first day of spring when he's having this leisurely breakfast while everyone else is saddling up horses; he's on his balcony waving to Joab and all the king's men and the entire Israeli army—he was dead before dinner. That's not when it happened. It happened when he began entertaining some kind of view that he wanted something—maybe it was a good thing—but he wanted it too much. A good thing becomes a great thing becomes an ultimate thing. It becomes an idol and it will destroy you. Idols eat their prey, their worshippers.

My original introduction was a list of all the men and women over my career who I had turned into heroes, and they're lost. And it was just such a sad list that I couldn't mention them. I don't know ... goodness, just finish well.

Certainly, one of the saddest stories in my personal experience is with ... I'm going to call her ... what do I nickname her? Debbie. And she's an old dear friend and loves serving the church. She and her husband did great things here at Grace. It changed the whole trajectory of our church for the better. And she was super tender-hearted—almost fragile—towards other people and towards God.



And then their marriage hit the skids for a while. He was working all the time and kind of neglecting her, and she was running with the kids, doing all that kind of stuff. And she put on a little weight and she was kind of known for being very pretty—very beautiful. Anyway, the point was that she was feeling like she was neglected and not desired or valued. And those were all good things, and as a wife, she should have those things. She shouldn't be neglected; she should be desired; she should be valued. And it just wasn't happening.

And she's meditating on these things and they transition from good to great things, and then become ultimate things. They became idols. She wanted them too much. And there was a bag boy—a bag boy—at the grocery store that loved to wait on her. And he would tell her how attractive she was and how valuable she must be to everyone that she touches and how she must have a very lucky husband waiting at home.

She liked going to that store and having him bag her groceries, again and again and again. She was on a battlefield she should never have been on. And then in the spring when all the groceries were in her car, she stopped and stared and it turned into something that scared her—more than she'd bargained for. And she didn't know how it happened. She was asking, "How?" and she should have been asking, "When? When did it happen?" When she was holding onto values that had become sinful. And if you don't kill sin, sin will kill you. And it's just looking for a place. It's just looking for a place to express itself.

If it could happen to Debbie, it can happen to me. And for all the heroes who have tripped and fallen before me, I hope you don't trust yourself. I hope you're living every day on the edge, one day at a time. Anybody, one day at a time? Do you know what that means? Yeah, we're all addicted to something.

The story of chapter 11 is all about power and all about the abuse of power. *I'm going to sin for this woman and I'm going to sin for Joab and I'm going to sin for Uriah.* And that's how it ends—all this flex and bullying power.

## **2 Samuel 12:1**

**The Lord **sent** Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said ...**

And then chapter 12 says this—the very first sentence: “And then Yahweh sent Nathan to David. And when he came to him, he said ...”

You need to come back next week. *[Laughter from the congregation.]* That's what it says right here in my notes. A new player has entered the story. Now Yahweh is going to send.

Friends, let's learn from the suffering of David. All right? Let's learn about the frailty of our own human soul, the capacity for sin, the capacity for "I'm the exception, I'm entitled, how bad could it get?" Be afraid. Be appropriately afraid so you will kill sin before sin kills you. Let's be a church of sin killers.

*[Prayer]*

*Lord, I bet there are people here who have been playing with sin like a mouse playing with a lion, thinking somehow, it's going to end up well for them. They've not been going to battle in the spring. They have been neglecting their internal thoughts. They've been entertaining things that will lead to destruction.*

*And Lord, I'd ask that Your Spirit would convict us of that. And Lord, like David had these four chances to get out, I'd ask that you would give us an exit ramp, a fork in the road, some kind of act of repentance, that we might act before the damage is done—too much damage has been done.*

*Lord, give us the power of repentance and restoration. Give us the courage to maybe confront, and certainly the courage to take responsibility. God, we want our lives to glorify You in all that we do, especially in the limited power that You've given us. Maybe it's just over a little brother, a younger brother, or a coworker—whatever it might be; that we would use that authority well to give and to honor and to serve the way we were meant to, like a good shepherd and a good king. Let this lesson of David speak to us, Lord, vividly, candidly, and truthfully. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*