

SIN-HOW SERIOUS IS IT?
2 SAMUEL 11:1-27
FEB 4, 2018



MAIN POINT

Even though David is one of the heroes of our faith, his life also gives us a picture of how Christians fall.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Let's start with a definition of sin. How would you define it? What is the difference between being tempted and sinning?

When we sin, who are some of the people who are likely to be hurt? Why do we still sometimes choose to sin knowing the pain inflicted on others?

Come up with a general list of consequences from sinning. How do these consequences differ from the life God wants us to live in Him?

Sin is real, and it's something we face countless times every day. If you are a Christian, then you have experienced the salvation that comes with faith in Jesus, but the struggle with sin will remain a part of your life until you die or Jesus returns. What sets the sin of the Christ follower apart from the sin of the non-Christian is the hope of victory that is ours in Christ. From today's discussion, we will see three truths that help us understand how Christians fall into sin: distance from God, giving into temptations, and scheming to protect our righteousness and cover our shame.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 11:1-13.

At the start of spring, David sent Joab and his troops to fight the Ammonites while he remained behind in Jerusalem. Staying home from war and not joining his troops was the first mistake of many David made during this brief span of time.

What does David's apparent idleness suggest about being vulnerable to temptation?

What three issues tempted David in verses 1-13? How could he have acted in the face of each temptation?

David was tempted by three issues in this passage: 1) a beautiful woman, 2) the desire to keep their encounter secret, and 3) fear of retaliation from Uriah. We, like David, face many temptations, yet we always have the choice to give in to the temptation or resist it.

Who was affected by David's sin, both directly and indirectly?

Read 2 Samuel 23:8 and 39. Who was Uriah the Hittite?

Describe David's first cover-up attempt (vv. 6-13). Why didn't it work? Who was affected by David's plot to make Uriah appear to be the father of Bathsheba's child?

David tried to cover his sin, making it worse. He hatched a plan to have Uriah come home from war, sleep with his wife, and think that he was the father of David's child (11:6-13). In doing so, David disregarded Bathsheba, Uriah, and the unborn child. He was not thinking about them but only about himself. David's plan would have worked except for one thing—Uriah was so loyal to his job as a soldier in David's army that he would not sleep with his wife when he returned because it would have been unfair to the other soldiers in the field.

Think about a time as a child when you misbehaved and tried unsuccessfully to cover up your wrongdoing. Why wasn't your cover-up successful? Why do we tend to try to cover up our wrongdoings or blame someone else when we get caught?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 11:14-27.

Describe David's second cover-up attempt (vv. 14-25). What were the results?

This time David wrote Uriah's death warrant, commanding Joab to put Uriah on the front line of battle. David then had Uriah carry the letter to his commander, knowing that Uriah was so loyal he would not even open its seal. Uriah was killed, and David married Bathsheba (11:6-27). Temptation again hit him without his refusing it. He murdered one of his better soldiers to cover his own sin. In a short time David had gone from great religious pursuits to committing adultery and murder.

Read James 1:13-15 aloud. How does this passage relate to David's situation? Why does a single sin often produce other sins?

Read 2 Samuel 11:25-27 again. What does David's response to Uriah's death reveal about his spiritual state at that time?

How did God feel about what David had done? Why is our sin always ultimately against God?

Psalm 41:4, a psalm of David, encourages us to realize God's knowledge of our sin. Temptation can be deceptive, and even the most committed Christians are vulnerable to the progression of sin as they yield to temptation. But God is proactive in convicting us of our sin and bringing us back to Himself.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Even after salvation, we, like David, still struggle with sin and give into temptations. Thankfully, God doesn't leave us in that place alone. How does God confront believers about their sins? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this process?

How does David's story remind us of the importance of confession and forgiveness?

How should we treat others as a result of the freedom and forgiveness God has shared with us?

PRAY

During this dark season of his life, David penned Psalm 51. Read it aloud as your group silently reflects on the Scripture. Then close with prayer, inviting God to help your group members recognize His willingness to forgive and their need to ask His forgiveness.

COMMENTARY

2 SAMUEL 11

11:1. David earlier had defeated the Ammonites (2 Sam. 10:6-14), but had not eliminated the threat they posed. Under Joab, David sent the king's men (his own troops) and the whole Israelite army to crush the Ammonites. The Israelites quickly defeated the Ammonites in battle and besieged Rabbah, their capital city. David, who usually led his troops, remained in Jerusalem. Some Bible students suggest David no longer wished to go into battle, preferring the luxurious life of the royal court. More likely, Joab and his troops insisted David remain in Jerusalem (see 18:1-4). Undoubtedly, many enemy soldiers hoped to win glory by killing David (21:15-17). A siege could last for months or years (2 Kings 25:1-3), and David needed to be administering the kingdom from Jerusalem rather than from the battlefield. In Jerusalem, David would be safe and could continue his royal duties.

11:2-3. The roof of the palace was probably on the highest ground, providing the king a commanding view of Jerusalem. He saw a woman bathing ("washing"); the text does not suggest she did so intentionally to lure David into an encounter. David discovered the woman's identity—she was Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam (one of David's elite warriors; 23:34) and the wife of Uriah the Hittite (another of David's elite soldiers; 23:39). She also may have been the granddaughter of Ahithophel, one of David's most trusted counselors (23:34). At any rate, her married status rendered her off-limits to the king.

11:4. David . . . slept with her—meaning he had intercourse with her. The narrative is silent about Bathsheba's feelings about coming to the palace and submitting to the king's wishes. Apparently the intent of the biblical writer was to place ultimate blame where it belonged—with Israel's king. The parenthetical explanation that Bathsheba had purified herself from her uncleanness relates to Leviticus 15:19-33. The point was that sexual relations might well result in conception.

11:5-8. The news of Bathsheba's pregnancy presented special problems for the king because her husband Uriah had been away fighting the Ammonites and thus could not be the father of the child. David sent orders to Joab without revealing the reason he was summoning Uriah. Uriah must have wondered why the king had summoned him—one of David's valiant warriors—when a simple messenger could bring news about the war (v. 18). The words of the king to Uriah, wash your feet, suggested a time of gentle relaxing at Uriah's house, where Bathsheba might arrange an intimate evening with her husband to make it appear that he was the baby's father. David even sent a gift along—probably some choice food and drink.

11:10-13. David questioned Uriah about his refusal to go home as the king had invited him to do, while being careful not to appear overly eager to make sure Uriah went home.

Uriah answered David as a true soldier. With Israel's army engaging the enemy in battle, he would not leave the battlefield to enjoy the comforts of home. Ironically, Uriah swore by the king's own life to

disobey David's command. David delayed Uriah's return a few days while he contrived another plan. David got Uriah drunk in an effort to get him to wander home to Bathsheba, but he did not go home. The king was becoming more desperate to cover his misdeed.

11:14. When David's plan failed, he devised a new strategy. Uriah's actions made a cover-up impossible, so the king decided to eliminate Uriah. David wrote a letter to Joab to send with Uriah. Uriah probably assumed the letter bore instructions about the siege. A loyal soldier of his general and king, he did not break the seal of the letter to read it. Uriah's obedience to his king contrasted sharply with David's disobedience to the King of kings.

11:15-16. David's initial sin drew him into a series of more desperate actions. He devised a plan to make Uriah's death look like a terrible tragedy of war. David's letter instructed Joab to place Uriah in the front line where the fighting would be fiercest and then withdraw from him so he would be struck down and die. Joab had to attack the strongly fortified city and ensure Uriah's death while seeking to minimize his losses. Uriah never knew or suspected he carried his own death sentence. Joab, a brilliant general, had to wonder what Uriah had done to deserve death, but he obeyed David's order. Uriah became a casualty of war.

11:18-20. Messengers (not elite soldiers as with Uriah; v. 6) routinely ran between battle lines and Jerusalem to provide updates on the war (18:19-23; 1 Sam 4:12-17). Joab knew that David, an experienced military man in his own right, might respond angrily if he heard a bad report that included what he considered foolish military tactics.

11:21-25. The account of Abimelech dying from an upper millstone that was thrown from the top of the wall was a vivid example from Israel's history (Jdg 9:50-54). The messenger must have wondered, however, why Joab's suggestion to tell the king that Uriah the Hittite was dead might appease David's anger. Now two people, besides David and Bathsheba, knew a piece of David's secret. The messenger did not wait for the king's reply to share the news of Uriah's death. Again, when David told the messenger an encouraging word to relay to Joab, the messenger must have wondered why the king would have received the news without even challenging Joab's strategy as Joab had anticipated he might (vv. 20-21). As is almost always the case, sin proves hard to hide for David.

11:26. The text's description of Bathsheba only as Uriah's wife is probably intentional to accent David's sin. She mourned for Uriah, probably putting on mourner's clothes (Jer 6:26), throwing dirt or ashes on her head (2 Sam 1:2), sitting in the dirt (Isa 47:1), fasting (1 Sam 31:13), and weeping. Professional mourners assisted in expressing the family's grief and loss, and mourning typically lasted seven days (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13). At the same time Bathsheba mourned, many other families in Israel mourned the losses of their sons, husbands, and fathers who had died as a result of David's plan to kill Uriah.

11:27. The time of mourning is not given. Israel mourned Moses for 30 days (Dt 34:8), but Uriah's mourning probably was not that long. David then brought Bathsheba to his house, and soon she bore him a son. The king might have escaped detection from some who might have been in a position to report him—except that the Lord had seen the entire ugly ordeal.