

# LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for August 22: Deal with personal sin

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In recent years, a number of very prominent religious leaders have been forced out of their ministries due to moral failure. Such behavior on the part of God's servants is not a new phenomenon.

David, king of Israel, was guilty of adultery and then became complicit in a plot to cover his sin. David's lack of moral judgment and his inability to control his desires sullied his reputation. As God's representative, David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba brought shame to God's name. Yet, the story of David and Bathsheba is a marvelous picture of redemption and it presents a model for dealing with personal sin.

## **Recognize that temptation leads to sin (2 Samuel 11:2-5, 14-15)**

David's trip to the roof of the palace was in no way remarkable. As a matter of fact, the roof of the palace most likely was a place where David would pray for his people. Bathsheba bathing was equally commonplace. But, as each was going through their regular routines, temptation presented itself.

David was overcome with Bathsheba's beauty (v. 2). Bathsheba was a subject under the king's authority, so when David's messengers summoned her to the palace, she was obligated follow David's request.

While not crucial to the ultimate outcome, it is interesting to speculate as to when David succumbed to temptation. Had he already purposed in his heart to commit adultery when he sent for Bathsheba, or was that decision made when she arrived in the palace? Either way, David had opportunities

to deny his temptation.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and she conceived (v. 5). Sin seldom travels alone. David developed a plan to have Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, come home from battle in hope Uriah and Bathsheba would have marital relations and give the appearance that Bathsheba's child was fathered by Uriah. On two different occasions David offers Uriah an opportunity to spend the night at home (vv. 8, 13).

Uriah was an honorable man and he refused to go home while other men were on the battlefield. When David's lies proved insufficient, he conceived an even more serious sin and arranged to have Uriah sent to the front lines of battle to be killed (v. 15). With Uriah gone, David could legitimately take Bathsheba as his wife.

It is easy to criticize David's behavior. In reality, any minister—any believer—can find themselves presented with opportunities to fall into serious sin. If anything, modern culture makes sexual sin more readily available. Like David, many who give in to temptation seek to cover their sin through deceit, and a snowball effect begins. David could have denied temptation. With God's help, every believer has the power to deny sinful behavior.

### **Realize that sin must be confronted (2 Samuel 12:7, 10-12)**

For all practical purposes, David's sin was a private affair. Even when sin seems to be hidden from the view of others, it never is outside the knowledge of God. God always will confront his children with their sin.

God sent Nathan, the prophet, to confront David (v. 1). In a parable, Nathan told the story of David's sin, and he asked the king to pass judgment on the sinner in the parable. Enraged by the evil character in the parable, David pronounced a four-fold judgment (v. 6). Nathan then reveals

the true identity of the evil man in the parable, "You are the man!" (v. 7).

Before sin can be forgiven, it must be confessed. David needed to be confronted with his sin, and God sent Nathan. Today, God's children need to be confronted with their sins. God still will use the faithful preacher as a means of confrontation, but he also uses his word, the Holy Spirit, circumstances and other believers as a means of confrontation.

God stands ready to forgive the sins of his children and restore them to fellowship with him. God does not, however, always remove the consequences of their sin. David had pronounced a four-fold punishment for his sin, and four times he suffered the consequences of his sin. The child he fathered with Bathsheba died after seven days (v. 18). David's son Amnon raped his sister Tamar (13:14). Another son, Absalom kills Amnon for his actions (13:29). Finally, Absalom leads a rebellion against his father and is killed by David's army (18:14).

### **Rejoice that sin can be forgiven (2 Samuel 12:13-14; Psalm 51:1-4)**

David's restoration is as beautiful as his sin was detestable. Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance. He accepts responsibility for his sin (v. 3). He recognizes he has sinned against God (v. 4). He pleads for forgiveness and restoration (vv. 1-2). God forgave David and restored him to right fellowship, and David became a man after God's heart. David's forgiveness was not based on his stature, but rather on God's grace.

David's restoration gives hope to every sinful child of God. God's nature is unchanging. There is no sin beyond the ability of God's grace to forgive. To find his forgiveness, the believer must confront sin, confess it to God and ask for God's forgiveness. The consequences of sin may not be removed, but fellowship with God will be restored. Then, like David, the repentant child of God can say, "wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (v. 7).