

Go ahead and turn to 2 Samuel chapter 12, and keep your finger there and *also* turn to Psalm 51. We'll eventually get there. Really quickly, let's recap some of what we talked about last week to set us up for where we are today. So David's armies are out fighting a war and David is really supposed to be with them. But instead he's at home shirking his responsibilities. And while he's somewhere he isn't supposed to be, David sees Bathsheba doing exactly what she *is supposed* to be doing. At her own home. And we saw some horrible consequences of what happens when David uses his power to force himself on her and then murder her husband in an attempt to cover it up.

And Jeff mentioned it last week, but I want to reiterate it: our reaction to David's sin and David's mistakes should not just be that we shake our heads in self righteous disgust. Our reaction should not be, "how dare he, I would never." No, the point we should remember is that David was the best of us. David is a man after God's own heart. David is the one who fought and killed Goliath when no one else was willing to try. David was the guy who was on the run when Saul was trying to kill him, and when he had the opportunity to retaliate and kill Saul, he didn't. He continued to show forgiveness over and over and trust God. Over and over we see examples that he's the best of us, and then he falls into this terrible, terrible sin. And that should strike us as pretty scary. Because if it could happen to David, *the* David, it could happen to anyone. So for the original readers of this story and for us, this should make us think, what now? David is supposed to be the guy. He's the one we're counting on. And he blew it. So to see what happens, let's take a look at 2 Samuel chapter 12 starting in verse 1:

"The Lord sent Nathan to David."

The Lord sent Nathan. So Nathan was a prophet at the time. We talked a couple weeks ago about who prophets were and what they did, but as a quick reminder, they had a direct line to God and would communicate with the Israelites and their leadership the things that God commanded of them. So Nathan was essentially David's prophetic counterpart. And he shows up after we read about one of the biggest moral failures in the Bible.

David has just been a part of some heinous things. He's turned his back on God in an act of outright rebellion. And he needs to get a grip on reality. He needs to see and understand the gravity of what's happened. He needs to repent and acknowledge his sin and turn his heart back to God. But we don't see that sequence of events in scripture. We don't see David commit these terrible acts then mourn over his sin and brokenness and be filled with remorse. We see David commit these things, then we see Nathan show up. Keep reading:

“When he came to him [this is Nathan talking to David], 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.”

Remember, this was an agrarian society. In general, most people are farmers in some capacity, or at least are very familiar with it. And even though this was a fundamental part of life, the way the guy in this story feels about his livestock is pretty intense. He treats this lamb like a child. I’m sure we’ve all heard someone talk about their pets as their “babies” before, and that’s all good and well. We all know for millennials that plants are the new pets and pets are the new kids. But when someone talks about sharing a plate and a cup with their pet and saying it is the *same* as one of their children, most of us can agree we’d probably have some concerns. So this is an *intense* bond. Verse 4:

“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.”

He took the lamb that belonged to the poor man. The lamb that was so precious to him that it was like his child. He went and blatantly *stole* something that wasn’t his. The lamb had no say in the matter. And the Hebrew word used here, “laqach,” “to take,” is the *exact* same word used a chapter earlier when scripture tells us what David did to Bathsheba. And Nathan is trying to use a story to illustrate an injustice being done to try to spark David’s conscience. He’s describing a rich man who has everything he needs, but he violently steals from another. He didn’t coerce the lamb. He didn’t seduce the lamb. He didn’t wine and dine the lamb. The lamb had no say in the matter and was stolen. Just like Bathsheba. And it looks like Nathan’s strategy is working. Look at verse 5:

“David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

David is *shook*. Talk about a big reaction. Arguably *too big* of a reaction to this particular story. David says, in this order, to “kill him, then pay them back.” I imagine Nathan being pretty surprised. Probably thinking, “turns out this meeting is going to be a lot shorter than I expected.” That’s a severe reaction. Even looking at the Levitical law, this kind of

situation wouldn't be punishable by death. But David is enraged at the injustice he just heard. *But*, he still isn't connecting the dots. He's blinded by his own sin. He doesn't understand the full picture of what's going on.

This is the beginning of what we can call David's conscience "waking up." He's being reminded of what justice and injustice look like in a similar situation. And we can see that he understands the *concept*. He gets the idea, but there's still a disconnect between what he knows to be true at a heart level, and the choices he has made. And for Nathan, he came into this probably expecting to have a 100mph fastball come at him, and instead it's just sitting on a tee. Now all you have to do is swing. Verse 7:

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

This is like an ancient episode of Maury. Remember, when Nathan is talking to David, it's as if the words are coming from God himself. Nathan is just a vessel of communication. And he's pointing a finger straight at David.

"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'"

Nathan bringing the *heat*. He is tearing David a new one, and rightfully so. David has committed some horrific things in his sin with incredibly damaging effects, and he is seemingly just continuing on with his life. He needed a wake up call, and he needed it fast. And this passage has some immediate application for us today. First:

We all need Nathans in our life

Repentance was what David needed. That was the end goal. **But Nathan was the means by which he got there.** Nathan was a grace gift to David. See, David was blind to his sin. He couldn't even get to repentance because he couldn't see. David needed someone to call him out on his sin, to bring attention to and highlight the mess he got himself into. And God put a calling on Nathan's heart. Look back at verse 1, it says, "the Lord sent Nathan to David." We don't know what Nathan was doing before this, but we do know

when God put this on his heart, he listened. He obeyed. He put his reputation, his safety, on the line to call David out on his sin. Going around pointing fingers at kings and accusing them of murder is dangerous work, but Nathan was faithful. And because Nathan *didn't* ignore the call God put on his heart, he *didn't* just sit back and say, "David will be fine. It's really not my business," he was able to show David where he was off. He was able to move David to repentance.

And if you're here today and you're thinking about how self aware you are and that you know yourself better than anyone and don't really *have* blind spots, I'm here to let you know you *for sure* have blind spots. Not thinking that you do probably is one. Hebrews 3:13 says this:

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

We are *all* susceptible to sin's deceitfulness. None of us are the exception. We have all been deceived by our own sin in one way or another. And we all need people who see those blind spots in our lives. How often does it say? *Daily*. I love how the author of Hebrews adds the clarifier, "as long as it is called 'Today.'" Or you may have heard people say, "only the days that end with 'Y.'"

And I think it's important to recognize the way Nathan engages David. He doesn't just come in and say, "I heard from God, you messed up big time. You dummy." He actually engages David in what seems to be a really effective way. He tells him a story in a way that he *knows* David will hear and receive what he's saying. And the only way he would be able to do this so effectively is, first, because God helped stir those things in his heart because Nathan was listening, and second, it seems like he personally knows David well enough to know how to engage him. And the only way *you* are going to be able to have Nathan's in your life is if you have deep, committed, connected friendships with people who love Jesus and are able to see your life regularly and up close.

Tim Keller puts it well. He said your only hope for growth is that you deputize people in your life. If you have people in your life that you have given the authority to speak into any and every part of your life. People who will say, "hey, I love you, and I know you love Jesus, and the Bible says you have blind spots, and here is where I see some. I want you to know because you might not be aware and I want you to grow to look more like Jesus." And in these situations, we don't just say I'm out of here. We don't get defensive. And if we do, we get to repent of that too. We're not going to be devastated and crushed that anyone would ever say those things to us. We're not going to get mad. We make it *safe* for people to see our flaws. To talk to us about those things. And it's something we

intentionally invite people into. And if you're thinking you don't have those types of people in your life, it might be because you haven't actually deputized people in this way. You may not have granted people that kind of access. People who can see your life. Your *real* life up close. The good, the bad, all of it, and they can call you out on sin and blind spots.

And if I may be so bold, I have a feeling that some people have tensed up quite a bit thinking about all of this. So, first let's take a deep breath in...let it out. I think part of the reason it feels weird to do this is because we really don't have much of a category in our culture today for healthy confrontation. Generally, when we see people call out someone in our culture, whether it's accurate or not, it's usually intended to hurt them or their platform, not build them up. Or maybe if you've grown up in religious circles you've seen some bad examples of this. Maybe you've seen people in church, leaders or pastors specifically, with self righteous agendas go around condemning people and doing a whole lot of damage in the process. Not going out with the goal of grace and repentance. And it's caused a lot of us to not have a category for healthy, biblical confrontation like we are called to.

But listen, if we don't have this understanding, then we're always going to be blinded by our sin, and we're never actually going to grow. If your sin is left alone and inaccessible to anyone to talk to you about it, it'll be like a cancer for your soul. Like a toxic mold left alone in the dark, slowly suffocating you spiritually. And if you feel like you have all kinds of Nathans in your life, plenty of people who regularly see and speak into your life, that's great! Praise God for that. But I also want you to really think about how many of those Nathans actually disagree with you at times. Because if we're only completely vulnerable with people who exclusively pat you on the back and say "whatever you say, bud," that's not really a Nathan. That's great for my ego, but terrible for my soul. Look at the screen at what the author of Proverbs has to say in chapter 27 verse 6:

"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."

A scalpel can cut you just like an axe can cut you, but in the right hands and with the right motivation, the wounds from a scalpel ultimately bring healing and growth, not destruction and harm. The "wounds from a friend" are not just meant to hurt you, but to help you grow. That doesn't mean they won't ever hurt, but we need to have this attitude. We need to understand these kinds of relationships are necessary to our growth and maturity and actively seek them out with humility. Because if we don't, we both will not grow *and* we will be deeply offended whenever it does happen.

A theologian back in the day put the idea this way: “You know how when you strike something soft it makes no noise, but if you strike a hard thing it makes a noise; so with the hearts of men who are full of themselves, and hardened with self-love, if they receive a stroke they make a noise, but a self-denying Christian yields to God’s hand, and makes no noise.” I love that analogy. And it’s true, the Christian who is hardened by self righteousness will just “make noise” when confronted. The whole world around them will know that you confronted them before anyone knows that they’ve repented or grown in anything. Imagine with me David as a self righteous 2022 Christian. And Nathan comes to confront him. What do you think his response would be? I think we can break it up into categories we see pretty often.

Minimizing: Trying to play things down like it isn’t significant, “come on, it wasn’t that big of a deal.” “It could’ve been a whole lot worse if we’re being honest.” “I think you’re being too sensitive.”

Maximizing: Time to switch it up and use it as an opportunity to be the center of attention, “woe is me, I’m the worst,” or, “woe is me, you’re the worst.” “I’m unlovable and unfixable.” And fishing for praise and affirmation to avoid honesty and repentance.

Blame shifting: This sometimes comes out as victimization too. “It’s not my fault, I’ve been really hurt before.” “You don’t understand what kind of pressure I’m under.” “You don’t know what it’s like to be in my position.” “My life is exhausting and stressful, you wouldn’t get it. What was I supposed to do?”

Lashing out: Just getting super angry. “You’re out to get me.” “You’re not a real friend, you don’t support me.” “You’re clearly not a safe person in my life.” “How could you do this to me?”

Redirecting: Or the good ole Uno reverse. “You know, while we’re talking about sin, I don’t really think you’ve got much room to talk, mister sinner-yourself.” “You’re terrible at this other thing.”

And as with any of these litmus tests we talk about up here, the goal is to help you identify ways *you* might be off, not use it as a weapon against someone else. But as followers of Jesus, we shouldn’t be responding like this. A self-denying, mature Christian *yields* to God, even when he speaks through other people. And the closer the view a follower of Jesus has in your life, the more you should pay attention. People in your LifeGroup who you see multiple times every week or your roommates if they follow Jesus have a window into your life. And when they confront and correct you, what they are saying should have more influence in your life than a person that you call to vent to once or twice a month. Does that mean you should never talk to anyone who isn’t in your LifeGroup? Of course not. But in general, the people who see your life up close have the best source of information about you.

I want to be the first to say this is something I struggle with sometimes. My sinful tendency is to take someone disagreeing with me as a personal affront. Or I take confrontation as criticism and immediately have this desire bubble up inside of me to make excuses and defend myself instead of listening with humility. Not too long ago, my wife Sara called me out on being too attached to my phone. She said I was always on it and ignoring other things, and my first response was [checks phone] “what?” I was offended. “ME? On MY phone too much? I was just on my phone because you were on your phone.” “Well Marcus or Kent or Jeff is texting something so if I put it away I’ll probably miss something really big.” “DON’T YOU KNOW HOW IMPORTANT I AM?” I couldn’t believe she would say something so false. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized how big it actually was. First thing in the morning, scrolling. Last thing at night, scrolling. Sitting down to dinner and having a conversation? Nope, scrolling. Hanging out with a group of people and I get a little bored for a second, scrolling. Sitting at LifeGroup and I’m not actively sharing? Sure would love to be scrolling. And I began to realize how much of a problem it really was. Instead of spending intentional time with my wife, I was on my phone ignoring her. Instead of having conversations and engaging with people, I was shutting them out and not showing them any kind of hospitality because I cared more about what was on my phone. Instead of being engaged with what was being shared or talked about in LifeGroup, I was communicating that I care way more about Instagram than I do about what’s happening in your life. So instead of all the excuses or defensiveness or redirection, I should be thanking her for seeing something off in my life, and bringing it up to help me grow.

Our response to being confronted should not be anger and defensiveness, but humility and gratefulness. This one will be quicker, but the second thing we need to take away is...

We can all be Nathans

In case it doesn’t go without saying, in order for us all to have Nathans in our life, we also need to be that for others. **Part of being a follower of Jesus is living in relationship with other followers of Jesus and taking responsibility for their spiritual walk.** In our relationships, we should be looking for opportunities to point people towards Jesus more and more. Sometimes that means encouraging people with the growth that we see and the progress they’re making. And sometimes that means bringing their attention to an area of their life where they may not be aligned with Scripture. Even when it’s uncomfortable. Even when it’s easier or more fun to join in whatever they’re doing. Listen, I will be the first to say it is not most people’s *preference* to be confronted or bring confrontation to others, **but our preferences do not take precedence over Scripture.** **Acceptance is not the core of biblical community, following Christ together is the core.**

And when we refuse to acknowledge or accept confrontation, or refuse to engage someone on their sin because it feels unpleasant or because it's just easier to talk to other people about it, we are elevating our preferences over Jesus in our lives.

And in the same way, our confrontation should not be done from a place of personal preference. Our confrontation does not come from personal frustrations. Confrontation is done through *scripture*. Through the truth of God's word, not our opinions. Your confrontation should never be determined by your mood. That's not biblical confrontation, that's just complaining. That's not for the purpose of building one another up and pushing each other towards Jesus. That's for tearing people down and creating division.

And with all of this, we have to remember that healthy confrontation is not the end goal. Healthy confrontation is a success when we are moved towards repentance. Healthy confrontation is not to just make people grieve their sin and recognize it. That's a part of it. That's a huge component of it. But that's only half of it. The second half is we are moved towards repentance; to change by God's grace and the power of the Spirit to walk more closely in step with Jesus. It's easy to grieve sin, but it can't just stop there. So when we receive confrontation or correction in our sin, we need to understand that others see a blindspot we do not see. Or maybe something we do see and we just hoped no one else would. We shouldn't respond in those ways we talked about earlier, with defensiveness or anger. We should *thank* them. We should thank the Lord for putting those people in our lives. Or for putting us in a situation where we can point someone back to Jesus.

And this week in our LifeGroups, I want us to try to put this into practice. To open ourselves up to others and invite them to speak into blindspots in our lives. Or to engage someone else. And this feels like the week everyone suddenly has an *extra* long or tiring or stressful day, and boy oh boy, does it just seem like I may not be able to make it to LifeGroup this week. But I want to invite you to push back against that desire that may come up. I want to invite you into something that is bigger and better than your comfort in the moment.

We'll wrap up today by just taking a look at David's response. Nathan took a big risk with this confrontation. I don't know if you've ever seen movies where a king was called out on something or someone disagreed with them, but it usually ends with a "off with their head" moment. And David could have responded in any number of ways. Anger and violence to name a few. But what does he do? Take a look back at 2 Samuel 12 in verse 13:

"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'"

This is David's wake up moment. He finally gets it out of this downward spiral. Here's this light bulb moment. I have sinned against the Lord. David finally wakes up from this unreality of sin that he has been living in for so long. The text goes on to say that David spends the next week fasting and praying before God. And we know that David followed through on his confrontation, to walk into complete repentance because of Psalm 51. So go ahead and turn to Psalm 51 and we'll end there. Like I said earlier, repentance was the end goal. Nathan's obedience in 2 Samuel 12 was the means. Psalm 51 is the end goal. Psalm 51 is a snapshot of what David prayed over that week. This prayer is how David processes through his sin. And it's a beautiful picture of repentance. This is how we ought to respond when we are confronted when we are corrected. Repentance, restoration.

So what I want to do is just want to read this over us. And as you're reading it along with me, I just want you to notice the shifts in tone. If you are grieving over your sin and you don't know what to pray, Psalm 51 is a great prayer to pray. Imagine this is David crying out to God over a week of prayer and fasting. Psalm 51 says this:

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar."

Notice how David's prayer moves and shifts in tone from grieving over his sin, to clinging to God's grace and mercy, to rejoicing and worshiping God through it all because he knows God is faithful. That while David's sin is great, God's grace is greater. That is what he clings to. The only way you can experience full repentance. The only way you can experience this picture is if Psalm 51 is the normal pattern of your life. For some of us in the room, the reason why you've never really experienced the presence and peace of Jesus in your life is because you've never actually walked in full repentance. Maybe you're a Christian in the vague sense. You know some of the theological principles, but it's all really abstract and you've never actually owned it. And because of that, you've never actually experienced real forgiveness, real peace in your life. But if you ever really want to own your sin, then you need to take it before God who offers you peace and mercy. And David, the man after God's own heart, could have easily become just another wicked King, just like Saul, if Nathan hadn't shown up. But he repents, and he turns his heart back to God and God keeps David on the throne for the rest of David's life. Now there would be consequences. Yes. But God didn't hang David's sin over him anymore. David was forgiven. And the same goes for us when we repent, God doesn't focus on our sin, and neither should you. Instead, he sees the righteousness of His Son Jesus, the true king from the line of David interceding on your behalf.

End with prayer and "invitation." Intro "White as Snow."